

Symbolic Interpretation of the Book of Job: A Poem of Initiation

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Abstract

The *Book of Job*, one of the books of the Hebrew Bible, tells the story of a man named Job: his tests brought about by Satan, his argument with three friends on the meaning of his suffering, a sermon from another speaker, and a response from God. The traditional approach of interpreting the story is to accept its literal presentation. This article, however, considers the elements of the story to be symbols that signify psychological or theosophical referents, so that the story depicts the tests and crisis of what Theosophy calls the “third initiation.”

The Book of Job

The *Book of Job* has been heralded as a masterpiece, and is included in lists of the greatest books in world literature.¹ Ezekiel (14:14, 20), written early in the sixth century BCE, cites Job as an historical figure, and makes the only references to him in the Hebrew Bible outside of the book that bears his name. James (5:11) also cites Job as an historical figure, and makes the only reference to him in the New Testament. A passage from Job (5:13) is quoted by the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 3:19), using the usual form of quoting scripture, “For it is written,” thereby showing that early Christians regarded this book as inspired scripture.

The *Patriarchal Age* is the period during which the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are thought to have lived. Roy Zuck, a Christian theologian, provides evidence that Job is described as living during the Patriarchal Age:

1. Job lived 140 years after his calamities (Job 42:16) so he may have lived to about

210. This corresponds roughly to the length of the Patriarchs’ lives.

2. Job’s wealth was reckoned in livestock (Job 1:3; 42:12), which was also true of Abraham (Genesis 12:16; 13:2), and Jacob (Genesis 30:43; 32:5).

3. The Hebrew word *qešîṭâh*, translated “piece of silver” (Job 42:11), is used elsewhere only twice (Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32), both times in reference to Jacob.

4. Job’s daughters were heirs to his estate along with their brothers (Job 42:15). This, however, was not possible later under the Mosaic Law if a daughter’s brothers were still living (Numbers 27:8).

5. The *Book of Job* includes no references to the Mosaic institutions (priesthood, laws, tabernacle, special religious days, and feasts).

6. Several personal and place names in the book were also associated with the Patriarchal Age.²

Some scholars argue that the *Book of Job* was written by Job himself during the Patriarchal Age (2100 – 1900 BCE), because the recorded conversations give the impression of an eyewitness account. Other scholars believe that the linguistic evidence of its text indicates that

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the book was written centuries later. Although the Jewish tradition considers the author to be Moses (1391–1271 BCE), some argue for Solomon (970 – 931 BCE), because of a few similarities to Proverbs, but others suggest Isaiah (731 – 681 BCE), because of a few similarities to the latter’s writings. Thus the author and date of the book are shrouded in mystery.³

This article contrasts two interpretative approaches to the *Book of Job*: the traditional approach, which accepts the story as it is literally presented; and the symbolic approach, which identifies the book’s symbols and their associated referents. The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* provides the traditional views of the book’s meaning:

Through the years, many purposes have been suggested for the book. Perhaps the one that has been mentioned more often than any other is that of answering the question of why the righteous suffer. Certainly this question was prominent in Job’s day, for ancient society believed that human suffering was the result of one’s sin or at least a God’s displeasure. Even the meaning of the name Job (the persecuted one) seems to support this suggestion, but that may not be all that is involved in the book. Another popular suggestion is that the book has been preserved to illustrate for us the nature of true faith both from the point of view of people and of God.⁴

Helena Blavatsky (1831 – 1891), founder of the Theosophical Society, offers a radically different view: “The *Book of Job* is a complete representation of ancient initiation and the trials which generally precede this grandest of all ceremonies.”⁵ She speaks of “the *Book of Job*, a Kabalistic treatise on Egypto-Arabic Initiation, the symbolism of which conceals the highest spiritual mysteries,”⁶ showing that her interpretation of the book is based on taking its elements as symbols. Blavatsky quotes and then comments on Job 38:17:

“Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?” Thus asks the “Lord, the Hierophant, the Al-om-jah, the Initiator of Job, alluding to this third degree of Initia-

tion. For the *Book of Job* is the poem of Initiation *par excellence*.⁷

The word *Hierophant*, which comes from Ancient Greece, denotes the conductor of an initiation, and the word *Al-om-jah* denotes the highest Hierophant in Ancient Egypt. Blavatsky regards the “Lord,” who is the speaker of the verse, as “the Hierophant, the Al-om-jah, the Initiator of Job,” and regards Job as undergoing the “third degree of Initiation,” but what does that mean?

Alice Bailey (1880 – 1949), a modern theosophical author, considers each initiation as marking a point of attainment. She characterizes the achievement of what Theosophy calls the “third initiation” in the following way: “Freedom from the ancient authority of the threefold personality,”⁸ in which the threefold personality consists of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies.

Blavatsky provides only a brief account of how the *Book of Job* could be viewed as a poem of initiation. This article, however, presents a detailed symbolic analysis that corroborates her conclusion, and covers the following initiatory stages: the tests, occult blindness, internal and external conflicts, inner purification, crisis of the third initiation, and aftermath.

All Biblical quotations in this article are from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.⁹ The NKJV updates the vocabulary and grammar of the King James Version, which was completed in 1611, while preserving its classic style. A few verses are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is another modern translation.¹⁰

Prologue: Chapters 1 and 2

Norman Habel, Professor of Biblical Studies, describes the basic structure of the book’s 42 chapters: “It has generally been accepted that the book of Job consists of two basic parts—a prologue and an epilogue in prose form which together constitute a discrete story framework (chs. 1-2; 42:7-17), and an extended dialogue in poetic form which represents the author’s contribution to Israelite thought (3:1-42:6).”¹¹

Chapters 1 and 2 constitute the prologue: the LORD boasts about Job's character and allows Satan to test it. Job's tests include losing his wealth and ten children as well as incurring a horrible skin disease. Let us consider in detail verses 1:6-12:

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.⁷ And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."⁸ Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"⁹ So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.¹¹ But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Several exalted beings are mentioned in these verses. The "LORD," written entirely with capital letters in the NKJV, substitutes for the Hebrew name *YHWH*, which means "the self-existent One."¹² Following an earlier quotation from Blavatsky, the LORD is taken as the Hierophant for the third initiation. Bailey provides additional information about this Hierophant:

It is only at the third initiation that the great Hierophant, the Lord of the World, Himself officiates. It is the first at which He contacts the initiate.¹³

The Lord of the World, the One Initiator, He Who is called in the Bible "The Ancient of Days," and in the Hindu Scriptures the First Kumara, He, Sanat Kumara it is, Who from His throne at Shamballa in the Gobi desert, presides over the Lodge of Masters.¹⁴

Thus the LORD is said to have the following roles: Hierophant, for what Theosophy regards as the major initiations, starting with the third initiation; Ancient of Days, who is mentioned in Daniel 7:9-10; Sanat Kumara, a Sanskrit name that means "Eternal Youth," who is mentioned in both the *Mahabharata* and *Chandogya Upanishad* of Hinduism;¹⁵ and King of Shamballa (also spelled Shambhala), which is the mythical kingdom described in the *Kalachakra Tantra* of Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁶ The LORD's reported association with Theosophy, Hinduism, and Buddhism may explain the similarity of the initiatory processes that are found in those systems.¹⁷

"God" is a translation of the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which means "the One who is the totality of powers, forces and causes in the universe."¹⁸ Do these two words, LORD and God, represent the same concept or can they be differentiated? Bailey gives this definition: "The Being Who is the life of our planet, the One in Whom we live and move and have our being. This being, or sum total of organised lives is sometimes called the planetary Logos, ... sometimes God, and sometimes the One Life."¹⁹ Bailey also speaks of "the manifested form of the planetary Logos in the Person of Sanat Kumara."²⁰ Thus, from a theosophical perspective, these words denote similar but slightly different concepts: God can be understood as the planetary Logos, and the LORD as the manifested form of the planetary Logos.

"The sons of God" are depicted in verse 1:6 as presenting themselves before the LORD. A previous quotation describes "the Lodge of Masters" as being presided over by Sanat Kumara, who is thought to be the same as the LORD, so "the sons of God" are taken to be "the Lodge of Masters."

"Satan," which literally means "the adversary" (Numbers 22:22), has various connotations in the Bible. In the *Book of Job*, Satan belongs to the Lodge of Masters according to 1:6, and is responsible for Job's tests according to 1:12. Bailey speaks of "The Guru or Master who leads a pupil up to the door of initiation and who watches over him in all the initial and subsequent tests and processes,"²¹ so Satan

appears to be the Guru or Master who has been assigned to Job from the Lodge of Masters. Bailey describes the role of such a Teacher:

Then the Teacher stands aside and watches the aspirant achieve. As He watches, He recognises points of crisis, where the application of a test will do one of two things, focalise and disperse any remaining unconquered evil—if that term might here be used—and demonstrate to the disciple both his weakness and his strength. In the great initiations, the same procedure can be seen, and the ability of the disciple to pass these greater tests and stages is dependent upon his ability to meet and surmount the daily lesser ones.²²

The LORD characterizes Job as “a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (1:8), so perhaps he does not have any flaws. Moses Maimonides (1135 – 1204), a medieval Jewish philosopher, perceives Job to be a person with moral virtue but not wisdom, implying that he does have something to learn:

The most marvelous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that knowledge is not attributed in it to *Job*. He is not said to be a *wise* or *comprehending* or an *intelligent man*. Only moral virtue and righteousness in action are ascribed to him. For if he had been *wise*, his situation would not have been obscure to him, as will become clear.²³

Job’s Opening Soliloquy: Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is Job’s opening soliloquy and consists of two primary sections: his curse (3:3-10) and lament (3:11-26). Job’s curse calls for his birth to be negated, invokes forces of darkness, and sets himself against God. His lament expresses misery and bitterness. Let us consider in detail verses 3:23-24:

²³ *Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in?*

²⁴ *For my sighing comes before I eat, And my groanings pour out like water.*

Zuck interprets “the subject of light and darkness as indicative of life and death,”²⁴ so Job’s

question in the first part of 3:23 has this meaning: Why is life given to a man whose way, or path, is hidden? This question indicates that Job does not see where he is going. In other words, he is experiencing what is sometimes called “occult blindness.”

Bailey considers this condition to be the stage mentioned by the prophet Isaiah (45:3):

Blindness is a prelude to initiation of no matter what degree ... Occult blindness is spiritually induced and “blacks out” the glory and the promised attainment and reward. The disciple is thrown back upon himself. All he can see is his problem, his tiny field of experience, and his—to him—feeble and limited equipment. It is to this stage that the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of giving to the struggling aspirant “the treasures of darkness.” The beauty of the immediate, the glory of the present opportunity and the need to focus upon the task and service of the moment are the rewards of moving forward into the apparently impenetrable darkness.²⁵

In the second part of 3:23, Job ponders why God has given him both life and suffering, because his use of the word “hedged” indicates that he blames God for his suffering. In 3:24, Job observes himself with some detachment, because he describes both the timing of his sighing and a simile for his groaning. Thus Job’s occult blindness is already starting to yield two “treasures of darkness”: greater self-reliance, because he is pondering his own questions; and greater self-knowledge, because of his detached self-observation. Bailey gives this explanation:

In the loneliness which is the lot of every true disciple are born that self-knowledge and self-reliance which will fit him in his turn to be a Master. This loneliness is not due to any separative spirit but to the conditions of the Way itself.²⁶

The Friends’ Argument with Job: Chapters 4 through 27

Chapters 4 through 27 present an extensive argument between Job and three friends who are introduced in the following way:

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite” (2:11). Traditional commentators simply accept the story as it is literally presented in these chapters. For example, Tremper Longman, Professor of Biblical Studies, provides a brief summary of the traditional perspective:

Finally, the silence is broken by Job, who utters a heartrending lament, bemoaning his condition and wishing he would die, indeed that he had never been born (Job 3). This lament transforms Job’s comforters into disputants as they argue over the cause of and solution to his suffering. This debate continues from Job 4 to Job 27 and takes place in three rounds with each of the three friends speaking in turn with Job responding to them individually.²⁷

Job’s three friends, called “comforters” in the above quotation, have unusual characteristics that raise questions, or paradoxes, about the traditional perspective. The first characteristic is that they make similar judgments, as shown by the following summaries:

1. *Righteous people prosper.* Eliphaz asks, “Remember now, who *ever* perished being innocent? Or where were the upright *ever* cut off?” (4:7). Bildad states, “Behold, God will not cast away the blameless” (8:20). Zophar counsels, “If iniquity *were* in your hand, *and you* put it far away, And would not let wickedness dwell in your tents; Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; ... And *your* life would be brighter than noonday” (11:14-17).

2. *Wicked people are punished.* Eliphaz states, “The wicked man writhes with pain all his days” (15:20). Bildad says, “The light of the wicked indeed goes out, And the flame of his fire does not shine” (18:5). Zophar asks, “Do you not know this of old, Since man was placed on earth, That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is *but* for a moment?” (20:4-5).

3. *Job’s affliction indicates his unrighteousness.* Eliphaz asks, “Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquity without end?” (22:5). Bildad asks, “You who tear yourself in anger, Shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed from its place?” (18:4). Zophar declares, “Know therefore that God exacts from you *Less* than your iniquity *deserves*” (11:6).

Because of this similarity among the three friends, Longman raises the following question:

The debate has four participants but really only two viewpoints. If there are differences between the arguments of the three friends, they are subtle at best. The three really represent one position, thus raising the question of why the book creates three rather than one debating partner for Job.²⁸

Stanley Diamond, an American poet and anthropologist, makes a key observation about Job’s friends: “They are not only interchangeable, but are interchangeable with Job himself.”²⁹ Indeed, Job himself speaks of changing places with his friends: “I also could talk as you do, if you were in my place; I could join words together against you, and shake my head at you” (16:4, NRSV). Diamond concludes, “The paradox is that the common values that motivate Job and his friends make it impossible for them to rely on each other or even to understand each other in their extreme moments even though, or rather because, they speak the same language.”³⁰

Charles Swindoll, Chancellor of the Dallas Theological Seminary, raises questions regarding the temperament of Job’s three friends:

Let me add here, *all three are legalistic.* They are judgmental and condemning. To a man, they resort to shame-based counsel. Sometimes you’ll shake your head and say, “How in the world could they say that? Why would they say something like that to somebody they called their friend?”³¹

Jack Kahn, Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, comments on the manner in which the three friends communicate:

Any group feeling which might have existed between Job and the comforters had been dissipated because they had failed to reach any common ground in their dispute. What transpired between them was scarcely dialogue; it was little more than collective monologue. The arguments were exhausted because the comforters had remained steadfast in their aim to compel Job to confess himself in the wrong, while Job remained steadfast in his aim to prove himself in the right. For all intents and purposes they had failed to communicate.³²

In this context, *communication as monologue* is characterized by condescension, dogmatism, coercion, self-defensiveness, and judgmentalism. *Communication as dialogue* is characterized by equality, open-mindedness, non-manipulative intent, empathy, and respect.³³ One would expect a dialogue to occur between friends, so why would Job and his three friends produce a collective monologue instead?

As shown by the foregoing observations, “Job’s three friends” share these unusual characteristics: they make similar judgments, are interchangeable with Job, are condemning, and produce a collective monologue rather than a dialogue. These three friends do not seem to be independent human characters, but what else could they be? Bailey provides the following analysis of the friends based on the meaning of their Hebrew names:

Eliphaz the Temanite means “my God is gold,” and also “the southern quarter,” the opposite pole to the north. Gold is the symbol of material welfare, and the opposite pole to spirit is matter, therefore in this name we have symbolised the tangible outer form of man, actuated by desire for material possessions and comfort. Zophar the Naamathite means the “one who talks,” and his theme is pleasantness, which is the interpretation given to the word “Naamathite.” Here we have the desire body typified, with its longing for pleasantness, for happiness and for pleasure, and an indication of the constant and ceaseless call and voice of the sentient nature, to which we can all testify. Bildad the Shuhite represents the mental nature, the mind, signify-

ing as he does “contrition,” which becomes possible only when the mind is beginning to be active (including the conscience). Shuhite means “prostration or helplessness,” signifying that alone and unaided the mind can reveal but cannot help. Remorse and sorrow, involving memory, are the result of mental activity. Thus, in Job’s three friends the three aspects of his lower nature stand revealed.³⁴

Bailey’s insight is that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are actually symbols that represent Job’s threefold personality, implying that Chapters 4 through 27 depict a heated *internal* argument rather than an *external* argument. William Wells, a Christian theologian, has a similar insight:

The Book of Job reads like an introspective study, which gives the book a modern feel. No other book of the Bible has this same quality. The entire story revolves around Job’s internal struggle to reconcile a just God with unjustified suffering. Job’s three friends and especially the mysterious Elihu at the end all reflect Job’s own attitudes, beliefs and character. As a result, the extended dialogs have the quality of a heated internal argument.³⁵

Carl Jung (1875 – 1961), the eminent Swiss psychiatrist, characterizes inner conflict: “Neurosis is an inner cleavage—the state of being at war with oneself ... What drives people to war with themselves is the intuition or the knowledge that they consist of two persons in opposition to one another.”³⁶ Jung gives these definitions: “The *persona* is ... a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual,”³⁷ “The *shadow* personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly.”³⁸

Jung also gives this definition: “The *ego* is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness.”³⁹ Murray Stein, a Jungian scholar, clarifies Jung’s definition: “The term *ego* refers to one’s experience of oneself as a center of willing, desiring, reflecting, and acting.”⁴⁰ This

notion of ego is not equivalent to the personality, but is a center of consciousness that acts through or on the personality, and it may or may not identify with various parts of the personality, such as the persona and shadow. As explained next, Chapters 4 through 27 depict the internal argument that arises when Job's ego defends his persona against the attacks of his shadow. To simplify this exposition, Job's ego is denoted simply as Job.

Job says, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me" (29:14), showing that Job's persona is his self-image of being righteous. He says, "May my enemy be like the wicked, and may my opponent be like the unrighteous. For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts them off, when God takes away their lives?" (27:7-8, NRSV). Thus Job condemns unrighteous people as being "godless" and as deserving of God's punishment.

Job gives his reason for performing righteous duties: "For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty" (31:23, NRSV). Thus, by his own admission, Job is motivated by a fear of being punished rather than by a feeling of generosity or compassion towards the poor and weak. This verse illustrates a key psychological principle: condemning other people establishes the possibility of self-condemnation. *A Course in Miracles (ACIM)*, a modern system of spiritual psychology, gives this explanation: "If you can condemn, you can be injured. For you have believed that you can injure, and the right you have established for yourself can be now used against you, till you lay it down as valueless, unwanted and unreal."⁴¹ Job, through his condemnation of other people for their unrighteousness, has accepted the belief that he de-

serves condemnation if evidence of his own unrighteousness were found.

Soon after being afflicted, Job states, "For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me" (3:25). Thus, even though Job claims to be

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righteous, his latent fear is that he would be punished for being unrighteous, so he must have a shadow that consists of suppressed judgments of his own unrighteousness. Job also says, "I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made them drop their prey from their teeth" (29:17, NRSV), which shows that he hates unrighteous people. This verse illustrates another key psychological principle: when Job hates unrighteous people, he is actually projecting his shadow onto them as a way of defending himself from it. Jung gives this explanation: "When [the patient] projects

negative qualities and therefore hates and loathes the object, he has to discover that he is projecting his own inferior side, his shadow, as it were, because he prefers to have an optimistic and one-sided image of himself."⁴²

Cognitive dissonance is a state of internal conflict and discomfort that occurs when one's existing belief is contradicted by new evidence. In Job's case, his self-image of being righteous, which is his persona, is contradicted by the new evidence of his affliction. Leon Festinger (1919 – 1989), an American social psychologist, states the following principle: "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance."⁴³

Job's speeches portray his efforts to reduce his cognitive dissonance. His strategy is to use

consonant cognitions for defending and supporting his persona, as shown by the following examples. Job, although agreeing that God punishes the wicked, accuses God of being unjust in his case: “For He crushes me with a tempest, And multiplies my wounds without cause” (9:17). He accuses God of punishing him for the sins of his youth rather than for any present sin: “For you write bitter things against me, and make me reap the iniquities of my youth” (13:26, NRSV). In addition, he has a hope of future vindication, “See now, I have prepared *my* case, I know that I shall be vindicated” (13:18); affirms his righteousness, “My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside” (23:11); and accuses the three friends of allowing an evil spirit to speak through them, “With whose help have you uttered words, and whose spirit has come forth from you?” (26:4, NRSV).

Job’s strategy would work better if he could avoid environmental cues, or stimuli, that amplify his dissonant cognitions. He, however, cannot avoid such cues, because he is constantly shocked by the evidence of his affliction: “If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint; I will put off my sad countenance and be of good cheer,’ I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know you will not hold me innocent” (9:27-28, NRSV).

The friends’ speeches are the dissonant cognitions and include the judgments listed earlier. Diamond has this insight: “For there is nothing that Job’s friends say that Job himself has not said.”⁴⁴ For example, the friends say that righteous people prosper and wicked people are punished, but Job made the same judgments before he was afflicted (29:18-20; 31:3). The friends say that Job’s affliction indicates his unrighteousness. Job made the same judgment before his affliction: he regarded the outcasts of his community as “vile men,” about whom he said, “I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock” (30:1-8), but those outcasts had characteristics similar to his own after his affliction. For each judgment that Job made regarding someone’s circumstance, he accepted the belief that he deserved the same judgment if he ever found himself in a similar circumstance. The friends’ speeches rise out of Job’s shadow,

because they are the amplification of Job’s own suppressed judgments of his unrighteousness. Even though the amplified judgments are attacking his persona, Job accepts them as being true, because he had made the same judgmental attacks on other people.

Job’s and the friends’ speeches depict the internal argument that rages within Job’s mind: the consonant cognitions, which defend Job’s persona, oppose the dissonant cognitions, which attack it. These speeches depict a collective internal monologue, rather than a dialog, because there is no attempt to find common ground: Job tries to defend what he pretends to be against the threat of what he really thinks he is.

Let us examine how this internal argument ends in Chapter 27. Job says, “As God lives, *who* has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, *who* has made my soul bitter” (27:2), so he still blames God and still is full of bitterness. He also says, “My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go” (27:6), so he still supports his persona. Yet Job shows cognitive dissonance, because he says, “This is the portion of a wicked man with God, And the heritage of oppressors, received from the Almighty” (27:13), and then describes the wicked man’s fate as being much the same as his own plight.

Thus, in the final chapter of the argument, Job’s speech incorporates both consonant and dissonant cognitions, thereby blending the earlier conflicting monologues. This blending indicates that his strategy of dissonance reduction *has failed*. Consequently, according to Festinger’s principle, Job is motivated to seek another strategy for reducing his cognitive dissonance.

Poem on Wisdom: Chapter 28

Chapter 28 consists of a self-contained poem on wisdom. It has a tranquil and reflective tone that contrasts sharply with the argumentative and emotional style of the preceding and subsequent chapters. Habel mentions its controversial nature: “Job 28 is a brilliant but embarrassing poem for many commentators. It has been viewed as an erratic in-

trusion, an inspired intermezzo, a superfluous prelude, and an orthodox afterthought.”⁴⁵

According to this poem, human beings can mine for various kinds of treasures, such as silver and gold, but they cannot find wisdom, which is the greatest treasure, by searching for it in the natural world. So how can wisdom be found? The poem’s conclusion is: “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom, And to depart from evil *is* understanding” (28:28).

Nancy Detweiler, a Bible scholar, gives her interpretation: “I believe this chapter to be a depiction of the Holy Spirit teaching Job through his own intuitive thought processes.”⁴⁶ The Hebrew phrase *ruach hakodesh*, usually translated as “Holy Spirit,” appears in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature, but not in the *Book of Job*.⁴⁷ Is Detweiler’s interpretation compatible with the *Book of Job*, even though the phrase “Holy Spirit” does not appear in it?

The adjective “holy” indicates a divine source, and the noun “spirit” translates Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*) words that denote “wind” or “breath.” Job 32:8 provides a related concept: “But *there is* a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.” The notion of the “Holy Spirit,” such as in John 14:26, seems equivalent to the “breath of the Almighty” in Job 32:8, because both breaths are regarded as coming from God and giving understanding. Thus Detweiler’s interpretation seems compatible with the intrinsic concepts of the *Book of Job*.

Chapter 28, however, could be interpreted in a second way: Job simply takes a break from his internal conflict, realizes that he lacks wisdom, and then thinks about what he has read or understood regarding wisdom. These two ways of interpreting this chapter are not mutually exclusive, and either way would support our subsequent analysis of the overall story.

Job’s Closing Soliloquy: Chapters 29 through 31

Chapters 29 through 31 comprise Job’s closing soliloquy. Chapter 29 is Job’s speech of remembrance in which he recalls how he was formerly treated by his fellow citizens, such as in verses 29:7-12 (NRSV):

⁷ When I went out to the gate of the city,
when I took my seat in the square,
⁸ the young men saw me and withdrew,
and the aged rose up and stood;
⁹ the nobles refrained from talking, and
laid their hands on their mouths;
¹⁰ the voices of princes were hushed, and
their tongues stuck to the roof of their
mouths.
¹¹ When the ear heard, it commended me,
and when the eye saw, it approved;
¹² because I delivered the poor who cried,
and the orphan who had no helper.

Chapter 30 is Job’s speech of lament in which he recounts how he is currently being treated, such as in verses 30:9-13 (NRSV):

⁹ And now they mock me in song; I am a
byword to them.
¹⁰ They abhor me, they keep aloof from me;
they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of
me.
¹¹ Because God has loosed my bowstring
and humbled me, they have cast off re-
straint in my presence.
¹² On my right hand the rabble rise up; they
send me sprawling, and build roads for my
ruin.
¹³ They break up my path, they promote my
calamity; no one restrains them.

Although Job has a skin disease (2:7), the foregoing verses indicate that he is primarily concerned with the change in the way that he is being treated by other people—a change brought about by his skin disease—rather than with his skin disease itself. Henry Ellison, a Bible scholar, makes a similar observation: “in the poem there is far less allusion to Job’s physical sufferings than has often been assumed. Job is concerned less with his physical pain than with his treatment by his relations, his fellow-townsmen, the mob and finally his friends.”⁴⁸

Why, then, does Job suffer? As indicated by the foregoing verses, Job craves honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Job gains pleasure when this craving is satisfied, as described in Chapter 29, but suffers when it is not satisfied, as described in Chapter 30. Even though these two experienc-

es are contrasted in successive chapters, Job does not acknowledge the following truth about himself: *his own craving causes his suffering*. This truth is related to what Buddhists call “The Second Noble Truth,” as the Buddha Dharma Education Association explains:

By watching people Buddha found out that the causes of suffering are craving and desire, and ignorance. The power of these things to cause all suffering is what Buddhists call The Second Noble Truth.⁴⁹

Why doesn't Job acknowledge that his own craving causes his suffering? Acknowledging this truth would be acknowledging an unrighteous motivation, namely, the craving to receive honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Instead, Job blames his troubles on God in 30:11, quoted above, and also in 30: 21: “*But You have become cruel to me; With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.*”

Here is where the poem on wisdom in Chapter 28 plays an interesting role, because that poem ends with the statement, “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom” (28:28). As Zuck explains, to fear God means to “venerate and submit to” God,⁵⁰ so Job is not fearing God when he accuses God of cruelty and persecution. Thus, to maintain his self-image of being righteous, Job ignores both his unrighteous motivation and a principle of wisdom that he had embraced. The foregoing Buddhist quotation states that “the causes of suffering are craving and desire, and ignorance.” Correspondingly, Job's suffering is caused by his craving to receive honor and respect for being righteous, his desire to defend and support his self-image of being righteous, and his willful ignorance of his hypocrisy.

Chapter 31 is Job's effort to force God to break his silence, and includes this plea: “Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. *Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, That my Prosecutor had written a book!*” (31:35). In this plea, “one to hear me” appears to be someone like an arbiter or judge in a formal legal proceeding; “my mark” suggests that Job figuratively signs his statement of defense; and “my Prosecutor” indicates that Job considers God to

be his legal adversary. Zuck gives this explanation: “If Job were innocent, then God would be required, according to legal practice, to speak up and affirm it. If Job were guilty, then God would be expected to bring down the imprecations on him.”⁵¹

Thus, whether innocent or guilty, Job has invoked God's answer. The final sentence in Chapter 31 is: “The words of Job are ended” (31:40), indicating that Job is waiting in silence to hear God's answer. What will be the response?

Elihu's Speeches: Chapters 32 through 37

Chapters 32 through 37 introduce a new speaker, Elihu, who is the only speaker in those chapters, starting with verses 32:1-4:

¹ So these three men ceased answering Job, because he *was* righteous in his own eyes. ² Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. ³ Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and *yet* had condemned Job. ⁴ Now because they *were* years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job.

Habel provides a traditional assessment of this new speaker: “Elihu, who is introduced to us as a hothead, but claims to be patient, perceptive, and wise, unknowingly discloses his true nature as a biased and brash fool in spite of his glib speech and florid apology.”⁵² Elihu, however, has some unusual characteristics that are not noted by traditional commentators.

Jacques Ellul (1912 – 1994), a French philosopher, analyzes Elihu's four associated names given in 32:2:

Elihu means ‘He is my God.’ Virtually all Hebrew scholars agree that when the Hebrew for ‘he’ is used in the composition of a name, it always designates the God of Israel. Hence, Elihu means ‘YHWH is my God’ ... Elihu is called the son of Barachel, which means ‘Elohim has blessed him.’ Hence, Elihu is the son of the benediction

of God ... Elihu comes from the land of Buz, which in Hebrew refers to 'he who is despised.' It is the word which the prophet Isaiah uses to designate God's servant ... Finally, Elihu is of the family of Ram, which means 'from above,' in the sense of the heavens. Putting all this together we have Elihu, YHWH is my God, son of Elohim's blessing, bearing the title of the despised servant, and coming from the heavens.⁵³

Charles Fillmore (1854 – 1948), founder of the Unity School of Christianity, states, "Elihu of the book of Job represents the Holy Spirit."⁵⁴ This identification is supported by the foregoing analysis of Elihu's associated names as well as by additional evidence that is discussed next.

Elihu teaches the discernment of what is false, "Look, *in* this you are not righteous" (33:12), and teaches wisdom, "Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom" (33:33). Moreover, Elihu can bring to Job's remembrance what Job had said in the past: Elihu tells Job, "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of *your* words" (33:8), and then quotes Job sixteen times in Chapters 33 through 36. Elihu's abilities to teach and bring to remembrance corroborate his identification with the Holy Spirit, because John 14:26 states: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

Elihu speaks about himself: "I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. For truly my words *are* not false; One who is perfect in knowledge *is* with you" (36:3-4). Elihu also speaks about God: "Do you know how the clouds are balanced, Those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?" (37:16). Thus Elihu is an intermediary: his "words *are* not false" because he can fetch perfect knowledge from God. Elihu's abilities to speak truth and be an intermediary further corroborate his identification with the Holy Spirit, because John 16:13 states: "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He

will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak."

According to 32:4, Job's three friends "*were* years older" than Elihu. This statement is construed to mean that Job's threefold personality—symbolized by his three friends—exists in time, whereas the Holy Spirit—symbolized by Elihu—exists in eternity. Hebrews 9:14 likewise mentions "the eternal Spirit." Verse 32:4 also states that "Elihu had waited to speak to Job." In fact, Elihu had waited to speak until after Job invoked God's answer in 31:35, so Elihu's timing is consistent with him fulfilling the promise of James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Thus 32:4 provides further corroboration that Elihu symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

Verses 32:2-3 say that Elihu is "aroused against" both sides of the internal argument described in Chapters 4 through 27. As mentioned earlier, Elihu teaches the discernment of what is false, so both sides of this argument must be false. In other words, both Job's persona and shadow are illusions, or false beliefs. *ACIM* gives this explanation: "One illusion about yourself can battle with another, yet the war of two illusions is a state where nothing happens. There is no victor and there is no victory. And truth stands radiant, apart from conflict, untouched and quiet in the peace of God."⁵⁵

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), a spiritual philosopher, explains the difficulty in recognizing illusions:

Ignorance of the ways of the self leads to illusion; and once caught in the net of illusion, it is extremely hard to break through it. It is difficult to recognize an illusion, for, having created it, the mind cannot be aware of it.⁵⁶

Job's internal argument is a war of two illusions, implying that he is caught in the net of illusions and is unable to recognize them. Nevertheless, Job can recognize his illusions if he listens to Elihu, because the latter teaches the discernment of what is false.

Job is confronted with a choice: either recognize his illusions by listening to Elihu; or defend his illusions by ignoring Elihu. Recognizing illusions is the uncomfortable option, because, in Bailey's words, "few people care to face the actual truth, for it involves ... the ability to recognise error and to admit mistakes, and this the false pride of the mind will not permit."⁵⁷ Elihu bears "the title of the despised servant," according to Ellul's earlier analysis, perhaps because of the uncomfortable effect of his instructions. Defending illusions is the futile option, because it results in what Elihu calls "empty talk" and "words without knowledge" (35:16, NRSV). Thus Job must choose between uncomfortableness and futility. During Chapters 32 through 37, Job chooses to recognize his illusions by having them pointed out, one by one, by Elihu. Put differently, Job acquiesces to the uncomfortable process of inner purification. Bailey writes, "Purification of the self leads one up to the portal of initiation."⁵⁸

Let us examine Elihu's instructions in Chapter 36 in some detail. Job believes that God afflicts in order to punish (31:2-3). Elihu considers that belief to be an illusion, because he says that God afflicts in order to teach in verses 36:8-10 (NRSV):

⁸ And if they are bound in fetters and caught in the cords of affliction,
⁹ then he declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly.
¹⁰ He opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity.

Job's condition illustrates these verses. He is "behaving arrogantly" because of his false pride in being righteous. His affliction opens his "ears to instruction" from Elihu, who tells Job what he has done and to "return from iniquity."

Elihu continues: "But you are filled with the judgment due the wicked; Judgment and justice take hold of you" (36:17). *ACIM* gives a similar account of Job's fundamental error: "the belief that anger brings him something he really wants, and that by justifying attack he is

protecting himself."⁵⁹ Because of this belief, Job condemned both God (9:17) and unrighteous people (27:7-8). To the extent that Job recognizes that this belief is an illusion, he can release himself from his self-condemnation.

Elihu continues: "Beware that wrath does not entice you into scoffing, and do not let the greatness of the ransom turn you aside" (36:18, NRSV). In other words, Job receives this warning: Do not allow the wrath of others to entice you into deriding them, and do not allow the apparent attraction of anger to turn you aside from giving it up. The first part of the warning is applicable to Job, because he scoffed at his tormentors by calling them "A senseless, disreputable brood" (30:8, NRSV). In the second part of the warning, "ransom" is the price, or sacrifice, that is demanded for advancement. Job is reluctant to sacrifice his condemnation of God and unrighteous people, because he uses such judgments to defend his false pride. Thus, to make progress, Job must sacrifice something that he values. Bailey gives this explanation: "Each step up is ever through the sacrifice of all that the heart holds dear on one plane or another, and always must this sacrifice be voluntary."⁶⁰

Elihu begins a new speech in Chapter 37 that uses images of an approaching storm, starting with verses 37:1-5:

¹ At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place.
² Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling *that* comes from His mouth.
³ He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth.
⁴ After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain them when His voice is heard.
⁵ God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.

Traditional commentators simply accept this storm as it is literally presented. For example, Steven Lawson gives this paraphrase: "Elihu was gripped with a deep sense of awe at the mighty power of God in nature ... He directed Job to hear and sense God's power in a thun-

derstorm.”⁶¹ Other Bible scholars, however, assign symbolic meanings to several words used by Elihu. Herbert Lockyer says, “But for the prophets of old, *voice* stood for the resultant inward demonstration of the divine will.”⁶² Emanuel Swedenborg says that Daniel 10:6 uses the phrase “‘His face appeared as lightning and His eyes as a flame of fire’ to signify the Lord’s Divine love.”⁶³ Geoffrey Hodson says, “*Earth* and all physical, solid objects refer, in the main, to the physical body.”⁶⁴ Thus “thunder of His voice,” “His lightning,” and “earth” can be assigned these meanings: divine will, divine love, and physical body, respectively.

Let us compare 37:1-5 to Bailey’s instructions to students preparing for the third initiation:

Students would do well to ... pay more attention to the recognition of that in them which “having pervaded their little universe with a fragment of itself remains.” They will then have anchored their consciousness in the centre of transcending power and guaranteed the flow of the will-to-achieve. From that high point in consciousness (imaginatively reached at first and practically achieved later) they would find it useful to work at the process of transmission, knowing themselves to be agents for the transmission of the will-to-good of the Transcendent One. They should next pass on to the stage of transformation wherein they would visualise and expect to see developed the needed transformation carried forward in their lives; then—equally expectant—they should believe in the transfiguration of those lives in line with the will of the Transcendent One, the success of the Transmitting One, and the activity of the Transforming One—all of Whom are but the One, the Monad, the Self. All this is done by the use of the will, conditioning, fulfilling and overcoming.⁶⁵

Elihu’s recognition of divinity in 37:1, “At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place,” corresponds to Bailey telling the students to “pay more attention to the recognition of that in them which ‘having pervaded their little universe with a fragment of itself remains.’” In other words, the divine presence,

which is denoted later in the quotation as “the One, the Monad, the Self,” is to be recognized as both immanent and transcendent. Elihu’s directive in 37:2, “Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling *that* comes from His mouth,” when symbolically understood, corresponds to Bailey saying that the students “will then have anchored their consciousness in the centre of transcending power and guaranteed the flow of the will-to-achieve.” Elihu’s lesson in 37:3, “He sends it forth under the whole heaven,” corresponds to Bailey telling the students “to work at the process of transmission, knowing themselves to be agents for the transmission of the will-to-good of the Transcendent One.”

Consider Elihu’s lesson also in 37:3: “His lightning to the ends of the earth.” Its symbolic meaning is that divine love eventually transforms physical behavior, assuming that the “ends of the earth” denote the extremities, such as hands and feet, of the physical body. Thus this lesson corresponds to Bailey telling the students to “visualise and expect to see developed the needed transformation carried forward in their lives,” even though the latter instruction does not explicitly mention either divine love or the physical body. Elihu’s lesson, however, has a meaning similar to Bailey’s statement given elsewhere, “the fire of divine love destroys the loves and desires of the integrated personality,”⁶⁶ which indicates that divine love does transform physical behavior.

Consider Elihu’s lesson in 37:4: “He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain them when His voice is heard.” “Them” refers back to the “ends of the earth,” because “ends” is the only plural noun in the earlier verses, and this referent represents physical behavior, as explained in the preceding paragraph. If such behavior is not restrained by the divine will, then there must be what is called the “transfiguration of the personality,” defined as “its liberation from the alluring imprisonment of the three worlds,”⁶⁷ in which “the three worlds” denote the physical, emotional, and mental worlds of human endeavor. Thus 37:4 corresponds to Bailey telling the students that “they should believe in the trans-

figuration of those lives in line with the will of the Transcendent One.” Finally, Elihu’s lesson in 37:5, “God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend,” corresponds to Bailey saying, “All this is done by the use of the will, conditioning, fulfilling and overcoming.”

During the remainder of Chapter 37, Elihu praises God’s knowledge, power, justice, and righteousness, which helps to prepare Job for the crisis of initiation that he is about to confront. This chapter concludes with Elihu’s statement about God: “Therefore mortals fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit” (37:24, NRSV).

The LORD’s First Speech and Job’s Reply: 38:1–40:5

Chapters 38 and 39 describe the LORD’s reappearance in the story, starting with verses 38:1-5:

¹ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

² “Who *is* this who darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?

³ Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

The LORD continues with a long speech that asks Job many more questions about the observable world. Leo Perdue, Professor of Hebrew Bible, gives a traditional interpretation of this speech:

What follows in the first speech of God is a lengthy list of questions directed to Job, questions that ask if Job has the wisdom to understand the workings of the cosmos and if he possesses the power to rule over it. Yet the questions are asked in such a way as to emphasize that while Job may lack the knowledge and power to direct the cosmos, he should know that God does not. Thus, the first speech not only attests to God’s wisdom and power in creating and main-

taining the structures of the cosmos and its orders of life, but it also demonstrates Job’s own obvious limits as a finite human creature.⁶⁸

From our perspective, the LORD has begun to act as the Hierophant for Job’s initiation. What is the meaning of the “whirlwind” out of which the LORD speaks in 38:1? Several theosophical writers use the expression “winds of thought,”⁶⁹ which suggests that Job’s initiation takes place on the mental plane. Bailey provides this explanation:

We are considering facts which are substantial and real on the *mental plane*—the plane on which all the major initiations take place—but which are not materialised on the physical plane, and are not physical plane phenomena. The link between the two planes exists in the continuity of consciousness which the initiate will have developed, and which will enable him to bring through to the physical brain, occurrences and happenings upon the subjective planes of life.⁷⁰

Bailey describes the crisis of initiation:

Initiation might be defined at this point as the moment of crisis wherein the consciousness hovers on the very border-line of revelation. The demands of the soul and the suggestions of the Master might be regarded as in conflict with the demands of time and space, focussed in the personality or the lower man. You will have, therefore, in this situation a tremendous pull between the pairs of opposites; the field of tension or the focus of the effort is to be found in the disciple “standing at the midway point.” Will he respond and react consciously to the higher pull and pass on to new and higher areas of spiritual experience? Or will he fall back into the glamour of time and space and into the thralldom of the personal life? Will he stand in a static quiescent condition in which neither the higher trend nor the lower pull will affect him?⁷¹

“The demands of the soul” are represented by Elihu’s speech in Chapter 37, because Bailey’s “soul” is comparable to the “Holy Spirit” and to the role played by Elihu. “The suggestions

of the Master” are represented by the LORD’s speech in Chapters 38 and 39, because the presiding Master in this case is the LORD. Both messages pull in the upward direction, because they proclaim the superiority of divine knowledge; but they conflict with the demand of Job’s personality that its intelligence remains in control, which pulls in the downward direction. Job is “standing in the midway point,” being pulled between this pair of opposites, and his response is in verses 40:3-5:

- ³ Then Job answered the LORD and said:
⁴ “Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.
⁵ Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

In the final verse of his response, Job says, “I will proceed no further” (40:5). Using Bailey’s words from her last quotation, he appears to “stand in a static quiescent condition in which neither the higher trend nor the lower pull will affect him.”

The LORD’s Second Speech and Job’s Reply: 40:6–42:6

Chapters 40 and 41 contain the LORD’s second speech, starting with verses 40:6-8:

- ⁶ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:
⁷ “Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me:
⁸ “Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?”

James Wharton, Professor of Homiletics, gives a traditional interpretation of the speech’s conclusion:

God’s second speech concludes with poems describing two quite indescribable “beasts” or “monsters” that have puzzled biblical interpreters for the better part of two millennia. Who is “Behemoth” (40:15-24)? Who is “Leviathan” (41:1-34)? Vivid and complex as these twin poems are, their import in the context of God’s speech to Job is simple in the extreme: They are surely to be taken, in the first line, as variations on the theme that God is God and Job is not. Job is

expected to be overwhelmed by the sheer power and terror of these beings, but even more so by the fact that they exist as signs of God’s overarching power, which includes them, in all their chaotic terror, but also controls them.⁷²

Bailey continues her explanation of initiation, in which “astral vehicle” and “Angel of the Presence” are alternative names for emotional body and soul, respectively:

It is at this process, the Master *presides*. He is able to do nothing because it is the disciple’s own problem. He can only endeavour to enhance the desire of the soul by the power of His directed thought. The personality can also do nothing, for at this point both the physical body and the astral vehicle are simply automatons, waiting responsibly for the decision of the disciple, functioning in his mental body. Only the disciple can act upon the mental level of consciousness at this point of endeavour. Once he does so, the die is cast. He either moves forward towards the door of light where the Master takes his hand and the Angel of the Presence becomes potent and active in a way which I may not describe to you, or he drops back *temporarily* into the life condition of the lower man.⁷³

The LORD’s first speech demonstrates that Job is ignorant about the observable world. The LORD’s second speech demonstrates that Job is ignorant about the occult, or hidden, world. Because of these speeches, Job realizes that his personality’s knowledge is meager when compared to divine knowledge, and responds in verses 42:1-3, 6:

- ¹ Then Job answered the LORD and said:
² “I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.
³ You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
⁶ Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes.”

In the final verse of Job’s response (42:6), “myself” is taken as Job’s personality, because

its nature can be assessed through self-observation; to “repent” means to turn towards God (Acts 26:20); and “dust and ashes” signify humility, or the lack of false pride (Genesis 18:27). Consequently, Job rejects the control by his personality (“Therefore I abhor *myself*”), and turns his mind towards the Holy Spirit’s divine knowledge (“And repent”) and away from false pride (“in dust and ashes”). These mental actions enable Job to go through the door of the third initiation, because that initiation is characterized by Bailey in the following way:

At the third Initiation of Transfiguration, the control of the personality in the three worlds is broken in order that the Son of Mind, the soul, may be substituted finally for the concrete and hitherto directing lower mind. Again, through the Law of Sacrifice, the personality is liberated and becomes simply an agent of the soul.⁷⁴

Bailey continues her explanation of initiation:

Should he, however, go forward through that door, then (according to the initiation which becomes possible) will be the revelation and its attendant consequences. The revelation will *not* be the revelation of possibilities. It is a factual experience, resulting in the evocation of new powers and capacities and the recognition of new modes and fields of service.⁷⁵

According to this quotation, Job’s initiation results in the evocation of new powers, capacities, and recognitions, but what are they? We agree with the traditional commentators, such as Purdue and Wharton, that the LORD’s two speeches have the purpose of impressing on Job the meagerness of his personality’s knowledge and abilities. Another purpose emerges, however, after his initiation: Job, according to our extrapolation of the story, finds that those speeches evoke his new powers, capacities, and recognitions. Consequently, the LORD’s speeches are actually much more profound than traditionally thought.

Let us reconsider the LORD’s first speech, given in Chapters 38 and 39. It asks more than 70 questions about the observable world: from phenomena of the heavens, such as celestial

laws and constellations, to phenomena of the earth, such as the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Our extrapolation is that Job’s recollection of these questions after his initiation evokes his understanding of them, because of the knowledge that is imparted at his initiation, as Bailey explains:

At the third initiation “the secret of fohat” is given to him, and then the mystery of the threefold *body* of the triple Logos is his, and the *why* of the phenomena of the dense, liquid and gaseous bodies of the Supreme Being is enfolded before his amazed vision ... By the knowledge thus imparted, and the progress which the initiate has made in the study of the law of analogy, he can comprehend the manipulation of the same forces on a vastly larger scale in the planetary scheme and in the solar system. The method of development in the three earlier rounds is revealed to him, and he understands, practically as well as theoretically, the evolutionary process in its earlier stages. The key to the three lower kingdoms of nature is in his hands, and certain ideas anent the subject of polarity, of at-onement, and essential union, are beginning to come within his range of consciousness.⁷⁶

The above quotation contains some terms that have not yet been defined. Bailey characterizes *fohat* as “divine Purpose, actively functioning.”⁷⁷ The “triple Logos” is taken to be the Planetary Logos, because Bailey mentions “the triple nature of the Planetary Logos.”⁷⁸ “The three lower kingdoms of nature” are the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms.

According to Theosophy, our universe consists of seven worlds that are often called “planes” and that are arranged metaphorically in an upper and lower manner. The physical plane, which is the lowest plane, is said to have seven subplanes. The three lowest physical subplanes, called the dense, liquid, and gaseous subplanes, provide the substance for the dense physical bodies of human beings. An analogous situation holds for the Planetary Logos. Bailey writes, “our seven planes are only the seven subplanes of the cosmic physical plane,”⁷⁹ and speaks of “the appropriation of a dense physical body by the Planetary Logos;

this body is composed of matter of our three lower planes.”⁸⁰ The point is that our physical, emotional, and mental planes, which are the three lowest cosmic physical subplanes, provide the substance for the dense physical body of the Planetary Logos, and thereby form what the above quotation calls “the dense, liquid and gaseous bodies of the Supreme Being.”

Some additional definitions need to be considered. Bailey speaks of “the Great Illusion, in its three forms of illusion, glamour and maya.”⁸¹ For a person, *illusion* is a false belief, *glamour* is an illusion that has been intensified by desire,⁸² and *maya* is a glamour that has been intensified by vital energy.⁸³ For the planetary correspondences, Bailey uses the terms *world illusion*, *world glamour*, and *world maya*.⁸⁴

For example, when Job created his persona as his self-image of being righteous (29:14) and used it to feel superior to unrighteous people (30:1), it became an *illusion*. When Job intensified this illusion by adding the desire to defend and support it (27:6), he turned it into a *glamour*, which in turn formed and projected his shadow. Job’s shadow consisted of suppressed judgments of his own unrighteousness, and the projection of his shadow resulted in his condemnation of God and unrighteous people (9:17; 27:7-8). When Job intensified this glamour by adding vital energy to it (23:11), he created *maya*, which appeared outwardly as physical activity that was obsessional, compulsive, or based on fantasy. When Job regularly performed ritual sacrifices on behalf of his children in case they might have sinned (1:5), his physical activity was obsessional, because it was a persistent preoccupation that supported his own self-image of being righteous. When he wore sackcloth and put his head in the dust (16:15-17),

his physical activity was compulsive, because it kept him from feeling unrighteous. After Job imagined himself as presenting his case in God’s celestial court (23:3-7), he physically acted out that inner fantasy by presenting formal testimony to a public assembly as though

God were in attendance (30:20-23).

Let us reconsider the LORD’S second speech, given in Chapters 40 and 41, which describes the characteristics of two occult beasts: Behemoth and Leviathan. Our extrapolation of the story is that Job can understand this speech after his initiation, because he recognizes the two beasts as the planetary correspondences of his own personal beasts, namely, his personal maya and personal glamour. As discussed earlier, he broke the control of his personality at his initiation,

which means that he broke the control of his own personal beasts, which in turn means that he apprehended their characteristics.

Behemoth is interpreted as world maya for the following reasons: “Look now at the behemoth, which I made *along* with you” (40:15), which is similar to Bailey’s statement, “the Lord of the World is not identified with the maya which He has created”;⁸⁵ “He eats grass like an ox” (40:15), indicating that maya acts through the physical body, because an ox symbolizes the animal nature;⁸⁶ “Its strength is in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly” (40:16, NRSV), indicating that maya has the powers of both vitality and glamour, because these powers are seated in those areas;⁸⁷ “It makes its tail stiff like a cedar” (40:17, NRSV), which symbolizes maya’s involvement in sexual compulsions, because Habel regards the “Beast’s tail as a euphemism for his penis”;⁸⁸ “His bones *are like* beams of bronze, His ribs like bars of iron” (40:18),

Job craves honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Job gains pleasure when this craving is satisfied . . . but suffers when it is not satisfied . . . Even though these two experiences are contrasted in successive chapters, Job does not acknowledge the following truth about himself: his own craving causes his suffering. This truth is related to what Buddhists call “The Second Noble Truth.”

meaning that maya compels all parts of the physical body to use their strength for acting out strongly felt fantasies; “only its Maker can approach it with the sword” (40:19, NRSV), which means that only the Holy Spirit can subdue maya, because the Holy Spirit conveys “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17); “For the mountains yield food for it where all the wild animals play” (40:20, NRSV), indicating that maya fulfills fantasies of using the physical body for self-glorification, thereby reinforcing feelings of identification with that body, because mountains symbolize both idolatrous worship (Deuteronomy 12:2) and false pride (Isaiah 40:4); and “The lotus trees cover him *with* their shade; The willows by the brook surround him” (40:22), which indicates the difficulty of recognizing maya as being what it is, because both the mind and emotions accept its underlying illusion.

Leviathan is interpreted as world glamour for the following reasons: the question “Shall *one not* be overwhelmed at the sight of him?” (41:9), to which the answer is “yes,” but only if one observes glamour while detached from one’s feelings; the question “Who can remove his outer coat?” (41:13), to which the answer is the “Holy Spirit,” because only it can recognize glamour’s underlying belief as an illusion;⁸⁹ “There is terror all around its teeth” (41:14, NRSV), symbolizing that one’s glamour bites other people in the sense of making cruel, incisive criticisms of them (Galatians 5:15); “Its back is made of shields in rows, shut up closely as with a seal” (41:15, NRSV), indicating that glamour is constructed to defend false pride; “His breath kindles coals, And a flame goes out of his mouth” (41:21), signifying that glamour incites resentment, which is smoldering anger, and rage, which is intense anger, because fire is a symbol of anger (Isaiah 30:27); “His undersides *are* like sharp potsherds; He spreads pointed *marks* in the mire” (41:30), referring to glamour’s shadow and its suppressed judgments of self-condemnation; “He makes the sea like a pot of ointment” (41:31), which means that glamour uses feelings like an ointment that protects the persona in a superficial way, because the sea symbolizes the emotional body;⁹⁰ and “He *is*

king over all the children of pride” (41:34), signifying that glamour engenders false pride.

The LORD asks Job, with regard to Behemoth, “Can one take it with hooks or pierce its nose with a snare?” (40:24, NRSV), and then asks, “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down its tongue with a cord?” (41:1, NRSV). The hooks, snare, and cord are instruments for subduing animals, so Job is asked whether he can subdue Behemoth and Leviathan. After Job takes the third initiation and understands the meaning of these beasts, he realizes that his answer to both questions is “yes,” because he recognizes that he can subdue both world maya and world glamour with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Bailey writes, “At the third initiation ... a part of the plans of the Planetary Logos becomes revealed to him, and the vision includes the revelation of the plan and purpose as it concerns the planet.”⁹¹ The LORD’s second speech fulfills this pronouncement by revealing these goals: subduing world maya, symbolized by Behemoth; and subduing world glamour, symbolized by Leviathan. In our extrapolation of the story, Job’s recollection of this speech after his initiation evokes his recognition that his new fields of service involve these goals, as Bailey explains:

*Fancy rests upon images which have no real existence ... This is one of the sutras which, though apparently short and simple, is of the most profound significance; it is studied by high initiates who are learning the nature of the creative process of the planet, and who are concerned with the dissipation of planetary maya.*⁹²

It is the problem of humanity itself, as a whole, to work in the world glamour; it is the responsibility of the aspirants of the world to guide humanity out of the valley of glamour. Men must learn to understand it and eventually—aided by the senior disciples of the world, trained by the Masters of the Wisdom—to transmute and dispel it.⁹³

Epilogue: 42:7-17

The remainder of Chapter 42 is the epilogue. We comment only on the initial

portion in verses 42:7-9:

⁷ And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*.⁸ Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your* folly; because you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*.”⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job.

William Stevenson, Professor of Semitic Languages, describes the contradictions that arise from the traditional method of interpreting these verses:

No sentence in the folk-tale has had a more mischievous influence on the interpretation of the poem than the words addressed to Eliphaz by the Almighty, as recorded at the end of the book, in ch. 42, ver. 7: ‘you have not spoken truth regarding me, as my servant Job has done.’ When the poem is read without the prejudice injected by this sentence, it is clear that Job’s words were generally less in agreement with religious principles than were those of his three comforters. God’s judgment on Job’s speeches is expressed in the poem in the words: ‘who here darkens debate in words devoid of knowledge?’ (38:2).⁹⁴

Stevenson resolves these contradictions by regarding the prose framework, consisting of the prologue and epilogue, as a “folk-tale” that is independent of the enclosed poem. Our symbolic analysis, however, treats the entire book as a coherent narrative without yielding any contradictions, as shown next.

Before interpreting 42:7-9, let us consider the meaning of its symbols. The Sanskrit word *chakra* literally means “wheel.” Yoga philosophy describes seven wheels of energy, called chakras, that belong to the subtle counterpart

of the dense physical body and have the following locations and Sanskrit names:

1. Head centre—sahasrara chakra
2. Centre between eyebrows—ajna chakra
3. Throat centre—vishuddha chakra
4. Heart or cardiac centre—anahata chakra
5. Solar plexus centre—manipura chakra
6. Sacral or sexual centre—svadhisthana chakra
7. Centre at base of spine—muladhara chakra.⁹⁵

The “seven bulls and seven rams” (42:8) are taken as the evolutionary and involutory energies associated with the seven chakras, because the up-turned horns of the bull depict the push upward towards illumination, and the down-turned horns of the ram depict the downward attraction for the material world. The bull and ram have similar astrological significances.⁹⁶ These energies include thoughts and their interior results, such as feelings, desires, and urges. There are no neutral energies, since, in the words of *ACIM*, “A neutral result is impossible because a neutral thought is impossible.”⁹⁷ Thus the bull and ram for a chakra depict the whole range of bodily and psychic energies that are associated with that chakra.

Matthew Easton, author of a leading Bible dictionary, gives this definition for *burnt offering*: “the whole being consumed by fire, and regarded as ascending to God while being consumed. Part of every offering was burnt in the sacred fire, but this was wholly burnt, a ‘whole burnt offering.’”⁹⁸

The Sanskrit word *kundalini* literally means “coiled.” Yoga philosophy considers kundalini to be an instinctive force that lies coiled at the base of the spine. Bailey defines *Word of Power* as “enunciated sound ... with the full purpose of the will behind it”⁹⁹ and gives this description of the raising of kundalini:

The Kundalini Fire, about which so much is taught and written in the East, and increasingly in the West, is ... then raised by the use of a Word of Power (sent forth by the will of the Monad) and by the united authority of the soul and personality, integrated and alive. The human being who can do this in full consciousness is therefore an ini-

tiante who has left the third initiation behind him. He, and he alone, can safely raise this triple fire from the base of the spine to the head centre.¹⁰⁰

When the kundalini fire rises from the base of the spine, it becomes a great moving force that carries all before it, for which Bailey describes this result: “the final transference of all the bodily and psychic energies into the head centre.”¹⁰¹ The kundalini fire acting on the whole range of energies of a chakra is analogous to a sacrificial fire consuming the whole animal on an altar, because the ascension of the whole range of energies to the head center is like the ascension of the whole burnt offering to God.

Let us now consider the symbolic meaning of 42:7-9. As discussed previously, Job’s three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) represent Job’s threefold personality. The LORD states in 42:7 that Job’s personality has not spoken “*what is right*” but Job has. In other words, at the third initiation, Job frees himself from being controlled by his personality and instead expresses the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The LORD gives Job’s personality the following command in 42:8: with regard to the whole range of energies for each of the seven chakras, submit to Job’s authority and offer up these energies as “a burnt offering”—which means that they ascend to the head center through the raising of the kundalini fire—whenever Job issues an appropriate Word of Power, or “prayer.” According to 42:9, Job’s personality did as the LORD commanded it, raising kundalini whenever Job issued his order; for Job gained this ability through being accepted by the LORD as an initiate of the third degree.

Conclusions

Blavatsky makes a key distinction: “Every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship.”¹⁰² The traditional method of interpreting the *Book of Job*, which accepts the story as it is literally presented, yields an exoteric teaching; the symbolic method of interpretation, which takes the story as a poem of initiation, yields an esoteric teaching. In our view, both kinds of

teachings were intended by the original author, and either kind can be helpful for those who can relate to it. The various paradoxes and contradictions that arise with a traditional interpretation serve as clues to a deeper meaning.

Bailey speaks of the following phenomenon: “a revelation has precipitated upon the mental plane and—owing to failure rightly to apprehend and interpret it or to apply it usefully—it has developed into an illusion and enters upon a career of deception, of crystallisation and of misinformation.”¹⁰³ A symbolic interpretation of the *Book of Job* has precipitated upon the mental plane in the form of this article, and it is a revelation in the sense that it makes many claims that have not been published elsewhere. Whether or not this interpretation is essentially valid, if it is misapprehended or misapplied, it would develop into an illusion and enter upon a career of deception and misinformation. To avoid that unhappy outcome, let us consider how this symbolic interpretation might be misapprehended or misapplied during each initiatory stage:

1. *The Tests*. In Chapters 1 and 2, a Master discerns Job’s weaknesses and imposes tests that will enable him to grow in self-mastery. One should not deliberately try to attract the attention of a Master, however, as Bailey explains: “Students must attend to the immediate duty and prepare their mechanisms for service in the world, and should desist from wasting time and looking for a Master; they should achieve mastery where now they are defeated and in the life of service and of struggle they may then reach the point of such complete self-forgetfulness that the Master may find no hindrance in His approach to them.”¹⁰⁴

2. *Occult Blindness*. In Chapter 3, the tests induce in Job what is called “occult blindness,” which leads to greater self-reliance and self-knowledge. One should not deliberately impose such an experience on oneself, however, as Bailey explains: “Blindness nurtures and protects, provided it is innate and natural, soul-imposed or spiritually engendered. If it is willfully self-induced, if it provides an alibi for grasped knowledge, if it is assumed in order to avoid re-

sponsibility, then sin enters in and difficulty ensues. From this may all of you be protected.”¹⁰⁵

3. *Internal Conflict*. In Chapters 4 through 27, the tests induce Job’s internal conflict by contradicting his self-image of being righteous. Having such a self-image is not necessarily unwise, because it is an admirable ideal at an early stage of one’s evolution. Bailey speaks of the progress that occurs when “your ideals have been superseded by greater and more spiritual ones.”¹⁰⁶ Job’s progress was blocked when he became attached to an ideal that was no longer appropriate for him.

4. *External Conflict*. In Chapters 29 through 31, the tests induce Job’s external conflict by frustrating his craving to receive honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Having such a craving is not necessarily unwise, because everyone needs to pass through a stage in which there is, in Bailey’s words, “Power to influence, sway, guide and hold others within the range of individual purpose and desire.”¹⁰⁷ Job’s progress was blocked when he became attached to a stage that he outgrew.

5. *Inner Purification*. In Chapters 32 through 37, the tests induce Job’s receptivity to the Holy Spirit’s teaching, which enables him to resolve his internal and external conflicts through inner purification. An aspirant should not simply follow any inner voice that is heard, however, because it may be one of these listed by Bailey: “his subconscious ‘wish life,’” “the result of the man tuning in telepathically upon the mind or the minds of others,” “all kinds and types of incarnate or discarnate men, ranging in character from very good to very bad,” and “the injunctions and impulses of his own personality.”¹⁰⁸ People can be left to the guidance of the Holy Spirit only when they understand what is happening to them and can discriminate among their various inner voices.

6. *Crisis of Initiation*. In Chapters 38 through 41, Job undergoes the crisis of the third initiation, showing that he was able to

learn from and surmount his tests. The conclusion should not be drawn, however, that one should seek to be initiated. Bailey writes, “There is much talk these days concerning the mysteries of initiation. Every country is full of spurious teachers, teaching the so-called Mysteries, offering spurious initiations (usually at a cost and with a diploma) and misleading the people.”¹⁰⁹ Seeking to be initiated could be a form of spiritual selfishness that leads to separateness rather than usefulness in service.

7. *Aftermath*. In Chapter 42, Job gains the ability to raise kundalini as a consequence of taking the third initiation. Such raising should not be attempted earlier, as Bailey explains: “The raising of the kundalini force—if brought about ignorantly and prematurely—may produce the rapid burning through of the protective web of etheric matter which separates the various areas of the body (controlled by the seven centres) from each other. This causes serious nervous trouble, inflammation of the tissues, spinal disease, and brain trouble.”¹¹⁰ Here, the term “etheric” denotes the subtle counterpart of the dense physical body.

Perhaps this symbolic interpretation of the *Book of Job*, when augmented by the above reservations, may be found to be helpful.

¹ “The top 100 books of all time,” *The Guardian* (8 May 2002), <http://guardian.co.uk/world/2002/may/08/books.booksnews> (accessed October 1, 2012).

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³ *Ibid.*, 716.

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- 8 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 686.
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