

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD AS A JOB FIGURE

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## PREFACE

This thesis is essentially a thematic study of Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield developing the parallels between the Book of Job and The Vicar. Its findings confirm the idea of Martin C. Battestin that The Vicar is a comedy of Job.

I am very thankful to Dr. David S. Berkeley, who helped me to get the study into its final shape. My special thanks to Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr., who brought to my attention the defects in the study and helped me to remedy them. I am also grateful to Dr. Jud Milburn, who kindly agreed to serve on my committee.

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## THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD AS A JOB FIGURE

The delightful creation of Goldsmith, the Vicar of Wakefield, who has captured the attention of many readers, can be seen as an eighteenth-century Job-Figure, although the similarities are not complete. The stories of Dr. Primrose and Job have similar beginnings and endings and to a large extent the tests they are subjected to before they meet their final salvation show total parallelism. However, the Vicar's tests are less intense in nature as compared with those of Job; but since his resemblance to Job is so close and striking, it is possible to develop a very good case of the Vicar as a Job-Figure. A survey of a number of parallels between Job and the Vicar will serve as a basis for discussing their significance.

A casual reader, who is not well acquainted with the book of Job, is totally ignorant of Job's true nature. Paul Scherer writes: "To approach it [the book of Job] as if it were an object lesson in patience under trial is to go utterly wrong at the start. If there is any single key word to some measurably adequate understanding of the whole, the word is not patience<sup>1</sup> but impatience."<sup>2</sup> Another interpretation of the book, by William Neil, runs on similar lines: "It is obviously not entirely about the proverbial patience<sup>3</sup> of Job, because most of the book is taken up with the attempt of Job's friends to quell the violence of his impatient outbursts against the injustice of his lot."<sup>4</sup> To the same casual reader of The Vicar of Wakefield, the novel at a first glance or reading offers no more than the benevolent side of the Vicar's human

nature. Some critics also have seen the Vicar as a figure of total goodness. Walter Scott States: "There are few characters of purer dignity described than that of the excellent pastor, rising above sorrow and oppressing, and laboring for the conversion of those felons into whose company he has been thrust by his villainous creditor."<sup>5</sup> Curtis Dahl is full of compliments for the Vicar: "Does not the power of the novel lie in large part in the warm hearted, slightly sentimental picture of the half ridiculous, but wholly lovable Vicar himself, a fit companion for Fielding's Parson Adams? . . . Dr. Primrose himself is one of the most heart warming characters in English fiction."<sup>6</sup> In a deeper study, however, Job and the Vicar have much more to reveal of their characters than in a casual reading.

A number of comments written of the novel could be taken as adequate interpretations for the book of Job. Michael E. Adelstein's suggestion of the lesson to be learnt from The Vicar could be learned from the book of Job too: "Goldsmith urges us to accept the way of the world and the nature of man; he believes that man's lot is to endure, to work, and hope. The Vicar of Wakefield . . . has lived through the years to help humanity do just that."<sup>7</sup> Another criticism of the novel, in a way, could be made to fit the book of Job. Ernest A. Baker, commenting on Goldsmith's handling of the novel, suggests: ". . . the reversal of fortune, if strictly interpreted, reverses the moral, for it is not repentance and amendment that is the agency of their salvation, but mere coincidence."<sup>8</sup> The return of Job's fortune is definitely not mere coincidence, but it reverses the moral in the sense that in spite of Job's constant complaints and outbursts God appears to him to prove his greatness. Both Job and the Vicar lose their fortunes for no fault or sin on

their parts, and when the fortunes are returned to them, it is not due to any effort on their parts. What John Forster, Goldsmith's nineteenth-century biographer, wrote of The Vicar could be considered as a qualified interpretation for the book of Job: "Good predominant over evil is briefly the purpose and moral of the little story. It is designed to show us that patience in suffering, that persevering reliance on the providence of God, that quiet labour, cheerful endeavour . . . are the easy and certain means of pleasure in this world and of turning pain to noble uses."<sup>9</sup> Job, of course, does not maintain a cheerful endeavor; but it should be taken into account that his temper turns sour only when he is physically afflicted. The Vicar, on the other hand, never reaches the stage of physical affliction. The multiple interpretations of the novel, which suit the Biblical book of Job, widen the possibility and scope of judging the novel in terms of morality rather than in terms of narrative art.

The moral approach to the novel could be understood better by comparing some of the comments on both the books, specifically on the protagonists. The comments do bear close resemblance. Samuel Terrien suggests: "According to popular opinion, the book of Job is the story of a man's trials and restoration."<sup>10</sup> William Black recognizes the Vicar as a Job-Figure and he shows it by implication rather than expressly: "You take a good man, overwhelm him with successive misfortunes, show the pure flame of his soul burning in the midst of the darkness, and then, as the reward of his patience and fortitude and submission, restore him gradually to happiness with even larger flocks and herds than before."<sup>11</sup> What Black has said of the Vicar is just an expanded version of what Samuel Terrien has briefly said of Job. Terrien discusses the

possibility of more than one hand at work, probably that of a narrator and that of a poet, in the book of Job. The narrator's view of the hero is completely different from that of the poet: "The narrator presents his hero as the supreme model of faith (1:21, 22; 2:10). The poet, on the contrary, daringly portrays a blasphemer, a doubter, a frenzied rebel, a proud giant, a challenger of God, who in the end must cast himself down in utter humiliation and repent in dust and ashes" (42:6).<sup>12</sup>

Adelstein, in trying to prove that the character of the Vicar is not the same in the second part of the novel as in the first, reflects in a strain similar to Terrien's: "He is no longer the mild, calm, gentle ironic individual who quietly and dispassionately lost his fortune and accepted deceit and chicanery. The protagonist of the second half of the novel is a disturbed, provoked, wrathful figure who curses his enemies and lacks the inner resources necessary to face his trials."<sup>13</sup> The reflection of a biblical character in an eighteenth-century creation opens the way to the development of a moral sense in the novel.

Recent scholarship on Goldsmith's *Vicar* has opened up new dimensions in the interpretation of the novel. Most of the major critics of the novel consider it as some kind of comedy. Early in 1950, D. W. Jefferson noted that Dr. Primrose "like Job, suffers a relentless succession of woes,"<sup>14</sup> but maintaining that the emotional effect of the novel is reduced by some sort of comedy, he remarks on the Vicar: "The element of comedy in the misfortunes places him among the dupes of literature, so that we associate him not so much with Job as with Parson Adams."<sup>15</sup> Agreeing with Jefferson, the fact still remains that the Vicar and Job resemble each other so closely that it needs some more consideration. Adelstein interprets Goldsmith's intention in the novel is to write a



satire on idealism. He sees the Vicar as a comic figure: "Quite clearly, readers are to laugh at the honest, virtuous simpleton who suffers because he lacks worldly wisdom."<sup>16</sup> Quintana, a major Goldsmith critic, talking about the design of the novel concludes that there are two parts to it--the first consisting of a series of comic scenes with the Vicar "less of an objective observer and more of a comic chorus of one"<sup>17</sup> and the second in the mode of the romance. Richard J. Jaarsma recognizes a satiric intent in the novel and writes: "The satire in The Vicar of Wakefield is an attack on a sentimental way of looking at life, a way that argues that true happiness is the end of life's vicissitudes if a man will only keep faith in himself and in his values."<sup>18</sup> Robert H. Hopkins, another major Goldsmith critic, besides naming the critics who point out the satire in the novel writes that in the first half of The Vicar the satire is obvious while "in the second half the satire becomes more subtle and goes underground as Primrose's narration becomes more subjective."<sup>19</sup> Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr. in his review essay on "The Vicar of Wakefield and Recent Goldsmith Scholarship" also brings to our attention that "most recent studies interpret the novel comically or ironically."<sup>20</sup> He notes that Arthur Friedman considers the novel to be comic with a sentimental plot. Richard Helgerson, Robert Hunting, and Hopkins are among other critics, pointed out by Dr. Woods, to consider the novel as a satire. Thus with the view of the modern critics that the novel is a satire, the Vicar can no longer be looked upon as a model figure. However, the likeness the novel bears to the book of Job has been noted by a few critics and developed by Martin C. Battestin. G. S. Rousseau, in his edition of critical essays on Goldsmith, points out that the novel was recognized in the nineteenth century for its moral

sweetness of tone and continues: "Victorian and Edwardian emphasis on this tonal sweetness usually excluded any focus on the Vicar's Jobian qualities, and on his moral determination and almost naive religious tenacity, on the varieties of his exile. It would be interesting to learn what Blake, himself a commentator on The Book of Job, would have said about Dr. Primrose's Jobian traits--Blake's successors in the nineteenth century were unconcerned; not one noted the parallel."<sup>21</sup> Black has nothing much to say except "The Vicar of Wakefield, considered structurally, follows the lines of the book of Job."<sup>22</sup> He does not care to mention any more than that on the subject. Clara M. Kirk, in discussing the tests the good Vicar undergoes, writes: "Dr. Primrose's immediate response to the news of his daughter's flight was to cast aside all his Christian faith in the benevolence of providence. Job-like, he now cried to his children: 'Now, then, my children, go and be miserable; for we shall never enjoy one hour more.'"<sup>23</sup> Helgerson writes of how the prediction of the fortune tellers, on Olivia getting married to a squire and Sophia to a lord, comes true and continues: "Less ambiguous is the overall resemblance of The Vicar to the story of Job, which, however much we may wish to qualify it, is unmistakable and inevitably suggests divine intervention."<sup>24</sup> Hopkins, to prove that the novel is a satire, starts from its first impression: "To recapitulate on the surface level The Vicar seems to be a sentimental romance--a homily illustrating the Job motif, told by a lovable, very human clergyman who suffers many misfortunes without loss of his optimistic faith."<sup>25</sup> Battestin,<sup>26</sup> unlike the other critics, has not only noted the similarity between the Vicar and Job, but has also treated the subject in connection with eighteenth-century interpretations of the book of Job. He notes similarities

between Job and Dr. Primrose including situational correspondences and two virtual quotations from Job in The Vicar. His controlling idea is that The Vicar is a comedy in the sense that both Job and Primrose exhibit various imperfections which may be ludicrous; but which are nullified by growing self-awareness and by a deux ex machina happy ending. The present effort, while acknowledging the truth and relevance of Battestin's analysis, differs from this work in adding names of critics who have perceived the Jobian background of the Vicar, in pointing out dissimilarities between Job and Goldsmith's novel, and in setting forth an expanded version of similarities between Job and Dr. Primrose which Battestin treats briefly. These similarities and dissimilarities function in the novel by way of suggesting that The Vicar is an expanded parable, heavy as all parables are, with theme--the fore ordained chastening of a good and even exemplary man who after being humbled and gaining self-awareness is restored to temporal felicity; at the same time the departures of Dr. Primrose's character and situations from Job and his trials suggest Goldsmith's adjustment of the Jobian archetype to persons of various temperaments and situations. Although no attempt is made here to subvert the growing idea, supported by Battestin, that The Vicar is a comedy of some sort with an obtusely self-righteous man in the process of divesting himself of this quality and with regard to the happy ending, this study is essentially a thematic study of the novel. In this respect its findings confirm the idea of Battestin and others regarding the principal theme of The Vicar of Wakefield. The neglect of the critics except Battestin, to give any more importance to the subject than mere mentioning of it, is possibly due to their failure to recognize its significance.

The Vicar's resemblance to Job is unmistakable. It can be seen in their reaction to their sufferings, their desire for death, their pride in their virtues, their ideas of God and man's suffering, the attitude of their comforters and their wives, and finally in the lesson they teach. A brief treatment of dissimilarities between the Vicar and Job is called for to show the absence of total parallelism.

To compare the ways in which the Vicar and Job face their sufferings, one should first compare their sufferings. The first misfortune is their loss of wealth. The Vicar loses his money by the betrayal of the merchant in whose responsibility he had left it, and Job loses his flocks and herds by the work of Satan. Next, affliction strikes their children. The Vicar's son loses his bride, Olivia elopes, and finally Sophia is abducted. All Job's children meet untimely death. The Vicar's suffering stops here; but Job is subjected to a further test as his suffering becomes physical. So the cry and complaint of Job becomes more intense than that of the Vicar. Both lose control of themselves, and both show extreme reactions at the sight of grief and sorrow. The first crisis, where the wrath of the Vicar is provoked, starts with the news of Olivia's elopement, which the Vicar believes to be abduction. The Vicar cries: "my children, go and be miserable; for we shall never enjoy one hour more. And O may heaven's everlasting fury light upon him and his! Thus to rob me of my child! And sure it will, for taking back my sweet innocent that I was leading up to heaven. Such sincerity as my child was possest of. But all our earthly happiness is now over! Go my children, go, and be miserable and infamous; for my heart is broken within me!"<sup>27</sup> While his son Moses tries to pacify him, the Vicar reaches out for his gun to punish or overawe the villain who abducted his daughter.

On another occasion, when his second daughter is carried away, his reaction is similar. He cries out thus: "the sum of my miseries is made up, nor is it in the power of anything on earth to give me another pang. What! not one left! not to leave me one! the monster! the child that was next to my heart! She had the beauty of an angel and almost the wisdom of an angel" (II,IX,172). Again, on seeing his son George, whom he believed to be untouched by any misfortune, chained and wounded, the Vicar is provoked: "To see my children all untimely falling about me, while I continue a wretched survivor in the midst of ruin! May all the curses that ever sunk a soul fall heavy upon the murderer of my children. May he live like me, to see--" (II,IX,175). His immediate reaction in the face of misfortune is to show his impatience and he is only too ready to curse his enemies whom he thinks to be root cause of all his sorrows. If the Vicar reacts with so much anger and sadness at the misfortune of his children, whereas Job's reaction at the loss of his offspring is one of passiveness, it can be safely assumed that he too would become a complaining figure, even worse than Job, if physically afflicted like him. Job also lacks the fortitude to suffer in silence, but only when it comes to physical pain. While the Vicar curses his enemies, Job curses the day of his birth and the night of his conception: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary; let no joyful voice come

therein" (Job 3.4-7).<sup>28</sup> Job's pain is to such an extent that he loses control of himself even to the point of questioning the justice of God: "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress, that thou shouldst despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked" (Job 10.2,3). One is inevitably reminded of the Vicar on seeing Job's impatience and burst of outrage. However, in the Vicar's case, as Jefferson has pointed out, the emotional effect is considerably reduced making his outcry something between the serious and comic and as a result the Vicar himself is a comedy of Job.

Both seek comfort in the grave. The Vicar at the loss of his second daughter loses every bit of hope and cries out to his son Moses: "look round the world, and see if there be any happiness left me now. Is not every ray of comfort shut out; while all our bright prospects lie beyond the grave" (II,IX,172). Job's expression of sorrow runs on similar lines: "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!" (Job 14.13). The grave is seen as a place of refuge. On several occasions, both of them speak of death as an end to their sorrows and sufferings. The Vicar indirectly speaks of his desire to die, but Job makes obvious his desire to meet death. The Vicar's wife sends a letter to their eldest son, George, giving him knowledge of their ill fate. The letter is miscarried; and the son, unaware of the family's situation, sends glad tidings of his good fortune. The letter makes the Vicar nothing but happy, since he has reserved the son to take care of the family when he should meet his death, which he desires as can be gathered from his speech: "Heaven be his

guard, and keep my boy thus happy to be the support of his widowed mother, and the father of these two babes" (II,IX,174). Immediately following his happy outcry, the Vicar sees his son, all bloody and wounded, brought in by the keeper of the prison. The letter, after all, has not miscarried; and the son, in his attempts to seek justice for his father, falls into trouble and gets arrested. The pitiable sight of the son makes the Vicar burst out: "My George! My George! and do I behold thee thus. Wounded! Fettered! Is this thy happiness! Is this the manner you return to me? O that this sight could break my heart at once and let me die" (II,IX,175). Later in the prison scene also, he does not forget to include in his sermon the happy prospects that lie beyond this world in death: "When I look round these gloomy walls, made to terrify, as well as to confine us; this light that only serves to shew the horrors of the place, those shackles that tyranny has imposed . . . O, my friends, what a glorious exchange would heaven be for these! To fly through regions unconfined as air, to bask in the sunshine of eternal bliss . . . when I think of these things, death becomes the messenger of very glad tidings" (II,X,179-80). The Vicar also talks about the worthlessness of life, and under such circumstance death's sharpest arrow is seen as the staff of his support. Job's reflections on death are for similar reasons--life is too sorrowful. After cursing the day of his birth and the night of his conception, Job continues in the same strain: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures" (Job 3.20,21). Later when Eliphaz reproves Job for his complaints, Job just answers: "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it

would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand and cut me off" (Job 6.8,9). He continues: "What is my strength, that I should prolong my life" (Job 6.11). Drowned in misfortune, both protagonists see death as a relieving agent. But in the Vicar's desire for death and his outcry there is a certain tint of artificiality which makes him a ridiculous figure whereas Job is sincere and genuine in the use of his language.

The Vicar and Job are aware of their virtue and goodness and take pride in them. The Vicar begins his narration with the description of his family; and he is not very modest in telling how his doors were always open to friends, relatives, and strangers. He was accustomed to lend a riding coat or a pair of boots to undesired and troublesome guests and see to it that they never come back: his "house was cleared of such as we did not like; but never was the family of Wakefield known to turn the traveller or the poor dependant out of doors" (I,I,24). He further describes how he turned the profits of his living to the orphans and widows of the clergy of his diocese since he had a fortune of his own and "was careless of temporalities." Also he made it a point to get acquainted with every man in the parish, forcing the married men to temperance and the bachelors to matrimony; so that soon people talked about the three strange wants at Wakefield as "a parson wanting pride, young men wanting wives, and ale-houses wanting customers" (I,II,27). The Vicar's pride in his goodness seems to be a comic echo of what is found in Job. Mourning over his present downfall, Job ponders over his past goodness: "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor" (Job 29.15,16). He continues: "The stranger did not lodge in the street; but I opened my doors to the traveller" (Job 31.



32). Job also talks of how he never desired wealth and always stood by the widowed and the fatherless. The Vicar seems to be aware of his commanding power and the respect others held for him; so is Job. When the officers of justice come to arrest the Vicar, he thinks, justly though, that only because of his interference the officers manage to escape the wrath of his parishioners, who would never let their minister go to jail. He gives a sermon and sends them home with peace. Later in the jail too, he befriends the prisoners and in less than a fortnight forms them into something "social and humane." He also has the pleasure of regarding himself as a legislator, who has brought men "from their native ferocity into friendship and obedience" (II,VII,164). Job remembering his former prosperity says: "The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth" (Job 29.8-10). Job is conscious of his righteousness and like the Vicar is willing to talk of it and of his reputation. The Vicar's boastful attitude ill-suits his calling and the character he claims himself to be and as a result he cuts a comic figure; but Job's mourning over his past prosperity deserves our sympathy.

The Vicar and Job have similar attitudes toward God and man's suffering. Both believe, at least on some occasions, that God has every right to take what he has given. Battestin also notes this similarity. The Vicar, after hearing the news of Olivia's disappearance, breaks down altogether and utters imprecations upon the perfidious villain who, he thinks, has robbed him of his child. His wife and son chide him for his behavior and for cursing his enemies. The Vicar comes back to his senses and replies: "Then may heaven forgive me and him if I did. And now, my

son, I see it was more than human benevolence that first taught us to bless our enemies! Blest be his holy name for all the good he hath given, and for all that he hath taken away" (I,XVII,102-03). Once the initial anger is spent, the Vicar's vision also conforms more to his belief. In the case of Job, "at the instigation of the Adversary, calamities one after another fall upon Job. His sheep, his cattle, his camels, his servants and finally his sons and daughters are struck down by an appalling series of accidents--lightning, hurricane and marauding bands."<sup>29</sup> Job does not complain at this stage. All he says is this: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1.21). When his wife persuades him to give up his integrity and curse God, he chides her for her foolishness and asks her: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2.10). Later in the story, as Job's distress increases and he tries to justify his complaints, Bildad tries to maintain God's justice by pointing out that he will not cast away a perfect man. But Job, sure of his righteousness, believes that "even the wisest and mightiest man cannot safely oppose him"<sup>30</sup> and so replies: "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What doest thou?" (Job 9.12). Although Job acknowledges God's right to take away what he has given, in this instance, unlike in the earlier instances where he is the uncomplaining victim, he speaks with rejection and as Terrien interprets the lines, "God is implicitly compared to a thief or a kidnapper whom no man can resist or even criticize and censure."<sup>31</sup> The Vicar and Job, in spite of their outbursts, show that they trust God. After the family suffers its first calamities, the Vicar decides to send his eldest son

to London in search of better prospects. As the son comes to take his blessing before leaving, the Vicar gives him a Bible and quotes the following two lines from the psalms showing his everlasting trust in God: "I have been young, and now am old; yet never saw I the righteous man forsaken, or his seed begging their bread."<sup>32</sup> Later in his attempts of reformation in the jail, the Vicar persuades the prisoners to give up courting the friendship of the devil and turn to God: "If used ill in our dealings with one man, we naturally go elsewhere. Were it not worthwhile then, just to try how you may like the usage of another master, who gives you fair promises at least to come to him" (II,VII,160). The prison sermon, as the chapter heading suggests, is a demonstration of the equal dealings of providence with regard to the happy and the miserable here below. If the poor suffer here on earth, they have the satisfaction of enjoying their reward in heaven, so the only thing to do is trust in God. Job maintains his trust in God in a different way. He understands God's greatness better than his friends. Terrien writes: "Eliphaz, Bildad, Sophar--each has maintained that if only Job would give up that pretension to innocence God would deal mercifully with him."<sup>33</sup> But Job will not be false to himself even to secure God's favor and replies: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him" (Job 13.15,16). In spite of questioning God's justice, Job trusts him and so does the Vicar.

Yet another matter where the Vicar and Job share their feelings is God's powers and man's suffering. God's powers are great, but some of his ways are mysterious, and one should not expect to understand them. The Vicar, in his sermon to the prisoners, explains: "Why man should

thus feel pain, why our wretchedness should be requisite in the formation of universal felicity . . . ? These are questions that never can be explained, and might be useless if known. On this subject providence has thought fit to elude our curiosity. . ." (II,X,177). Job, at one point, reproving Bildad who asserts that man cannot be justified with God, speaks of the infinite and unsearchable power of God: "He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26.12-14). The Vicar and Job agree on the point that man is born to suffer. The Vicar's sermon in the jail begins thus: "My friends, my children, and fellow sufferers, when I reflect on the distribution of good and evil here below, I find that much has been given man to enjoy, yet still more to suffer" (II,X,176). Job's reflections are the same, but more pessimistic: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14.1,2). Man's suffering is inevitable.

The Vicar and Job believe in reward in heaven. The Vicar cheers the prisoners by pointing out to them that though they suffer on this earth they can expect their reward in heaven. Similarly, Job realizing the futility of appealing to the pity of his friends tells them: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19.25,26). Both take consolation from the fact that there is happiness and cheerfulness in heaven.

Another noteworthy point of comparison is in the attitude of their comforters towards Job and the Vicar. The comforters respect them and at the same time accuse them of certain things. When the Vicar becomes passionately angry at the news of Olivia's elopement, his son Moses pacifies him thus: "Your rage is too violent and unbecoming. You should be my mother's comforter, and you encrease her pain. It ill suited you and your reverend character thus to curse your greatest enemy: You should not have curst him, villain as he is" (I,XVII,102). When Job cries out his wretched state, Eliphaz comforts him thus: "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee and thou art troubled" (Job 4.3-5). Terrien interprets the lines: "Eliphaz pays sincere and grateful tribute to one who in the past . . . had strengthened and upheld and made firm many a life dejected and spiritless."<sup>34</sup> Much the same way the Vicar's son respects his father and feels that his behavior does not conform to his character. Nonetheless both the Vicar and Job are accused by their comforters. At the height of his calamity, with the arrest of his son George, the Vicar pours out his wrath and curses the murderer of his children. George reproves him: "Hold, Sir . . . or I shall blush for thee. How, Sir, forgetful of your age, your holy calling, thus to arrogate the justice of heaven, and fling those curses upward that must soon descend to crush thy own grey head with destruction" (II,IX,175). Elihu, the fourth comforter of Job, is wrathful on hearing the speeches of Job and his other comforters: "against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God" (Job 32.2). In other words, Job disregards the

justice of God, or at least he is accused of such a thing, which is similar to the Vicar's crime of arrogating the justice of heaven, as his son accuses him.

The Vicar is blessed with a wife very much like Job's. As Clara M. Kirk points out, "Deborah, like Job's wife, broke down at the realization of the family disaster."<sup>35</sup> With the family's honor at stake, as a result of Olivia's elopement, the Vicar is still ready to forgive and take his daughter back into the family; but his wife can only think of her as an ungrateful creature: "She never had the least constraint put upon her affections. The vile strumpet has basely deserted her parents without any provocation, thus to bring your grey hairs to the grave, and I must shortly follow" (I,XVII,103). Job's wife, unlike Job, is unable to withstand the family's tragic blows and advises him: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God and die" (Job 2.9). Terrien interprets Job's wife thus: "Augustine called Job's wife 'the adjutant of the devil,' a spiritual sister of the woman in the store of the garden, for she tempted the hero to forsake his creator."<sup>36</sup> The Vicar's wife can also be said to tempt him to forsake his own daughter. But both the heroes withstand the temptations.

At the end of the Vicar's story, Mr. Burchell appears to show his true identity as the good angel removing the mask of the villain. All mystery is cleared. The Vicar realizes that Mr. Burchell was not responsible for all his misfortunes, and he is restored to better prospects. His lost wealth is restored to him, and his children are also restored to happiness. As one of the final chapter headings suggests, "Former Benevolence Repaid with Interest," his fortune is greater than before. At the end of Job's story God appears to him and "Job realizes divine

omnipotence and understands the folly of trying to penetrate God's plans and purposes with the limited mind of a human being."<sup>37</sup> He is restored to more wealth, and a new set of sons and daughters is provided for him. The moral of both the stories is the same: One should not lose hope in God under any circumstances.

It is necessary at this point to consider the dissimilarities between Job and the Vicar. Job, unlike the Vicar, has an intellectual attitude toward his sufferings. While his comforters dispute that he must have sinned because prosperity has forsaken him, Job maintains his integrity and all he desires is not a restoration of his previous wealth, but an answer to his suffering and an assurance from God that he is still his friend. Job has no doubts about his innocence and hence he is baffled at the cause of his suffering and demands that God should formulate the charges of sin for which he is suffering. The Vicar, on the other hand, never once reflects on the cause of his sufferings, although, like Job, he is aware of his righteousness. He gets emotional when misfortune strikes him, but once his comforters pacify him, he never asks why it has happened to him. Job is perplexed by the justice of God to the extent of believing that God favors the criminals and makes them prosperous, while the poor and honest suffer. The wicked give themselves to such deeds as stealing the ass of the fatherless or taking a pledge of the poor; yet they suffer no punishment. Further, "Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them" (Job 24.12). Job cannot understand why the wicked prosper and the honest suffer. The Vicar does not strongly object to the justice of God, although all his experiences with Squire Thornhill have taught him to believe that God allows the wicked to prosper. His attitude, unlike

Job's, is tempered and he would rather believe "that the good are joyful and serene, like travellers that are going towards home; the wicked but by intervals happy, like travellers that are going into exile" (I,IV, 148). A possible reason for the difference in their opinion is the difference in the intensity of their sufferings. Also, by creating the Vicar less of an intellectual Goldsmith has made it possible for the common reader to identify himself with the Vicar and yet have the age-old problem of undeserved suffering as Job.

It is difficult to say whether Goldsmith had Job in mind when he cast the Vicar, and if he had there is no indication of it; it may be a case of mere coincidence. But the overall resemblance of the two books is so strikingly close to make one suspect of Job's deliberate influence on the Vicar. Battestin points out that Goldsmith did follow with interest when in the middle decades of the eighteenth century the story of Job became the focus of a strenuous theological debate. Goldsmith had no strong opinions on religion and his remark to Boswell in 1773 gives one a pretty good idea of his view on religion: "As I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the taylor, so I take my religion from the priest."<sup>38</sup> However, one particular remark of Goldsmith in his Roman history exemplifies the idea used in Job. He writes of the death of the Emperor Alexander that it proves "that neither virtue nor justice can guard us against the misfortunes of this life; and that good men are to expect their reward in a place of more equitable distribution."<sup>39</sup> Neither virtue nor justice protects Job and the Vicar until, of course, the end.

The collection of situational correspondences, seemed like parallels once, no longer seem so similar if one takes into account the modern



view of the novel. In the past few years The Vicar has been interpreted as a satire, a romance, and a burlesque; but, as Quintana points out, "the real theme of this seemingly innocent book is discovery about life."<sup>40</sup> God has his own reasons to inflict sufferings and to make every individual go through certain trials and tribulations and his ways are past finding out; but the one assured thing is that the righteous will emerge victorious in the end. Job teaches us this lesson in a non-ironic way and Goldsmith shows us the same thing by use of irony in the Vicar. In other words the moral sense works through irony in the novel. The problem of undeserved suffering is utilized in both the books, but with a difference in tone; it is comic and satiric in the Vicar, serious in Job. Neither is punished for sin, nor suffers on other Biblical causes such as the blind man of John 9 or Stephen the martyr of Act 22. But both need to be disciplined. Job has to learn "a humble acceptance of his proper place in the scheme of things"<sup>41</sup> and the Vicar, as Battestin points out, "has been chastened to an awareness of his own folly and presumption."<sup>42</sup> Thus Job and the Vicar present in themselves two highly memorable examples of chastening the self-righteous. Finally, the parallels make the Vicar a comic antitype of Job. By casting an eighteenth-century Job in the Vicar, Goldsmith has affirmed the wisdom and justice of Providence.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The King James Version of the Bible uses the word "patience" to mean suffering or enduring as it meant in seventeenth-century English. It can be referred in James 5.11, which reads: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job. . . ." The OED gives the meaning of patience as "The suffering or enduring (of pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure." Scherer probably uses the OED meaning here.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Scherer, The Interpreter's Bible, ed. Nolan B. Harmon (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), III, 906.

<sup>3</sup>The OED meaning is used.

<sup>4</sup>William Neil, Harper's Bible Commentary (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 221.

<sup>5</sup>"Critical Estimates of The Vicar of Wakefield," The Vicar of Wakefield (New York: Charles E. Merrill Co., 1906), p. 28.

<sup>6</sup>Patterns of Disguise in The Vicar of Wakefield," ELH, 25 (1958), 104.

<sup>7</sup>"Duality of Theme in The Vicar of Wakefield," CE, 22 (1961), 321.

<sup>8</sup>The History of the English Novel (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1950), V, 83.

<sup>9</sup>The Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848), 358.

<sup>10</sup>The Interpreter's Bible, 877.

<sup>11</sup>Oliver Goldsmith, ed. John Morley (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), p. 81.

<sup>12</sup>The Interpreter's Bible, 886.

<sup>13</sup>Adelstein, p. 319.

- <sup>14</sup>"Observations on The Vicar of Wakefield," Cam J, III (1950), 621.
- <sup>15</sup>Jefferson, p. 624.
- <sup>16</sup>Adelstein, p. 317.
- <sup>17</sup>Oliver Goldsmith: A Georgian Study (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 109.
- <sup>18</sup>"Satire Intent in The Vicar of Wakefield," SSF, V (1968), 333.
- <sup>19</sup>The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 209.
- <sup>20</sup>"The Vicar of Wakefield and Recent Goldsmith Scholarship," ECS (1976), 443.
- <sup>21</sup>Goldsmith: The Critical Heritage, ed. G. S. Rousseau (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 12.
- <sup>22</sup>Black, p. 81.
- <sup>23</sup>"Philosophic Travelers," Oliver Goldsmith (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 101.
- <sup>24</sup>"The Two Worlds of Oliver Goldsmith," SEL, 13 (1973), 533.
- <sup>25</sup>Hopkins, p. 207.
- <sup>26</sup>The Providence of Wit (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).
- <sup>27</sup>Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, Goldsmith: Selected Works, ed. Richard Garnett (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 102. All subsequent quotations will be from this edition, and volume, chapter, and page number will be noted parenthetically in the text.
- <sup>28</sup>This and subsequent quotations of the Bible will be from the King James Version, and book, chapter, and verse will be noted parenthetically in the text.
- <sup>29</sup>Neil, p. 222.
- <sup>30</sup>Samuel Terrien, p. 978.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 979.

<sup>32</sup>Goldsmith's use of a quotation from the Bible is probably due to the influence of his father and brother.

<sup>33</sup>Terrien, pp. 1005-1006.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 934.

<sup>35</sup>Kirk, p. 101.

<sup>36</sup>Terrien, p. 921.

<sup>37</sup>Asimov's Guide to the Bible: The Old Testament (USA, n.p., 1968), I, 487.

<sup>38</sup>Quoted from Ralph M. Wardle, Oliver Goldsmith (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1957), p. 193.

<sup>39</sup>Quoted from Wardle, p. 193.

<sup>40</sup>Quintana, p. 115.

<sup>41</sup>Neil, p. 228.

<sup>42</sup>Battestin, p. 207.

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