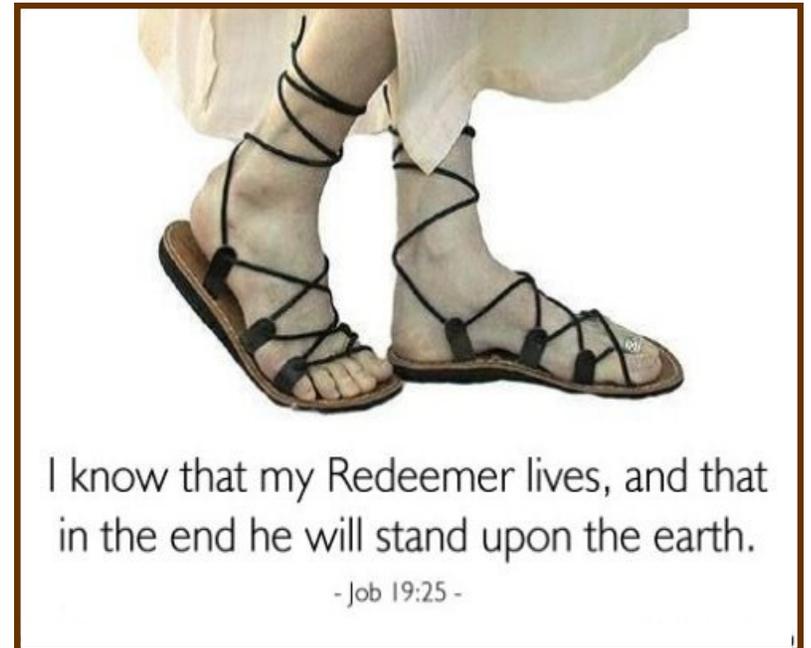


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Job

Chapter Forty One:



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

- Job 19:25 -

The Great Power of Satan

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

CHAPTER FORTY ONE: THE GREAT POWER OF SATAN

The First Lesson: God can not be Reproached

1 I will not arouse him as though I were cruel. For who can resist my glance? 2 And who gave something first to me that I must repay him? Everything under heaven belongs to me. 3 I will not spare him for his powerful words to turn me away by prayer. 4 Who will uncover the face of its clothing? And who will enter the middle of his mouth? Terrible is the circle of his teeth. 6 His body is like cast metal shields welded together, compact with scales closely joined together. 7 One is joined to another, nor can breath pass between them. 8 One will adhere to another and they hold themselves together and cannot be separated in any way.

After the Lord had enumerated the power of Leviathan, in that man cannot conquer him but only God, now he tells of his power respecting his ability to act against others. Since “there is no power unless it comes from God,” (Rom. 13:1), someone could ascribe cruelty to God, in the sense that he gave such great power to so harmful a creature. So to exclude this he says, “I will not arouse him as though I were cruel,” that is I will not permit him to be exalted by the power I gave him. This seems to answer what Job had said already, “You are changed for me into someone cruel,” (30:21) He shows that this must not be attributed to him as cruelty for three reasons. First, because of the power of God himself, and so he says, “For who can resist my glance,” that is, my providence? This is as if he should say: Even though Leviathan is as powerful as could be, he cannot resist my providence, so that he only uses his power as I will. My will does not aim at the destruction of men but at their salvation. Second, he shows the same thing from the bestowing of his goodness by which he distributes his good things freely to everyone. So he says, “And who gave something first to me that I must repay him,” implying the answer, “No one”. From this it is clear that I love everything which I made and I freely communicate my good things to them. Therefore I do not have any cruel intention against anything I have made. This relates to the next verse, “Everything under heaven belongs to me,” because they are created, conserved and governed by me, and no one wants to do evil to his own things. Third, he shows that he is not cruel in permitting Satan to be raised up in his power, because he defers to him in nothing. For it is a characteristic of cruelty that when someone wants to favor a tyrant, he tolerates patiently the afflictions of many people. Men favor some powerful men for two reasons. In one way because of fear of his threats, but the Lord excludes this from himself saying, “I will not spare him,” that is, I will defer to him in nothing so as not to resist him as is necessary, “for his powerful words,” because of the threatening words he used as though trying to show his power. In another way someone favors a powerful person as if he is allured by him with flattering words, and to exclude this he says, “words to turn me away by prayer” as if to say: Although he should threaten powerfully or deprecatingly, I still will not defer to him in anything, because there is no compatibility “of light to darkness.” (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14)

Since he has said many things about the properties of Leviathan as an image of the devil, he consequently explains this metaphor. As I said already, all the properties treated seem to be reduced to two. One of these is that he cannot be harmed by another, and he explains this saying, “He has been made to fear no one,” that is, the devil fears no man nor any other corporeal creature from the condition of the nature in which he was made by God. Another is that Leviathan has the power to do great and powerful actions, and he explains this saying, “he sees everything which is sublime,” that is, the intention of the devil is to attach himself to whatever is sublime. As these properties are characteristic of pride, he shows as a consequence that the devil is not only proud in himself, but he exceeds everyone in pride and is the source of pride in others. So he continues, “he is the king over all the sons of pride,” that is, over those who are slaves of pride, who all follow his leadership. Consider, then, that the Lord has begun to clearly show the action which he works in evil men, with the proud, (40:6) and so he completes his narrative with the proud. This is to show above all that Job had to fear that the devil, who desired to tempt him, tried in a special way to tempt him to pride, and thus to transfer him to his kingdom. Therefore, he should beware of affection and words which have the flavor of pride.

END OF JOB CHAPTER 41

Men often overcome others not only by striking them but also by threatening to strike him. But neither the devil nor the whale is intimidated by any threat on the part of man, and so he continues, "and he will deride the vibrating pike." For the brandishing of the spear is like a threat strike. Just as one man sometimes overcomes another by intimidating him with threats, so he also wins him over by alluring him with promises, especially when one promises gifts which allure a man because they are beautiful or precious. Nothing seems more beautiful among corporeal bodies than the rays of the sun. But this beauty does not attract Leviathan whether understood corporally or spiritually, and to show this he continues, "The rays of the sun will be under him," because he does not prize them as something great, and consequently we are given to understand that he prizes nothing else excellent among human things. Gold is reckoned especially precious among the things which man uses, and as to this, he says, "and he will throw gold aside as though it were mud," i.e., he will hold it in contempt as something vile. Therefore it is clear that he cannot be allured by man.

Therefore, after he proves that Leviathan cannot be overcome by man, God shows next that he cannot be overcome by the sea or any fish in the sea, because of the strong action which he does in the sea. Pliny says that "some animals in the Eastern ocean are so big that they churn the seas from the bottom," and make storms in the sea. These animals certainly belong to the genus of whales. To indicate this he says, "He will make the depths of the sea boil like a pot," for just as boiling water rolls about in a pot, so the waves of the sea are stirred by the violent movements of this fish. This violent motion begins in the depths and arrives at the surface, and so he says, "and he will apply it like ointments," which make a greater foam and motion on the surface than mere water which does not contain so much air, "effervescent". By this he indicates the disturbance which the devil excites in this world. Just as he produces a great effect when he moves about in the depths of the sea, so also he causes a great effect when he moves about on the surface. To indicate this he says, "His wake will shine behind him." For just as when a ship moves through the sea, it leaves a long wake where it passed by because of the movement and foam which it causes in the water, so also the same thing happens because of the motion of this fish because of his great size. This indicates that the effect of the disturbance which the devil excites in the world does not immediately pass away, but sometimes endures for a long time. For since the whale does such powerful movements in the sea, he fears nothing in the depths of the sea, and so "he will measure" the deep," i.e., the depth of the sea, "like an old man," i.e., as though it has an end and is powerless to swallow him up. For when a thing is old, it is weak and near the end. From this he indicates that the devil does not account the damnation of hell so great that he ceases to strive against God because of it as though his damnation must end. Just as Leviathan cannot be overcome either by man in the sea or by some creature in the sea, so he cannot be overcome by any land animal, and so he says, "There is no power on earth comparable to him." For there is no animal on earth as large as a whale in the sea, and so Pliny says that in the sea there are "greater animals than on land, and the evident cause is the profusion of moisture." By this he indicates that no material power can equal the power of a demon which is a power of spiritual nature.

After he has said these things to remove the charge of cruelty against himself, he proceeds to describe the power of Leviathan, and first he describes his shape beginning with his head. It is said that "above the eyes of whales there are certain horns in the form of a great pruning hook. There are two hundred fifty over one and the same over the other, and the whale uses them to cover his eye at the time of a great storm." To express this he says, "Who will uncover the face of its clothing?" that is, what man can approach so near to the whale that he can strip these coverings from his face? By this we are given to understand that no man is sufficient to reveal the cunning ways of the devil. Another author says that "in his throat he has some skin like a membrane, and it is perforated with many openings to not allow any large bodies to go down to his stomach," because his digestion would be blocked by it, if he swallowed some large animal whole. To show this he says, "and who will enter in the middle of his mouth?" i.e. to scrutinize those narrow channels by which small fish descend to his stomach? He shows by this that no one can know the intention of the devil by which he is said to swallow men spiritually. Another author says that the whale has a large opening of the mouth "provided with teeth which are very large and very long, and two teeth especially are longer than the others like elephants or boars." Thus to show these two largest teeth are farthest out he says, "Will you open the doors of his face?" for those two great teeth seem like two doors by which the mouth of the whale is opened. In this image he shows that no man can open the mouth of the devil to extract sinners from his power, whom he swallows as though through two doors violence and cunning. As for the other teeth of the whale he says, "Terrible is the circle of his teeth," because he has teeth around his mouth so great that he can strike terror into those who see him. By this image he expresses the terror that the devil inspires in men to impel them to sin. One can also interpret his teeth as the rest of the demons, or even evil men who induce others to evil by their power by frightening them.

When the Lord has described these characteristics of the head of Leviathan, he proceeds to the order of his body which he describes as like a fish having scales. So according to the great size of his body, he should have great scales like shields, so he says, "His body is like cast metal shields welded together," which are without joints, for wooden shields are joined by tying them together. But the devil is compared to all evildoers as the head to the body, and so sinners who defend others in evil are like the shields of the body of the devil. He shows as a consequence that his scales are not only large but also pressed close together like a fish with many scales. So he shows this saying, "compact with the scales closely joining each other," by which he shows the great number of evil men. He shows their perverse accord in evil when he says, "One is joined to another," because as on the body of some fish each scale is not joined to the other at random but there is an order among them; so also in the crowd of evildoers, all do not form a society with all of them, but rather certain men with certain men. As long as the fish is alive and strong, his scales are full of life, so thus they adhere close to each other and to the skin of the body that not even air can come between them. But when the fish either dies or is sick or his scales dry out for some reason, then this connection is relaxed little by little so that the scales themselves become curved and something rather large can even enter between them. To show, then, the vigor of the scales of Leviathan he says, "nor can breath pass between them," that is, through the space between the scales. By this he means that the evil are not separated in their complicity to malice by any spiritual persuasion or internal inspiration. Therefore, to show the obstinacy of their consensus to evil he says, "One will adhere to another," by mutual favor and consent, "they hold themselves together and cannot be separated in any way," because of their obstinant consent in evil, like the scales of Leviathan cannot be separated from each other by human power.

So after he has described the way the devil bears himself for the assault of God, he shows how he is disposed to the assault of a creature, and first for the assault of man. Man attacks someone at close quarters or at a distance. He attacks someone at close quarters armed with a sword and spear to strike another and a breastplate as his defense. So he says, "When the sword," of man, "has caught him (Leviathan) it," i.e., the sword, "will not be able to stand without breaking," because of the hardness of his body, "nor the spear," be able to stand," nor the breastplate," by which the chest is protected, be able to stand against Leviathan. He assigns the reason for this saying, "For he will treat iron like straw," for just as a man cannot be wounded by straws and easily breaks them, so Leviathan cannot be wounded by an iron sword or spear, but easily breaks things like that. Likewise, he will consider the "Bronze," of the breastplate, "like rotten wood," which cannot resist a blow. By this he indicates that no human power is capable of wounding the devil or resisting him, but every human power is reckoned by the devil as naught.

Man also attacks someone from a distance with arrows and stones launched by sling, but those weapons have no power against a whale either, and so he says, "The archer will not put him to flight," with a flight of arrows, which he does not fear because he cannot be wounded by them. Just as arrows discharged from far off wound someone internally, so stones from a sling wound him by bruising externally. But just as the whale cannot be pierced with arrows, so he cannot be bruised by stones thrown against him, and so he says, "and stones of the sling are turned into stubble," because just as stubble cannot pummel anyone because it is too light and so the whale cannot suffer any harm from stones of a sling. By this he shows that just as the devil cannot be harmed by human power by a kind of blow at close quarters, so also he cannot be harmed by the cunning of man by a kind of blow from far away. As someone is bruised from a great distance by stones shot from a sling, so also something is bruised at close quarters by a hammer, but the whale cannot be harmed even in this way by man, and so he says, "He will treat the hammer as stubble." This also can mean the same thing as the other image he has already used, except that the hammer deals a heavier blow than stones from a sling. So this can be understood to mean that however much the strength and effort of man is extended, it is held in contempt by the devil.

Second, he shows the reaction of Leviathan to what God does against him, when he says, "His heart will be hardened like stone." Hardness describes a natural power which is not easily corrupted by an exterior agent. This verse shows the natural power of the heart of the whale, because he is not easily corrupted by an exterior agent trying to harm him. To indicate this hardness, the example of the stone was sufficient when one was talking about light blows, but not about greater ones, for although one cannot break a stone with his hand, it still can be broken with an iron hammer. So to indicate the power of the whale even against grave harms he says, "he is compressed together like the blacksmith's anvil," which is not shattered by the striking of hammers but seems more solid. With this verse he describes the obstinacy in evil of the devil and his members, since they are not softened regarding evil by divine blows.

Third, he shows the final effect of the divine striking. For though he seems to resist every kind of divine scourges, he still must finally be overcome by them, and so he says, "When he will fall," by divine power from his place, "the angels will tremble with fear," wondering about the divine power. In their wonder many effects of the divine power become known to them, and so he says, "and terrified, they will be cleansed." For as Dionysius says in Chapter 6 of *The Divine Names*, angels are said to be purified not from filth but from ignorance. But since every corporeal creature is something small compared to the holy angels, this does not seem principally to describe the wonder of the heavenly angels at the killing of a corporeal whale, unless perhaps we understand the heavenly angels to mean holy men. A better interpretation is that the whale principally refers to the spiritual Leviathan, the devil, who was cast down by divine power when he fell from heaven through sin. (Is. 14:12) Then the angels were struck with wonder at the divine majesty and were cleansed by separation from Satan's society. Likewise also on the day of judgment when the devil is cast down with all his members into hell, the angels and all the saints will wonder at divine power and they will be cleansed in everything else by their complete separation from the evil ones. This is indicated from the Apocalypse where after the devil has been cast down, a loud voice is heard in heaven saying, "Now the salvation, the power and the kingdom of our God have come." (12:10)

The Second Lesson: How Satan acts in Sinners

9 His sneeze is a resplendent fire and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn. 10 From his mouth, the lamps go forth like flaming pine logs. 11 From his nostrils, smoke comes forth like pots of boiling water on the fire. 12 His breath makes live coals blaze and flame comes forth from his mouth. 13 Power will reside in his neck and want will go before his face, 14 the members of his flesh cling together. He will send thunder bolts against him and they will not be born to another place. 15 His heart will be hardened like stone and compressed together like a blacksmith's anvil. 16 When he will fall, the angels will tremble with fear and terrified, they will be cleansed. 17 When the sword has caught him, it will not stand nor the spear nor the breastplate. 18 For he will treat iron like straw and bronze like rotten wood. 19 The archer will put him to flight and stones of the sling are turned to stubble. 20 He will treat the hammer like stubble and will deride the vibrating pike. 21 The rays of the sun will be under him and he will throw gold aside as though it were mud. 22 He will make the depths of the sea boil like a pot and will apply it like effervescent ointments. 23 His wake will shine behind him, he will measure the deep like an old man. 24 There is no power on earth comparable to him. He has been made to fear no one. 25 He sees everything which is sublime: He is king over the sons of Pride.

After the Lord describes the order of Leviathan, he next describes his powerful action. As he first described the ordering of his head and then his body, so too he first begins to enumerate the actions which belong to his head. The first and most important part of the head is the brain, whose excitement causes an animal to sneeze. So he describes the sneeze of Leviathan saying, "His sneeze is a resplendent fire," because the sneeze of Leviathan produces such a great disturbance of the waters that it causes a kind of whiteness in the troubled water. This resembles the flash of fire. This can also refer to the fact that when our head or eyes are strongly disturbed, we see stars like the flash of fire and so since the concussion in the head of Leviathan must be much greater when he sneezes, much more does such a flash go forth. He clearly describes this that the concussion of the head of the devil, i.e., his temptations, the flash of fire, of either anger, concupiscence, or vainglory leaps forth. The eyes are next in importance among the other parts of the head, and so he says, "and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn." For the eye is transparent by reason of its smoothness. The whale has large eyes because of the size of his head and his whole body, and so a certain diffused clarity appears in their glance like the clarity of the dawn. By this image he describes the temporal prosperity which the devil promises to man. Third, he describes the work or effect of his mouth when he says, "from his mouth lamps go forth like flaming pine logs." Consider here that a pine log is a type of wood which when lit gives forth a pleasant odor. It is said of the whale that "when he is very hungry, he emits from his mouth a fragrant vapor like the smell of amber. Fish, delighted in this smell, enter his mouth and are eaten by him." Therefore, the vapors emitted from the mouth of the whale are called lamps because of the great amount of their heat generated from his insides. But they are compared to flaming pine logs because of their smell, as was said. By this he describes the fact that the devil enkindles men to the concupiscence of sin by showing them some good as though giving forth an odor. Fourth, he discusses the operation of his nostrils. For this animal has a lung and breathes like a dolphin, and to show this he says, "From his nostrils," which are principal organs needed for breathing," comes forth, "by breathing, "smoke," that is, a burning air from the great heat which is necessary for this animal to move such great bulk. So he clearly says, "like pots of boiling water on the fire," for the air which he sends forth in breathing was contained in his lung, where it was heated by the heat of the heart which is next to the lungs, like water is heated in a pot and boils when fire is applied to it. Since an animal breathes not only through the nostrils but also through the mouth, he describes the action of his mouth in a fifth place saying, "His breath," i.e., his exhaling, coming from his mouth, "makes live coals blaze," for it is so hot and so strong that it would be sufficient to light coals. For he speaks in a metaphor of those who can make live coals by blowing under them saying, "and flame comes forth from his mouth," because the vapor coming from this mouth is so hot and igneous that it can be rightly compared to a flame. By all these things he shows that the devil enkindles the fire of perverse desire in man by his hidden or open suggestion.

When he has described what pertains to the power of the head of Leviathan, God moves on to describe what pertains to the power of his members. Consider that, as Aristotle says, in *The History of Animals* II, "no fish has a neck," except those who generate animals like dolphins. Whales also belong to this genus. So he begins to describe the strength of his neck when he says, "power will reside in his neck," which is necessary for so large an animal to carry the weight of his head. Because the neck joins the head to the body, one can understand by the neck of Leviathan those through whom the devil exercises his evil against others, who are as powerful men as possible and whom the others reverence or even fear. It is evident that this animal needs a lot of food, since it is of such great size, and so when a whale is in some part of the sea, it swallows a lot of the fish living there, so that the sea before his gaze remains almost empty of fish. He expresses this saying, "and want will go before his face," because he attracts fish to himself as has been said above, (v. 10) and the sea remains empty of fish before him. By this he means the want of virtues in men is caused before the face of the devil, i.e. by his suggestion. He shows then the power of the other parts of his body when he says, "the members of his flesh cling together," because of their density, which shows the consent of the members of the devil to evil.

After he describes the strength of Leviathan in acting, he next treats of his power to resist. Although he can resist human power in action, he cannot resist the strength of divine action anywhere, and so first he shows what God does against him when he says, "He will send thunderbolts against him." For clearly thunderbolts frequently fall into the sea and sometimes even create danger to ships. So it is also probable that sometimes thunderbolts strike whales, and so one attributes this to God because of the grandeur and terror of this effect. So the Lord said already, "Will you send the lightning and will it go." (38:35) He then says, "and they will not be born to another place," which can have two senses. First, to show the great size of his body. For lightning usually strikes in one place and is reflected by rebounding to other places close by. But the body of Leviathan is so great that when lightning strikes it, it is not reflected from his body. In another sense this can mean the infallibility of the divine operation. Just as a skilled archer shoots the arrows in a direct line so that he only strikes the target, so when God wants to send forth lightning bolts like arrows against Leviathan or any other creature, they only go to the place where he releases them, as Wisdom says, "Bolts of lightning will go directly to their goal." (5:22) By this he describes the divine scourges, which God sends against the devil and his members in such a way that they are not born to others. For if sometimes the good are scourged by God with temporal adversities, nevertheless, he permits this for the glory of the saints and the greater condemnation of the devil and his evil ones.