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Job

Chapter Thirty Eight:



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

- Job 19:25 -

God Resolves the Question

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

CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT: GOD RESOLVES THE QUESTION

The First Lesson: What Can Man Understand?

1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 2 Who is that man who envelops his opinions with inept arguments? 3 Gird up your loins like a man. I will question you and you 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, if you know it? Or who stretched the measuring line upon the earth? 6 On what were the bases of the land sunk or who has laid the cornerstone 7 when each of the morning stars praised me, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 Who shut up the sea with doors when it burst forth as though coming from a womb, 9 when he laid out the clouds as its clothing, and I wrapped it in fog like the swaddling clothes of an infant? 10 I surrounded it with my limits and placed the bar and the doors. 11 And I said: Thus far shall you come and you will not proceed further and here shall your proud waves break. 12 After your rising, did you command the dawn and have you shown the dawn its place?

After the discussion of Job and his friends about divine providence took place, Eliud had assumed to himself the office of determining the answer, contradicting Job in some things and his friends in others. But because human wisdom is not sufficient to understand the truth of divine providence, it was necessary that this dispute should be determined by divine authority. Since Job thought correctly about divine providence, but in his manner of speaking he had gone to excess that he had caused scandal in the hearts of the others when they thought that he did not show due reverence to God, therefore, the Lord, as the determiner of the question, contradicts the friends of Job because they did not think correctly, (42:7) Job himself for expressing himself in an inordinate way, (v. 3ff. and Eliud for an inadequate determination of the question. (v.2) So the text continues, "The Lord answered Job," because this answer was more on his account, although he had not spoken immediately before. Then he shows the manner of response saying, "out of the whirlwind," which can certainly be understood according to the literal sense to mean that the voice of God was formed miraculously in the air by some disturbance of the air, as happened on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 20:18, or like the voice which spoke to Christ, which some said, "was like a clap of thunder," as one reads in John 12:29. Or this can be understood metaphorically, so that this answer of the Lord is an interior inspiration divinely given to Job himself, and so the Lord is said to have answered him, "out of the whirlwind," both because of the disturbance which he still suffered and also because of the darkness which accompanies a whirlwind, since we cannot perceive divine inspiration clearly in this life, but with the darkness of sensible likenesses, as Dionysius says in chapter I of *The Heavenly Hierarchy*. The Lord indicated this if he had made his voice sensibly heard from a corporeal whirlwind. Pg 1

***"Call me and I will answer you,
and let me speak and you answer me."***

Then he goes on to another property of the animals which is directed to the acquisition of food. There is something wonderful about this subject in the lioness. For when the lion needs a lot of food, it seems marvelous how she can capture in one region so much from the prey of animals what is sufficient for herself and her cubs, and so he says, “will you take the prey of the lioness from her cubs,” i.e. will you prepare such a great abundance of prey for her that she will have enough for herself and her cubs, and so he says,” and will you fill the soul of her cubs?” This does not seem very difficult when they range through many different places, but when they stay in the same place, it is difficult either from necessity of feeding the cubs which he discusses saying, “and when they lie in their dens,” or because they are waiting in ambush for some other animals, “and lie in wait in the hollows,” to capture animals.

There is also another wonderful thing observed in the birds as we see in the crow. For one expert says that, “the crow does not feed the chicks when they leave their eggs until she sees their feathers turn dark knowing from their feathers that they are hers.” So she does not give any food to them for seven days, but they are sustained by natural strength given to them by God, and so he says, “Who prepares food for the crow when her little ones cry out to God stretching out?” looking here and there, “because they do not have food,” as though abandoned by their parents. This does not mean that the chicks of the crow know God, but he says this because all natural things in their desire, which is to desire the good, intend in some way to acquire something from God who is the author of good things.

END OF JOB CHAPTER 38

Once a dispute has been determined by the opinion of the judge, nothing else remains to be said unless the statement of the determination is rejected. So the Lord first rejects the determination of the question which Eliud had made. He rejects it because Eliud had enveloped the true opinions which he had proposed with many false and frivolous words, and so the text continues, “He said: Who is that man who envelops his opinions with inept arguments?” In his arguments Eliud had accused Job of saying he wanted to dispute with God and said that he was just and that he vigorously seemed to detract from the justice of the divine judgment. But Eliud enveloped these opinions with many presumptuous and even false statements, as should be clear already, which are called here inept arguments because every lack of order proceeds from a defect of reason.

So after the Lord rejected the determination of Eliud, he himself begins to determine the question. First, he gets Job’s attention when he says, “Gird up your loins like a man,” which here is used as a metaphor. For men usually gird up their loins in preparation for a journey or some work. The Lord therefore wanted Job to be ready to consider what he said to him by removing every impediment. So he clearly tells him to gird up his loins, because loins metaphorically mean carnal desires which block spiritual attention in a special way as Isaiah says, “To whom will he teach knowledge, and whom will he make understand what has been heard? Those who have been weaned from milk, those taken from the breast.” (28:9)

First, he begins in his determination to accuse Job for seeming to have spoken presumptuously when he provoked God to discussion. Since Job seems to have given God two options when he said, “Call me and I will answer you, and let me speak and you answer me,” (13:22) and as Job had already said enough, the Lord, as though he choosing the second alternative, says, “let me speak and you answer me.” God certainly does not question to learn, but to convince man of his ignorance. He questions Job about his effects which are accessible to the experience of the human senses. When a man is shown to be ignorant of these, he is much even convinced that he does not have knowledge of the higher realities. Among other sensible effects he begins to ask about the principle parts of the earth. Of these earth is more known to us because it is more immediate to our experience. He begins to ask him about this and says, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” He rightly compares the earth to a foundation because as a foundation is the lowest part of a building, so also the earth is the lowest of bodies and it lies under everything. Since the earth is the principal matter of the human body, matter precedes in time that which is made from it, and even more the plan of the artisan who puts together the matter precedes it. So he clearly says, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth,” as if to say: You cannot know the plan of the foundation of the earth, because when the earth was laid on its foundation you did not yet exist in the nature of things.

Consider that some of the ancients did not attribute the position of the earth and of the other elements to some ordering plan, but to material necessity, according to which the heavy elements sank under the light ones. So to disprove this opinion, the Lord as a consequence compares the foundation of the earth to the foundation of a building. This foundation is constructed from the plans of the architect. In the same way the foundation of the earth was made according to divine providence, which human intelligence is not capable of understanding fully. He makes this clear when he says, "Tell me, if you have understanding," as if to say: Therefore, you cannot indicate the reason for these things because your intelligence is not capable of grasping them. Consider that an artisan puts four things in order in the foundation of a building. First, he orders how large the foundation ought to be. In the same way, divine reason has disposed how great a quantity the earth should have, and not larger or smaller. He expresses this saying, "Who determined its measurements," in all its dimensions. He clearly says, "determined," for the shape of the earth does not require a certain quantity by necessity, but this quantity was only imposed on the earth from divine reason, which man cannot know. So he says, "If you know it," since man cannot know or tell this. Second, an artisan puts in order in his plan the determination of the site of the foundation, which he encompasses by the extension of the measuring line, and so he says, "or who stretched the measuring line upon the earth?" This means the plan of divine government which clearly determined the place for the earth in the parts of the universe. Third, after the artisan has determined the size of the foundation and where it is to be located, he determines on what the foundation can be solidly laid. As to this he says, "On what were the bases," of the land, "sunk," because it was founded on the center of the world. Fourth, after thinking through these three things, the artisan now begins to lay the stones in the foundation. First, he lays the corner stone to which the different walls are aligned. As to this he says, "or who has laid," put down, "the cornerstone," on which the very center of the earth is clearly determined, according to which the different parts of the earth are aligned.

After the Lord has brought to mind the marvels of his effects concerning the principal parts of the earth, which are the earth, the sea, and heaven, and their ordering, he now goes on to tell the marvels of his works especially seen in the different properties of animals. Among these properties, knowledge is very remarkable, which is found more perfectly in man than in other animals, and so beginning with man he says, "Who put Wisdom in the bowels of man?" By the bowels of man is understood the inmost power of the soul itself, namely, intellect and reason, on which God has conferred wisdom in giving the light of reason to man. For God has Infused the seeds of wisdom and science naturally from his reason in the knowledge of the first principles. In other animals, many indications appear of a kind of natural prudence. This is especially true in the cock, as a known and domestic animal, and so he says, "and who gave understanding to the cock?" Understanding is taken here for a kind of natural estimative power according to which he acts like an intelligent being. According to this, the cock seems to have a certain likeness to intelligence because he breaks forth in song at determined times as though he knew the proportions of the heavenly motions, and so he says, "Who told him", the cock, "the reasoned order of the heavens?" that is, the proportion of the heavenly motions so that he could discern from this the determined times for crowing. Watchmen usually declare the approach of the day or of other fixed hours of the night by singing or using some other instruments. But one cannot say that some sound is heard in heaven for determining the time and silence at other times so that the cock discerns from this when to crow, and expressing this he says, "and who will make the harmony of heaven sleep?" as if to say: The harmony of heaven is not silent like a sleeping watchman so that from hearing it or from its silence the cock can be instructed to crow. Consider here that the Pythagoreans thought that a harmony of sounds comes forth from the motion of the heavens because of a very fitting proportion of the heavenly motions, and since they posited that celestial bodies had souls, therefore, such a harmony of sounds can be called the harmony of heaven. But Aristotle proves in II *De Caelo* that no sound comes forth from the motion of the heavenly bodies, and so here we can take this harmony metaphorically as posited solely from the symmetry of the heavenly motions which never cease. This inspired wisdom or intelligence or even this harmony of heaven existed from the beginning of the foundation of the earth, and so he says, "When the dust was established on the earth," which refers to the position of the earth, placed on the lowest part as on a foundation, "and the clods of the earth held fast together," which refers to the humidity which holds the parts of the earth together, i.e., so that the land may not return to dust because of its dryness.

True, the effects of divine power just discussed are very great; yet the greatness is known by the vast majority of ordinary men in them so much as in thunder and lightning, and so he places these effects last. So as to thunder he says, "Will you lift up your voice in the clouds?" For thunder is generated in the clouds and the sound seems like the voice of God. Thunder is often followed by heavy rains because of the condensation of the clouds from the violent movement of the winds from which thunder is caused, and so he says, "and will the rapid movement of the waters cover you?" For heavy rain seems to almost cover God because it hides heaven from us which is called the throne of God. (cf. Is.66:1) He next speaks about the lightning saying, "Will you send the lightning?", that is, will their motion be by your power? "And will it go forth," as though obedient to your command? The movement of the lightning often rebounds from one place to another, and he shows this saying, "and upon its return will it say to you: Here we are?", as though on their return they indicate they are prepared to obey again the divine command, and so go forth again to another place. He relates all these things to show that man cannot attain either divine wisdom or divine power.

The Third Lesson: The Marvels of the Animal Kingdom

36 Who put wisdom in the bowels of man or who gave understanding to the cock? 37 Who told him the reasoned order of the heavens and who will make the harmony of heaven sleep? 38 When the dust was established on the earth and the clods of earth held fast together? 39 Will you take the prey of the lioness and will you fill the soul of her cubs 40 when they lie in their dens and lie in wait in the hollows? 41 Who prepares his food for the crow when her little ones cry out to God stretching out because they have no food?

A man usually lays the foundation of a building because he needs a place to live. But to show that God does not lay the foundation of the earth from need, he adds, "when each of the morning stars praised me," as if he should say: Although heaven whose stars praise me is my dwelling, yet I founded the earth, not because I need the servants who live there, but from my will alone. He does not say this as though heaven was made before the earth, especially as we read in Genesis, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," (1:1) Whereas the text says that the stars which he mentions here were created on the fourth day. (Gen. 1:14) But Genesis says this to show that in the order of nature heaven and the stars are prior to the earth as incorruptible to corruptible and mover to moved. He says the "morning stars," i.e. ones newly created, as we call morning stars the ones which usually appear at the beginning of the day. The fact that the morning stars are said to praise God can be understood materially in one way, inasmuch as they were the material of divine praise in their brightness and nobility. If not to men, who did not exist yet, they were so at least for the angels who already existed. In another way, according to those who say the heavenly bodies have souls, the stars in the beginning of their institution praised God, not with vocal, but with mental praise. This can even refer to the angels whose ministry is to move the heavenly bodies, as the text continues, "and all the sons of God shouted for joy," which refers to the angels of the highest hierarchy, whom Dionysius says are located in the entrance court of God. Therefore, as he clearly attributes praise to former stars as to the lower angels, but he attributes shouting for joy to the latter as to the higher angels, because this connotes a kind of excellence in praise.

After the foundation of the earth, he continues then speaking about the waters which are immediately placed over the land. The natural order of the elements requires that water surrounds the earth at every point like air surrounds earth and water at every point. But by divine disposition, it has been effected for the generation of men, animals, and plants, some part of the land remains uncovered by the waters, as God holds back the waters of the sea within their certain limits by his power, and so he says, "Who shut up the sea with doors," with determined limits. There were some who thought the action of the sun dried up some part of the earth, but the Lord shows that it has been disposed from the beginning that the sea does not cover the land everywhere. He describes the production of the sea using the comparison of the birth of a living thing, a child, because water is especially apt to be changed into living things. This is why the seed of all things is moist. The child first comes forth from the womb of its mother, and he means this when he says, "when it burst forth as though proceeding from the womb." He uses the word "to break forth" because it is a property of water to move almost continually. He says the sea proceeds, "from the womb," not because it has had its origin from other corporeal matter, but because it proceeded from the hidden origin of divine providence as from the womb. Second, a newborn child is dressed, and expressing this he says, "when he laid out the clouds as its clothing." For since the clouds are born from vapors released from water, clouds are much more numerous in maritime places. Third, a child who is born is wrapped in swaddling clothes, and expressing this he says, "and I wrapped it in fog like the swaddling clothes of an infant." The fog does not mean those water vapors raised up or condensed in the clouds, but darkening of the air on the face of the sea, and perhaps he alludes to what Genesis says, "and darkness covered the face of the abyss." (Gen. 1:2)

When he has explained these things about the variable changes of the air, he proceeds further to the immutable changeableness of the heavenly bodies. On this subject he first considers the immobility of figure in the fixed stars, because each of them maintains its place so that one does not approach the other too much or too little. This phenomenon especially appears in the stars closer to us which never come together, and so he says, "Will you be able to bind together the flickering stars of the Pleiades?" The stars of the Pleiades are the stars which shine in the head of Taurus, of which six appear very close, but the seventh is more dull. Second, he considers the uniformity of the first motion in the heavenly bodies, by which the whole heaven and all the stars in it revolve once in a night and a day over the poles of the world. This motion is more perceived by the senses in the stars near the North Pole, which are perpetually apparent to us because of the elevation of the pole over our horizon. Among these stars one especially notes the constellation of Arcturus, which is The Great Bear. The stars of this constellation clearly move uniformly in a circle around the pole of the world, and as to this he says, "or are you able to break up the circle of Arcturus," so that it does not encircle the pole? Third, the motion of the planets seems wonderful among the heavenly bodies. Although completely uniform, our senses perceive some irregularity in this motion. This can be especially observed in the star Venus, which sometimes rises before the sun and then is called Lucifer, the Morning Star, but sometimes sets after the sun and then is called the Evening Star. It is clear that the stars which always move more slowly than the sun begin first to appear in the morning before the rising of the sun, because the sun in its own proper motion moves from the West to the East and leaves them behind, as one can see in Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. The moon, which has a faster motion than the sun, always begins to appear in the evening as though leaving the sun behind and preceding it towards the East. Venus and Mercury sometimes begin to appear in the morning, sometimes in the evening; but since Mercury is rarely seen and is small in size, its irregularity is less evident. Venus, however, is visible to everyone, and so it clearly sometimes has a faster motion than the sun, sometimes a slower one. From this the irregularity in the motion of the planets clearly is evident, and to show this he says, "Will you bring forth Lucifer," that is, Venus appearing in the morning, "at its time," in a determined time, because this variation is always regular. "And the Evening Star," that is, Venus appearing in the evening, "can you make it rise over the sons of the earth?" Note that in saying, "Will you bring forth," and, "do you make it rise up," he means a new appearance of the star. Fourth, the order, placement, and movement in the heavenly bodies seems wonderful, and so he says, "Do you know the order of heaven?", which man cannot comprehend? Fifth, the disposition of the lower bodies in relation to the higher ones is wonderful, and expressing this he says, "and will you be able to establish their plan upon the earth" so that you know the proper effects of each one of the heavenly causes.

Next he proceeds to certain aspects of the winds in the air, by which the rainstorm is caused when rain is driven on. So he says, "Who gave the course of the very violent rainstorm?" For the violent course of the rainstorm is caused by the strong impulse of the winds which divine power produces. Likewise, when clouds are set in motion from the winds, this causes thunderclaps, and that is why such a sound is not heard in one place, like the sound of some passing body, and so he says, "and the way of sound to thunder?" He adds the reason why the winds set in motion the rain and the clouds when he says, "to rain on the land of an uninhabited desert," which cannot be lived in because of the aridity of the earth. Vapors bearing rain arise especially from humid places, and so if the clouds and rains were not set in motion by the winds it would follow that it would never rain in dry places. It happens that some places are sometimes irrigated by human industry, when the rains cease. But this cannot happen there, and so he says, "where no mortal man lingers." So human technology cannot provide water for that land. Because of this God ordered that the clouds and the rains be set in motion by the winds so that it might rain even in desert places, and so he says, "to rain on," with rains, "the steppes," that is the land which no man can cross, "and the desolate earth," destitute of human care. So only by divine care alone, "to produce green plants," to beautify the earth and give pasture to wild animals which are also managed by divine providence.

Next he discusses the rains without the wind when he says, "Who is the father?" that is, the efficient cause "of the rain" not from necessity, but from the order of providence which befits a father. For God moves the sun and the other heavenly bodies which are the proximate efficient causes of the generation of the rains. The dew is generated from the same cause as the rain, and only differs from rain in the greatness and smallness of matter, and so he then says, "or who generated the drops of the dew?" He clearly calls them drops to show their small quantity. Consider here that just as rain, when frozen, is snow, so dew, when frozen, is frost,⁹ and so he says, "From whose womb did the ice come forth?" Here one should note that cold is the cause of ice and is a feminine quality, whereas the cause of rains and dew is the heat which melts and does not permit the vapor to freeze. Heat is a masculine quality, and so he used clearly the name of father for the generation of the rain and dew. However, concerning the generation of ice he used the term womb which pertains to a mother. Cold causes two kinds of ice: one in the air, which pertains to the frost falling from the sky, and so he says, "and who has given birth to the hoarfrost falling from heaven?" an act which he still attributes to a father because the power of cold does not appear to be so great in frost as in more substantial ice. The other kind of ice is generated from the waters below where the cold is more intense, and so he says, "The waters harden like a stone," because the violent intensity of the cold hardens them to ice. This cold may be so great that in very cold climates even the seas freeze over, and expressing this he says, "and the surface of the deep is frozen," namely, the water which is on the surface is frozen by the cold. But cold air cannot penetrate to the depths of the sea.

After he posits these things which express the primordial production of the sea, he explains his conclusion as if he said: When the sea was newly made, then, "I surrounded it with my limits." He posits three things which pertain to the boundary of the sea. One of these is shown when he says, "within my limits," that is, those placed by me. The second is when he says, "I placed the bar," and the third when he says, "and doors." These three things pertain to the rule of divine power, and so he explains them in this way, "and I said: Thus far shall you come," which pertains to the nature of boundaries, i.e. for a boundary the farthest extent of motion, "and you will proceed no further," which pertains to the bar by which one's progress is blocked, "and here shall your proud waves break." This pertains to the gates which are placed for the purpose of not allowing entrance or exit at random, but according to a determined measure. Thus even the sea does not change its shore at random, but according to the determined measure of the ebb and flow of the waves.

After the land and the water, he proceeds on to the air, which, according to appearances, is joined to heaven. The first disposition common to the whole body which stretches over the waters and the land is the variation of night and day, which happens from the motion of the day which is first of movements. Therefore, he says as a consequence, "After your rising did you command the dawn?" as if to say: Do day and night succeed each other on this earth by your command? For dawn is a kind of boundary between day and night. He clearly says, "After your rising," as when he spoke about the earth before he had said, "Where were you?" (v.4) For just as the earth is the first material principle of man, so also the highest heaven, which varies night and day by its motion is the first principle of the human body among corporeal causes. Consider that the clarity of the break of day or the dawn is diversified according to the diverse degrees of the intensity of signs which accompany the sun, because when there is the sign of a quick rising, in which the sun rises immediately, the dawn lasts only a little while. When the sun shows signs of a delayed rising it endures longer. The measure of place is determined out of which the brightness of the daybreak begins to appear when the sun is rising there, and expressing this he then says, "and have you shown the dawn its place?" as if to say: Have you ordered the places in the heaven from which the dawn will give its light? He implies the answer, "No". From all these things you can understand that your reason falls short of the comprehension of divine things, and so it is clear that you are not suited to dispute with God.

The Second Lesson: God's Marvels on Earth, in the Sea and the Air

13 Have you taken hold and shaken out the ends of the earth and have you shaken wicked men out of it? 14 The seal will be opened like clay and will stand like a garment. 15 Their light will be withheld from the wicked and their upraised arm will be broken. 16 Have you entered into the depth of the sea, and have you walked in the valley of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death opened to you and have you seen the dark gates? 18 Have you considered the expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know everything, 19 in which path does the light dwell? And where is the place of darkness, 20 to lead to each of its limits and understand the paths to its home? 21 Did you know where you were born then? And do you know the number of your days? 22 Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you inspected the storehouses of the hail? 23 These things which I have prepared for a time of the enemy the day of battle and war. 24 By what path does light scatter, and is heat divided on the earth? 25 Who gave a course to the very violent rainstorm and the way of sound to thunder 26 to rain on the land in an uninhabited desert, where no mortal man lingers. 27 To rain on the steppes and the desolate earth and to produce green plants. 28 Who is the father of the rain or who generated the drops of the dew? 29 From whose womb did the ice come forth and who has given birth to the hoarfrost falling from heaven? 30 The waters harden like a stone and the surface of the deep is frozen 31 Will you be able to bind together the flickering stars of the Pleiades? Or will you be able to break the circle of Arcturus? 32 Will you bring forth Lucifer at its time and can you make the evening star rise over the sons of the earth? 33 Do you know the order of heaven, and will you be able to establish their plan upon the earth? 34 Will you lift up your voice in a cloud and will the rapid movement of the waters cover you? 35 Will you send the lightening and will it go forth, and upon its return will it say to you: Here we are?

After he considers these things about the changeableness of light and darkness, he comes to diverse changes of the air, according to which the air varies as storm or calm. He begins with the snow and the hail saying, "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you inspected the storehouses of the hail?" By the storehouses of the snow and the hail he means the water vapors which have risen up from which snows and hail are generated. But because hail is the heavier substance and is generated in a place closer to us, when cold is expelled to the interior of a cloud by surrounding heat, for this reason when he discusses the hail he desires sight because it is more capable of being seen. When he speaks about snows he talks about entering, because one can penetrate snow more because it is light. God sometimes uses things like this for the correction of men, as we have already seen, "He judges the peoples with these things." (36:31) So he says, "These things which I have prepared for a time of the enemy," that is for a time when revenge must be taken on enemies. God uses these things against them like the arms of war, and so he says, "in the day of battle," that is, actual conflict, "and war," that is, wars in which one prepares for combat.

After a storm of snow and hail ends, a calm follows in which warm and clear air is prepared, and so he says, "By what path does light scatter?" which expresses the clear air, "and heat is divided upon the earth," which expresses warm weather. Here we should consider that before when he spoke about light and the luminaries themselves in which light dwells, he mentioned only their path because the light wends its way through the motion of the luminaries, whether in a storm or calm. But clarity and warmth from it only appear to us after the storm ceases. There is no sensible difference of the intensity of the clear air in various lands when the air has been calm, but there is a sensible difference in intensity of heat. Therefore he said that light is scattered as though diffused indifferently, but heat is divided as though distributed differently, befits difference of place.

The duration of the lower bodies and the times of generation and corruption are measured according to the motion of the heavenly bodies, as Dionysius says in Chapter IV of *The Divine Names*.

Therefore, when one is ignorant of these causes, one consequently does not know the effects, and so he says, "Did you know when you were born then?" as if to say: Could you know the time of your birth in advance by considering the motion of the heavens? You could not know this because before you were born, you did not exist; but also no other man could know this in advance because of the weakness of human knowledge. For God speaks to Job as representing all men. Just as you could not know in advance the time of your birth, so also you cannot know the end of your life in advance, and so he says, "and do you know the number of your days?" as if to say: You cannot know this from the computation of the heavenly motions, whose certain measure you do not know.

After the Lord has enumerated the principle parts of corporeal creatures, that is, earth, sea, and sky, he begins here with the marvels of divine works which appear in the ordering of these three parts of the world just mentioned. He begins with the earth in which what happens in earthquakes seems to be especially wondrous. He speaks about this metaphorically in the figure of a man who takes some object and shakes it. So he says, "Have you taken hold," i.e., have you grasped with your power, "and shaken out the ends of the earth?" This must not be interpreted to mean that the whole earth is shaken at once in an earthquake, but that some extremities are shaken. Everything which happens in the corporeal creature redounds to the usefulness of man. Earthquakes and other such terrible things are useful in that man, being terrified, may desist from their sins, and so he says, "and have you shaken wicked men out of it?" He speaks here using the comparison of a man who shakes a garment to shake dust or a moth out of it. So also God seems to shake the earth to shake sinners out of it, sometimes by death, and sometimes by a changed life.

In an earthquake some things are usually uncovered, like walls and things of this kind, and he expresses this saying, "The seal will be opened like clay." For clay, when it is divided, easily returns to the same condition, and so also a seal, for example, on a wall or something of this sort, which has been changed by the opening of the wall, is sometimes restored to the same place by divine power. Sometimes towers, trees and other things of this kind are shaken by an earthquake and do not fall, and as to this he says, "and will stand like a garment," which does not lose its original shape after it is shaken out. But on the contrary sometimes men die either buried by the earth or even crushed by walls falling in an earthquake, and so he says, "their light will be withheld from the wicked," by death. Sometimes fortifications and very strong towers are cast down by an earthquake, and as to this he says, "and their upraised arm," is broken that is, a very strong fortification or some powerful friend in whom a man confides like his own arm.

After these premises about the earthquake and its effects, he proceeds to the disposition of the middle element, i.e., the sea, where man believes there are marvelous things hidden. First, those things which are in the depths of the sea, for example, the habitats of the fish living in the sea, and as to this he says, "Have you entered into the depths of the sea," so that you know the animals which are hidden there? Another thing which seems hidden and marvelous in the sea is the disposition of the ocean floor, and as to this he says, "and have you walked in the valley of the deep," that is, in the deepest part of the sea?

After the disposition of the land and the sea he proceeds to the disposition of heaven under which air is contained. He lingers a little longer on this because of the many marvelous things which appear there. First, he considers the disposition of the light and the darkness which embraces the whole of the higher body in common. Consider that the heavenly bodies act through their own light on lower bodies. This is so because light is like the active quality of the heavenly bodies, like cold and heat of the elements. Therefore, he connects the effects of the heavenly bodies on those lower things with the consideration of light and darkness. Among the other effects of the heavenly bodies on lower bodies, the most common is generation and corruption. and from this he begins saying, "Have the gates of death opened to you?" For death is the corruption of a living body, and so it properly belongs to the man to whom the present discourse is addressed. But the gates of death are the causes of corruption in relation to the powers of the heavenly bodies, which are the primary powers through which one proceeds to such an effect. It is very difficult to know the period of life and the permanence of each thing, and so the gates of death are not open to us because we cannot know in the heavenly bodies the proper cause of the corruption of each thing. Darkness fittingly describes death both because in death man (who experiences knowledge by means of light) is deprived of corporeal sight, and also because man after death passes into oblivion as into a kind of darkness. Therefore he says, "and have you seen the dark gates?" He may be understood to be calling "the dark gates" because it is proper to death which before he had called the gates of death. Or "dark gates" can be referred to another action of the heavenly bodies, which is the darkness of the atmosphere, so that what he said about the gates of death is referred to only living bodies, but what he said about the dark gates may refer to transparent bodies.

He continues about the diversity of heat and cold around the earth saying, "Have you considered the expanse of the earth?" Consider here that according to the astronomers the longitude of the earth is from East to West, and the latitude of the earth from South to North, because in everything the greater dimension is called length and the lesser dimension called breadth. We know by experience that the dimension of the earth which is inhabited is greater from the East to the West than from the South to the North. Thus the latitude of the earth is measured from South to North in which progression one measures the difference of heat and cold. For the nearer one approaches the South in our populated world, the hotter the place is because of nearness to the sun. Thus what is said about the latitude of the earth can be referred to the diversity of hot and cold places.

When he has said these things about the action of heavenly light on lower bodies, he mentions the light itself when he says, "Tell me, if you know everything," so that you are fit to argue with God who knows everything, "in which path does light dwell?" Consider here that light is found in the heavenly bodies of the world, which are called luminaries because of the fact that they are vessels of light. But since a path refers to motion, the question of the path in which the light dwells refers to the motion of the luminaries. Exactly how the luminaries move exceeds human knowledge, which is shown from the different opinions of men concerning their motions. Some assert that they move by eccentric movement [not having the axis in the center] and epicycles, others by the motion of the different spheres. So just as the movement of the luminaries causes light as they move in the upper hemisphere, so also darkness proceeds from their motion as they are moved in the lower hemisphere, this also presents the same difficulty, and so he says, "and where is the place of darkness." One cannot measure the motion of a body perfectly unless the path that it follows is known since magnitude is measured by motion and motion by magnitude, as Aristotle says in *IV Physics*. Therefore, since the path of motion of the luminaries cannot be known by man for certain, the consequence is that the measure of their motions cannot perfectly be known either, and so he says, "to lead each," i.e., the light and the darkness, "to its limits," by showing the reason for the appearance and disappearance of each of the luminaries as to beginning and end and also with respect to their medium. He speaks about this saying, "and do you understand the path to its home," of the light. For when at noon it reaches its zenith, then it walks the paths to its home, so to speak. Its two termini are in the rising and the setting.