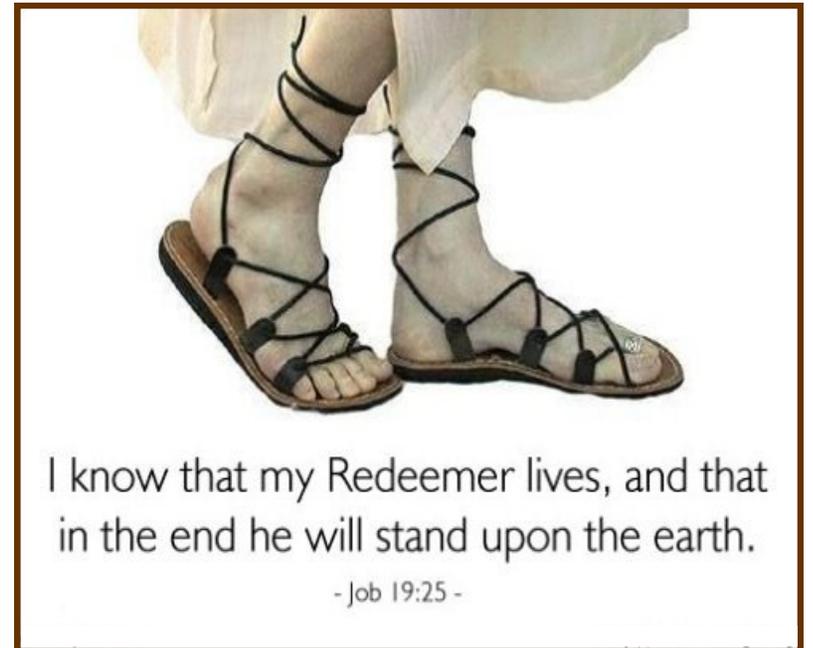


Job

Chapter Thirty Nine:



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

- Job 19:25 -

God Continues His Discourse

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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 THIRTY NINE: GOD CONTINUES HIS DISCOURSE

The Lesson: The Marvels of the Animal Kingdom

1 Do you know the time of the birth of the goats in the rocks, or have you seen the deer giving birth? 2 Have you numbered the months of their conception, and did you know the time of their giving? 3 They crouch to bring forth young and give birth and they bring it forth roaring. 4 Their young separate and they go to pasture, they go forth and do not return to them. 5 Who has let the wild asses go free, and who broke their chains? 6 I have given them a home in uninhabited places and tents in the land of the salt waste. 7 He scorns the multitude of the city, he hears not the shouts of the driver. 8 He ranges the mountains for his pasture and he searches eagerly for green grass. 9 Will the rhinoceros be willing to serve you or will he spend the night in your manger? 10 Will you bind the rhinoceros with your strap to plow or will he break up clods of the earth of the valleys after you? 11 Will you put your confidence in his great strength and will you leave your labors to him? 12 Will you have faith in him to render seed to you and to bring it together on your threshing floor? 13 The wing of the ostrich is like the wing of the falcon and the hawk. 14 She leaves her eggs in the earth and will you perhaps heat them in the dust? 15 She forgets that a foot may crush them or the a beast of the field trample them. 16 She deals cruelly with her young as if they are not of hers. She labored in vain, not compelled by fear. 17 For God has deprived her of wisdom, nor did he give her intelligence. 18 When the time comes, she lifts her wings up high; she laughs at the mounted horse and his rider. 19 Will you give the horse his might, and will you clothe his neck in neighing. 20 Will you make him leap like locusts? The glory of his smell is terror: 21 He paws the ground with his hoof, he exults, he proceeds audaciously to the clash of arms. 22 He scorns fear and he does not retreat from the sword. 23 Above him the quiver will sound, the pike will vibrate and the shield; 24 raging and snorting, he sucks in the earth and he does not regard the blast at the sound of the trumpet. 25 When he hears the trumpet, he exclaims: Hoorah! He smells the battle from afar, the exhortations of the commanders and the shouting of the army. 26 Is it by your wisdom that the hawk puts on feathers and expands its wings towards the South Wind? 27 Will the eagle fly high at your command and place his nest in places difficult to reach? 28 He dwells in rocks and he dwells in steep crags and in inaccessible cliffs. 29 From there, he spies food and his eyes behold it from afar off. 30 His young suck up blood and whenever there is a carcass he is immediately there. 31 The Lord fastened his eyes and spoke to Job: 32 Is he who asserts himself with confidence against God so easily stopped? Certainly he who accuses God ought also to answer him. 33 Job answered and said to the Lord: What can I who have spoken thoughtlessly answer? I will place my hand over my mouth; I have said one thing and I would that I had not; another thing, to which I will not add anything further.

“Will you put your confidence in his great strength and will you leave your labors to him?”

All these things have been brought in to show the greatness of divine wisdom and power which produces such marvelous effects. We understand that after Job had heard so many wonderful things about the divine effects he was stunned and silent. But the Lord stirs him to consider that man is not fit to dispute with God, and so the text says, "The Lord fastened his eyes," adding more to these words, "and spoke to Job," who was silent. "Is he who asserts himself with confidence against God," who offers to argue with him, "so easily stopped?", namely, as if he has been vanquished like you who are silent? "Certainly he who accuses God," in disputing with him about his just judgments, "ought also to answer him." For it is just that one who provokes another to dispute should also be prepared to answer.

Lest Job seem obstinate in his opinion even though he was proved wrong, he breaks forth in words of humility, and so the text continues, "Job answered and said to the Lord: What can I who have spoken thoughtlessly answer?" Consider here that Job, speaking in the presence of God and his own conscience is not accusing himself of speaking falsely or of a proud intention, for he had spoken from the purity of his soul, but of thoughtlessness in speech. This is because even if he had not spoken from pride of soul, his words still seemed to smack of arrogance, and so from this his friends took occasion of scandal. For one must not only avoid evil things, but also those things which have the outward appearance of evil, as St. Paul says, "Abstain from every appearance of evil," (1 Thess. 5:22) and so he says, "I will place my hand over my mouth," so that I will not break forth in words like these about other things. I do penance for these things which I have said, and so he says, "I have said one thing, and would that I had not," namely, when I said that I wanted to dispute with God, (13:3) "and another thing," that I preferred my own justice when it was a question of divine judgments. (6:2) He does not acknowledge the third thing which Eliud had reproved him with, i.e. that he said that the judgment of God was unjust. (33:10) For this does not pertain to thoughtlessness in speaking but to blasphemy. So he does penance for thoughtlessness in speech because he proposes to correct this defect, and so he says, "to which I will not add anything further," so that I utter anything else thoughtlessly.

We should consider that if this discourse of the Lord to Job is not spoken in an exterior voice, but is by interior inspiration, Job is found to have spoken in three ways in this book. First, he represented the affective desire of the senses in his first loud complaint, when he says, "Let the day when I was born perish." (3:3) Second, he expressed the deliberation of human reason when he disputed against his friends. Finally, he spoke according to divine inspiration when he introduced words from the person of God. Because human reason must be directed according to divine inspiration, when the Lord has spoken, Job reproves the words which he had said according to human reason.

END OF JOB CHAPTER 39

The Lord called to mind in what preceded what relates to the cognitive power, speaking about the wisdom of men and the intelligence of the cock. (38:36) He also called to mind the prey of lions and the food of crows, which relate to the nutritive power. (38:39,41) Now he calls to mind certain things relating to the generative power, and he begins to treat the birth of goats and deer in which there is something hidden. For goats are animals small in body who live in rocky places where they also give birth. The access to places like this for men is difficult, and because of this he says, "Do you know the time of the birth of the goats in the rocks?" as if he should say: This is unknown to men because of the severity of the places where they give birth. The deer choose hidden places in which they give birth, where wolves do not usually approach them. Thus to show the hidden character of their giving birth he says, "or have you seen the deer giving birth?" He says this to commend divine providence. For when women give birth they need the assistance of midwives, but in the animals, whose giving birth is hidden from men, God comes to their aid by his providence with what is necessary for them to give birth, in as much as he gives them a natural aptitude to know what they should know in such things. The first of these is to know the space of time in which the fetus is brought to term in the womb, and expressing this he says, "Have you numbered the months of their conception?", i.e., can you indicate to them when they must prepare themselves for giving birth? So he says, "and did you know the time of their giving birth," to tell them when they should give birth? In these things women in labor are usually instructed by others, but the animals, which are far from human society, know these things through natural aptitude implanted in them by God, and prepare themselves at a determined time to give birth in the way in which they can most easily bring forth young, and so he says, "They crouch to bring forth their young," which they bring forth, "and give birth," by themselves instructed by nature. Still giving birth is not delightful, but painful for them, and so he says, "and they bring it forth roaring," because of the pain which they suffer in giving birth. Just as the mothers by natural aptitude prepare themselves for giving birth, so also their young by natural aptitude are divinely taught to search for the necessities of life for themselves, and so he says, "Their young separate," which is not the case with a human child, for a boy who has only been born cannot move himself to leave his mother, but this happens with those animals. As soon as they are born they immediately move themselves, and their first motion is to look for something to eat, and so he says, "and they go to pasture." But still in the beginning they need to be fed by the mother's milk, and so they separate from the mother, but still return to her. However, after a little while, when they are stronger, they are completely separated from their mothers, and so he says, "they go forth and do not return to them," because they do not need to be nursed by them anymore.

When he has said these things which pertain to certain special properties of animals: knowledge, food and giving birth, he treats those things which pertain to conserving their lives as a whole. On this subject the first wonderful thing is that certain animals, when they are domesticated, cannot sustain themselves without the care of man. Yet there are some pertaining to the same species which are wild and govern themselves without the providence of men. This is especially remarkable in the ass who when he is domesticated seems totally given to human service. But asses which are called wild asses are free from this service, and so he says, "Who has let the wild asses (undomesticated) go free," from human service? When men customarily understand something, it seems to be almost natural to them, and so because men do not customarily see asses except the domesticated kind, they seem to them to be naturally servants. So when a man at times finds a wild ass, it seems to have been freed from service. Things, however, are totally the opposite, for first, animals of this sort were not subject to man in the way they are now. Later they were tamed by human skill and given to the service of man. The mark of the slavery of the asses is the chains with which they are bound, for example, as a bridle, or other things of this sort. As to this he says, "and who broke their chains?", for wild asses do not have chains of this kind. Domesticated asses also seem to perish if they remain without shelters built by men, but the wild asses have a shelter prepared for them by divine providence, and so he says, "I have given them in uninhabited places," to which man does not go, "a home," a cave or cavern, "and tents," for example, under grass and trees, "in the land of salt waste," in some land not inhabited because of dryness and the burning of the sun. Here the dampness is turned as it were into the taste of salt. Although a dwelling of this sort seems more neglected and bleak because it is in a waste, still the wild ass prefers it as much as possible to any noble city, and so he says, "He scorns the multitude of the city," in comparison to the dwelling of the desert. He gives two reasons for this. The first of these is because laborious work is not required of him there, and so he says, "he hears not the shouts of the driver," i.e. his master demanding that he carry heavy loads or something of this sort. The other reason is because there he wanders more freely in search of pasture, and so he says, "He ranges the mountains for his pasture," since free access to different places to find his pasture lies open to him, and he receives the pastures themselves at his own pleasure, and so he says, "and he searches eagerly for green grass." Domestic asses are not given the best pasturage, but often the worst, because the better pastures are reserved for more noble animals.

After he has explained about animals which walk on the earth, he goes on to animals which fly in the air. First, he remarks on the natural aptitude of the hawk, who in molting season stretches out his wings to the South Wind, which is a hot wind, so that with the pores opened he may shed the old feathers and new ones may take their place, and so he says, "Is it by your wisdom that the hawk grows feathers," that is, when its feathers are renewed, "and expands his wings toward the South Wind," to molt more easily? He last speaks about the eagle, "who flies higher than the rest of the birds," and so he says, "Will the eagle fly high at your command," like he does at mine? For the eagle does this by natural instinct. The whole natural course of things is a kind of motion of the creature according to the command of God, as Psalm 148 says, "Fire, hail, snow and mist, stormy winds that obey his word." (v.8) Just as the eagle moves high in the sky, so also does he enjoy living in the heights, for this expresses his nobility of nature. So he says, "and place his nest in places difficult to reach," so that his young, as soon as they are born, become accustomed to dwelling in high places. So he says, "he dwells in the rocks," as though enjoying the purity of the air, because in rocky places there is not a lot of evaporation, "and he dwells in steep crags," those to which access is not open to predators, "and in cliffs which are inaccessible," to man, where his security is provided for. The eagle has very acute vision so that he can see necessary food from a long way off, and so he says, "from there," i.e., from the high places, "he spies food," not only near, but also far away, and so he says, "and his eyes behold it far off." The eagle is a powerful in game like the lion among quadrupeds. To show this he says, "His young suck up blood," that is, of the living animals which the eagle carries back to the nest. The eagle eats not only live animals, like falcons and hawks, but also the carcasses of dead animals, and so he says, "and wherever there is a carcass he immediately goes there." In this text he also shows the swiftness of his flight.

Another property of the horse is his courage in battles, which he describes at greater length because it is noble and wondrous. He first demonstrates his courage when he already perceives the odor of war from afar, and the text continues, "The glory of his smell is terror," i.e., when the nostrils of the horse smell the battle, what is a terror for others is perceived by him as a glory to show his greatness of spirit. The sign of this appears immediately in him, which the text describes next, "he paws the ground with his hoof," to prepare himself to fight. He rejoices interiorly to perceive the coming battle, and so he says, "he exults," because he senses the opportunity to fight, and he shows this exultation by effect when he says, "he proceeds audaciously to the clash of arms." Nor is he cast down with fear in the thick of the battle itself, and so he says, "he scorns fear," and what is more, he is not even put off by the pain of wounds, and so he says, "he does not retreat from the sword." Loud noise alone is usually enough to terrify most animals, but this does not apply to the horse, and so he says, "Above him the quiver will sound," that is, full of arrows when it is shaken at the motion of the soldier sitting on the horse. The pike and the shield likewise produce some sound of war, and so he says, "the pike will vibrate," for a pike makes a noise when it is brandished. A shield also makes a noise when it is moved and struck with arms and so he says, "and the shield," sounds. But the horse is still not struck with terror by this sound, and so he says, "raging," from interior courage, "and snorting," that is, neighing. He calls this a roar which is the sound characteristic of lions (Proverbs 19:12) because of the courage of the horse. He not only shows his interior passion of spirit with his voice, but also with an exterior act, and so he says, "he sucks in the earth," that is, he seems to suck it in by digging it with his hooves. Not only does the sound of the quiver, the pike and the shield not terrify him, but he is also not frightened by the sound of the trumpet, which is a martial instrument, and so he says, "nor he does he regard the blast of the trumpet," so that he is terrified by it. Rather, he is said to rejoice at the sound of the military trumpet, and so he says, "When he hears the trumpet, he exclaims: Hooray!" i.e., he shouts in exaltation, for "Hooray" is an exclamation of exultation. Since all these things mentioned express the courage of the horse, he now adds something about his perspicacity saying, "He smells the battle from afar," that is, while the enemy is still far off he senses by smell that battle is imminent. He almost seems to sense the preparation of battle, when the generals stir up the troops with their exhortations, and as to this he says, "the exhortations of the leaders," he perceives, "and the shouting," the confused shouting and uproar, "of the army," preparing itself for battle.

Just as the ass serves man for carrying heavy loads, and the wild ass finds his habitat in wild places, so also among domesticated animals the ox serves man for plowing because of his strength. He is compared to the rhinoceros or unicorn among wild animals, a very strong and fierce four-footed animal with one horn in the middle of his forehead. This animal, because of his ferocity, cannot be as easily domesticated as the ox, and so he says, "Will the rhinoceros (the unicorn) be willing to serve you," so that he willingly obeys you like a domesticated animal? Domesticated animals accept their food freely from men, and to show the rhinoceros does not he says, "Will he spend the night in your manger?" prepared to eat what is offered to him by you? Domesticated oxen are fed so that they may be used in the work of plowing. He shows the rhinoceros is not saying "Will you bind the rhinoceros (the unicorn) with your strap to plow," as one plows with oxen. Men use oxen for other work, to drag a rake to smooth plowable land by breaking up the clods of earth to pieces, and so he says, "or will he break up the clods of earth of the valleys," which are often more diligently cultivated because of their greater fertility, "after you," after you have plowed the land? Or "after you," that is, so that with you preceding, he follows breaking up the clods? Some strong animals are set free to guard the fields against thieves or animals which can devastate the standing grain, as fields are guarded in this way by ferocious dogs, but this cannot be done with the rhinoceros, because he is not domesticated, and so he says, "Will you put your confidence in his great strength and will you leave your labors to him?", i.e., to guard the fruits of the fields. So you cannot use this very strong animal, either like the ox for plowing, or like the dog as a guard. Likewise, you cannot use him like a strong farm hand to reap the fruits of the earth, and so he says, "Will you have faith in him that he will render the seed to you and bring it together on your threshing floor?", like a worker does who sows seed taken from his master and gives it back multiplied, when he collects the crops on the threshing floor, and after the threshing brings them to the storehouse of the master.

After he has examined the things which distinguish wild animals from the domestic ones, he treats the properties of some animals which seem to differ from other animals. This is especially true in the ostrich, which is a species of bird very close in genus to beasts. So although she has wings like animals which fly very high, she cannot raise itself up by them to high places, and so he says, "The wing of the ostrich is like the wing of the falcon," the most noble of the falcons which is called a peregrine falcon, "and the hawk," which is a well known bird, and both are good for swift flying. There is, however, another property of the ostrich which distinguishes it from other birds, i.e., that she does not hatch her own eggs, but digs in the sand, deposits them there and covers them with sand, and so he says, "she leaves she eggs in the earth." She has a natural instinct for recognizing hot weather, namely, when the constellation called Virgo begins to appear in the month of July. Then she lays the eggs, and so, thanks to the heat of the season and the place, (because she lives only in hot climates,) the eggs are hatched and the chicks come out of them. So he says, "Will you perhaps heat them in the dust?" He implies the answer, "No". This happens by divine providence which even incubates eggs in the sand unharmed. The ostrich is naturally a forgetful animal and exhibits no care to preserve her eggs, and so he says, "she forgets that a foot," of a man passing that way, "may crush them," the eggs, "or a beast of the field trample them," either in a chance passing by or in the search of food. Just as she does not care to guard her eggs, so she does not care to nourish her young, and so he says, "She deals cruelly with her young as if they are not hers," because she takes no care for their nutrition, so, as far as she is concerned, she loses the fruit of generation, and so he says, "she labored in vain," by conceiving and bringing to birth, because she does not nourish her young. Sometimes other animals also desert their new born young from fear, but the ostrich does this, "without being compelled by fear." She does this if not because of fear, because of a defect of natural instinct which other animals have for this care, and so he says, "For God has deprived her," the female ostrich, "of wisdom," to nourish and govern her young in an orderly way, "nor did he give her intelligence," by which she has care for her young. Wisdom and intelligence here mean natural instinct. Because he had said already that she has wings like the falcon and the hawk, (v.13) consequently, he shows next what purpose wings serve her saying, "When the time comes," when some necessity of violent movement presents itself to her, "she lifts her wings up high," so that although her body cannot be raised to fly by her wings, she is helped by her wings to run more swiftly, and so he says, "she laughs at the mounted horse," because she runs more swiftly than a horse carrying a man, "and his rider," of the horse, because she would run more swiftly than a man running on foot.

Just as the ostrich has some properties which differ from other animals and in which he is deficient from other animals, so also the horse has some noble properties by which he differs from other animals. First he notes the strength of the horse when he says, "Will you give the horse his might," not only strength of body to carry a heavy load, but also of soul to run to dangers bravely? He notes still another property of the horse, that is, he is provoked to libido by his exterior adornment. For it is said of horses that they are driven to intercourse by the adornment of manes, and "Cut the mane and their libido is extinguished." To show this he says, "Will you clothe his neck with neighing?" For horses usually neigh because of libido, as Jeremiah says, "They became horses loving women and were made messengers, each one neighed for his neighbor's wife." (5:8) Thus God surrounds the neck of the horse with neighing when God gives him manes, from which he is provoked to sexual desire. Another property of a horse is his powerful jump which is contrary to the behavior of many quadrupeds, and so he says, "Will you make him leap," raising him up high, "like the locusts," which move by jumping.