

Your Letters



The Satan of the book of Job

I've just received the January issue of the *Testimony* and read with interest the discussion regarding Satan in Job ([p. 360](#)). I would like to share several arguments put forward by Brother John Pople in a manuscript on Job, as yet unpublished. Several incongruities arise if one concludes that Satan is indeed one of the heavenly host.

Firstly, it is important to note that the adversary is an opponent not only of Job, but also of God. The dialogue with the Almighty is definitely adversarial in tenor. Satan asks, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side?" (1:9,10).^{*} Consequently, if Satan is the opponent of God, he by nature cannot be 'good' as we would expect of the angels, endowed with immortality.

Secondly, the angels are with God in both the sense of physical proximity and unity of purpose. "[The] angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father Who is in heaven" (Mt. 18:10). Hence the question, "From where do you come?", posed to Satan was not to ascertain information, but to let the reader know that Satan was not one of the heavenly host. Rather, Satan identifies himself as coming "From . . . the earth" (Job. 1:7). Furthermore, when the sons of God presented themselves before the Lord, the same language is used elsewhere to describe the assembling of men, not angels (Ex. 34:1,2; Lev. 14:11; Jude v. 24).

That Satan is not an angel is confirmed by the Apostle Peter, who wrote that it was impossible for an angel to bring a slanderous accusation against a righteous man: "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord" (2 Pet. 2:11, AV). Although I am told the Greek is somewhat ambiguous, the weight of the argument is not lessened, whether Peter is referring to the ecclesial leaders or the blasphemous false teachers in the passage. Bringing forth accusations is not the purview of angels.

Rather, the evidence would point to Satan as representative of the ungodly human desires of Job's three friends. Satan, for instance, appears driven by jealousy of Job's material possessions.

Why would an angel concern himself with the extent of Job's flocks and possessions?

In addition, Satan is not very bright. His entire argument is based on the premise that he is more clever than God. He has observed something that God has apparently missed. Satan thought that Job's obedience was driven by a selfish motive. One would be hard pressed to conclude that an angel could be so presumptuous or so dense. Furthermore, once Satan's assumption was proven false, and Job remained faithful (1:20-22), Satan maintained that he was still right, and if he could simply change the criteria and affect Job's health then God's error in judgement would become self-evident (2:3-5). Such is the nature of human reasoning.

The adversary does not disappear from the book of Job, but remains central to the drama, and is ultimately rebuked in the personage of Job's three friends (42:7,8). The evil machinations of these men's minds were acted upon by God, and in the end, with their error exposed, they were redeemed by the priestly intercession of righteous Job. The underlying message of the book speaks of God's desire to bring salvation even to Satan. It demonstrates the depths of God's love in providing redemption to such an opponent, and, by extension, to us all.

Alan Ghent
Mississauga, Ontario

May I be allowed to comment on Martin Cragg's letter under this heading ([Jan. 2009, p. 360](#))?

He says regarding Job 38:6,7 that this does not refer to the original Creation, as "The reference to the corner stone allows the confident identification of this joyous occasion to be at the future foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth". Are we to understand, then, that the rest of chapter 38 has no reference to the Creation? Does he really think that Job would have understood Yahweh's words in the way that he suggests? Did Job know about the future Kingdom? If so, why does he not refer to it?

With regard to the comment, "God later testifying that Job had spoken right things about Him",

^{*} Quotations from the NASB unless stated otherwise.

what are we to make of such questions as, “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”, and, “wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?” (38:2; 40:8)? Also, why did Job recant in 42:1-6 on the basis of Yahweh’s challenge in 38:2?

Martin Cragg refers to one who “pitilessly wanted [Job] to be tried to the end”, a reference to Elihu (see 34:36). If Elihu was pitiless, why was he not rebuked with the others? If he was in the wrong, why did not a merciful God instruct him to approach Job with the others and make the appropriate sacrifice (42:7-9)? What exactly did Elihu mean by the words “the end” (34:36) within the context of his speech? Finally, why does so

much of what Elihu said correspond with what Yahweh said? See, for example, 35:16; 38:2; 42:3; and there is much else.

Tom McCarthy
Newport

Just as there have been two views put forward by Christadelphian authors on the identity of Satan in the book of Job, as demonstrated by Brother Noakes ([Jan. 2009, p. 362](#)), so there have been two views on Elihu, one being that he spoke on behalf of God and the other being that he lines up with the three friends as speaking wrongly about Job. Readers who wish to comment should bear this in mind.—T.B.