

that Eliphaz is wrong and as a matter of fact in the end it is Eliphaz and his friends, rather than Job, who receive God's condemnation. If the interpretation of most of the modern English versions is followed, it would seem to teach that Eliphaz held that Job, if he would turn away from his own sins, would, through the resulting pureness of his hands, himself become the means of redeeming others who were not innocent. While I have no way of knowing what sort of theology may have been in the mind of Eliphaz I have no reason to think that he held such a view as this.

It is hardly consistent with New Testament theology, which teaches that only the Lord Jesus Christ can make atonement for sinners. The Roman Catholic Church holds that the saints by performing good works beyond what was due have built up a treasury of merits that can be used by the Church to help the guilty, but this view is without New Testament support.

The Revised Standard Version seems to make the best sense, by omitting "island of " or "not" altogether, and changing the third person to a second person, thus assuring Job that if he turns from his sin he will become innocent and can be delivered by the cleanness of his hands. Perhaps Eliphaz believed this teaching of salvation by works, but it is certainly not what the Hebrew contains. While I am not in a position to know what theology the later-condemned Eliphaz actually held, I do not see that we are much better off by adopting the conjectures of the RSV, or by assuming the presence of post-Biblical Hebrew like the other modern versions, than by simply keeping the KJV's literal rendering of the Hebrew as it stands.

Three of the versions that you quote have inserted the word "even", which corresponds to nothing in the original. If we are to insert words into the text in this way, I could point out a dozen or more cases in the prophets where I feel that the expression would be greatly improved and the understanding of the reader tremendously helped by the insertion of a word, and each word of my suggestions would deal with a place where the context makes it clear that the insertion would be strictly in line with what the verse really means. Unless we are going to do this in such cases, it seems to me to be hardly in line with our principles to do it in this obscure verse in the speech of Eliphaz.

To insert "once" would surely be paraphrase rather than translation. There is nothing in the Hebrew to suggest it.