

Third, he shows the same thing from the good pleasure of the divine will saying, "As God pleased, so it has been done." For friends will and do not will the same thing. Thus if it is the good pleasure of God that someone should be despoiled of temporal goods, if he loves God, he ought to conform his will to the divine will, so that he is not absorbed by sadness in this consideration.

These three arguments are put in the proper order. For in the first argument it is posited that temporal goods are exterior to man. In the second, it is posited that they are a gift given to a man and taken away by God. In the third that this happens according to the good pleasure of the divine will. So one can conclude from the first argument that man should not be absorbed by sorrow because of the loss of temporal goods; from the second that he cannot even complain and from the third that he ought even to rejoice. For it would not please God that someone should suffer from adversity unless he wished some good to come to him from it. So though adversity is bitter in itself and generates sadness, nevertheless it should be the cause of rejoicing when one considers the use because of which it pleases God, as is said about the apostles, "The apostles went rejoicing because they had suffered contempt for Christ." (Acts 5:41) and so on. For when taking a bitter medicine, one can rejoice with reason because of the hope for health, although he suffers sensibly. So since joy is the matter of the action of thanksgiving, therefore Job concludes this third argument with an act of thanksgiving saying, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." The name of the Lord is truly blessed by men inasmuch as they have knowledge of his goodness, namely that he distributes all things well and does nothing unjustly.

Then the text therefore concludes to the innocence of Job when it says, "In all these things, Job did not sin with his lips," namely, he did not express a movement of impatience in word, "nor did he say something stupid against God," i.e., blasphemy, so that he did not blaspheme concerning divine providence. For stupidity is opposed to wisdom which properly is knowledge of divine things.

END OF JOB CHAPTER ONE

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Job

Chapter One:



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

- Job 19:25 -

The First Trial

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 ONE: THE FIRST TRIAL

1. There was a man in the Land of Hus whose name was Job. He was a man without guile and upright, and he feared God and turned away from evil. 2 There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. 3 His property was seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels; five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses and a great number of servants. So this man was accounted great among all the peoples of the East. 4 His sons used to go and hold banquets in each other's houses, each one on his appointed day. And they would send and invite their sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send for them and purify them; and rising at dawn, he offered burnt holocausts for each one. For Job said: It may be that my sons have sinned and blessed God in their hearts. Job did this every day.

The whole intention of this book is ordered to showing how human affairs are ruled by divine providence, and a kind of history is put first in which the numerous sufferings of a certain just man are related as the foundation of the whole debate. For it is affliction like this which seems most of all to exclude divine providence from human affairs. First, therefore, the person of this man is described as to his sex when the text says, "There was a man." This sex is found stronger in suffering troubles. He is also described as to his land of origin when the text continues, "in the land of Hus," which is situated in the East. His name is given next, "whose name was Job." These two things seem to have been put in the text to suggest that this is not a parable but recounts a real deed.

His virtue is then described and in this he is shown to be free from sin, lest anyone think that the adversities which are set down in the account afterwards happened to him because of his sins. One should that a man sins in three ways. There are certain sins in which he sins against neighbor, like murder, adultery, theft and the like. There are certain sins in which he sins against God like perjury, sacrilege, blasphemy and the like. There are sins in which he sins against himself, as St. Paul says in I Cor., "He who fornicates, sins against his own body." (6:18) One sins against his neighbor in two ways, either secretly by fraud or in openly by violence. But this man did not deceive his neighbor by fraud, for the text says, "He was without guile (*simplex*)." Being without guile (*simplex*) is properly opposed to fraud. Nor did he render violence against anyone, for the text continues, "and upright." For uprightness properly belongs to justice, which consists in the mean between good and evil, as Isaiah says, "The way of the just is upright; you make straight the path the righteous walk." (26:7) The text clearly indicates that he did not sin against God openly when it continues, "and he feared God," which designates to his reverence for God. The fact that he also did not sin against himself is shown when the text puts, "and turned away from evil," because he regarded evil with hatred for his own sake, not only for the sake of the harm of his neighbor or the offense of God.

So Job followed this opinion and truly showed sorrow in adversity; yet this sadness was so moderated that it was subject to reason. The text therefore continues, "Then Job arose, and rent his robe," which is usually an indication of sadness among men. Note however that the text says, "Then", namely after he heard about the death of his children, so that he might seem more sad over their loss than the loss of his possessions. For it is characteristic of a hard and insensible heart to not grieve over dead friends, but it is characteristic of virtuous men to not have this grief in an immoderate way as St. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians, "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." (4:13) This was true in the case of blessed Job and so the state of his mind appears in his exterior act. Since his reason stood upright, the text fittingly says that "Job arose" although men in grief usually prostrate themselves. For though he suffered grief, but not a grief which penetrated as far as disturbing his interior reason, he showed a sign of his sadness in exterior actions in two ways: namely as to what is outside the nature of the body, and so the text says, "he rent his robe"; and as to those things which proceed from the nature of the body, "he shaved his head," which among those who care for their hair, usually indicates grief. These two signs then fittingly correspond to the adversities mentioned, for the tearing of the robe corresponds to the loss of his possessions, and the cutting of the hair corresponds to the loss of his sons. Then the mind stands upright when it humbly is submitted to God. For each thing exists in a higher and more noble state to the extent that it stands firm in what perfects it more, like air when it is subject to light, and matter when it is subject to form. Therefore the fact that the mind of blessed Job was not dejected by sadness, but persisted in its righteousness, clearly shows that he humbly subjected himself to God. So the text continues, "and he fell on the ground, and worshipped," to show evidence for his devotion and humility.

Job revealed the state of his mind not only by deeds, but also by words. For he rationally demonstrated that although he suffered sadness, he did not have to yield to sadness. First, he demonstrated from the condition of nature so the text said, "He said: Naked I came forth from my mother's womb," namely, from the earth which is the common mother of everything, "and naked shall I return there," i.e., to the earth. Sirach speaks in the same vein saying, "Great hardship has been created for man, and a heavy yoke lies on the sons of Adam from the day they come forth from their mother's womb until the day they return to their burial in the mother of them all." (40:1) This can also be interpreted in another way. The expression, "from my mother's womb" can be literally taken as the womb of the mother who bore him. When he says next "naked I shall return there," the term "there" establishes a simple relation. For a man cannot return a second time to the womb of his own mother, but he can return to the state which he had in the womb of his mother in a certain respect, namely in that he is removed from the company of men. In saying this he reasonably shows that a man should not be absorbed with sadness because of the loss of exterior goods, since exterior goods are not connatural to him, but come to him accidentally. This is evident since a man comes into this world without them and leaves this world without them. So when these accidental goods are taken away if the substantial ones remain man ought not to be overcome by sadness although sadness may touch him.

Second, he shows the same thing from divine action saying, "The Lord gave; the Lord has taken away." Here his true opinion about divine providence in relation to human affairs must first be considered. When he says, "The Lord gave," he confessed that earthly prosperity does not come to men accidentally either according to fate or the stars, or as a result of human exertion alone, but by divine direction. When he says, however, "The Lord has taken away," he confesses also that earthly adversities also arise among men by the judgment of divine providence. This leads to the conclusion that man does not have a just complaint with God if he should be despoiled of his temporal goods, because he who gave freely could bestow them either until the end of his life or temporarily. So when he takes temporal goods away from man before the end of life, man cannot complain.

To compound his sorrow more greatly, the damage of the destruction of his children is added, when the text says, "It fell and crushed the young people and they are dead," namely, all of them so that no hope of posterity would remain in the escape of even one of his children. This was believed to be more sorrowful because although all the children were destroyed, one of the servants escaped to increase his pain, for there follows, "and I alone escaped to tell you."

Consider that since all this aforementioned adversity comes from Satan, it is necessary to confess that with God's permission demons can bring about turbulence in the air, can stir up the winds and can make fire fall from heaven. For although corporeal matter obeys only the nod of God the Creator for the reception of forms, and does not obey the nod of either the good or the wicked angels, corporeal nature is still born to obey spiritual nature as far as local movement is concerned. Evidence of this appears in men, for the members of the body are moved at the mere command of the will to pursue the act desired by the will. Whatever then can be done only with local motion, can be done by not only the good but also the wicked angels from their natural power, unless prohibited by divine power. The winds the rains and other like disturbances in the atmosphere come about only from the motion of the vapors released from the earth and the water. Thus the natural power of a demon is sufficient to procure these things. However, sometimes they are prohibited from this by divine power so that they are not permitted to do everything which they can do naturally. Nor is this contrary to what is said in Jeremiah, "Are there any among the false gods of the nations which can give rain?" (14:22) For it is one thing that the rain takes place by natural cause and this is the office of God alone who orders natural causes to this; it is another thing to use artificially those natural causes ordered by God to rain to produce rain or wind sometimes in an almost extraordinary way.

The Fourth Lecture: Job's Submission

20 Then Job arose and rent his robe; he shaved his head and he fell on the ground and worshipped. 21 He said: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there; The Lord gave; the Lord has taken away. As God pleased, so it has been done. Blessed be the name of the Lord! 22 In all these things, Job did not sin with his lips, nor did he say anything foolish against God.

After the adversity of blessed Job has been narrated, the text treats the patience Job showed in adversity. As evidence of what is said here know that there was a difference of opinion among the ancients philosophers as to corporeal goods and the passions of the soul. For the Stoics said that exterior goods were not goods of man and that there could be no sorrow for their loss in the soul of the wise man. But, the opinion of the Peripatetics was that some of the goods of man are truly exterior goods, though these are certainly not the principal ones. Nevertheless, they are like instruments ordered to the principal good of man which is the good of the mind. Because of this, they conceded that the wise man is moderately sad in the losses of exterior goods, namely his reason is not so absorbed by sadness that he leaves righteousness. This opinion is the more true of the two and is in accord with the teaching of the Church as is clear from St. Augustine in his book, *The City of God*.

When both the person and the virtue of this man have been described then his prosperity is shown so that the adversity which follows may be judged to be more grave because of the prosperity which precedes it. At the same time, this also demonstrates that not only spiritual goods but also temporal goods are given to the just from God's first intention. But the fact just are sometimes afflicted with adversities happens for some special reason. Hence from the beginning, man was so established that he would not have been subject to any disturbances if he had remained in innocence. Now after the good firmly held in one's own person, an element of temporal prosperity consists in the persons who are kin to a man and especially in the children born to him, who are in a certain sense a part of their parents. Therefore, Job's prosperity is first described in terms of the fertility of his children when the text says, "There were born to him seven sons and three daughters." The number of the men is fittingly greater than the number of women because parents usually have more affection for sons than for daughters. This is both because what is more perfect is more desirable (men are compared to women as perfect to imperfect) and because those born males are usually of more help in managing business than those born females.

Next, Job's prosperity is shown as to the great number of his riches especially his animals. For near the beginning of the human race, the possession of land was not as valuable as the possession of animals because of the small number of men. This was especially true in the East where even up to the present there are few inhabitants in comparison with the extent of the region. Among the animals those are placed first which are especially useful for providing food and clothing for the human person, namely sheep, and so the text continues, "His property was seven thousand sheep." Next, those animals are placed which are most useful as beasts of burden, camels. So the text adds, "and three thousand camels." Third, those which serve for the cultivation of the fields are placed, and the text expresses this saying, "five hundred yoke of oxen." Fourth, those animals which men use for transportation are placed, and so the text says, "and five hundred she-asses," from which mules are bred, which the ancients used especially as mounts. All other species which serve the same purposes are classed under these four types of animals; for example, all those animals necessary for food and clothing classed under sheep and so on for the rest. Since men who have great wealth need a large number of servants to administer it, the text fittingly adds, "and a great number of servants." Consequently his prosperity is established in terms of his honor and reputation which was known far and wide and this is what the text means saying, "So this man was accounted great among all the peoples of the East," that is, he was honored and respected.

To praise Job even more the discipline of his house is described next, which was free from those vices which wealth usually produces. For very often great wealth in fact produces discord and so Genesis says that Abraham and Lot could not live together to avoid the quarrelling which arises from an abundance of possessions (cf. Gen.13). Also, men who have a lot of possessions, while they love what they possess in an inordinate way, frequently use them more sparingly. As Ecclesiastes says, "There is another evil which I see under the sun, and which happens frequently among men: a man to whom God gave wealth, possessions and honor so that his soul lacks nothing he desires. Yet God does not give him power to consume it." (6:1-2) The house of blessed Job was free from these evils, for concord, laughter and just frugality were there, which the text expresses saying, "His sons used to go and hold banquets in each other's houses, each one on his appointed day." This charity and concord existed not only among the brothers, but extended even to the sisters who often are despised by their brothers because of the pride which wealth generally produces, so the text adds, "And they would send and invite their sisters to eat and drink with them." At the same time, the text also shows in this the confidence which Job had about the chastity of his daughters, for otherwise they would not have been allowed to go about in public, but would have been kept at home as Sirach wisely says, "Do not forget to keep a firm watch on your daughter lest she herself when she found the opportunity." (26:13)

Just as frugality and concord flourished in Job's house, so a holy solicitude for the purity which riches frequently destroy or diminish flourished in Job himself. As Deuteronomy says, "But he waxed fat, and kicked," and further on, "and he forsook the God who made him, etc." (32:18) He was so solicitous for his purity that he removed himself completely from those things which could defile it. This is shown in the text already quoted that, "He feared God and turned away from evil." (1:1) But he was also solicitous for the purity of his sons, even though he permitted them to have banquets as an indulgence to their age. For some things can be tolerated in young people which would be reprehensible in mature people. Because at banquets men with difficulty either can never avoid unseemly humor and inordinate speech, or they offend in their immoderate use of food, he showed a remedy of purification to his sons whom he did not keep away from these banquets and so the text says, "And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send for them and purified them." Days of banqueting is said to run their course because since there were seven sons and each one held a banquet on his own appointed day, the feasts would use up each of the seven days of the week in turn. Afterwards like in a circle or in cycles the day returned to the beginning in the banquets just as in the days of the week. One should note, however, that although Job indulged his sons in allowing them to have feasts, yet he did not participate himself in their banquets because he preserved his maturity. So the text says, "He would send for them," but not that he would go himself. The manner of this purification by which he sanctified them through an intermediary can be understood in two ways: he either had them instructed with beneficial warning so that if they had done anything wrong at the banquets, they would correct it, or else that they should perform some rite of expiation in which they could satisfy for these kinds of faults as there were sacrifices and the oblation of first fruits and tithes even before the Law was given.

Consider also that the soul of man is more disturbed by those things which come on the scene suddenly for adversities which are foreseen are more easily tolerated. Therefore to make Job more disturbed, Satan brought adversity on him at a time of the greatest rejoicing, when he could at least think about adversity, so that the adversity might seem more severe from the very presence of the rejoicing. For "when things which are contraries are placed beside each other, they become clearer in their contrast." Therefore, the text says, "on a certain day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine," which is especially put here to indicate rejoicing because according to Sirach, "Wine was created from the beginning for rejoicing, not for drunkenness." (31:35) "They were in their eldest brother's house," which is placed to show greater solemnity. For it is probable that a more solemn banquet would be celebrated in the home of the first born. "A messenger came to Job and said: The oxen were plowing," which would remind him of profit, and so the damage would seem more unbearable. "And the asses feeding beside them," which is also put in to increase pain when he considered that the enemy fell upon them at a time in which they could steal more things at once. "And the Sabeans fell upon them," namely an enemy who came from far away from whom the things which they stole could not easily be retrieved. "And took everything", lest if they left something it would at least be sufficient for necessary use or breeding. "They slew the servants with the sword," which was more grave for the just man. "I alone escaped to tell you," as if to say: the fact that I alone escaped happened by divine disposition so that you could have an account of such a great loss as though God meant to afflict you with pain.

Immediately after the announcement of this adversity, another one is announced, lest it some interval happened meanwhile, Job would recover his composure and prepare himself in patience to sustain what followed more easily. Because of this, the text adds, "While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said: The fire of God," that is, send by God, "fell from heaven," as if to impress on his mind that he was suffering persecution not only from men, but also from God, and thus he might more easily be provoked against God. "And burned up the sheep and the servants, consuming them," as if to say: this was divinely caused so that everything was immediately consumed at the touch of the fire. This is beyond the natural power of fire. "And I alone escaped to tell you." The text continues, "While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said: The Chaldeans" (who were fierce and powerful) "formed three companies" to emphasize how strong they were, so that he cannot hope for revenge or recovery of his lost goods. The next text shows what he lost saying, "and made a raid upon the camels and took them and slew the servants with the sword. I alone escaped to tell you." The destruction of his children follows. "While he was still speaking, another messenger entered and said: Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their brother's house," so that because of this, their death would be more sad for Job, since he would be uncertain whether they were in a state of sin preceding their death. For he used to sanctify them and offer holocausts for each one for this reason because he was afraid that they had incurred some sin during their banquets. Lest he could perhaps think that they had repented or provided for their souls, the text adds, "a violent wind suddenly rushed in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house." This is said to show the force of the wind which unusually destroyed the whole house at once, which shows the wind proceeded by divine will and so Job would be moved more easily against God when he was afflicted by one whom he had served with a devout mind.

The Third Lesson: The Trial

12 So Satan went forth from the face of the Lord. 13 Now on a certain day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine, they were in their eldest brother's house; 14 a messenger came to Job and said: The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them, 15 and the Sabeans fell upon them and took everything. They slew the servants with the sword and I alone have escaped to tell you. 16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said: The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants consuming them. I alone escaped to tell you. 17 While he was still speaking, there another messenger came and said: The Chaldeans formed three companies and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the sword; and I alone escaped to tell you. 18 While he was still speaking, another messenger entered and said: Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, 19 and a violent wind suddenly rushed in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It fell on your children and they are dead and I alone escaped to tell you.

After the cause of the blessed Job's adversity has been considered, the text shows as a consequence how such adversity came upon him. Because all the adversity was produced by Satan, the text therefore speaks about him first saying, "So Satan went forth from the face of the Lord," as if to use the power permitted to him. It is expressly stated, "He went forth from the face of the Lord," for Satan is in the presence of the face of the Lord in that the power of harming someone is permitted him because this happens according to the reasonable will of God but when he uses this power permitted to him, he goes forth from the face of the Lord, because he turns away from the intention of the one giving him permission. This is apparent in the case in question: for he was permitted by God to harm Job to make Job's virtue clearly known. However, Satan did not inflict him for this reason, but to provoke him to impatience and blasphemy.

At the same time, what we said above appears clearly true in this text. Satan came to present himself among the sons of God assisting in his presence in the sense that some are said to assist in the presence of God who are subject to divine judgment and examination, not in the sense that they assist in the presence of God who see God. So here the text does not say Satan cast God away from his face, but that, "he went forth from the presence of God," as though he turned away from the intention of his providence, although he was not strong enough to escape the order of providence.

Reflect that the order in which the adversities are about to be explained is just the opposite of the order in which the prosperity was explained. For the prosperity which was explained proceeded from the more important to the less important beginning from the person of Job himself. After him came his offspring and then his animals, first the sheep and then the rest. This was done reasonably because the duration which cannot be preserved in the person is sought in the offspring for whose sustenance one needs possessions. In the adversity however, the opposite order is proposed. First, the loss of possessions is related, then the destruction of the children and third the affliction of his own person. This is to increase the adversity. For one who has been oppressed by a greater adversity does not feel a lesser one. But after a lesser adversity, one feels a greater one. Therefore, so Job would feel his own individual affliction from each adversity and so be disturbed to become more impatience, Satan began to afflict Job with a small adversity and gradually proceeded to greater ones.

Now, at banquets, men not only incur impurity sometimes in the ways already mentioned, but also immerse themselves in more serious sins even to holding God in contempt; when, because of moral depravity their reason is dulled and they are separated from reverence for God, as Exodus says, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play," (32:6) that is, to fornicate and to sacrifice to idols. So Job not only assisted his sons by sanctifying them against their light faults, but he was also eager to add a remedy by which they might be pleasing to God even against their graver sins. "And rising at dawn he offered holocausts for each one." In these words, the text shows the perfection of his devotion both as to time, because he rose at dawn as Psalm 5 says, "In the morning, I will stand before you, etc." (v.5) and so on; and as to the manner of offering because he offered holocausts which were completely burned to the honor of God. No part of this offering remained for the use of the offerer or of the one for whom it was offered as was the case in peace offerings or sin offerings, for the burnt offering is like "something completely consumed." As to the number of the burnt offerings, because he offered holocausts for each one of his sons, for each sin must be expiated by suitable satisfactions.

Now, the text adds the reason for the offering of the holocausts saying, "For he (Job) said," in his heart not certain but doubtful about the sins of his sons, "It may be that my sons have sinned", in word or deed, "and blessed (*benedixerint*) God in their hearts." This can be understood in two ways. In the first way, the text may be understood as a unified whole. For although to bless God is good, yet to bless God about the fact that a man has sinned means that one's will agrees with the sin. He is blameworthy for this, as we read in Zechariah against some men, "Feed the flocks doomed to slaughter, which they killed who took possession, they did not grieve and sold them saying: Blessed be the Lord, we have become rich." (11:4-5) In another way, it may be understood divided. In this way "they blessed" (*benedixerint*) means "they cursed" (*maledixerint*). For the crime of blasphemy is so horrible that pious lips dread to call it by its own proper name, and so they call it by its opposite. Holocausts are fittingly offered for the sin of blasphemy, because sins committed against God must be expiated by a mark of divine respect.

Now when divine worship is rare, men usually celebrate it more devoutly; but when it is frequent, it annoys them. This is the sin of *acedia*, namely when someone is saddened about spiritual work. Job was not indeed subject to this sin, for the text adds, "Job did this every day," maintaining an almost steadfast devotion in divine worship.

The Second Lesson: Satan's Request

6 Now on a certain day the sons of God came to assist in the presence of the Lord and Satan also was with them. 7 The Lord said to Satan: Where do you come from? Satan answered the Lord: I have prowled about the earth and I have run through it. 8 And the Lord said to him: Have you considered my servant Job, there is none like him on earth? He is a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil? 9 Then Satan answered the Lord: Does Job fear God in vain? 10 Have you not fortified him with a wall and his house and all that he has in a circle? You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased on earth. 11 But put forth your hand just a little and touch all that he has, if he does not bless you to your face. 12 And the Lord said to Satan: Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not extend your hand to him.

After Blessed Job's prosperity has been enumerated, his adversity is placed. First, their cause is introduced. Lest anyone think that the adversities of just men happen apart from divine providence and that because of this might think human affairs are not subject to divine providence, he first explains how God has care of human affairs and governs them. This is set forth in symbol and allegory according to the usual practice of Holy Scripture, which describes spiritual things using the images of corporeal things, as is clear in Isaiah, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a high and lofty throne," (6:1), in the beginning of Ezechiel and in many other places. Now, even though spiritual things are conceived using the images of corporeal things, nevertheless what the author intends to reveal about spiritual things through sensible images do not pertain to the mystical sense, but to the literal sense because the literal sense is what is first intended by the words whether properly speaking or figuratively.

But one should know that divine providence governs things with such an order that lower things are ordered through higher things. For bodies which are generated and corrupted are subject to the motion of the heavenly bodies and in the same way lower reasoning spirits united to mortal bodies, namely, souls are directed through higher incorporeal spirits. The tradition of the church teaches that among incorporeal spirits some are good ones, who guarding the purity in which they were created, enjoy divine glory and never turn from the will of God. These spirits are sometimes called angels, i.e. messengers in the Scriptures because they announce divine things to men. Sometimes they are called sons of God in as much as they are made like to God by participation in his glory. But there are also some spirits which are evil but not by nature or creation, because God is the author of the nature of each and the supreme good cannot be the cause of anything but good things, but these spirits are evil through their own fault. Spirits of this kind are called demons in the Scriptures, and their leader is called the devil, as though he fell from on high (*deorsum cadens*). He is also called Satan, which means adversary. Therefore both kinds of spirits move men to do things; the good to good deeds, the evil to wicked deeds. Just as men are moved by God through these spirits mentioned above, so too those things which are done by men are said in the Scriptures to be referred to divine consideration by the mediation of the same spirits. Thus to show that both the good and evil things which men do are subject to divine judgment, the text continues, "Now on a certain day when the sons of God came to assist in the presence of the Lord, Satan also was among them."

Satan wants to show that Job had served God because of the earthly prosperity he had attained using an argument based on opposition. For if after earthly prosperity comes to an end Job ceased fearing God, it would become clear that he feared God because of the earthly prosperity he was enjoying. So he adds, "Put forth your hand just a little and touch all that he has," by taking it away, "If he does not bless (*benedixerit*) you to your face," i.e. curse you openly (literally, "may misfortune come upon me.") Note that even the hearts of truly just men are sometimes badly shaken by great adversity, but the deceitfully just are disturbed by a slight adversity like men having no root in their virtue. So Satan wants to insinuate that Job was not truly just but only pretending to be. Thus he says that if he should be touched by even a very small adversity, he would murmur against God, that is blaspheme him. He distinctly says, "If he does not you to your face," to indicate that even in prosperity he was blaspheming God in a certain sense in his heart when he preferred temporal things to love of him. But when his prosperity is taken away, he would blaspheme God even to his face, i.e. openly. The expression, "If he does not bless (*benedixerit*) you to your face," can be understood in another way, so that may be taken as a blessing properly speaking and the sense would be this: If you should touch him even a little by taking away his earthly prosperity, may these things befall me if it does not become clear that before he blessed you not in his true heart, but to your face, that is keeping up appearances before men.

Because, as I have said, God wills the virtue of the saints to be known to all, both the just and the wicked, it pleased him that as all saw Job's good deeds of Job that his right intention should also be clearly shown to all. So he willed to deprive Job of his earthly prosperity, so that when he persevered in the fear of God, it would become clear that he feared God from a right intention and not on account of temporal things. Note that God punishes wicked men through both the good and the wicked angels, but he never sends adversity on good men except through wicked angels. So he did not will that adversity be brought on blessed Job except through Satan, and because of this the text continues, "And the Lord said to Satan: Behold, all that he has is in your power," that is, I surrender it to your power, "only do not extend your hand to him." From this text we are clearly given to understand that Satan cannot harm just men as much as he wants, but only as much as he is permitted to do so. Consider also that the Lord did not command Satan to strike Job, but only gave him the power to do so, because, "The will to do harm is in each wicked person from himself, but the power of harming comes from God."

From what has been said already it is clear that the cause of the adversity of blessed Job was that his virtue should be made clear to all. So Scripture says of Tobias, "Thus the Lord permitted him to be tempted so that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, like blessed Job." (Tob. 2:12) Be careful not to believe that the Lord had been persuaded by the words of Satan to permit Job to be afflicted, but he ordered this from his eternal disposition to make clear Job's virtue against the false accusations of the impious. Therefore, false accusations are placed first and the divine permission follows.

Consider that God not only orders the lives of the just for their own good, but he represents it for others to see. Still those who see this example are not all influenced by it in the same way. For the good who consider the life of the just as an example profit from the experience; whereas the wicked, if they are not corrected so that they become good by his example, revolt against the life of the just which they have observed, either when they are either tortured by envy or they try to ruin that life with false judgments, as the Apostle Paul shows in 2 Cor., "For we are the good odor of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one the stench of death to death; to the other the smell of life to life." (2:15) Thus God wants the life of the saints to be considered not only by the elect for the progress of their salvation, but also by the iniquitous for the increase of their damnation, for from the life of the saints the perversity of the impious is shown to be blameworthy as Wisdom says, "The just man who has died condemns the impious who are alive." (4:16) Therefore the Lord says to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, etc.", as if to say: You prowl about and run through the earth, but you can consider my servant Job and wonder at his virtue.

Perverse men, whose prince is Satan who here acts in their place, usually accuse holy men unjustly of not acting for a right intention because they cannot find fault with the life of the saints. Scripture expresses this saying, "Turning good to evil, he lies in ambush and he will put the blame on the elect." (Sir. 11:33) This appears in what follows in the text, "Then Satan answered the Lord: Does Job fear God in vain?" as if to say: I cannot deny that he does good things, but he does not do them for a right intention because of love of you and the good for its own sake. Rather he does them because of the temporal goods which he has attained from you. So he says, "Does Job fear God in vain?" for we are said to do something in vain when we cannot hope to attain what we intend. Job serves you because of the temporal goods he has gained from you, so it is not in vain that he fears you in serving you.

Satan shows that Job has attained temporal prosperity in two ways. First, as to his immunity from evils, because he has been preserved by God from all adversity and this is what he says, "Have you not fortified with a wall?" that is, have you not protected him like a hedge or wall protects, and "him" as to his person, "his house" as to his family and children; "all that he has," as to all his possessions. Satan adds, "in a circle" to show a perfect immunity because what is entirely surrounded by a wall in a circle cannot suffer an attack from any direction. Second, he shows his prosperity regarding the multiplication of goods and this is what he says, "You have blessed the work of his hands." Because God makes all things by his speaking, the blessing of God gives goodness to things. Thus God blesses someone's works when he brings them to good to attain a fitting end. Because some goods come to a man without his effort and intention, he adds, "and his possessions have increased on the earth." So Satan unjustly deprecates the deeds of blessed Job as though he did them from the intention of earthly goodness. So it is clear that the good things which we do are not referred to earthly prosperity as a reward; otherwise, it would not be a perverse intention if someone were to serve God because of temporal prosperity. The contrary is likewise true. Temporal adversity is not the proper punishment of sins, and this question will be the theme dealt with in the entire book.

One should know that the angels who are called here "sons of God" are said to assist in the presence of the Lord in two ways: In the first way in as much as God is seen by them as Daniel says, "A thousand thousands ministered before him and ten thousand thousands assisted in his presence" (7:10); in another way in as much as the angels themselves and their acts are seen by God. For those who "assist in the presence of a Lord" both see him and are seen by him. Therefore in the first way it only befits those angels to assist in God's presence who are the blessed ones enjoying the divine vision. Nor is this fitting for all of these but only for those who exist among the higher angels, who enjoy the divine vision more intimately and do not go forth according to the opinion of Dionysius (Bishop of Athens), to perform exterior ministries. For this reason, the angels assisting in the presence of God are distinguished from the ministering angels in the text of Daniel already cited. In the second way, however, it is fitting not only for the good angels, but also the wicked ones and even men to assist in the presence of God, because whatever is done by them is subject to the divine gaze and examination. Because of this the text says next, "when the sons of God came to assist in the presence of the Lord, and Satan also was among them." Although those things which are in the care of the good and the bad angels are continually subject to the divine sight and examination, and so the sons of God always come to assist in the presence of God and Satan is among them, nevertheless the text says, "on a certain day" according to the usage of Scripture which sometimes designates things above time through things which are in time. For example, at the beginning of the book of Genesis, God is said to have spoken some things on the first or the second day even though his act of speaking is eternal, because what is said by him happened in time. So now, since the deed about which the author now treats took place in a determined time, those who do this deed are said assist in the presence of God on a certain day even though they never cease assisting in the presence of God.

One should also consider that those things which are done through good angels are referred to the judgment of God in a different way than those things which are done by the wicked angels. For the good angels intend that the things which they do be referred to God. So the text says that the sons of God "came to assist in the presence of the Lord," as if by their own movement and intention they subjected everything to the divine judgment. But, the wicked angels, however, do not intend that the things which they do are referred to God, but the fact that whatever they do is subject to divine judgment happens against their will. Therefore, the text does not say that Satan came to assist in the presence of the Lord, but only that, "Satan was among them." He is said to be "among them" both because of the equality of their nature and also to convey indirectly that evil things are not done from a principal intention [of God's] but comes upon good men almost by accident.

There is a difference then between the things which are done through the good angels and the wicked angels. For the good angels do nothing unless they are moved to do it by the divine command and will, for in all things they follow the divine will. But, the wicked angels dissent from God in their will and so the things which they do are hostile to God as far as their intention is concerned. Because we do not usually ask about the things which we do, but only those things which happen without us, the text therefore does not say that the Lord asked anything of the sons of God but only that he questioned Satan. So the text continues, "The Lord said to Satan: Where do you come from?" Note here that the Lord does not say to him, "What are you doing?" or "Where are you?", but "Where do you come from?" This is because those deeds themselves which are administered by the demons sometimes arise from divine will when he punishes the wicked and tries the good through them. But the intention of the demons is always evil and hostile to God and so Satan is asked, "Where do you come from?" because his intention from which the totality of his act proceeds is hostile to God's.

One should know that to speak can be taken in two ways for sometimes it refers to the interior concept of the heart; sometimes to the term by which this kind of concept is expressed to another. In the first way, God's act of speaking is eternal and it is nothing other than to generate the Son who is his own Word. In the second way, God speaks some things in time, yet in diverse ways according to what corresponds to those with whom he speaks. For God spoke at times with men who have corporeal senses with a corporeal sound formed in some created subject, like the voice which said at the baptism and transfiguration of Christ, "This is my beloved Son." (Matt. 3:17; 17:5) Sometimes he has spoken through an imaginary vision as one reads so often in the Prophets. Sometimes through intellectual expression, and God should be understood to have spoken in this way with Satan insofar as he made him understand that the things which he did are seen by God.

Therefore, just as in God's act of speaking to Satan he informs Satan of something, so Satan answering God certainly does not inform God of anything but makes Satan understand that everything which is his is open to divine scrutiny. According to this way of speaking, the text says, "Satan answered the Lord: I have prowled about the earth and I have run through it." By the fact that the Lord says to Satan, "Where have you come from?", God examines the devil's intention and actions. By the fact that Satan answers, "I have prowled about the earth and I have run through it," as though giving an account of his actions to God, both statements serve the purpose of showing that everything which Satan does is subject to divine providence. In prowling over the earth, Satan shows his craftiness in seeking out those he can deceive. With this in mind, 1 Peter says, "Your adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." (5:8) This prowling about fittingly shows his craftiness as the straight way shows simple justice. For the straight (right) line is "that whose mean does not exceed the extremes." Because therefore the action of the just does not diverge from its principle which is the will and from its intended end, straightness (rightness) is fittingly ascribed to the just. The work of the crafty, however, is to pretend one thing and to intend another. Thus what they show in their deed has its source in extremes when it agrees neither with the will nor the end. So the crafty are rightly said to prowl about and because of this Psalm 11 says, "The impious are prowling about." (v.9) One should know however that although the devil uses the study of his craftiness against everyone, good and wicked alike, the effect of his cunning takes place only in the wicked who are rightly called "the earth".

For since man is composed of spiritual nature and earthly flesh, man's evil consists in the fact that after he has abandoned the spiritual goods to which he is ordered according to a mind endowed with reason, he clings to earthly goods which befit him according to his earthly flesh. Therefore wicked men are correctly called "earth" inasmuch as they follow earthly nature. Satan then not only prowls about but also runs through "earth" of this kind because he completes in them the effect of his malice. For the completion of his progress is designated in his running through them, just as God on the contrary is said to run through just men. So St. Paul says in 2 Cor., "I will live in them and walk along with them." (6:16)

There can also be another interpretation of this passage. There are three states of the living. Some are above the earth, that is, in heaven, like the angels and all the blessed. Still others are on the earth like all the men living in mortal flesh. Some are under the earth like the demons and all the damned. Satan neither prowls about nor runs through the first group because there can be no malice in the citizens of heaven, as there can be no evil of nature in the heavenly bodies. He prowls about with those who are in hell, but does not run through them because he has them totally subject to his malice, so it is not necessary that he use craftiness to deceive them. However he prowls about and runs through those who are on earth because he strives to deceive them by his craftiness and to draw some of them to his malice, who are especially designated by the term "earth", as I have already explained.

The fact that worldly men are designated by "earth" is shown clearly enough by the fact that the Lord seems to separate Job from the earth, although he is living on earth. For when Satan had said, "I have prowled about the earth and I have run through it," the text adds, "And the Lord said to him: Have you considered my servant Job, there is none like him on the earth?" For it would seem groundless to ask whether he who asserted he had prowled about and run through the earth had considered Job, unless he understood Job his servant to be outside the earth. God clearly shows in what respect Job is separated from the earth saying, "my servant Job." Man has been created as it were like a mean between God and earthly things, for with the mind he clings to God but with the flesh he is joined to earthly things. Besides, as every mean recedes more from one extreme the closer it approaches to the other one. So, the more man clings to God, the more removed he is from earth. To be a servant of God means to cling to God with the mind, for it is characteristic of a servant to not be his own cause. The one who clings to God in his mind, orders himself to God as a servant of love and not of fear.

Note that earthly affections in some remote sense imitate spiritual affections by which the mind is joined to God, but they can in no way complete their similarity. This is because earthly love and consequently all affection falls short of the love of God, because love is the principle of every affection. So after God fittingly said, "Have you considered my servant Job," he continues, "there is none like him on earth," because nothing among earthly things can equal spiritual things. However, this passage can be understood also in another way, for in each saint, there is some preeminent virtue for some special use. This is why we sing in Church for each one of the Confessors that, "There is found none like him who kept the law of the Most High," except for Christ because everything existed in him in the most perfect and excellent way. In this way the text can be understood to mean that no one of those living on earth was like Job in that he excelled in some special use of virtue. In the next verse, the text shows in what Job was a servant of God and that there was no one like him on earth when it adds, "He is a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?", which will not be dealt with here because it has been already commented on.