



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man perfect in Christ Jesus*. Colossians 1:28

Volume 27
Issue 651

The Book of Job

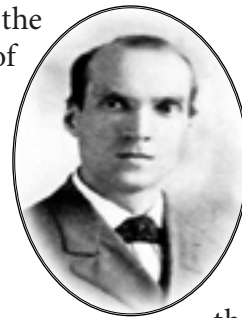
Part 4:¹

The Debate

by — Vladimir Gelesnoff (1877-1921)

We pass over the short section of the book which tells of the arrival of Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, as it serves only to connect the threads of the narrative.

We enter, therefore, upon a study of the debate. Its analysis is the following:



3. Job's curse (basis of the debate).

First Round

4-5. Eliphaz's first address.

6-7. Job's Reply.

8. Bildad's first address.

9-10. Job's reply.

11. Zophar's first address.

12-14. Job's reply.

Second Round

15. Eliphaz's second address.

16-17. Job's reply.

18. Bildad's second address.

19. Job's reply.

20. Zophar's second address.

21. Job's reply.

Third Round

22. Eliphaz's third address.

23-24. Job's reply.

25, 26:5-14. Bildad's third address.

26:2-4; 27:1-6. Job's reply.

27:7-28. Zophar's third address.

29-30. Job's reply.

31. Job's oath of clearing (conclusion of the debate).

ANTIQUITY AND MAJORITY ARE NOT DIVINE EVIDENCE

Our aim in the study of this colloquy is "to become wise unto salvation." To accomplish this we must seek to view the controversy from the right standpoint.

Jehovah, when He speaks at the conclusion of the debate, distinctly declares that Job had "darkened counsel by words without knowledge" (38:2). At the "end" of the whole matter He tells the friends, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right" and orders them to bring a burnt-offering in atonement for their "folly" (42:7-8).

In the light of this verdict, our basis in examining the speeches of the friends is not to receive their wisdom but to recant their "folly." The disputants were aged men, and great; they were sincere, well-meaning, upright; but their utterances are the effusions of a darkened understanding, mere groupings of the mind in the quagmire of human opinion.

Godliness is no guarantee of right principles or correct opinions. A man's character may be everything that is good; his principles and opinions may be wrong. Some of the saintliest characters that the Church has produced have at times found themselves on opposite sides of some controversy. Con- ►

1. [Editor:] Part 1, [Bible Student's Notebook #605](#); Part 2, [Bible Student's Notebook #619](#); Part 3, [Bible Student's Notebook #622](#).

flicting theologies have arrayed the godliest against each other.

Lot was a righteous man, and he aimed at being right, but his principles of action were so palpably wrong that Holy Writ holds him forth, not as an example which we should follow, but as a warning in order that we may avoid his footsteps.

So it was with Job's three friends. They were good men – good, that is, in intention, good in the deepest desire of their hearts, pure in their motives – but utterly wrong in their knowledge of God's ways. They knew God, yet had not spoken of Him the thing that was right: they were grave, yet had uttered folly. Theirs was a pattern case. In them are set forth the flimsy substitutes for divine revelation to which we are ever prone to turn.

Let us first review their grounds of reliance.

With us are both the gray-headed and very aged men, much elder than thy father (15:10).

Here is leaning on *antiquity* and *majority*. The antiquity of a belief is no proof of its truth: Buddhism antedates Christianity. The friends repudiated Job's doctrine, because it was "modern;" they held tenaciously their own, because it was "ancient." In our quest after truth we should be influenced by nothing save the ruling of Scripture. The great test of a doctrine being true is not whether it is new to *us*, but whether it is "new" to the *Word*. A doctrine may be new as far as its acceptance is concerned; it may be old, as far as God's revelation of it is concerned.

When Luther preached justification by faith many repudiated it on the score of novelty, but we know today that whilst it was new to the "doctrines of the church," it was old in the "doctrine of the Bible."

Job's friends tested things by "what they were taught;" what agreed therewith they received, what conflicted therewith they refused.

The friends are also inclined to lean on the number and distinction of those "with them." Majorities and minorities cannot be recognized as factors in establishing the truth of any doctrine. Numerical pre-

ponderance is not spiritual evidence. Saul had more supporters than David, the Pharisees had more votaries than Christ. Christianity has had fewer martyrs than apostates.

EDUCATION AND ERUDITION ARE USUALLY IN ERROR

I will declare what wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it; unto whom alone the land was given (15:18-19).

Job's opponents repose implicit confidence in *education* and *erudition*.² Learning and truth do not always walk hand in hand, nor does the presence of the one imply the existence of the other. Some of the greatest intellects have aligned themselves on the side of error. The learned Jews were the bitterest opponents of Him Who came in His Father's name. Education is an aid of no mean caliber. It dilates the sphere of usefulness, gives greater point and color to argument, increases the power of adaptation, but education can only develop; it imparts nothing. It is no substitute for grace and spiritual illumination. Nor does erudition betoken spiritual power. The herdsman of Tekoa

2. [Editor:] "Great knowledge or learning; scholarship" (*Oxford Dictionary*).

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made more impression on the sinners in Zion than all the intellect and culture of a whole generation of learned priests.

The speeches of the friends are replete with personal observations, profusely seasoned with quotations from the fathers, and abound in reference to arts and sciences, to natural history, to astronomy, to mineralogy, etc., but contain only one reference to the Word of God (22:22). They knew and revered “*the instruction of the Almighty*”: they laid up its words in their hearts and could no doubt repeat many texts. They read it, however, through the spectacles of the fathers, and knew it only as a valuable textbook of dogmatics in defending traditional tenets.

The Word as a life-shaping force, as the living and active word, piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, they did not know. The all-sufficiency of the Word was to them a mere theory. In reality it was a dead letter. They are committed to a fixed theory. Their minds are closed. Their submission to the fathers is servile. They rest their position on human authority; support it by human wisdom; accredit it on the strength of human favor.

Is not the tendency to acquiesce without inquiry in the teachings of good men all too prevalent among Christians? From time to time God has raised men to unearth precious truths which for generations lay buried beneath the rubbish of decayed theology. Hearts were quickened; new life infused into moribund communities; souls lifted to higher planes of life and aroused to a new sense of responsibility. The Word became to many the joy and rejoicing of the

heart, but the next generation, instead of using the knowledge thus gained to climb higher the ladder of truth, devoted its energy to stereotyping it, and so the very knowledge which would have opened the inner recesses of Scripture was employed in erecting a barricade to bar admission thereto.

Such were the bulwarks of the friends. They substituted the “wisdom of men” for the power of God; the stagnant pool of tradition for the gushing stream of revelation; the clumsy club of opinion for the sharp sword of the Spirit.

Let us now glance at the procedure of the controversy.

HUMAN MERIT IS INADEQUATE

The friends begin by suggesting, in guarded language, that the severe fate which has overtaken Job proves him to be a sinner. Resistance to this overture they meet with aspersions on the moral character and remarks reflecting on the *animus*³ of the opponent. Intensification of feeling follows; pungent epithets are exchanged by the contestants, the friends enforcing their arguments by enumerating instances or elaborating pictures. To Job's remonstrance against such treatment at their hands Eliphaz prefers a long list of supposed charges:

Thy wickedness is great, neither is there any end to thine iniquities. For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry, but as for the mighty ▶

3. [Editor:] “Hostility or ill feeling” (*Oxford Dictionary*).



Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance

by — E.W. Bullinger. (1837-1913)

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man, he had the earth; and the honorable man, he dwelt in it. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken (22:5-9).

If their doctrine was precarious, the weapons of their warfare were carnal.

The friends have passed away, but their doctrine lives. Their bulwarks – aptly styled by Job, “*proverbs of ashes,*” “*defenses of clay*” – are still the bulwarks of Christendom.⁴ “I have seen,” “the fathers have said,” “I have done my best” – experience, the voice of the church, personal merit – are the premises on which a vast number of people found their hope for the future. Thousands of professing Christians know of no other authority in spiritual matters. The church of God, split into a number of contending parties, offers to the world the same sad spectacle which the heated disputants outside a village in the land of Uz presented to the spectators assembled around the ash-mound.

Faith looks beyond the transient scenes of this age. It penetrates behind the curtain of the visible and “*perceives that apparent phenomena were not evolved from apparent causes*” (Hebrews 11:3). By faith Noah adjusted the affairs of his household in the light of “*things not seen as yet,*” Abraham went “*not knowing whither,*” and Moses endured as “*seeing the invisible.*”

The knowledge of the friends was not of faith. They knew only what is seen. Nature was their textbook.

4. [Editor:] See the following,

- *Christianity: A Religion of Works*, David Sielaff, [Bible Student's Notebook #495](#);
- *The Fixed Ideas of Religious Notions*, Vladimir Gelesnoff, [Bible Student's Notebook #535](#).

They reasoned thus: “The visible world is God’s workmanship. The essential facts of God’s being govern all the forces of His nature and find expression in a variety of ways, through created things. Harmony prevails throughout nature: the world-system must exhibit the same order and perfection.” They ignored that nature reveals God’s *works*, but not His *ways*. These are unfolded in the Scriptures. Psalm 19 elaborates this distinction; its first part (:1-6) is occupied with the revelation of God written in the *Heavens*, and its latter part (:7-14) with the revelation of God written in the *Word*.

The Heavens declare the perfection of God’s handiwork; the Scriptures make known God’s dealings with His servants. There is no analogy whatever between the universe about us and the world of man. In the former all is order, harmony, law, symmetry; in the latter all is confusion and disorder – we read of “error,” “faults,” “sins,” “transgressions.” This antithesis between the world of nature and the world of man the friends could not account for, but they labored to “reconcile” it with their theory. Grounded on this false hypothesis as to the “course of the world,” they inferred that all calamity is a judgment on sin, as prosperity is a reward for uprightness. The position of the three friends is substantially the same, only Eliphaz supports it by experience, Bildad by tradition, Zophar by human merit. The whole duty of man they sum up thus:

Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding (28:28).

Job once held their views, but he has spirituality enough to cast them aside now that they have proved deficient.



Dispensational Truth or *The Place of Israel & the Church Which is His Body in the Purpose of the Ages*

by — Charles H. Welch (1880-1967)

First published in 1912, this was the author’s first full length book. The author exhibits how the Bible reveals the purposes of God, which are seen to have earthly as well as heavenly implications, and need to be carefully compared with traditional doctrines.

263 pp., HB

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JOB'S ANSWER

The friends offered commonplaces of divine judgment; he retorts with commonplaces of impunity. They dwelt on generalities in accordance with their theory; he appeals to the organized character of evil as seen in social evolution of which he describes the process (24:2-17).

- (a) Encroachment of landowners on the common land.
- (b) The consequent formation of a proletariat.⁵
- (c) The animosity engendered in the proletariat by the luxury of the wealthy.
- (d) The congested condition of cities and violence of city crime.
- (e) The rise of a distinctly criminal class, whose whole aim is the overthrow of social order.

Such dispensation of God's providence – so runs his train of thought – impeaches God's justice; affliction therefore is a persecution by God of His own creatures:

He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If the scourge slay suddenly, He will mock at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if it be not He, who then is it? (9:22-24).

Towards the close of the colloquy, Job, wresting from Zophar his definition of wisdom, defeats the friends with their own weapons. He shows that his wonderful former prosperity was evidence which proved that he feared the Lord, and his innocence of life was

5. [Editor:] "Industrial wage earners" (*American Heritage Dictionary*), i.e., blue-collar workers.

proof that the sudden reversal of his position could not have come upon him on account of sins. Thus the friends were silenced; they found "no answer."

THE FRIENDS' FAILURE

The preposterous view of the friends that all calamity is a judgment on sin, when practically applied, is productive of disastrous consequences. The treatment which Israel accorded the Messiah has demonstrated its absurdity. He was among them as "*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*" They regarded his abasement and unassuming appearance without any outward attraction as a sign of God's displeasure and accordingly esteemed Him "*stricken, smitten of God.*" Awful illusion! Calvary's scene is the standing refutation of the friends' doctrine.

In dealing with the problems of sin,⁶ sickness and death, in seeking to ascertain the origin of evil, and its existence and continuance in the world, the question to be settled is, "Have we a revelation?" If this question can be answered in the affirmative, as we know it can, then experience and tradition have no voice in the matter.

Scripture informs us that the complex world-system in which we find ourselves is not of the Father (I John 2:15-16). It tells us further that Satan accosted the first human pair and proposed to them a scheme ►

6. [Editor:] For more information about the creation of evil, Satan and the purpose of sin, see:

- *The Problem of Evil*, A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), see order form;
- *The "Fall" of Satan*, A.E. Knoch, [Bible Student's Notebook #547](#);
- *The King of Tyre*, E.H. Clayton, [Bible Student's Notebook #569](#);
- *Divine Lockup, Part 2: Sin*, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., [Bible Student's Notebook #588](#);
- *Did We Inherit Sin From Adam?* Phillip R. Garrison, [Bible Student's Notebook #431](#).



Charles H. Welch: An Autobiography

Welch (1880-1967), an associate of E.W. Bullinger, was the editor of the *Berean Expositor* (1906-1967), a Bible study magazine. While Bullinger was working on *The Companion Bible* his time was limited. As a result, Welch shouldered the editorial duties of his periodical *Things to Come*. During his lifetime he produced over 60 books, booklets and pamphlets.

156 pp, HB

See order form.

of progress which would eventually raise them to Godhood. Bewitched by his representations, our first parents embarked on the career thus offered them, thereby committing their posterity to the consequences of their choice. In consequence of this compromise Adam forfeited his right to lordship, and Satan became the world's god (II Corinthians 4:4), prince and moving spirit (Ephesians 2:2).

There is another point we wish to note before parting company with the friends. Eliphaz backs his experience by the story of a vision (4:13-21). Experience, insufficient to grapple with life's problems, is ever disposed to lean on the mysterious.

Bildad never ventures to dissent from the fathers, even though their theory be contrary to experience and revelation. He meets objections by reiterating his view, and will rather deny the sickness than take the medicine.

EVOLUTION AND INVOLUTION

Zophar lays more emphasis on human merit than his companions. He preaches the gospel of self-improvement. He talks of "setting things right," "preparing the heart," "putting away iniquity," "stretching the hands," etc., and goes through the whole ceremonial routine of patriarchal life. Self-occupation fosters ritualism.

Thus has it been in the past, and thus it is today. Truly there is nothing new under the sun. "That which

is hath been already." The gropings of the human mind have not changed with the course of centuries; the same tendencies are as much in evidence as ever. Movements making extraordinary claims to "holiness" are noted for laying excessive stress on experience and are, almost invariably, accompanied by trances, visions, special revelations, pretense to miraculous gifts, and other phenomena akin to spiritism.

Among deserters of the evangelical camp avowing their emancipation from the teachings of the Bible, there is a strong tendency to embrace the exploded theories of evolution. Men who scoff at the Biblical account of man's creation pride themselves in believing that man was evolved from a "cell." To believe God takes *faith*; to believe evolution⁷ takes *credulity*. That God is able to create is a fact. Man's ability to produce is unquestioned; why then deny this prerogative to God? That a cell should evolve into a human being is a figment. There can be no evolution unless there is also, and first, *involution*. Only what is *involved* can be *evolved*. The flower is involved in the seed and is evolved in due time, but an animal is not involved in the flower, and therefore no flower has ever evolved one.

It is a patent fact that ritualism thrives best where aversion to the Biblical doctrine of salvation by faith

7. [Editor:] For more information on evolution, see:

- *Genesis 1:1 and the Seven Human Philosophies*, John H. Essex, [Bible Student's Notebook #483](#);
- *Evolution? or Creation?*, Andre Sneidar, [Bible Student's Notebook #528](#).



286 pp., PB

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God's Truths Recovered: Beyond the Reformation

by – Daniel Russino

God's Truths Recovered is a study manual which covers such topics as: The eons and their importance; eternity; Satan; evil; administrations; rightly dividing the word; the gospel of the circumcision and uncircumcision; the church; book of Acts; Paul's epistles; salvation; justification; reconciliation; maturity in Christ; human traditions; baptism of the holy spirit; born again; new creation; the body and bride; trinity; spiritual gifts; gifts for today; healing; suffering; reigning; revealed secrets; Israel's future; your future; God's unconditional love; the Deity; hell; lake of fire; death; pagan philosophy; immortality; soul; second death; resurrection; vivification; judgment; great white throne; secret of Christ and more. 8-½ x 11 format.

is strongest. It may be laid down as a canon that in proportion as churches apostatize from the fundamental truths of the gospel they drift toward ritualism.

We must now leave the venerable trio and hearken to Elihu.

ELIHU (32-37)

As the friends ceased to speak, a new actor appears upon the scene. Among the group of silent listeners to the colloquy was a young man, Elihu, of the family of Ram. In all probability he was a passer-by who lingered there in hope of learning more of God's ways. He had no intention of participating in the debate. Job's self-justification, as well as the friends' inability to answer, made him feel as "*wine which hath no vent*" and forced him to the front.

Here is the analysis of Elihu's striking address:

- 32. Address to the friends.
- 33. Address to Job.
- 34. Address to the friends.
- 35. Address to Job and his friends.
- 36-37. Address on God's behalf.

He begins by dissociating himself from the previous speakers. He points out the shallowness of experience, exposes the fallacy of tradition, demonstrates the futility of merit, and proves the views of the contestants to be erroneous. He outlines God's dealings with humankind. Man is utterly ruined: he is incapable of recovering his lost estate. God deals with him through a Mediator Whose office is to interpret the invisible God and pay the price for man's redemption.

"GOD IS GREATER THAN MAN"

The strange personage of Elihu stands out in striking contrast with the friends. He is a living refutation of their "folly." Greatness is confounded by obscurity; age by youth; pomp by modesty. The friends had defended an established doctrinal system; Elihu speaks on God's behalf (36:2). They relied on human wisdom; he on the divine spirit (32:8). They depended on those "with them"; he counts on the divine presence (36:4). His ministry cleared the arena and prepared it for God's operation. When Jehovah interposes, He reproves Job in the words of Elihu (38:2; cf. 35:6; 40:2; cf. 33:13), takes for His text Elihu's words, "*God is greater than man*," and seals with His approval the ministry of this obscure stranger. ►



100 pp., PB

See order form.

Suffering: God's Forgotten Gift

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Two gifts given to the believer are mentioned by Paul in Philippians 1:29. The first is "to believe on Him." This is a glorious gift. Every believer has been given this gift from God. Those who possess it may not even fully recognize it as a gift from Him, but indeed faith is God's wonderful gift to us. Faith is a rich gift from God, but there is also another gift from God to the believer, mentioned by Paul in Philippians 1:29, that is equally as glorious. The second gift is "also to suffer for His sake." This, too, is a glorious gift. Every believer has been given this gift from God as well, but those who possess it often do not fully recognize it for what it is. Indeed, suffering for His sake similarly is God's wonderful gift to us. Paul teaches us to embrace this second gift as well as we do the first!

"After over 40 years of seriously searching the Scriptures with the aid of writings from men of many varied walks, no literature has so profoundly changed my life as this book. It needs to be in the hands of every believer!" – *LA*

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What a deep and needed lesson is here for us! Let the theme of our ministry be nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else besides *Himself*.

The Department of Agriculture, some years ago, was cultivating a tract of land in one of the western states. The experiment was carried on for a number of years with poor results. The matter was then placed in the hands of a commission, which decided upon an elaborate program of investigation. Fertilizers, new implements, improved methods, all were tried in turn without much success. Once an old farmer who was passing by lingered for a while to watch the sowers. He chanced to take a handful of seeds and noted their poor quality. The matter was brought to the attention of the commission. New seed was procured; the field was sown afresh and yielded splendid crops.

We have spent much time and talent in multiplying and perfecting organizations and in devising new contrivances for catching men. Is it not easier and wiser to pause and ascertain what quality of seed we sow? Perhaps we need to exchange it.

The church of God stands in no need of more stately and costly edifices. It does not demand more high-

ly cultured singing and sweeter music. Neither is it famished for want of orators or eloquence. The bread of life is needed by the people who cry aloud for the truth of God.

The ministry of the friends, supported by varied auxiliaries, produced no impression. It made much ado, but accomplished nothing. The Word of Life ministered by Elihu, alone, single-handed, unaided, unassisted, undiluted, brought about the desired effect. When Job and his three friends turned to the fountain of revelation, and the burnt-offering became the ground of acceptance, the object of contemplation and subject of conversation, it was not long before the scene was transfigured. The rays of grace dissipated the fog of discussion, animosity gave place to loving fellowship, and intercession replaced argument.

(edited)

TOPICS:

Major: Job; Atheism; Evolution; Religion

Minor: Grace; Works

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- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:

- total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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