REDEEMING THEODICY IN JOB: MOVING FROM A CLASSICAL TO A CHRISTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes existing interpretations of theodicy in the book of Job, in order to suggest an alternative approach informed by the nature and mission of Christ. Much of biblical scholarship in Job has focused on a classical approach to theodicy or, in recent years, deconstructed anti-theodicy. This thesis offers an alternative approach that focuses on the Christological overtones in Job and a modern synthesis of Old and New Testament theodicy.

Chapter 1 introduces the problem of theodicy in Job, and a taxonomy of lenses traditionally used to examine Old Testament theodicy. Chapter 2 analyzes classical perspectives of Job derived from those lenses, and draws some conclusions about its interpretive history. Chapter 3 then puts forth two non-classical perspectives, and explores the Christological elements of Job's journey, in order to suggest that these provide an alternative framework for interpreting the book's theodicy. Finally, chapter 4 considers the implications of being attentive to Christology in interpreting the theodical message of Job.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Will, who met me at my Job-like point of despair and pointed me towards God. Because he was a good comforter, my whole trajectory changed, and I became dedicated to promoting the life-giving God among those with similar struggles.

PREFACE

This thesis was inspired by my own testimony. In a high school literature class, I was handed the book of Job to read, alongside Archibald MacLeish's *J.B*., and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Our class was promptly told that these three works represented the same message: that God was hidden from humanity and would never show Himself. The implication was that He was non-existent, and the Bible affirmed existentialism. This instruction aided a long descent into atheism and loneliness, where I had never been exposed to the Bible prior, and never thought to consult it again.

Thankfully, God met me at the bottom of that descent four years later. But in the process of healing and coming to know Christ, I dealt with the pain of Job again. I discovered my mother had struggled with the meaning of Job during her battle with cancer. She passed away believing in Jesus, but with a lot of theological torment. Having come full circle with Job, now into great love and warmth, it is one of my favorite books of the Bible. And having faced the problem of evil in ministry, with family and friends, from different angles, it is my joy to explore and provoke more discussion over one of the hardest, but most meaningful questions, that God desires to enter into with us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Daniel D. Bunn Jr. and Dr. David K. Hebert for taking much time and effort to help produce this thesis. I would also like to thank the graduate faculty at Oral Roberts University for supporting it and dedicating their lives to faith-filled, devoted love for God as their context for instruction. I must also thank my husband and children for their inestimable patience as I peppered their lives with random musings from the book of Job for over two years. For financing the majority of this project, I would like to thank my father-in-law. Lastly, I am grateful for the Holy Spirit for not just speaking the Scriptures from which we draw life, but for searching the innermost thoughts of the heart and depositing His revelation there. I would not be here today without this miraculous process and the inspiration He continuously produces.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM OF THEODICY IN JOB

Introduction and Thesis Statement

The book of Job is iconic in its treatment of theodicy, and is often looked to for more understanding of God and evil. However, there is a fair amount of dissatisfaction with the theologies of suffering that have emerged, as well as the overall enterprise of theodicy. The question becomes whether classical theodicies are sufficient to capture the book's theological message, or whether a new way of examination is warranted. Specifically, could an approach informed by Christology provide a better framework for probing theodicy in Job, or has the project, at this point, been essentially exhausted? To begin answering this question, the background of this problem will now be examined.

Background of the Problem

Theodicy is a more potent topic than ever before. Despite gains in health and prosperity in the present era, Marcel Sarot notes that modernity has brought an increasing preoccupation with the unfairness and injustice of tragedy.[1] Colonial oppression, the Holocaust, and the recent coronavirus pandemic are just a few calamities that have surfaced great despair over whether God sends suffering, permits it, or simply stays silent

[1]Marcel Sarot, "Theodicy and Modernity," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible,* ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 7–19.

during it.[2] There is also concern over God's nearness during crisis, which, as Robert Alter points out, God Himself controls.[3] These issues lie at the heart of theodicy and people's desire for the book of Job to help interpret one of the hardest issues of human experience.

Some scholars, like Sarot and Tom Holmén, have noted that theodical questioning tends to be accusatory, as though the nature of God or His very existence is at stake.[4] There may even be an assumption that God is guilty until proven innocent. David R. Blumenthal, for example, has questioned where God was during the Holocaust, and insists that "without addressing that question, no Jew (or Christian) can honestly claim to be religious."[5] Less controversially, Philip Yancey suggests, "We have put God on trial

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[2]W. H. Chong, "Learning from 'J.B.' and Job Through Pain and Pandemic: An Overview and Critique of MacLeish's 'J.B.' in Light of COVID-19," *Stimulus* 27, no. 1 (May 3, 2020): n.p., *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 October 2022); Nicholas List, "Receptions of Job and Theologies of Suffering," *Stimulus* 27, no. 2 (May 10, 2020): 2–6, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 October 2022). One particularly good lay treatment of the subject, reflecting contemporary educated despair over Job is Abraham Riesman, "The Impatience of Job," *Slate.com*, 13 March, 2022, n.p., https://slate.com /human-interest/2022/03/job-torah-story-despair-alternative-war-democracy-climate-apocalypse.html/ (October 7, 2022).

[3]Robert Alter, "Hebrew Poems Rewriting Job," in *The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics, Hermeneutics,* ed. Leora Batnitzky and Ilana Pardes (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 178–183, ProQuest E-book Central.

[4]Sarot, 7-9; Tom Holmén, *Theodicy and the Cross of Christ: A New Testament Inquiry,* The Library of New Testament Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 1–4.

[5]David R. Blumenthal, "What Are the Limits of Protest Theology? A Review Essay," *Religion & Theology* 24, no. 4 (1 October 2017): 623, *Christian Periodical Index,* EBSCOhost (20 October 2022). Please note that this question is a shared starting point for dialogue, and that post-Holocaust theology is an entire genre with many authors and perspectives.

over the issue of suffering."[6] No theological explanation for pain or misfortune seems satisfying, or compassionate enough, to be the answer. Nor do explanations dignify victims of tragedy, argue David B. Burrell and Trevor B. Williams.[7] The interpretation of Job's experience, then, enters a charged societal and global context to understand God.

Adding insult to injury, the book of Job is infamously hard to read. According to Brian P. Gault, the church father Jerome was known to have said that grasping the meaning of Job was like grasping an eel: "the more you squeeze it, the sooner it escapes."[8] As recently as 2015, David J. A. Clines called Job, "the most intense book theologically and intellectually of the Old Testament."[9] Much of the oft-cited difficulty is due to the Hebrew text, which is ancient, poetic, and contains—as Alter puts it—"huge, unexplained gaps" that are left to the interpreter.[10] John E. Hartley and Clines write

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[6]Philip Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 52. A similar statement is made by Espen Dahl, *The Problem of Job and the Problem of Evil,* Elements in Religion and Violence, ed. James R. Lewis and Margo Kitts (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 6.

[7]David B. Burrell, *Deconstructing Theodicy: Why Job Has Nothing to Say to the Puzzle of Suffering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007); Trevor B. Williams, "Job's Unfinalizable Voice: An Addendum to David Burrell's Deconstructing Theodicy," *New Blackfriars* 101, no. 1096 (November 2020): 681-688, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (15 October 2022).

[8]Brian P. Gault, "Job's Hope: Redeemer or Retribution?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173, no. 690 (April–June 2016): 147, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 September 2022).

[9]David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 17, ed. David A. Hubbard et. al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), xiii, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Job_1_20_Volume_17/Rl8qDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=outrage/ (11 November 2022).

[10]Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 177.

extensively on the notorious issues with dating, authorship, and textual integrity that exacerbate these gaps and make the historical context resistant to definition.[11] On top of that, Espen Dahl expresses how chapters of winding speeches about creation, lament, and theology weave in and out of each other in a kind of "broken dialogue in which no mutual recognition and learning take place."[12] The intertextual argument builds until, as Trevor B. Williams describes it, the "theodical promise of the book of Job" simply collapses into "an inevitably vexing set of questions."[13]

The theophany in chapters 38–42, where God speaks to Job personally,[14] is often included in this enigma. After innumerable interpretations, the one thing most theologians agree on is Manlio Simonetti's and Marco Conti's statement that "God does not ever answer Job's questions" about why he suffered.[15] Clines affirms, "God in no way explained or justified it to him."[16] Richard P. Belcher Jr. concurs: "The book does

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[11]John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job,* New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 3–6, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Book_of_Job/f-m5GnRjDckC?hl=en&gbpv=1/ (11 November 2022); Clines, *Job 1–20*, xci–cxiii.

[12]Dahl, 48.

[13]Trevor B. Williams, 681.

[14]Unless otherwise indicated, all English Bible references in this thesis are taken from The Berean Standard Bible (BSB), *Bible Hub*, 2020, n.p., https://biblehub.com/ (30 August 2022).

[15]Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti, eds., *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), xvii.

[16]David J. A. Clines, "Job," *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. Gordon J. Wenham et. al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 483.

not answer the question of why."[17] Daniel J. Estes agrees, "God does not give Job an explanation" nor "disclose the reason."[18] Ultimately, concludes David McKenna, "God does not directly answer any of the issues in the debate."[19] Hartley aptly sums up Job's interpretive history when he says, "Modern readers in search of insight into the issue of suffering are often keenly disappointed with the Yahweh speeches."[20]

This disappointment is perhaps most visible in a segment of Joban scholars who have settled in cynicism. Zachary Margulies represents them well, saying that the moral of Job is that God "has never answered and never will." Humanity, therefore, "can expect nothing."[21] Carol A. Newsom similarly speaks of the "tragic knowledge" Job discovers: that mutual, moral relationship between God and humanity is impossible.[22] According to Philip K. Roth, Nehama Verbin, and Vivian Liska, existentialists from Franz Kafka to Elie Wiesel have believed abandoning relationship with God is simply following Job's

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[17]Richard P. Belcher Jr., "Job," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised,* ed. Miles Van Pelt (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 357.

[18]Daniel J. Estes, *Job,* Teaching the Text Commentary Series, ed. Mark Strauss and John Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 255.

[19]David McKenna, "God's Revelation and Job's Response," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 382.

[20]Hartley, *The Book of Job,* 31.

[21]Zachary Margulies, "Oh, That One Would Hear Me! The Dialogue of Job, Unanswered," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2020): 601, *ProjectMUSE*, EBSCOhost (8 September 2021).

[22]Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 253.

own response to God's hiddenness and delay.[23] Verbin testifies of alienation being the final message of Job, when she says, "[Job] does not address God directly any longer . . . The book . . . tells the story of a failed relationship, of a relationship that subsists in brokenness."[24]

Of course, not everyone has been disenchanted by the narrative. Distinct paradigms of Old Testament theodicy have been forged through centuries of Jewish sacred writing, and are captured well in Antti Laato's and Johannes C. de Moor's *Theodicy in the World of the Bible.* These theodical paradigms have been applied to many Old Testament books by biblical scholars: to help fill interpretive gaps, round out passages theologically, and provide explanations for why God is just to permit suffering.[25] These paradigms form the backbone of classical theodicy, and have been applied to the book of Job for most of its interpretive history.

However, a key problem has been that, as Karl-Johan Illman notes, Job does not "neatly fit" any one paradigm.[26] Certain elements fit Job to a degree, but others are

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[23]Philip K. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 2001), 6; Nehama Verbin, *Divinely Abused: A Philosophical Perspective on Job and His Kin* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 121–128, ProQuest E-book Central; Vivian Liska, "Kafka's Other Job," in *The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics, Hermeneutics,* ed. Leora Batnitzky and Ilana Pardes (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 123–143, ProQuest E-book Central.

[24]Verbin, *Divinely Abused*, 142.

[25]Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor, eds., *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003).

[26]Karl-Johan Illman, "Theodicy in Job," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 304.

explicitly contradicted elsewhere in the text. Another problem is that none of the classical theodicies, applied to Job, resolve the essential theological puzzle driving so much inquiry: the famous "Epicurean trilemma." As penned by the apologist Lactantius:

> If He [God] is willing but unable [to take away evils], He is feeble . . . if He is able and unwilling, He is envious [malevolent] . . . if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? or why does He not remove them?[27]

Since this cornerstone of classical theodicy was penned, it has all but indicted the God of Job. To be sure, Job predates the latter. But the pitting of God's omnipotence and His omnibenevolence, against the existence of pain and suffering, has framed the classical problem of evil for centuries. Epicureans and Stoics taunted Jews and Christians over it, and Enlightenment philosophers, like Hume, repeated the attack. Within Judeo-Christian scholarship, there has been much debate but no consensus; nor, as mentioned above, a satisfying resolution from God perceived in the text of Job. In light of this, the prevailing expectation that the book of Job should resolve this logic problem persists today. And, it induces the kind of disappointment reflected in Claus Westermann's statement that, Job's history of interpretation "shows no progress on this crucial question."[28]

Lastly, the theological wisdom which emerges from classical theodicies of Job yields opposing interpretations. For example, the principle that "God has a right to do

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[27]Lactantius, *De Ira Dei*; quoted in Marcel Sarot, "Theodicy and Modernity," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible,* ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 7.

[28]Claus Westermann, "The Literary Genre of the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 52–53.

what he does . . . even making an innocent man suffer" sounds intellectually satisfying to Clines,[29] "abusive" to Blumenthal,[30] and as if God is "complicit in evil" to Roth.[31] Similarly, Henrietta C. Mears' statement that God was "honoring" Job[32] and "preparing him for greater influence from the hand of the Lord,"[33] appears to make light of the "horror movie" Job experiences, as Christopher Ash describes it.[34] What Estes calls God's "mysterious ways"[35] are "paradoxical" to Humphreys Frackson Zgambo and Angelo Nicolaides,[36] and "dangerous" to Verbin.[37] Eric Ortlund's summation of the prologue is "troubling;"[38] but Alter concludes it is a "perverse wager."[39] Finally, Job's

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[29]Clines, "Job," 483.

[30]Blumenthal, "Limits," 624.

[31]Roth, 6.

[32]Henrietta C. Mears, "Understanding Job," *What the Bible is All About* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 201.

[33]Mears, 199.

[34]Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross,* Preaching the Word, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 55.

[35]Estes, 5.

[36]Humphreys Frackson Zgambo, and Angelo Nicolaides, "A Brief Exposition on the Notions of Human Suffering, Theodicy and Theocracy in the Book of Job," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 103 (2022): 1, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (1 October 2022).

[37]Verbin, *Divinely Abused,* 142.

[38]Eric Ortlund, *Piercing Leviathan: God's Defeat of Evil in the Book of Job,* New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 1.

[39]Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 177.

restoration is "joyful" and "undeserved" to Ash,[40] but a "reparation" and "admission of guilt" to Verbin and Michael V. Fox.[41] It is God's prophetic token of the resurrection to Mears,[42] but a cliché "scribal fig leaf" to Margulies.[43] For every theory, there is a counter-theory. Without any kind of navigational system, centuries of conflict in interpretation have given rise to "the impression that the study of Job has reached a state of uncertainty and impasse," according to C. J. Williams.[44]

In response to this felt experience, theologians from different communities have converged upon the once-iconic theodicy of Job presenting no theodicy at all. Westermann says Job is not really about "a problem" of evil with a "cogent conceptual or theoretical answer," yet scholars have exegeted themselves into believing so.[45] Agreeing, John H. Walton counsels, "We must be content with mystery . . ." because, like Job, people "overestimate the ability to devise a cogent philosophy of the operation of the world."[46] Newsom and Wesley Morriston concur, arguing that intelligibility has been

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[40]Ash, 432.

[41]Verbin, *Divinely Abused*, 138; Michael V. Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 1 (2018): 18, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (1 September 2022).

[42]Mears, 200.

[43]Margulies, 601.

[44]C. J. Williams, *The Shadow of Christ in the Book of Job* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), xi.

[45]Westermann, 52–53.

[46]John H. Walton, *Job,* The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 402.

fractured by God's desire for inscrutability.[47] To this, Fox adds a commonly shared sentiment that "To be aware of our ignorance is wisdom too."[48] Clines takes this one step further, saying pointedly, "Job's mistake has been to demand an answer to the problem of suffering, which is to intrude into an area beyond human comprehension."[49] But, is it a "mistake" to attempt to comprehend this matter? Should the human instinct to question be silenced? Is theodicy truly an "intrusion" because God desires His ways and purposes to be unknowable? These ideas have significant implications for theology, relationship, and ministry. They shape not only the moral conclusion of Job, but conclusions about the God of Job, and the life He has made.

The question, therefore, becomes whether this is all that can be made of this key wisdom book. Has the text been so exhausted that there is nothing else to say about the theodical questions it raises? Or, could another approach permit the text to speak freshly to an age-old discussion? At this point, it should be noted that the New Testament is not normally a featured part of the discussion in Job, especially in modern interpretation. Clines defends this, affirming it is the "appropriate Christian approach" to "forswear" a

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[47]Newsom, 159–160, 177; Wesley Morriston, "God's Answer to Job," *Religious Studies* 32, no. 3 (1996): 354–355, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 October 2022).

[48]Fox, "Meanings,"12. See very similar conclusions in Morriston, 351–354; Walton, *Job,* 415; Norman C. Habel, "The Design of Yahweh's Speeches." In *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 419; Robert Gordis, "Job and Ecology (and the Significance of Job 40:15)," *Hebrew Annual Review* 9 (1985): 198–199. GoogleScholar (10 October 2022); Kizito Uzoma Ndugbu, "Human Experience as the Point of Departure in the Wisdom Literatures: A Demonstration with the Book of Job's Engagement with the Problem of Human Suffering and Theodicy," *Journal of Biblical Theology* 3, no. 4 (October–December 2020): 21–23. *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (29 September 2022).

[49]Clines, "Job," 482.

Christological reading of Job because it differs little from feminist, materialist, or personal interpretations of the text.[50] Walter Brueggemann expresses a related desire to "deliver" the Old Testament from Christian "misrepresentations" that "haunt" its interpretation.[51] Alter has similarly spoken of his translation work as "regrounding" the Old Testament from Christian arrogation, and restoring it to its original "theological theater."[52] This pattern has caused Graeme Goldsworthy to lament that Christian scholars, "in increasing numbers," are writing books on the Old Testament "which hardly even mention the fact that the New Testament exists."[53]

Given the Hebraic and pre-incarnational context of Job, this hermeneutical approach is understandable. But, in fairness to the issue at hand, it is worth considering whether the Gordian knot of interpretive history in Job could in fact be related to its methodology. This thesis will consequently consider what would happen to Job's theological message if a Christological approach were permitted. Could the person and mission of Christ speak to the puzzle and experience of Job in any way? What if Job's encounter with evil and innocent suffering were not seen as completely independent of

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[50]Clines, *Job 1–20*, lv.

[51]Walter Brueggemann, review of *The Book of Psalms:A Translation with Commentary*, by Robert Alter, *Christian Century* 124, no. 4 (February 26, 2008): 51–52, *MasterFILE Premier,* EBSCOhost (25 October 2022).

[52]Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), xxxiii–xxxiv.

[53]Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 54.

Christ's? Could New Testament revelation, surrounding the mysteries of Christ (Eph 3:8–9), aid in unlocking the mystery of Job?

At a time when global community, awareness, and sensitivity have aroused continually critical questions of God and suffering, the world would benefit from a powerful and accurate interpretation of the book of Job. It is therefore opportune to reflect on whether the traditional, classical approach has been sufficient to treat theodicy in Job; or whether a new way of examination might provide a better framework. The rest of this thesis is dedicated to exploring this question. Next, the objectives and delimitations will be given to situate the exploration.

Objectives and Significance

Studies in the book of Job currently exhibit great variety. A contemporary search yields textually critical studies, sometimes informed by Higher Criticism, ecology, or psychoanalysis. Others are ministerial, giving practical counsel on navigating tragedy. Still others—often at least a decade old, or more—are by Old Testament scholars who have spent their lives mastering ancient languages, the ancient Near East, or rabbinical commentaries. A wide variety of beliefs about God and the text characterize these analyses.

In this regard, there are fewer Christian treatments of Job than Jewish ones, fewer evangelical than non-evangelical, and even fewer Spirit-filled scholars who are committed to a positive view of the text and its message. This thesis aims to contribute to the latter. There are also limited studies dealing with the methodology involved in theodical taxonomy. Most authors already subscribe to a set of hermeneutical principles

and a particular philosophy of theodicy from which they teach. By questioning these precommitments and asking whether Christology from the New Testament is recognizable in Job, this study will most likely appeal to Christian believers interested in theodicy or the relationship between the two Testaments. More generally, this thesis will contribute to contemporary interest in theodicy and Job, which, as mentioned above, is on the rise. Christian believers hoping that the topic has not yet been exhausted, and that there is more to God's answer about suffering, may find the study edifying. That said, there are a number of delimitations importantly narrowing the scope.

Delimitations

It will be beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss theodicy in significant detail outside the book of Job. There is a rich tradition of analytical philosophy on the problem of evil,[54] but this thesis will only invoke it as necessary to analyze Job. Similarly, Job's iconic treatment by theologians, philosophers, and academics of all types, requires this thesis to narrow the number of voices and perspectives represented.

Accordingly, this thesis will focus on established Old and New Testament scholarship around the text of Job, not the multiform treatments of Job that can be found in sermons, blogs, editorials, and literature across the world. While the perspective from a few lay sources will be included,[55] this thesis will focus on theologically established categories of options for viewing Job. These have been fashioned by centuries of biblical

[54]A notable one is Michael L. Peterson, *The Problem of Evil*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016).

[55]See Clines' note on the importance of this to good scholarship in *Job 1–20,* xxx.

scholarship, and have been acknowledged, developed, and documented by rabbis and scholars accountable for the conversation.

That said, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss theodicy in Scripture more broadly. It is understood that the book of Job operates in context and does not get to define theodicy independently of other Scriptures, nor subordinate alternative perspectives in them. Non-canonical Jewish writings, like the Pseudepigrapha and Dead Sea Scrolls, also contain a spectrum of theodicies that James H. Charlesworth argues should be considered alongside the Old Testament.[56] It is certainly possible that a collection of theodicies, or a combination of them, represents a biblical perspective more than any one lens. This argument duly noted, the book of Job is emblematic as a treatment of theodicy. This thesis will focus on what it, uniquely, adds to the discussion.

Lastly, this thesis will also not be able to treat the text of Job with the exegetical scrutiny it deserves.[57] It will focus on the text at a high level and the options for theology it raises. This delimitation is important because, ideally, the theology of any book should be closely connected to exegesis; and this is certainly the case for Job. Nevertheless, this thesis will focus on the emergent messages that different biblical scholars subscribe to and believe exegetical studies support. Next, the following section will outline some important presuppositions in approaching the text.

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[56]James H. Charlesworth, "Theodicy in Early Jewish Writings," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible,* ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 508.

[57]Resources containing excellent exegesis, however, include Clines, *Job 1–20*; Hartley, *The Book of Job*; and Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary,* Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985).

Presuppositions

This thesis assumes that the biblical God exists, and that He is Lord and Creator of all (Matt 3:16–17; 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–17). It also takes as a fundamental assumption that Scripture is His accurate and divinely inspired self-revelation (Matt 4:4, 2 Tim 3:16). Norman L. Geisler expounds that both Old and New Testaments are to be accepted as the infallible Word of God (Ps 119:160), revealed and authored by the Holy Spirit "as He carried men along" (2 Pet 1:20–21).[58]

The book of Job is, by extension, also divinely inspired. It is the perspective of this thesis that the same Holy Spirit who authored the New Testament also authored the book of Job. Therefore, its message connects to the rest of Scripture and to orthodox beliefs about the power, love, and justice of God derived from the full counsel of Scripture.[59] This assumption will be developed more throughout this thesis.

As canonical, the book of Job is also reliable. According to Mark Larrimore, although Job bears the signs of age and intergenerational handling, God preserved the biblical text "essentially unchanged" over the centuries.[60] This implies Job's basic revelation is able to edify all generations of biblical believers (Rom 15:4, 2 Tim 3:17), both Jews and Christians (Deut 29:29; Heb 12:25). This thesis will assume these foundational principles are relevant in navigating possible theological options for Job.

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[58]Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 245–249.

[59]For more information on orthodox views, see Geisler, 410–427.

[60]Mark Larrimore, *The Book of 'Job': A Biography*, Lives of Great Religious Books, vol. 15 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 7.

This thesis also presumes that credible theology and supporting exegesis can be done on a text where the authorship and dating are unknown, and will likely remain so. To this effect, scholars have provided a wide set of plausible arguments for Job's authorship during the time of Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon, the exile, and Second Temple Era—which R. Laird Harris and J. J. M. Roberts summarize well.[61] And while context and application would be admittedly different for each setting, Harris, Roberts, Clines, and Walton maintain that the basic theological message of the book can be examined despite this missing information.[62] Harris, for example, states, "the date is not of theological concern," with Roberts agreeing that authorship is "largely irrelevant for its exegesis."[63] It is therefore the view of this thesis that while the longstanding questions over Job's dating and authorship are important, they are not completely essential to diagnosing its theodical meaning. Nor is a perfect translation completely essential, although interpretation is indebted to the scores of scholars who have wrestled with the ancient language.

One last presupposition is that this thesis treats the book of Job as if Job could have been a historical person, rather than merely fictional. The *Babylonian Talmud* states

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[61]R. Laird Harris, "The Book of Job and its Doctrine of God," *Presbyterion* 7, no. 1/2 (Spring 1981): 5–33, *Christian Periodical Index*, EBSCOhost (27 March 2023); J. J. M. Roberts, "Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89, no. 1 (1977): 107–114, *AtlaSerialsPLUS®,* EBSCOhost (7 January 2023); Also see Hartley, *The Book of Job,* 13, 17–21.

[62]Clines, *Job 1–20*, xxix; Walton, *Job*, 23–24.

[63]Harris, 10. Roberts, 114.

that Job is a parable,[64] but the references to him in both the Old and New Testaments suggest that he lived. They exhort imitating Job like Noah, Daniel, and other Old Testament saints who persevered (Ezek 14:12–20; Jas 5:10–11). Mears defends Job's historicity.[65] Westermann, Estes, Belcher, and Matitiahu Tsevat make room for it.[66] According to Larrimore, Burrell, Dahl, and Belcher, the *Peshitta*,[67] *Qur'an*,[68] and *The Babylonian Job*[69] lend weight to his existence. While inconclusive, this thesis errs on the side that Job's suffering should be comprehended not merely as a "thought experiment"[70] to be grasped intellectually, but as "the life story of a man, written with his life blood," as Tsevat summarizes it.[71] As addressed above, the intellectualizing of radical suffering is a spring of antipathy towards theodicy; and, if Job's suffering never happened, then it demands no real explanation or dignity. Nor does it warrant the amount of axial attention,

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[64]b. Bava Bathra 15a. Unless otherwise indicated, all Talmudic references in this thesis are taken from *The Babylonian Talmud*, William Davidson digital edition, translated by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, Koren Publishers, *Sefaria.org*, 2023, n.p., https://www. sefaria.org/Bava_Batra? tab=contents/ (8 March 2023).

[65]Mears, 200.

[66]Westermann, 58, 63; Belcher, 358; Matitiahu Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 209.

[67]Larrimore, *The Book of 'Job',* 8.

[68]Burrell, 65–88; Dahl, 11.

[69]Belcher, 357–358.

[70]As argued by Walton, *Job*, 26–27; Fox, "Meanings," 9.

[71]Tsevat, 109.

moral quandary, and outcry that it has caused throughout history.[72] While the aims of this thesis do not rise and fall on holding to a historical Job, it will mean more to those who are open to Job being part of the history of God's holy sufferers; each of whom testified of something very important to their observers. With these presuppositions now clarified, the key terms that will guide the body of discussion will now be defined.

Definition of Terms

Many terms will be defined and developed throughout this thesis. This section outlines those which form the backbone of discussion in chapters 2 and 3. These guide the overall methodology by representing major fields of theodical interpretation in Job.

Although already introduced in the previous section, the word "theodicy" is important to define before proceeding. Laato and de Moor explain that in the early Enlightenment, Gottfried Leibniz coined the word "theodicy" from two Greek roots meaning "God" and "defense." Leibniz created this construct as an apologetical tool to argue that Christian belief in an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God was reasonable, despite the existence of evil and imperfection.[73] Today, Ronald M. Green affirms that "theodicy" still refers to the basic effort to defend the biblical God's goodness, power, and justice in the face of suffering. Different "theodicies" result from this endeavor as

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[72]For example, the exhortations to sever relationship with God in Verbin, *Divinely Abused*, 118–121; Leora Batnitzky, "Beyond Theodicy? Joban Themes in Philip Roth's 'Nemesis,'" in *The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics, Hermeneutics*, ed. Leora Batnitzky and Ilana Pardes (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 215, ProQuest E-book Central; to protest God's abusiveness in Blumenthal, "Limits," 623–625; Roth, 6; and to bring God to repentance in Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 177–178.

[73]Laato and de Moor, xiii–xiv.

"specific explanations or justifications of suffering in a world believed to be ruled by a morally good God."[74] The author of this thesis would add the nuance that it is really *God's nature* which is being justified. Theodicies provide certain contexts for His ways and suffering to be reconciled.

Classical Theodicy

Classical theodicy is the traditional approach to the problem of evil, as shaped by biblical scholarship and the Western philosophical tradition. Looking to Green again, "classical theodicy" can be defined as a systematic, logical, and doctrinal understanding of God's agency as it pertains to evil's existence.[75] Three classical theodicies will be examined in this thesis, following the taxonomy and definitions endorsed by Green, Laato and de Moor, Charlesworth, and Jacob Neusner.[76] The first is "retributive" theodicy: the idea that God is just to send or permit suffering because punishment is somehow deserved. The second is "educative" theodicy: the idea that God is just to send or permit suffering because it teaches important lessons, or enriches humanity, in ways that cannot be obtained otherwise. The third is "mystery" as theodicy, which, as Illman notes, embraces God as having "reasons of his own, which human beings cannot

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[74]Ronald M. Green, "Theodicy," *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* vol. 14, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York, Macmillan Publishing, 1987), 431.

[75]Green, 432.

[76]Green, 432–434; Laato and de Moor, xxix-xxx, xliii-xlvi; Charlesworth, 470–472; Jacob Neusner, "Theodicy in Judaism," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible,* ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 685–727.

discern."[77] There can therefore be no intelligible explanation of evil or suffering. Walton adds that mystery rejects the attempt to reduce the "complexity" of evil.[78] These three theodicies have long, established chains of thought in Judeo-Christian scholarship, especially regarding the book of Job. They also use the Epicurean trilemma[79] as an orienting frame of thought.

One important subcategory of mystery as theodicy is "anti-theodicy," which suspects the entire enterprise of theodicy; and, as Green puts it, that God is just in "humanly, understandable terms."[80] This position also includes the belief, held by Burrell and Trevor B. Williams, that logical explanations for evil end up justifying it and are therefore immoral.[81] All of the preceding perspectives, based on these definitions, will be developed in chapter 2 as part of the classical framework for approaching Job.

Non-Classical Theodicy

Non-classical theodicies are alternative approaches to the traditional forms of theodicy. As Bethany N. Sollereder clarifies, they generally do not attempt to solve the trilemma of God's goodness, power, and permission of evil in the same way that the

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[77]Illman, 306.

[78]Walton, *Job*, 11.

[79]Lactantius, *De Ira Dei*; quoted in Sarot, 7.

[80]Green, 432.

[81]Burrell, 116–117; Trevor B. Williams, 686–687. For definition of the field of anti-theodicy beyond Job, see Lauri Snellman, "'Anti-theodicy' and Anti-theodicies," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 1 (17 March 2019): 201–211, https://www.philosophy-of-religion.eu/index.php/ejpr/article/view/2579/ (2 January 2023).

classical approach does. They eschew retributive educative, and mysterious readings, and instead, seek resolution or dissolution from a different angle.[82]

In this thesis, a "Christological" approach to theodicy will be suggested as an alternative approach to theodicy in Job. A Christological theodicy may be defined as an explanation and defense of God's permission of suffering, as shaped by what R. S. Wallace and G. L. Green term, "the significance of the person of Christ and of what is done in Him . . . [as well as] what the Father speaks and acts through Him." [83] It takes, as a starting point, Holmén's controlling idea that Christ's attributes and journey were sent by the Father to remedy the problem of evil and elucidate the mystery of suffering.[84] In chapter 3, this will be brought to bear upon Job's attributes and journey.

To explore Christology in Job, two less common Old Testament theodicies will be brought into the conversation. "Communion" theodicy is defined by Laato and de Moor as God's permission of suffering being just because He suffers alongside His people.[85] "Proleptic" theodicy, sometimes called "anticipated" theodicy, is defined by Charlesworth as God's justice being prophetically entered into, and participated in, prior

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[82]Bethany N. Sollereder, "Compassionate Theodicy: A Suggested Truce Between Intellectual and Practical Theodicy," *Modern Theology* 37, no. 2 (April 2021): 382–395, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (2 January 2023).

[83]R. S. Wallace, and G. L. Green, "Christology," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 239.

[84]Tom Holmén, "Theodicean Motifs in the New Testament," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 605–651.

[85]Laato and de Moor, xlviii.

to the end of the age.[86] This is a distinct form of eschatological theodicy, which claims that justice will not manifest completely until the end of the age, when God judges the world.[87] The preceding categories of thought, with their definitions, will be used in this thesis to analyze theodicy in Job and its history of interpretation. Now that they have been introduced, the last section will provide an overview of how the body of the thesis will proceed.

Methodology

To assess whether classical theodicy can sufficiently treat theodicy in Job, chapter 1 has so far introduced the book of Job, the problem of theodicy, and a taxonomy of theodicies derived from Old Testament scholarship. Chapter 2 will then analyze these classical theodicies of Job. It will highlight major contributors and streams of thought, how Old and New Testament scholars interact over similar points, and how the history of interpretation has led to mystery as theodicy becoming the predominant interpretation of Job. Chapter 2 will then end by asking to what extent the classical approach yields a satisfactory understanding of God's permission to let Job suffer. This step will also provide a warrant for asking if another theological framework for theodicy in Job is permissible—one that is non-classical and open to Christological analysis.

Chapter 3 will then explore Christological concepts recognizable in the narrative of Job, as well as two non-classical forms of Old Testament theodicy. It will use these as a basis for probing whether a Messianic person and journey are anticipated by Job's

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[86]Charlesworth, 472.

[87]Charlesworth, 472; Green, 433; Laato and de Moor, xlii–xlv; Neusner, 686, 713.

character and experience. Chapter 3 will also examine theological streams that have connected Job and Christ, and attempt a synthesis of classical and non-classical findings. Finally, chapter 4 will discuss hermeneutical, theological, and ministerial implications of making room for a Christological approach to Job. With this methodology clarified, the next chapter will proceed with delving into Job's interpretive history, and the wisdom derivable from his experience.

CHAPTER 2

THE CLASSICAL APPROACH TO THEODICY IN JOB

Introduction

This chapter will introduce the book of Job and its context within the ancient Near East. It will then survey three forms of classical theodicy in Job: retributive theodicy, educative theodicy, and mystery as theodicy. Each will include a sample of scholars' views, from historical to present, as well as a theological analysis. Finally, an overall assessment of the classical approach to theodicy in Job will be made.

The Story of Job

The book of Job opens with a glimpse into an important moment in God's heavenly courtroom. Satan interrupts a divine assembly and accuses God of making fraudulent, self-interested worshippers. After asking whether Satan believes this is true, even of His servant Job, God permits Satan to afflict Job, in order to discover whether Job's devotion to God is self-serving or not. In successive calamities, Job's property, family, and health are destroyed. No one on earth knows why, but Job refuses to curse God. In fact, he blesses Him and appears to accept what has happened.

Job's three wise friends then arrive to comfort him and address his suffering. After sitting with them in silence for seven days, Job suddenly despairs he was ever born and curses life itself. The friends tell him to repent of his sin, and God will restore him.

Thus begins a lengthy disputation between Job and his friends about whether Job has sinned to bring on this suffering (Job 3–31).

The friends probe his past, family, and character. They point out Job's sinful attitude towards God and his blasphemous responses to their correction. Job, in the meantime, insists he is innocent, their theology is wrong, and God is unfairly, inexplicably against him. As the argument continues, Job grows more desperate. He longs for a trial between himself and God, where God will explain His rationale for attacking him. Finally, Job swears a formal oath of innocence and challenges God to appear against him in open court, even if it means he is condemned. Following Elihu's sudden interjection that this is unwise, and God could be punishing Job for a different reason (Job 32–37), God Himself enters the scene in a whirlwind.

In chapters 38–41, Yahweh speaks to Job face to face and challenges his perspective with a litany of questions about creation. Yahweh also provides a lengthy speech on two beasts, Behemoth and Leviathan. In response, Job retracts his case against God and expresses great humility (Job 42:1–6). God's parting act is to declare Job righteous and his friends unrighteous, and to demand a large guilt offering from the friends that Job will officiate. Afterwards, Job is healed and restored. He and his friends enter a form of golden age where Job lives a second, even more prosperous life. This story, though simple, raises the great question of how it should be understood. The context of the book will be examined next, to situate the discussion.

The Context of Job

The setting of Job is the ancient Near East (ANE), which is defined by Elmer B. Smick as the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Canaan, Ugarit, Assyria, Babylon, as well as Israel.[1] As mentioned in chapter 1, the unknown author and dating of the book make its original audience, reception, and critical history uncertain. It is usually accepted, claims Walton, that Job and his friends are non-Israelites (Edomites) from patriarchal times or earlier. Yet, the authorship reflects a "strictly Israelite" and "unsyncretized view" from centuries later, similar to Deuteronomy and the Psalter.[2] Ash clarifies that the use of the name "Yahweh," in the text, signals to the reader that they are learning about the God of Israel, but through "a believer [in Him] before and outside of Israel."[3] The ANE, in very broad terms, is therefore the closest context for biblical and theological study of Job.

Whether Job personally existed is also unknown, but Belcher and Hartley report a significant literary tradition, starting in the early second millennium BC, of a man suddenly suffering at the hands of the gods, from an inexplicable break in the divine order. Belcher describes three ANE legends of a wealthy, pious individual who suffers and cries out to the gods at length for understanding.[4] Hartley compares the Old

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[1]Elmer B. Smick, "Another Look at the Mythological Elements in the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 232.

[2]John H. Walton, "Job 1: Book of," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 344.

[3]Ash, 375.

[4]Belcher, 359–360.

Testament version of Job to six Mesopotamian and five Egyptian tales that have remarkable parallels in theme and structure. Walton, likewise, notes that these comparative myths offer their own thoughts on retributive theology and the inscrutability of the divine, just like the book of Job. Ultimately, he concludes that the parallel mythology makes it possible that an original source exists, perhaps from "an actual individual whose experiences have become legendary."[5] Or, as the Talmud claims, Job could be a parable devised by Moses, to teach Israel a particular lesson.[6]

Either way, the Old Testament version of Job finds itself dialoguing with a set of competing legends about a man and his god, and describing a very different divine-human relationship. Hartley argues that despite the literary parallels, "the uniqueness of the book of Job stands out vividly." This is because, while the Israelite version joins the others in probing the world of the gods, deliverance, and personal integrity, it rejects fate, divination, obeisance, and other ANE resolutions.[7] To appreciate this distinction, the difference between ANE paganism and the "uniquely Israelite cognitive environment"—as Walton calls the ambiguous exegetical setting of Job—will now be considered.[8]

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[5]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 336.

[6]b. Bava Bathra 15a.

[7]John E. Hartley, "Job 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings,* ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 360. Walton argues that the three friends represent some of these competing ANE solutions in, "Job 1: Book of," 338.

[8]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 344.

Ancient Near Eastern Religion

Within the ANE, pagan religion differed from Israelite religion. Yahweh desired exclusive worship, and His divine attributes were different from those of the pagan gods. Smick, for example, claims the ANE gods were "disinterested" in human affairs and had a "shallow" relationship with humanity.[9] Joseph Heckelman claims they demonstrated "divine caprice" by taking a sudden interest in an individual or particular agenda for their own reasons.[10] They were not necessarily just, says Walton, nor were they expected to be.[11] Pagan gods like Baal, Yamm, or Mot, were powerful but limited, adds Francis I. Andersen. They were not infallibly good or sovereign, but rivaled each other for dominion. This created an aggressive climate that discouraged stable order.[12] Agreeing with Andersen, Clines describes the ANE gods as "hostile to creation" and filling the world with drama.[13] Yahweh was supposed to be different in all these respects.[14]

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[9]Smick, 232.

[10]Joseph Heckelman, "The Liberation of Job," *Dor Le Dor* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1988): 129. *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 October 2022).

[11]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 344.

[12]Francis I. Andersen, "The Problems of Suffering in the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 181.

[13]David J. A. Clines, "The Shape and Argument of the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 134.

[14]However, in Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony Dispute, Advocacy,* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 387, Brueggemann argues that ANE paganism can be seen in the description of Yahweh and His "peopled court of polytheism" where He still has "conversation partners" and an "unsettled interior life."

However, according to Hartley and Laato and de Moor, both ANE and Israelite religion accepted an essentially retributive relationship between divinity and humanity, which upheld the cosmic moral order.[15] Sylvia Huberman Scholnick describes this retributive relationship as the scales of justice being continually balanced through a system of divine retribution that rewarded faithfulness and punished wickedness.[16] God or the deities dispensed favor and protection for pious worshippers, says Smick, but punished the impious with misfortune or loss.[17] Tsevat claims this law was as formulaic as the law of cause and effect.[18] Fox, Heckelman, Habel, and Gregory W. Parsons use the word "mechanical" to describe its application.[19] Parsons also describes divine retribution as "binding" in both Israelite and ANE religion: its basis as the moral, governing force between humanity and the divine was "an unquestioned dogma with no exception."[20] The gods' response to human works could be delayed, but never broken.

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[15]Laato and de Moor, xxx–xxxii; Hartley, "Job 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background," 360. For similarities between ANE and Israelite retributive law, see Avi Shveka and Pierre van Hecke, "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict Between Job and His Friends," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 90, no. 1 (2014): 101–103, *AtlaSerialsPLUS®,* EBSCOhost (5 October 2022).

[16]Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "The Meaning of *Mispat* (Justice) in the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 355.

[17]Smick, 232.

[18]Tsevat, 191.

[19]Habel, "Design," 419; Fox, "Meanings," 9; Heckelman, 130; Gregory W. Parsons, "Literary Features of the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 28.

[20]Parsons, 24.

The Old Testament Job, therefore, stands directly in conversation with, and in contradistinction to, this religious environment. It probes whether Yahweh is indeed hostile to His creation, or capricious, or disinterested. It examines the axiom of retribution, and the cause-and-effect style of relationship. Within paganism, the changing favor, attention, and interests of the gods created an unreliable experience for humanity, even within the lawfulness of retribution. By contrast, Yahweh was a lone sovereign: powerful, good, and just. He operated dependably, understandably, relationally, and wisely. These qualities provided a very different experience for worshippers, even prior to the Mosaic era.

As Charlesworth notes, however, the emergent problem for Yahweh's sovereignty was theodicy: if He is the only deity—omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient—then why do His followers suffer?[21] Neusner states the theological problem more succinctly: if only one God rules, and covenant obedience should ensure divine protection of His people, "then all things can be credited to, and blamed on Him. He must be good or bad, just or unjust, but not both!"[22] The Epicurean trilemma of theodicy is therefore described as a unique consequence of Yahweh's attributes. The misfortune of Job, in pagan religion, did not require moral justification, but the biblical Job did.[23]

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[21]Charlesworth, 471.

[22]Neusner, 685. Also Charlesworth, 487, that the devout should be protected from disaster.

[23]Andersen, 181. See also Dahl, 4–5 and Green, 431–432 that paganism mitigates theodicy, but biblical monotheism fosters the problem of evil.

Furthermore, the theodical questions raised by Job's predicament had significant, historiographic import. The book of Job began dialoguing with, and shaping Israel's self-understanding, as soon as it was written. Charlesworth emphasizes that, unlike later concerns about universal theodicy, "Jewish reflections on theodicy were neither theoretical nor abstract; they evolved through reflections on their social and historical crises."[24] He explains that as Israel lost land, wars, and their Temple, rabbis increasingly asked where Yahweh was and why He apparently did not care what was happening to His covenant people.[25] By the time of the diaspora, the book of Job was dialoguing with texts like 2 Baruch, which says God chastened His sons "as his enemies because they sinned" (13:8–9). Also, in Psalms of Solomon 2, God "turned away his face" because "of their sins."[26] Was Job a parable of this?

Laato and de Moor clarify that, in contrast to forthcoming concerns about suffering, the existence of tragedy and loss—in and of itself—was not problematic for Israelite theology, Punishment was part of retributive relationship and the Deutero-Isaianic worldview that Yahweh punishes unfaithfulness.[27] Moreover, Neusner and Green maintain that Israelite theology was flexible enough to permit delay or inconsistency that would be compensated for in the age to come.[28] But, according to Roberts, as tragedies

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[24]Charlesworth, 471.

[25]Charlesworth, 472–473.

[26]Charlesworth, 495.

[27]Laato and de Moor, xxx–xxxiii.

[28]Neusner, 713; Green, 433–444.

for Israel accumulated, and the book of Job was formally canonized, its narrative was increasingly viewed as a historical "cipher" for the nation's theodical questions about their mission and election.[29] Brueggemann describes Job as articulating Israel's historical "countertestimony" that Yahweh is unreliable and "reneged on [His] claims of fidelity."[30]

Ultimately, these questions, along with their philosophical counterparts, coalesced into the classical approach to theodicy in Job. The goal became to solve the seemingly contradictory truths of Yahweh's goodness, power, and relationship to evil, while providing a grid to navigate personal and corporate tragedy. This still frames the object of classical theodicy, to which this chapter will now turn. The three classical lenses for interpreting Job's suffering—retributive, educative, and mysterious theodicy—will now be examined.

Retributive Theodicy in Job

As mentioned, retributive relationship was the accepted governing paradigm between divinity and humanity across the ANE. To keep the scales of justice balanced, the deities meted out prosperity for good behavior and punishment for wrongdoing. Tsevat therefore finds it logical that retributive theology frames the conflict in Job.[31]

At the outset, the prologue presents an intact, retributive relationship between Job and Yahweh. Job worships Yahweh and has His covenant protection. But this is tested, for an unclear reason. Job and his friends end up arguing over whether the divine-human

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[29]Roberts, 108.

[30]Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 388.

[31]Tsevat, 190.

order has been breached or not, with the friends insisting it could not be. God is unquestionably just, so Job must be guilty, maintain the friends. Job, however, believes the converse: he is blameless, so God must not be just. As Morriston puts it, it was impossible for any of them to consider that God would "destroy a righteous person,"[32] or that Yahweh "sometimes has good reasons for making the innocent suffer."[33]

Thus, retributive relationship goes unchallenged throughout the dispute. It causes the dissonance because, if God is just, then Job's devastation should not have happened. Yet, if God acted unjustly, then the moral order is now broken and relationship is incoherent. As everyone involved ponders this conundrum, tension arises in chapter 42 when Yahweh suddenly pronounces Job back in His favor. The blessings associated with covenant faithfulness are restored, indicating that: either retributive relationship became intact again, or Job deserved what happened so it was never broken in the first place. Which is it?

Retributive-Free Will Theodicy

In Jewish tradition, the latter is suspected. According to Dahl, the "major tendency" of rabbinical interpretation is that Job is guilty and receiving justly earned punishment for overlooked sin.[34] This position can be considered a retributive-free will theodicy because Yahweh is justly punishing unfaithfulness that Job is responsible for.

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[32]Morriston, 340.

[33]Morriston, 345.

[34]Dahl, 10.

Illustrating this position, Eliphaz asks Job, "Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Or where have the upright been destroyed?" (Job 4:7). His questions imply that Job is guilty, and the calamities prove it. The Talmud upholds the same inference from retributive theology because—while the Old Testament maintains "In all this, Job did not sin . . ." (Job 1:22; 2:10)—the sage Rava contends that "Job did not sin with his lips, but he sinned in his heart . . . he had wicked thoughts."[35] Rava then supplies portions from Job's lament as evidence that Job had wicked thoughts *preceding* his suffering. The assumption is that such caustic accusations towards God must have had deeper roots.

Corroborating this interpretation, Newsom argues that Job's opening concern—that his children might have cursed God "in their hearts" (Job 1:5)—is poetic irony: the narrator is hinting that this sin is precisely the one Job commits.[36] Newsom acknowledges that diagnosing Job's cursing is difficult because the text does not define exactly what this means.[37] In Jewish tradition, Moses Maimonides suggests that earthly prosperity debilitates Job's heart and "true knowledge of God."[38] Coming from a rabbinical perspective, Lawrence Corey and Heckelman agree and argue that Job lacks heartfelt

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[35]b. Bava Bathra 16a.

[36]Newsom, 61.

[37]Newsom, 55.

[38]Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed,* 2nd ed., trans. M. Friedlander, (NY: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1919), 300, GoogleBooks, https://philosophy-of-religion.eu/index.php/ejpr/article/view/2579/ (30 November 2022).

devotion to God.[39] Heckelman describes Job as a "smug observer" or "goody-goody," who performs his liturgy methodically rather than authentically.[40] In light of the Talmud's teaching that suggests Job's children were corrupted by worldliness,[41] Heckelman argues that Job sins by not fasting, weeping, and interceding for them. God is right to "shake him out of his proper, shallow surface routine, . . . break the comfortable cocoon," and "prod him to demand knowledge of and loving contact with God."[42] Tsevat concurs that God brought up Job, to Satan, "to shake him."[43]

Similarly, Corey claims Job must not have been completely *mitvot* observant. His suffering is therefore deserved, rather than undeserved.[44] Both Corey and Maimonides refer to Rav Ami's teaching, in b. Shabbat 55a, that "there is no death without sin, and no suffering without iniquity."[45] Regarding the Old Testament's testimony that Job was "blameless" (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3), Corey argues that this is Job's own report of his behavior and therefore unreliable. The Israelite reader must trust Yahweh that what happened to Job was fair, based on His just nature. Additionally, observes Corey, the curses which

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[39]Lawrence Corey, "The Paradigm of Job: Suffering and the Redemptive Destiny of Israel," *Dor Le Dor* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1988): 124, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 October 2022).

[40]Heckelman, 128.

[41]b. Bava Bathra 15b.

[42]Heckelman, 130, 132.

[43]Tsevat, 190.

[44]Corey, 123.

[45]Corey, 123–124; Maimonides, 304.

befall Job in 1:13–19 mirror exactly those reserved for Jews unfaithful to Torah in Deuteronomy 28:31–33. They even fall in exactly the same sequence. For Corey, this proves that Job was "out of God's grace," even if he was honest and feared God.[46] No one except Yahweh could be behind this signature affliction.

Offering an alternative perspective, Rabbi Yohanan argues that Job was more righteous than Abraham. Rabbi Abba bar Shmuel defends Job as generous with money.[47] Brueggemann says Job was the picture of obedience to Torah and *mitvot*, but this was not enough.[48] Newsom adds that Job must have been meek because he does not demand relief or healing from God.[49] Neither is Job ignorant, because he confesses that both good and adversity can come from Yahweh, and followers should be prepared to accept either (Job 2:10, 20). For Newsom, then, Job shows at the outset that he does not believe the retributive theodicy his friends will suggest: that only blessing follows the righteous while punishment signifies wickedness.[50] She suggests that Job's pivotal sin is doubt, or pride, which causes him to trade his trust in God for an explanation of what is happening to him.[51]

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[46]Corey, 121–123.

[47]b. Bava Bathra 15b.

[48]Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 387.

[49]Newsom, 70.

[50]Newsom, 62.

[51]Newsom, 70.

Regardless of the particular sin assigned to Job, Clines observes, Job appears incredibly guilty, not blameless.[52] Ortlund adds that this is what a devout observer in Job's time would have assumed.[53] In Christian interpretation, the Reformed and Augustinian perspective of Job emphasizes that Job blasphemes God and must repent.[54] Ash concurs,[55] with Hartley[56] and D. A. Carson[57] adding that sins like arrogance and presumptiveness surface in Job's speeches. William C. Pohl IV and Lance Hawley validate that Job's speeches surface hidden, sinful attitudes, including: self-righteousness (that Job is right and God is wrong), blame and blasphemy (that God is a wicked hunter, tormenting him), and hubris (that boldly challenges God to appear and explain Himself).[58] Gault goes further by declaring Job to be "a doubting foe" who is disloyal to

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[52]Clines, "Job," 482.

[53]Ortlund, 18.

[54]Joel S. Allen, "Job 3: History of Interpretation," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 368, 370.

[55]Ash, 417.

[56]Hartley, *Book of Job*, 537.

[57]D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Faith in Job 38:1–42:16," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 376.

[58]William C. Pohl IV, "The Inheritance of the (Wicked) Speech: A Reconsideration of Job 20.29," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 45, no. 3 (2021): 357, *Religion and Philosophy Collection,* EBSCOhost (5 September 2021); Lance Hawley, "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 3 (2020): 459–478, *Humanities International Complete,* EBSCOhost (5 Sept 2021).

Yahweh.[59] These scholars stop short of arguing that these sins brought on Job's sufferings. But they insinuate guilt and connect Job's impiety to his character, rather than to pain, which is an important distinction. Job's lament is seen as exposing impure worship in his heart that was covered up, probably by his blessed life. This viewpoint, voiced in various ways, represents the retributive-free will perspective that Job requires no complicated theodicy: God is simply repaying Job, justly, for unfaithfulness he chose to harbor. Next, a related but distinct retributive theodicy will be explored.

Retributive-Determinist Theodicy

Retributive-determinist theodicy contextualizes God's desire for Job to repent inside a desire for Job to enter the missional purpose of his life. It is important, at this point, to recall that theodicy for ancient Israelites had historiographic purpose, and shaped how they understood their own history. As Israel passed through the various eras Job could have been authored in, Neusner describes it interacting with an explanation for their national losses: that Israel had been given God's revealed will, Torah, to construct His world order among the nations; but unfaithfulness brought exile, defeat, and hardship. These would persist until enough of God's chastisement triggered repentance and renewal, at which point the world order would come back under Israel, and God's foreordained purposes would recommence.[60]

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[59]Gault, 147.

[60]Neusner, 685–686.

In this schema, Job as typological of Israel corroborates this narrative. Job (Israel) suffers tragically because he has a deeper call. A good and powerful God brings him (Israel) through a journey of suffering in order to enter deeper communion and see the eschatological promises manifest. Heckelman therefore emphasizes how Job cries out to the God he has worshipped, to see Him face to face. This is what God wanted when He sent or permitted Job's suffering, and Job moves from knowing about God, to actually knowing God.[61] In this process, Job (Israel) is cleansed of unfaithfulness and becomes able to actualize his priestly, intercessory call.

Corey develops this theme further. Identifying Job's friends with the gentile nations,[62] Corey describes how Job's journey of "fall, repentance, salvation, and final acceptance into God's favor" permits him to reenter holiness. Job is "nominated" to suffer for God, and then proceeds down the Suffering Servant pathway described in Isaiah 52–53. Lastly, says Corey, Job makes "atonement"[63] for his "past alienation from the Lord." This brings him to a place of submission, to Torah and calling, and back into the holy, predestined mission of saving the world.[64] The tone of this suffering journey is retributive but mysterious, because it entails a foreordained invitation that is sovereignly

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[61]Heckelman, 131; also noted as a key point in Dahl, 49; Clines, "Job," 484; Parsons, 27; Shveka and van Hecke, 115.

[62]Corey, 126. Corey claims Job is Jewish, but rabbinical and Christian histories of interpretation appear divided over the matter, as chronicled in Allen, 364–367.

[63]Corey, 122.

[64]Corey, 126.

decided without Job's awareness. Yet, it joins him to the experience of the prophets, who were called to testing, sacrifice, and mediation on behalf of God's people.

Alter, in his own reflections on Job, protests this call to suffering, asking, "But what does he [Yahweh] feel about the hideous chain of afflictions that the man he supposedly cherishes is made to undergo?"[65] In this, Alter's despair suggests that this is not a personal question, as much as a collective one. Corey's answer is, "It is for this destiny that the House of Israel has been privileged to be inflicted by the Master of the Universe with the sufferings of Job."[66] To be the Lord's "eternal priest"[67] and "redeem the world," retributive justice demands both Job and Israel to submit to being "forged" in the "iron furnace" of history.[68] In view of the weighty implications of this theology, the next section explores one critical response and revision of retributive theodicy in Job.

A Critical View: Job as "Protester"

Moral repugnance to the idea that Israel is in retributive relationship with God, as represented by Job, is currently expressed in Jewish protest theology. Blumenthal, for example, calls Job "the quintessential protest text" for demonstrating that God is abusive, mistaken, and unjust in His administration of the world.[69] Alter, also, in his review of

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[65]Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 177.

[66]Corey, 128.

[67]Corey, 126.

[68]Corey, 124–125.

[69]Blumenthal, "Limits," 621.

contemporary Israeli poetry on Job, finds God portrayed as a weak, flawed, father figure who misses Job, realizes He made a mistake, and lives ashamed of what He did.[70] Natan Zach, for example, portrays God reading the book of Psalms, to learn from it, and weeping when He discovers that He should not have treated Job the way He did.[71] Others similarly describe God as having no foresight, no moral high ground, and no excuse for hurting Job. Taken together, the collection reflects a reverse retributive theodicy: a hope, voiced by Roth, that "humanity's repentance will be matched only by God's."[72]

Blumenthal locates the roots of Jewish protest theology in the medieval period or even earlier.[73] But, in the 1940s, the horrors of Auschwitz reframed the entire discussion of theodicy. Martin Buber suggested that Job, prefiguring Israel, was "in the gas chambers" and suffering a type of Holocaust in the narrative.[74] Elie Wiesel, a survivor, confessed to being "haunted" by Job for years afterwards as he pondered this thought.[75] In his courtroom play, *The Trial of God*, Wiesel puts the assumptions of retributive

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[70]Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 1781–179.

[71]Natan Zach, "Sometimes He Misses," quoted in Robert Alter, "Hebrew Poems Rewriting Job," in *The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics, Hermeneutics,* ed. Leora Batnitzky and Ilana Pardes (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 177, ProQuest E-book Central.

[72]Roth, 10.

[73]Blumenthal, "Limits," 620–621.

[74]Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 224, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/On_Judaism/mycAI9FnoUQC?hl=en&gbpv=1/ (7 March 2023).

[75]Elie Wiesel, quoted in Ariel Burger, "What Elie Wiesel Taught Me about the Book of Job," *MyJewishLearning.com,* 2023, n.p., https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/what-elie-wiesel-taught-me-about-the-book-of-job/ (3 January 2023).

theodicy on trial for justifying the Holocaust. Rabbis judge the dogmas of suffering being deserved because of sin; and, God bringing suffering for purification or to test the faith of His people. At the end, God's lawyer in the play reveals himself to be Satan, implying that these theologies of suffering are demonic, and so is the God who authored them.[76]

Consequently, protest theology attempts to hold Yahweh accountable for abusing and abandoning Job (Israel). Blumenthal, Fox, and Verbin suggest that God knows He is guilty of injustice, and restores Job to make up for it.[77] Others prefer to think Job pioneers a defiant conclusion. Wiesel imagines the true ending of Job to be lost, where Job holds God accountable and continues to protest.[78] Textual critics like Margulies sympathize with this view and argue that Job's repentance, in 42:1–6, was added later by scribes to mitigate the impiety of the dialogue.[79] The translation of this repentance has become an object of special scrutiny by linguists, for its centrality to interpretation. Edward L. Greenstein, for example, proposes a translation of 42:6 where Job is not penitent, but angrily cries out: "That is why I am fed up. I take pity on 'dust and ashes' [humanity]!"[80]

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[76]Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God (as it was Held on February 25, 1649, in Shamgorod)* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Trial_of_God/8bH2Qt4QdaIC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=trial+of+god+wiesel&printsec=frontcover/ (3 March 2023).

[77]Blumenthal, "Limits," 622; Fox, "Meanings," 18; Verbin, *Divinely Abused*, 138.

[78]Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God* (New York: Random House, n.d.), 234, Yale.edu, https://yale.imodules.com/s/1667/images/gid6/editor_ documents/ponet/book_of_job/job__our_contemporary__wiesel.pdf?sessionid=46d35d82-cece-4bfd-8450-ef7b4fc45809&cc=1/ (19 January 2023).

[79]Margulies, 602.

Others agree that Job severs his relationship with God, rather than reconciling with Him. Newsom, for example, argues that comprehensibility between God and Job is shattered after the theophany.[81] People may still choose to have faith, but moral, theodical understanding of God is impossible. Job walks away, enters a new era without Him, and leads the way for humanity to do the same. Blumenthal clarifies, "That one cannot forgive an abusive f/Father" is "the classical position of religious thinkers in our tradition from Job to Elie Wiesel. . . . We will accuse God of acting unjustly, as fully and directly as we can, as our greatest poets and sages have done."[82]

By itself, protest theology's inversion of Job does not prove retributive theodicy is flawed. But, it should give pause. It is understandably troublesome to imagine God ordaining or punishing people with calamity. On this basis, Tsevat argues that, in Job, God is actually revoking divine retribution because He realizes it is so cruel.[83] Within Christian interpretation, Susan Scheiner claims that John Calvin "constantly worried" that "Job's God seemed to act according to an 'absolute,' tyrannical power."[84] The question should therefore be asked if the God of Job is this harsh, or whether something

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[80]Edward L. Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), xx.

[81]Newsom, 252–258.

[82]David R. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 257.

[83]Tsevat, 215–218.

[84]Susan Schreiner, "Calvin as an Interpreter of Job," in *Calvin and the Bible,* ed. Donald K. McKim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 58, ProQuest E-book Central.

presuppositional is enabling this conclusion. With this in mind, an assessment of retributive theodicy, as an explanatory paradigm for Job's suffering, will be proposed.

Assessment of Retributive Theodicy

Having surveyed retributive perspectives of Job, the reader must evaluate whether Job's suffering should be classified as primarily retributive or not. If Job's sin or compromised relationship with God best explains what triggers God to hand Job over to Satan, then retributive theodicy is the most fitting paradigm. Some strengths and weaknesses of this approach will now be posited.

Strengths

One of the strengths of retributive theodicy is its overall simplicity. Retributive theodicy assumes that God is consistently and unquestionably just. It diminishes the Epicurean trilemma in the narrative by assuming that Job has somehow sinned, and Yahweh is good, powerful, and fair to send suffering. By taking this position, retributive theodicy preserves orthodoxy. It dissolves the problem of evil without destroying any critical attribute of Yahweh.

The perspective also presumes that a coherent theodicy actually exists in Job, and that the text should be taken at face value—which not all views do. Divine retribution logically fits the larger context of retributive theology in the ANE. It offers a modest, local, and practical explanation that seeks to interpret Israel's walk with God, rather than explain all suffering with a universal, rational theory. Educative theodicy, presented in the next section, will be very different.

A last strength of retributive theodicy is its connection to Isaiah 52–53 and the Suffering Servant. This point of correspondence will be examined more in chapter 3. Newsom discerns that Job's suffering is a unique case that aims to "expose and resolve a hidden contradiction within the religious ideology of ancient Israel."[85] Thus Job is situated in the context of Israel, the ANE, and other passages in Scripture to probe something unusual or outlying within its understanding of suffering and judgment. This is an orienting way of examining the message that can be lost in other paradigms.

Weaknesses

A weakness of retributive theodicy is that it does not differentiate itself enough from the friends' theology, which God clearly condemns. Throughout, the friends insist that Job is guilty and God's retributive laws can never be broken. But then God tells Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled towards you and your two friends" (Job 42:7). He directs them to sacrifice under Job's authority, which is a substantial judgment against what they have spoken. Ortlund argues that God reverses the power dynamic in this moment, as well as the locus of truth that the friends had claimed. Ortlund uses the word "demoted"[86] to describe the situation, while Walton says they are being "indicted." The possibility that the friends were mouthpieces for Satan's agenda against Job must be entertained, continues Walton: not just because they were dispassionate, but because they pushed Job to repent, prostrate himself, pay obeisance—even falsely confess if need be—to get his

[85]Newsom, 51; Clines agrees in "Shape and Argument," 129.

[86]Ortlund, 168.

life back (e.g., Job 11:13–19; 22:21–25). This would have validated Satan's accusation that this was all Job cared about; and, showed he was willing to play his own kind of retributive game with God in order to recover it.[87]

In light of this, most modern interpreters argue that the book is an apologetic *against* retributive theodicy. Fox states, "The currently dominant readings of the book of Job agree on one essential point: the book refutes the retributory theology assumed to be Jewish orthodoxy."[88] Olojede adds, Job is "a polemic against the conventional wisdom that . . . whatever one sows, one would also reap."[89] Carson nuances this, claiming "the book does not disown all forms of retribution; rather it disowns simplistic, mathematically precise, and instant applications of the doctrine of retribution.[90] Walton concurs, saying reward for the righteous and punishment of the wicked remains true, but is not a strict formula that can adduce character. He clarifies that the Old Testament embraces the Deutero-Isaianic worldview as sound;[91] but, in Job, "retributive theology has been rejected as offering a theodicy."[92] Still others put forth that God did not intend

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[87]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 337–338.

[88]Fox, "Meanings," 7.

[89]Funlola Olojede, "What of the Night? Theology of the Night in the Book of Job and the Psalter," *Old Testament Essays* 28, no. 3 (2015): 730, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (1 October 2022). See agreement in Estes, 246; Tsevat, 190.

[90]Carson, 377.

[91]Walton, *Job*, 44–45.

[92]Walton, *Job*, 420.

retribution to be a formula.[93] Morriston concludes that the narrator is critiquing the predominant view of truth as adequate to explain Job's suffering.[94] Belcher agrees, claiming Job and his readers are drawn to explain his pain while taking into account that something even greater is going on.[95] What, precisely, this greater aspect is, is the conundrum of the text. However, it does appear that the scene in Job 1–2 is given precisely to inform the reader that Job is innocent of any guilt or moral offense that would otherwise justify what happens to him.

A related weakness of retributive theodicy is its constraint of the actual text, to make its correspondence with Israel work. Job's "blamelessness," for example, is upheld by both God and the narrator in Job 1:1, 1:8, and 2:3. It is also implied through Job's: prosperity (1:3), greatness (1:4), his "regular" sacrificing and care to "purify" his children (1:5–6), the hedge God put around him (1:10), his worship after pain (1:21), his refrain from sin when provoked (1:22; 2:10), his "integrity" (2:3, 9), and his acceptance of God's giving and taking (2:10, 20). To this point, Fox says, "The entire book hangs on Job's righteousness, for without that, the friends are right . . . Job deserves his punishment in some way."[96] Andersen agrees: "The Book of Job loses its point if the righteousness of Job is not taken as genuine."[97] Robert Gordis points out that "nowhere does God declare

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[93]Andersen, 183; Estes, 4; McKenna, 390; Parsons, 23.

[94]Morriston, 341; also see Newsom, 51.

[95]Belcher, 369.

[96]Fox, "Meanings," 9.

[97]Andersen, 183.

Job to be guilty."[98] Morriston says the same: "There is not a hint in either of the divine speeches that Job deserves the things that have happened to him, and . . . the rest of the book makes it perfectly clear he is innocent."[99]

This particular point is worth emphasizing because, if Job is typological of Israel and their historical losses, then the narrative must be read through the lens of guilt and unfaithfulness, rather than innocence. Job must be self-righteous, not integrous, for defending his innocence. The death of his family makes Job's friends right to push for a confession, rather than incredibly wrong. And, God acting "gruff"[100] when He appears, is a climactic push for Job to get honest and repent, rather than an expression of something else. Yet, if Job is innocent, the interpretations reverse, and all must be understood the opposite way. Also, the presupposition that Job is historiographic theodicy falters.

Other areas of the text may be constrained or underdeveloped as a result of retributive commitment. In the theophany, for example, assuming divine retribution facilitates the judgment that Yahweh's speeches are about humbling Job, not informing

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[98]Gordis, "Ecology," 192.

[99]Morriston, 344; Carson agrees, 374.

[100]Clines, "Job," 483; Morriston, 341; Fox, "Meanings," 15; Julian the Arian in Charles Meeks, "Will the Real Job Please Stand Up? Politico-Pastoral Exegesis of Job 38 in the Wake of Nicaea," *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 4, no. 1 (2015): 30, *Christian Periodical Index*, EBSCOhost (19 September 2021).

him. Yet, many who have scrutinized the speeches have concluded that they deny retribution as the efficient explanation for suffering.[101]

Another place of constraint and underdevelopment is Satan's agency. Yahweh's sovereignty is admirably upheld in retributive theodicy, but causes the collapse of Satan's agency into God's agency illustrated by Wiesel in *The Trial of God*. Verbin, for example, asserts that "*God* [emphasis mine] has destroyed Job's property, killed his children, and afflicted him with a disease."[102] This discussion will receive more extensive treatment in the next section on educative theodicy. But, for now, it should be noted that theodical interpretation in Job is contingent upon this matter. Most ancient and contemporary Jewish interpreters agree that Yahweh is morally responsible for Job's tragedy and could have prevented it. Yet, Satan's agency is uniquely conspicuous in the text.[103] This ought to lead the reader, argues Yancey, to the "subtle but important distinction" that, at least in Job, Satan actually causes the suffering.[104]

In conclusion, retributive theodicy views Job as guilty, needing to repent, and deserving of divine retribution. This keeps the trilemma at bay and the moral order intact. But, it ignores or recasts important pieces of the narrative. It also associates closely with the friends' theology, that God clearly rebukes, and drives the unpalatable ministry that

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[101]Ash, 181–182; Ortlund, 169; Parsons, 11; Tsevat, 217–218; Walton, 44, *Job,* 417; Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, "Poetry in the Courtroom, Job 38–41," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 428.

[102]Verbin, *Divinely Abused,* xii.

[103]Genesis 3 and Zechariah 3 are notable comparisons.

[104]Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read,* 69.

people's sufferings—whether Job's, or Israel's in the Holocaust—are punishments that their sins brought upon them. In the next section, educative theodicy will attempt to provide a better explanation for why evil befalls Job, and how God is justified in sending or permitting it.

Educative Theodicy in Job

In comparison to retributive theodicy, where sin provokes the test of Job, educative theodicy looks at the results of Job's test as a possible warrant or explanation for it. The defining characteristics of educative theodicy include a reassessment of pain as good and useful, especially for spiritual growth; and, an acknowledgment of God's goodness and sovereignty being seen in the long term, as evil is bent to serve His redemptive purposes. Laato and de Moor claim that "the best example of educative theodicy is the book of Job" because, after his trial, Job articulates the highest good of knowing God better.[105] Green adds that sufferers who grow from pain or tragedy, aid God's transformation of evil into good.[106] Educative theodicy, therefore, emphasizes the unique ability of pain to teach, to bring a new way of seeing, and to produce closeness with God.

Educative theodicy in Job originates from retributive theodicy and ancient Jewish thought because, as discussed in the last section, rabbis often connected Job's punishment with greater communion and virtue. However, educative reasoning became distinct from retributive theodicy as it was shaped by New Testament theology and greater regard for

[105]Laato and de Moor, xxxix.

[106]Green, 433.

Job's innocence. In this chapter, the first form of educative theodicy discussed will reflect the Christian understanding that those justified by God are not guilty (Rom 8:1–2) but have entered a sanctification journey to "escape corruption" (2 Pet 1:4) and "share in His holiness" (Heb 12:10–11). In this light, Job's suffering is not a punishment but a purifying chastisement, sent by God, to grow in grace and achieve a depth of faith he would not have otherwise reached.

The second form of educative theodicy presented will diminish God's role in sending Job's sufferings. It will instead recast them as unintentionally permitted, within a free will system, that provides the best opportunity to mature and reform. This version of educative theodicy maintains pain's unique ability to foster spiritual virtue, and bring good from evil, but encourages a distinct trajectory of thought about best possible worlds, human potential, and suffering on the broadest level. Also, Job is interpreted as an ordinary person and leaves the construct of Israel, the Church, and God's holy people.

Importantly, Green reminds us that no classical theodicy is exclusive of the others, and texts or interpreters may hold several of the positions concurrently.[107] This is especially true within educative theodicy in Job. Interpreters often compile several paradigms, lessons learned, virtues instilled, and purposes realized, to best explain the book. With that said, the first form of educative theodicy will now be examined.

[107]Green, 432.

Educative-Determinist Theodicy

Educative-determinist theodicy explains that Job is innocent of sin warranting divine retribution, but he is sent chastisement to become a closer, more devout follower of God. Suffering and pain, in this view, are not antithetical to God's goodness or sovereign will, but are actually part of it, for the greater, spiritual goods to be obtained. Calvinist theology significantly influences this paradigm, as outlined below.

Calvinist Influence

In 1554, John Calvin preached a six-month sermon series on the book of Job. According to Schreiner, Calvin wrote no commentary because he sympathized with much of the friends' theology. He also felt "continually uneasy" about God's pronouncement that Job spoke rightly, in 42:7–8.[108] Independently, Luther agreed and suggested the impious chapters, 3–37, might not have been spoken aloud, but merely thought in Job's mind.[109] Ultimately, Calvin concludes that the main lesson in Job is, "irrespective of how He [God] treats men, we must keep our mouths shut and not murmur against Him."[110] He opens his sermons with a statement that represents classic, Reformed theodicy in Job:

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[108]Schreiner, 58.

[109]James Swan, "Luther: 'Job . . . is merely the argument of a fable. . . '," *Beggars All*, 15 November 2016, n.p., https://beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2007/03/luther-job-is-merely-argument-of-fable.html/ (7 March 2023). Please note that this blog article is documented with primary sources in the original languages and translations.

[110]John Calvin, *Sermons from Job,* translated by Leroy Nixon (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952), 47, *Internet Archive*, 2023, https://archive.org/details/sermonsfromjob0000john/page/n49/mode/2up (10 March 2023).

> The story which is here written shows us how we are in the hand of God, and that it belongs to Him to order our lives and to dispose of them according to His good pleasure, and that our duty is to submit ourselves to Him in all humility and obedience, that it is quite reasonable that we be altogether His both to live and to die; and even if it shall please Him to raise His hand against us, though we may not perceive for what cause He does it, nevertheless we should glorify Him always . . . [111]

In this statement are core components of educative-determinist theodicy, and the chastisement paradigm which subsequently developed to explain Job's suffering. These include: that Job was in God's hand, that God was free to choose whether Job suffered or prospered, and that Job's test was to humbly accept God's will. In doing this, Job would glorify God. Mears endorses this perspective when she says, in Job, "God's answer" to why death, disease, and tragedy exist, is that "suffering is his will."[112] Job does not suffer as the result of sin in his life, she explains, but God "assigned to him this great problem of suffering" because He "trusted" him.[113] In her application, Mears exhorts that "we are to learn to thank God in all that happens to us" because "even if we never know what he is working out in the battleground of our hearts . . . there is a reason."[114] Agreeing with Mears and Calvin, that God has a reason for sending suffering, Estes interprets Job's testing as: "Yahweh has enrolled Job in a graduate course of wisdom" where he learns to "submit" rather than "demand that God do what he thinks is right."[115]

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[111]Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, 3.

[112]Mears, 201.

[113]Mears, 199, 204.

[114]Mears, 201, 209.

[115]Estes, 243, 252.

Underlying Calvinist theodicy in Job is the Augustinian view of original sin and depravity. This is captured well in the *Synod of Dordt*: that "all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of any saving good, prone to evil . . . and neither able nor willing to return to God . . . nor to dispose themselves to reformation"[116] In this context, divine chastisement is good because the flesh resists its suppression. In his *Sermons on Job,* Calvin asks, "If God goes before us and uses chastisements as preservative medicines, and tarries not till the disease has progressed too far, is it not a great benefit to us, and such a one as we ought to wish for?"[117] Calvin then encourages followers of God to embrace His "lashes with the whip," and being "beaten by His rods,"[118] because these "caus[e] the Holy Spirit to work."[119] The resulting theodicy is that pain is God's will and special tool, to address latent sin from the Fall.

Matthew Henry develops this thought further in Job 16:12–13, where Job despairs that he is God's "target" and His "archers" are surrounding him. Henry argues that the archers are benevolent, because they aim at sin in Job's heart: "We must look upon them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow," says Henry, knowing that He "will be

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[116]"*Synod of Dordt, 1618-19. Art. III*," in *Readings in the History of Christian Theology: From the Reformation to the Present*, vol. 2, ed. William C. Placher (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 69.

[117] Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, 38.

[118] Calvin, *Sermons from Job,* 49, 112

[119] Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, 38.

sure to hit the mark he sets up."[120] Mears, likewise, interprets Job as needing to accept the chastisement sent to him, explaining that "God puts us in the fire; then He watches us and removes our impurities before He pulls us out of the fire."[121] In view of the exhortation to accept discipline from the Lord, in Hebrews 12:4–12, Job is learning to endure and to be called to a higher level. Validating this perspective, Ash adds, "The Book of Job is not about suffering in general . . . rather, it is about how God treats his friends." God "singles out his friend [Job] for the Satan's detailed attention," continues Ash, while promising "through Eliphaz, that 'He wounds but also binds up' (Job 5:17–18)."[122]

Educative-determinist theodicy gets its distinctive characteristics from Calvinism, but draws from preexisting ideas of educative chastisement. In Israelite theology, Laato and de Moor explain, divine retribution carries an educative component.[123] They report how some Israelites living after the Exile (c. 586–538 BC), for example, interpreted it as Yahweh "educating" them, to love Him better.[124] Likewise, Corey and Heckelman's retributive theodicies, in the previous section, express the rabbinical conviction that

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[120]Matthew Henry, "Job XVI, Art. VI," *Commentary on the Whole Bible III (Job to Song of Solomon)*, n.p., Christian Classics Ethereal Library, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Commentary_on_the_Whole_Bible_Volume_III/yuPrkp0UW9QC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Job%27s+archers+are+at+command+%22we+must+look+upon+them+as+God%27s+archers%22&pg=PT183&printsec=frontcover/ (8 March 2023).

[121]Mears, 203.

[122]Ash, 43.

[123]Laato and de Moor, xxxix.

[124]Laato and de Moor, xl.

divine chastisement would not only halt and expose Job's sin, but educate him towards God and a holier way of living. Laato and de Moor clarify that biblical belief in suffering's ability to nurture God's elect away from evil, out of bondage, and into reformation and calling, is rooted in both an expiating, atoning function (which is retributive), and an informing, enlightening function (which is educative).[125]

Perhaps breaking tradition, however, Maimonides encourages the educative function of Job's chastisement above the retributive function. He emphasizes the greater, spiritual good acquired by Job: a "felicity" that changes everything.[126] Maimonides then considers several Old Testament prophets who accepted God's testing and chastisement to see more clearly, and care more deeply about His purposes.[127] While Maimonides stops short of associating Job with these historical prophets, Harris discusses a segment of the Jewish community in the first and second centuries BC that considered the book of Job as prophetic.[128] In view of Ezekiel 14:14–20 and James 5:10–11, where Job's righteous afflictions link him to the prophets, an educative theodicy that emphasizes the virtues he gained as an explanation for his sufferings, has at least some Hebrew support.

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[125]Laato and de Moor, xlii.

[126]Maimonides, 301.

[127]Maimonides, 304–311.

[128]Harris, 11–12 mentions a segment of second-century BC Judaism that places Job in the prophetic genre; Josephus, who holds this view; and Ecclesiasticus 49:9, which refers to Job as a prophet very similarly to James 5:10–11. Harris' point is not to argue for reclassification of the book; but, he opens the door to making room for Job's testing and message to be examined as if it were one of the prophets', and part of that genre.

In the early Christian era, more than one thousand years before Calvin, Lactantius also taught that, in the light of original sin and the sanctification journey, God is good and just to chasten whatever requires repentance—especially if it leads His children to doubt and blaspheme the way Job does.[129] Dahl describes Tertullian, Augustine, and Ambrose praising Job for permitting such purification.[130] Maria Roeske documents Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas saying that the virtues that Job obtains explain God's testing.[131] According to Meeks, Julian the Arian justifies Job's pain as a worthwhile invitation into becoming a seer like Moses.[132] Also in Meeks, John Chrysostom defines Job's losses as a personal gain: a special "emancipation" from worldly citizenship.[133] In contemporary scholarship, Sorot and Martin A. Shields describe Job's educative gains as an eschatological happiness which brings Job a rare, eternal perspective.[134] None of these observations are retributive at their core. Chastening arrests sinful attitudes in Job, but are sent as an opportunity, not a punishment. God initiates Job into suffering as an accepted son, to be sanctified completely, and experience a special grace. Given that this

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[129]Sorot, 14–15.

[130]Dahl, 10.

[131]Maria Roeske, "'Why Did I Not Die in the Womb?' Job Cursing the Day of His Birth in the Interpretation of Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas," *Biblica et Patristica Thoruniensia* 14, no. 3 (2021): 260–266. *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 September 2022).

[132]Meeks, 27.

[133]Meeks, 34.

[134]Sorot, 17; Martin A. Shields, "The Ignorance of Job," *Australian Biblical Review* 68 (2020): 30, *AtlaSerialsPLUS®,* EBSCOhost (5 October 2022).

perspective is significantly shaped by Calvinist theology, the associated understanding of providence, which also shapes educative-determinist theodicy, will be explored next.

View of Providence and Satan's Agency

Providence, which Hugh J. McCann and Daniel M. Johnson define as God's system of divine direction,[135] forms a significant part of educative-deterministic theodicy in Job. Job's calling has been foreordained, in this perspective, as have all the trials associated with it; the latter are not being spontaneously constructed by God or Satan[136] in Job 1–2. And, even though Satan is part of this process, God intentionally sends pain from His hand to create good from evil, and bend it towards His purposes. Thus, Mears affirms, "The book shows that the suffering of righteous Job came from the hand of the Lord, who allowed Satan to attack him in order to purge and prepare him for greater influence from the hand of the Lord."[137] Heckelman concurs, describing God as "enticing and manipulating Satan," and even "playing on Satan's ego . . . to liberate Job painfully" from lukewarmness.[138] Scholnick agrees that Yahweh, not Satan, initiates the test of

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[135]Hugh J. McCann and Daniel M. Johnson, "Divine Providence," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Plato.stanford.edu,* Winter 2022, n.p., https://plato. stanford.edu/entries/providence-divine/#Bib/ (10 March 2023).

[136]Due to the robust debate over the interpretation of *ha satan*, "Satan" will be the default appellation in this thesis, but used interchangeably with "the Adversary," "the Accuser," and "the s/Satan" to reflect, as much as possible, preferences of authors cited. "God" will also be preferred, but used interchangeably with "Yahweh" to reflect cited authors' preferences. Note that, according to Harris, 6, "Shaddai" is actually used much more often than "Yahweh" in the text of Job.

[137]Mears, 199.

[138]Heckelman, 130.

Job's integrity as "an executive" decision: Job is "receiving what is wise in the King's mind to do."[139] Mears speaks of God "trusting" Job with this "assignment" because the sufferings were a foreordained challenge that He knew Job would pass.[140]

Accordingly, the educative-determinist perspective views the opening exchange between God and Satan as controlled and ordained by God. According to Schreiner, Calvin taught that "God did not merely permit but ordered and controlled all of the devil's actions against Job," to intentionally diminish the role of Satan.[141] Luther expounds, in *The Bondage of the Will*, that Satan is not a rogue force. He is "God's Satan": an ambassador of any hardships the Lord desires to send.[142] Habel and Clines agree that, although Satan acts, God does the afflicting.[143] Ash also portrays the Satan as "God's Satan," saying "We should not draw too clear a line" between God "directing" Satan, and God "permitting" Satan. He continues, "We do not like the idea of God instructing the Satan to attack Job, but that is in fact what he does . . . The Satan does what he is told, no more and no less."[144] This recalls Henry's view of God guiding Job's arrows and archers in Job 5:17–18. The Lord's hand and Satan's hand are enmeshed, in

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[139]Scholnick, "*Mispat*," 351–352.

[140]Mears, 204.

[141]Schreiner, 77.

[142]Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2001), 87, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_ Bondage_of_ the_Will/_ISa95zS0r4C?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (10 February 2023).

[143]Habel, *Book of Job*, 27; Clines, "Shape and Argument," 126.

[144]Ash, 45.

this view, with God sublimating Satan's hostility, and utilizing him to accomplish a longer term, redemptive purpose that God believes is worth it.

Accordingly, Ash depicts God's divine administration as an "absolute supremacy and sovereignty of the Creator, who has no rivals . . . and yet . . . governs the world . . . through the agency of a multiplicity of supernatural powers, some of whom are evil."[145] Walton describes the administrative order similarly, saying "God has no enemies worthy of the title . . . Satan is our enemy but he is entirely under God's control."[146] To illustrate the particular place of Satan within God's administration, Ash suggests thinking of the Satan as God's "opposition party" within a congressional assembly. He has a place in Yahweh's court where his existence is acknowledged, received, and channeled into more benevolent ends.[147] Clines, therefore, maintains that everything the Satan does in the opening sequence is approved by God.[148] If he comes from the earth (Job 1:7; 2:2), then he has been sent there by God; he is not roaming free. Ash also describes a "ministry" of the Satan: the testing of "the genuineness of believers."[149] Newsom similarly describes *ha satan* as "the heavenly being charged with keeping an eye on the world and spotting disloyalty or falsity. . . . [H]is function is . . . the maintenance of its good order, its

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[145]Ash, 42.

[146]Walton, *Job*, 442.

[147]Ash, 39.

[148]Clines, "Job," 462.

[149]Ash, 45.

wholeness."[150] Clines concurs, saying the Satan's role is to test whether Job's love for God (representing humanity's love) is authentic.[151] "It is a hostile and malicious ministry," says Ash, "but a necessary ministry for the glory of God."[152]

In educative-determinist providence, Satan is set in a prescribed place, within limits that God has determined for evil. This is seen as the main message God gives Job in the theophany: that "he has evil on a leash," as Ash puts it.[153] Åke Viberg elaborates, God feeds the wild ones, limits the sea, and has bound the monsters.[154] Estes agrees: Job sees that he cannot tame the dragon, Leviathan, but Yahweh "controls it completely."[155] Scholnick validates that God reveals to Job, that His "actions are his prerogative as Ruler and a sign of His total control."[156]

The resulting theodicy in Job, from this perspective, is one where people can trust God's administration because all things have passed through Him. He has a plan for evil; and any evil that manifests must come by His permission, to serve His purposes. Mears says, in discussing Job 1–2, "No calamity can come upon us that the Father does not

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[150]Newsom, 55.

[151]Clines, "Job," 462.

[152]Ash, 45.

[153]Ash, 422.

[154]Åke Viberg, "Job," *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 202.

[155]Estes, 234.

[156]Scholnick, "*Mispat*," 356.

allow. . . . [T]he Almighty holds Satan in check so he can only strike where he is given permission."[157] Ash offers the application of this principle, that "I, the Lord . . . am in control of all the world, and therefore you may trust me with your life."[158]

In light of this providential control, Clines goes one step further and downplays Satan's personal, active existence. Clines at first claims that Satan is Job's adversary, but "not the personal devil." He is merely God's eyes and ears on the earth, "not an enemy of God."[159] Later, however, Clines asserts that the Adversary is "a manifestation of the divine doubt, an embodiment of the demonic wrath of God, and expression of the dark and sinister side of the divine personality."[160] This supports the fears of Calvin, Wiesel, and protest theologians that the God of Job is abusive. James G. Williams posits that, indeed, "Yahweh discloses his dark, irrational side to Job." Interpreting Leviathan as symbolic of God, Williams claims God is quite proud of this "beastly" connection.[161]

The theological impetus to enfold Satan's agency into God's, and eclipse the former's existence, has precedent. Ancient Israelite theology tended to downplay Satan as a distinct, operative agent. Retributive theodicy in the Talmud and rabbinical tradition reduces Satan's importance because Job's guilt and divine retribution adequately resolve the conflict. Augustine, in his concept of *privatio boni*, denies that evil exists in itself, or

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[157]Mears, 207–208.

[158]Ash, 403.

[159]Clines, "Job," 462.

[160]Clines, *Job 1–20*, 22.

[161]James G. Williams, "The Theophany of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 370.

that God could create an evil being.[162] While accepting Satan theoretically, Augustinian metaphysics prefers not to acknowledge evil as a substance, personality, or creation. Aquinas and the scholastic philosophers continue this tradition.[163] A distinction between two supernatural agents is useful colloquially, but is theologically dualistic and unorthodox. Rather, Augustine says, evil manifests as an impersonal quality, as a darkness in the will. This creates an absence of the good, or a vacuum, where sinister ideas can flourish.[164]

Annihilating Satan as the source of evil, however, causes the Epicurean trilemma to move inward into the very personality of God, as Clines and James G. Williams demonstrate. If arbitrary, cruel, or uncaring elements of God's personality must fit with His sovereignty and omnibenevolence, then He becomes a living contradiction, or inconsistent like the pagan gods. A providential system where God is said to be "in control" of evil enables this contradiction; and, it creates a stumbling block for theodical resolution. This can be seen in Walton's desire that "We should not assume that God initiated the course of action resulting in a particular case of suffering, or even that He 'signed off' on it (we often use words such as 'allowed' or 'permitted'). These responses

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[162]Augustine, "A Good Creation's Capacity for Evil," in *The Problem of Evil*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael L. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), n.p., GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Problem_of_ Evil/ R1UFDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (10 March 2023).

[163]Thomas Aquinas, "No Evil Comes from God," in *The Problem of Evil*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael L. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), n.p., GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Problem_of_ Evil/ R1UFDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (10 March 2023).

[164]Augustine, n.p.

reflect an overly simplistic view." However, in Walton's attempt to provide a more adequate description of God's administration, he claims no language exists to express the enigmatic nature of God's involvement.[165] God is "involved with every decision that goes on in His earth" but does not "micromanage" everyone's circumstances.[166] The "chaos monsters" (Behemoth and Leviathan) do not inflict disorder "independently of God," but neither do they "operate by his remote control."[167] And, Satan should not be seen as "a rival" or "author" of suffering, but "neither should we view suffering as God's will."[168] Theologically, Walton disagrees with Calvin and Mears that every trial is sent or screened by God, but there is no simple rebuttal.

Habel voices the same concern, that the Yahweh speeches "express the paradox of reality." By this Habel means that, somehow, God has supreme authority in His world and prescribes the boundaries of evil, yet continues or chooses to operate amidst death and disorder.[169] McKenna affirms Habel's paradox, calling it "truth held absurdly." "Because with Job," McKenna elaborates, we must believe that God is the Creator of all, *the Controller* of all, and *the Cause of all,* but not the one who intervenes . . . so that every evidence of prosperity or punishment can be interpreted as . . . initiated by God

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[165]Walton, *Job*, 421.

[166]Walton, *Job*, 383.

[167]Walton, *Job*, 417.

[168]Walton, *Job*, 441, 442.

[169]Habel, "Design," 418.

[emphasis added]."[170] At the risk of oversimplifying the complexities of providence, it may be that "truth held absurdly" requires reexamination. A brief critique of educative-determinist theodicy will be made below, before transitioning to explore an educative-free will paradigm, which will take a different course.

Critique

The strength of educative-determinism as a theodicy in Job is the overall support for holiness and discipline throughout Scripture. Chastisement for sin is orthodox, according to Hebrews 4:1–12, Proverbs 3:11, and other passages. And, sanctification is clearly desired by God (Lev 11:44–45; Col 3:12–17; 1 Pet 1:15–16). But, the question in Job is whether this is the pretext for his particular suffering. Ortlund argues that character growth as a reason for Job's suffering is questionable if he is chosen as the representative head of God's people at that time.[171] Presumably, Job achieved this status while being blessed by God, which nullifies the hypothesis that his prosperity corrupted him. Job also may have been more righteous than his friends, who were not chosen. Eliphaz's oft-quoted statement, that Job should not despise the discipline of the Lord (Job 5:17), cannot be casually accepted as God's interpretive key for the book. If interpreters embrace original sin, spiritual underdevelopment, or insubordination as motive for what happens to Job, then Andersen may be right that they "join the friends in condemning Job."[172]

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[170]McKenna, 390.

[171]Ortlund, 181. Ash, 33–34 and Newsom, 70 agree.

[172]Andersen, 183.

Even gaining special wisdom, revelation, or promotion from the Lord must be situated in language and theology that does not resemble the retributive theodicy Job's friends had to rescind. In particular, it is important that educative theodicy not confuse "fruits" with "roots." The idea that a greater spiritual good is ultimately achieved by Job—patience, endurance, holiness—should not be confused with God's purpose for permitting the affliction in the first place. The problem with chastisement, as an interpretive grid, is that the language of intentionality and discipline blur this distinction. The point of the narrative, argues Yancey, is not to entertain Satan's cynical view of Job's righteousness, by finding faults or growth points that justify chastisement. Rather, it is to ask why the worst possible consequences would befall the greatest man, who deserves nothing but favor.[173]

Sensing this conflation between retributive and educative chastisement, Ash and Ortlund reformulate typical educative theodicy to suggest that the greater good gained at the end was actually God's rather than Job's. Ash says, "In the end, it is necessary and right that this man should suffer personal and intimate attack upon himself, so that we see absolutely and without a doubt that God is worthy of worship."[174] By this, Ash means that Job's endurance through chastisement—making it hurt to worship—is "useless" to him but achieves a greater, spiritual good he is unaware of: a pure glorification of God.[175]

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[173]Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 53.

[174]Ash, 51–52.

[175]Ash, 17. Also Ortlund, 180–181.

Ortlund describes this as Job foregoing any lesson or understanding, in order to endure God appearing like his enemy, even though He is not.[176]

But in response to this theodicy, Riesman wryly responds that the sages' insistence on Job's suffering as punishment, is better than this "invigorating step toward spiritual clarity."[177] Cynically, Riesman surfaces a cognitive dissonance involved with believing that God has foreordained evils—cancer, slavery, poverty, miscarriage—to bless His people. An important implication of educative determinist theodicy is that God "assigns these honors," as Mears conceptualizes them,[178] to be accepted in His name, as His will, as chastising, sanctifying, or wisdom opportunities. This takes a considerable redefinition of omnibenevolence, Green notes.[179] And, it makes ministry somewhat contradictory for working against what God has sent. Even Job's restoration and second life in the final chapter could be seen as contradictory to God's highest purposes, if His greatest communion and glory is seen only through pain.

The next educative theodicy explored in this chapter will utilize a free will lens instead of a determinist one. In doing so, it will decouple the agency of God and Satan and make them more distinct. This division will strengthen omnibenevolence and the goodness of God's will, but mitigate omnipotence and the classic view of divine sovereignty.

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[176]Ortlund, 180–181.

[177]Riesman, n.p.

[178]Mears, 204.

[179]Green, 437.

Educative-Free Will Theodicy

Educative chastisement flourished in the Reformation era. However, as time went on, historical and cultural context changed, and so did the angle of theodicy. Christian faith during the Enlightenment entered into dialogue with naturalism, deism, and the values of modernity and freedom. David Hume revived the Epicurean trilemma and argued that the existence of evil proved the biblical God did not exist.[180] Christian theists of varying creeds responded with an overtly theodical enterprise aimed against skepticism. At the same time, concepts of human rights and human potential emerged which greatly affected theological conversation. A new worldview was taking root that emphasized freedom, hope, and choice.

This change in conversation affected Joban interpretation because there was new analysis of the problem of evil, and the origins of pain and tragedy. God was less frequently invoked as the source, and systems and circumstances were examined. Trials went from originating in the mind of God for intentional, communion-related purposes, to originating within a free-world system where people choose to say, do, or believe good or evil. Job, consequently, went from being educated and chastised from the hand of God, to being matured through evil that was sovereignly, but passively, permitted in the system.

Additionally, an emerging desire to consider those inside God's covenant the same way as those outside of it—particularly in government and philosophy—began to

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[180]David Hume, "Evil Makes Belief in God Unreasonable," in *The Problem of Evil*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael L. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), n.p., GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Problem_of_Evil/ R1UFDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (10 March 2023).

encourage a universal theodicy. Christian theists in the modern era shifted from the narrower constructs of theodicy for the elect, towards a doctrine of God's governance that made sense for all. The goal for the book of Job then widened to be about all suffering: innocent, existential, individual, societal, and devout and non-devout alike. This required an extremely broad philosophical stance, and one particular stream of ancient theodicy resurfaced as foundational.

Irenaean Influence

Educative-free will theodicy appeared new during the Enlightenment, but it was actually birthed in antiquity. Its founder, Irenaeus, wrote in the early second century AD that God created men and angels free, and "capable of transgression."[181] This had two important implications. First, God's creation of people and angels, with the choice to sin or not, meant that good and evil would coexist in the same world. The amount of good or evil would be affected by the presence of the other, and the idea of an only-good world (or only-evil one) could not logically exist. Pain would always exist, and theodicy was about God's wise ways of handling this situation, not His lack of wisdom in creating it.

A second major implication of Irenaean theodicy was that greater, authentic goodness develops and matures through people freely making good choices and resisting evil. While this means that the results of evil choices will, unfortunately, always be evident in society, so will the results of good choices. Over time, the latter should become

[181]Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* Book IV, Chapter XXXVII in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, *CCEL.org*, 519, https://ccel.org/ccel/irenaeus/against_heresies_iv/anf01.ix.vi.xxxviii.html/ (11 March 2023).

stronger, more creative, and more productive—from being challenged and forged through pain. And, more of God's purposes should be revealed. Dahl explains the hidden dialectic at work: "as [evil] creates resistance to achieving the good, the desire for the good is increased."[182] John Hick has described this role for evil as "soul-making" in his work.[183]

Educative-free will, therefore, emphasizes that the role of pain and suffering is ultimately constructive. God's free will system ensures that evil has a function in creation, and this function is, ironically, to bring about good. Sarot describes how Lactantius, Leibniz, and others wrote prolifically to defend God's brilliance in choosing this particular schema.[184] Today, Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga lead this effort, occasionally referencing Job.[185]

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[182]Dahl, 42.

[183]John Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy," in *The Problem of Evil*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael L. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), n.p., GoogleBooks, https://www. google.com/ books/ edition/The_Problem_of_ Evil/ R1UFDgAAQBAJ? hl=en&gbpv=0/ (10 March 2023).

[184]Sarot 3–7. Also Gottfried Leibniz, "Best of All Possible Worlds," in *The Problem of Evil*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael L. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), n.p., GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_ Problem_of_ Evil/ R1UFDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (10 March 2023).

[185]See Richard Swinburne, "Some Major Strands of Theodicy," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 30–48; Alvin Plantinga, "The Free Will Defense," in Michael L. Peterson, *The Problem of Evil*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), n.p. GoogleBooks, https://www. google.com/books/edition/The_Problem_ of_Evil/ R1UFDgAAQBAJ?hl =en&gbpv=0/ (10 March 2023). See Plantinga's comments on Job, specifically, in "Epistemic Probability and Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 74–76.

This philosophical development lies several layers upstream from exegesis in Job, but the Irenaean worldview grounds educative-free will theodicy, which Green affirms is one of the most common, classical theodicies of the text.[186] An educative-free will perspective emphasizes Job's pain as God's unique tool for growth and greater good, just like educative-determinist theodicy. These greater goods are also analyzed and considered sufficient for explaining suffering. Yet, educative-free will removes the concept of God intentionally sending Job's suffering, for chastisement or rehabilitation from sin. Walton, for example, interprets the God of Job as "in his wisdom, willing to allow injustice in the world." He continues, "We can assume that it grieves [God's] heart, for he is just," but the truth about freedom "prevents us from committing Job's error, which is . . . blaming God."[187] In Walton's view, God is not sending Job's suffering to discipline him. Rather, God is kind and grieved over the disparity between what He ideally wants, and what His wise rule of the earth permits.

Tsevat reflects an Irenaean perspective of God's free will system exerting proactive, "soul-making" pressure in Job. He argues that Job matures in courage and integrity, as the dialogue progresses and the resistance continues. Job gets louder, Tsevat declares, and grows in conviction that he is right.[188] Yancey agrees. Job grows in faith, he says, because Job has absolutely no reason to believe God will answer him; his friends insist this is impossible; yet, he cries out for a personal encounter. Parsons detects the

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[186]Green, 432.

[187]Walton, *Job*, 415.

[188]Tsevat, 192.

same spiritual development, as Job moves from complaining to his friends about God, to directing his petitions right to God.[189] Ortlund substantiates growth in that Job as he goes from doubting that he could ever appear before God in court, to being bold enough to die for it.[190] Hartley and Mears view this negatively, as arrogance.[191] And, from an Augustinian perspective, Job's behavior would suggest character deficit. But, from an Irenaean perspective, Job grows in ways that have nothing to do with deficit. Tsevat, for example, implies that Job's boldness is based on the God that he has known and worshipped, not an inherent brashness.[192] Habel says that Job entered the theophany "innocent but ignorant,"[193] and is given "a special gift"[194] for making it through his testing. Even Ash describes Job leaving the theophany enriched in his soul.[195]

This perspective is a significant departure from educative-determinism, even though both emphasize a redemptive view of what Job's sufferings produce. The next section will examine the view of providence and Satanic agency from an educative-free will lens. The prologue and epilogue, especially, will be examined as areas where God

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[189]Parsons, 19.

[190]Ortlund, 55.

[191]Hartley, *The Book of Job,* 537; Mears, 212.

[192]Tsevat, 192.

[193]Habel, "Design," 414.

[194]Habel, "Wisdom," 313.

[195]Ash, 426–433.

reveals a free will system behind Job's sufferings, and the coexistence of good and evil forces that Irenaeus describes.

View of Providence and Satan's Agency

As in educative-determinism, educative-free will theodicy frames Job's problem as ignorance regarding what is happening to him. His pain and tragedy have forced him to believe that God is victimizing him without cause, so he has lost faith in the created order. In the determinist paradigm, God corrects this by reinforcing His sovereign agency, especially in chapters 38–41. God confirms that He is in control of all that has happened, and in control of the world and evil as well. In the free will perspective, however, God differentiates Himself from Satan in these chapters. There are two different hands with two different plans; and, in the end, God's plan is seen.

Maimonides, therefore, asks readers to "dwell" on the fact that Job's afflictions are caused by "the adversary alone," in Job 1–2. He insists that Satan neither resided with the angels in heaven, nor was he invited to the divine assembly since "he has no place among them."[196] Belcher, likewise, argues that Satan is an outsider invading God's council.[197] He is not part of God's court, with his own ministry, like Ash, Clines, and Newsom claim. Belcher maintains that, although God "is big enough to take ownership of the situation," there are clearly two opposing wills and three distinct personalities at work in Job 2:3, where God says to Satan ". . . *you* incited *Me* against *him* to ruin him

[196]Maimonides, 297.

[197]Belcher, 362.

without cause [emphasis added]."[198] In this, Maimonides and Belcher reflect an Irenaean worldview that locates evil's source inside Satanic agency, inside God's free will system. Importantly, this agency is real and substantive. It is not merely an inclination to evil or a non-entity, as Augustine, Aquinas, and *privatio boni* assert.

After the divine courtroom scene, Robert S. Fyall argues that Satanic agency continues in various "guises" throughout the whole book of Job.[199] He discerns demonic agency in Job's wife, who pushes Job to curse God, and in the friends' dispute with Job: in the accusations made against him, in theologies about God's ways, in Job's cursing of life and creation, and more.[200] Fyall balances this by claiming that God's thoughts operate in a similar manner, surfacing through prophetic statements that rival Satan's.[201] Fyall's point is that God and Satan cannot be conflated like they are in the chastisement paradigm; the battle with evil is real.

Job, of course, does not know this. He thinks God is unilaterally behind everything happening, as does everyone else. Fyall argues that Job gets close to discerning the truth of a second agency several times in the dialogue.[202] Scholnick offers that, as a litigious man, Job perceives someone has opened a case against him and

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[198]Belcher, 363.

[199]Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job,* New Studies in Biblical Theology, edited by D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 37, 183.

[200]Fyall, 36–37, 144, 163, 167–168, 174, 189.

[201]Fyall, 39–44, 123, 167. Ortlund permits this possibility, 168–169.

[202]Fyall, 39, 60–62, 163.

declared him guilty without a fair trial.[203] But, he assumes it is God, asking in 9:24, "If it is not He, then who is it?" The theophany subsequently reveals to Job a picture of providence that explains what has happened.

First, Yahweh situates Job's problem as ignorance, emphasizing that he was not present at creation and does not understand how it works. Habel explains that, in view of Yahweh's remarks about the earth's "foundations" in Job 38:2–6, His response "implies that Job's unwarranted affliction is to be understood in the light of a 'design' which is hidden."[204] Viberg suggests this refers to Genesis 3, and God's binding of the serpent.[205] Fox adds that the earth was originally dedicated as God's "temple." Thus, the concept of the cosmic order being inherently good, under God's authority, but mixed with evil influence is unknown to Job; or else, Job's pain has "darkened" his perspective (Job 38:2).[206] Gordis goes into greater detail of how the Yahweh speeches reveal a grand design and order where God permits evil forces to operate within the constraints of His overall plan. The wild animals, for example, must hunt to eat, and God directs this savage instinct.[207] Habel agrees that the "the incongruous and bizarre" fill God's description of the created order, right alongside the moral and beautiful.[208] Morriston validates that

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[203]Scholnick, "*Mispat,*" 352.

[204]Habel, "Wisdom," 313.

[205]Viberg, 202–203.

[206]Fox, "Meanings," 12.

[207]Gordis, *Book of Job*, xxx–xxxi, 560.

[208]Habel, "Design," 414.

strange and disturbing features characterize God's plan, yet somehow God has gotten them "to play its assigned part in the total scheme of things."[209] This is particularly true of Behemoth and Leviathan, whose cruelty, chaos, and defiance are mysteriously permitted by God within His domain. Fyall and Ortlund argue that these beasts symbolize Sheol and Satan, as part of God's provident administration.[210] But even if they do not, Maimonides maintains that the moral of Job is: that God rules over the visible world in "strange ways, but ways that see all things, dark, light, nonetheless, and makes use of them."[211] Once Job learns this, his angst dissipates. He is no longer ignorant of the way God planned the created order, which contains multiple agencies under His authority.

This interpretation is grounded in the view of God's providence developed by Irenaeus, Hick, and free will philosophers. Their belief is that a free will system was sovereignly chosen by God as the best possible world system, and is superintended by Him to bring good out of evil. A just, moral order is upheld by His transcendence over it, yet freedom permits a resistance that is real. Thus, in Job, Walton argues that God reveals how He "sustains sufficient order in the cosmos for it to be functional . . . and yet . . . has allowed sufficient order to accommodate the continued existence of sinful humanity—one of the forms that disorder takes."[212] This theodical resolution attempts to relax God's sovereignty just enough to relieve it from causal control of evil, but not enough to nullify

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[209]Morriston, 343.

[210]Fyall, 80–81, 93–99; Ortlund, 144–153.

[211]Maimonides, 302.

[212]Walton, *Job*, 413.

His authority, restraint, and involvement with it. The next section will offer a brief critique of this approach before addressing a critical view that goes further in its views of providence and Satanic agency.

Critique

One of the strengths of educative-free will theodicy is that it takes Job's innocence and character seriously. It avoids repentance and discipline as the greater goods warranting Job's sufferings, and thereby averts the issue of guilt and hidden sin. The educative component does emphasize what is learned or gained from trials, including higher virtues which are appraised as "worth" the existence of evil. But these virtues are generally practical, rather than scholastic: Job's trust, rather than the glory of God. And, God only permits evils as part of a free will system; He is not sending Job trouble to sanctify him. In some sense, neither God nor Job can be blamed for what happens, and the omnibenevolence of God remains comprehensible.

However, mitigating God's responsibility opens up the problem of His authority and sovereignty being satisfyingly understood. God is clearly not arbitrary and absent, as Job accuses Him of; but, He clearly permits disorder and disruption. Why? Is he constrained by something? Is any limit discernible? If God can move all of His history towards His redemptive purposes, in the long term, why not more of the smaller evils in the short term? Goldsworthy puts his finger on the tension when says, God is sovereign in the sense that He is "alive and active, exercising his lordship over the history of the whole world to move it inexorably towards the goal he has ordained for it." However, the

disruptions in creation and humanity are "not original to the order of things and do not characterize the God who created all things good."[213]

Educative-free will theodicy therefore answers one question in Job while opening another. By implying that the disruption in Job's life might not have been God's will, a doctrine that answers how much creation reflects the attributes of its Creator is needed. Scholars in the next section have contemplated this doctrine, and asked what the book of Job is saying about what it means for God, to be God. Additionally, the question over the significance of Job's narrative becomes more pressing. Why does the Bible spotlight this one man and his suffering? Does the theodicy that sufferings are random acts of evil, within a free will system, encapsulate the message? Scholars in the next section consider this quite carefully.

A Critical View: Job as "Wrestler"

Some free will theologians have chosen to abandon the dogma that creation expresses the revealed will of God and His stable, completed order. They also reject the idea that Satan plays any beneficial or appointed role in God's Kingdom. Instead, they emphasize demonic agency as untamed, and rivaling the process of God's dominion over the earth. In this perspective, creation is far from the obedient providence of Ash and McKenna. Creation is still in process, and God works daily to restrain and sustain it.

André LaCocque, for example, describes how the theophany reveals to Job that he is not "living in a 'finished' world, where good and evil are woven into the fabric of the

[213]Goldsworthy, 93.

cosmos." Rather, creation is a wild, open system where each element needs a personal, recreative touch by God.[214] Walton interprets this to mean that the cultivation of earth, originally given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1, is only partly finished; so, the earth only partly reflects God's image.[215] Dahl clarifies that God is infinitely stronger than demonic forces, but still must actively constrain them. Thus, the wilderness scenes He shows Job reveal many things that require "binding" or restraining.[216] God's boast that He will bind Behemoth and Leviathan Himself (e.g., 40:19; 41:9–11) indicate to Belcher that God is prophesying His future judgment of chaos and evil, and a change in the created order to come.[217]

This disturbs the classical Reformed view of providence, as well as the typical free will model, which suggest a more static view of God's administration. Viberg, for example, interprets Yahweh's speeches on binding as something he has already done in the past.[218] Ash's and Estes' providential order is based on Yahweh explaining He has already limited the sea and channeled the wild.[219] Gordis, likewise, argues that God's

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[214]André LaCocque, "Job and Religion at its Best," *Biblical Interpretation* 4, no. 2 (June 1996): 139, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (11 March 2023).

[215]Walton, *Job*, 404.

[216]Dahl, 77–78. Fyall, 130–131 and Ortlund, 133–152 agree that binding and restraining are a significant theme throughout Yahweh's speeches. Ladd, 63–64 explores this premise continuing in the New Testament.

[217]Belcher, 369.

[218]Viberg, 202.

[219]Ash, 422; Estes, 234.

grand moral design is inferable because the same order and beauty characterize the natural world.[220]

Parsons challenges this, saying there is no "deism" in the created order, but only God's "active participation in creation."[221] Harris concurs that Job "makes it clear that Satan has much power here and now—with the necessary caveat, under God." He argues against Irenaean theodicy, saying "This is not the best of all possible worlds. That was the deists' perversion, not the Christian teaching."[222] The correct worldview, N. T. Wright offers, is an active, participatory one where God chooses to bring the world "back to rights through a family . . . of deeply flawed human beings." He clarifies, "this is not exactly the same as the 'free will defense'. . . [that] 'God gave us free will so it's all our fault.'" Rather, Wright describes God desiring to partner with humanity to fix the "out-of-joint-ness" in creation. This mission is symbolized in chapter 42, when God offers Job a second life with Him.[223]

Within this dynamic context, the paradigm of Job as "wrestler" emerges. The name stems from God inviting Job to "belt-wrestle" with Him when He appears and tells Job to "Brace yourself like a man" (Job 38:2). Origen argues that this battle-prepping moment is God's invitation to Job to "Clothe yourself with glory. Abase the slanderer

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[220]Gordis, "Ecology," 194.

[221]Parsons, 28.

[222]Harris, 26.

[223]N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 72–73.

completely [because] . . . He was arrogant against you, but you destroy the arrogant." [224] Other church fathers and pseudepigraphal writers affirm that Job was supposed to humble himself before God, but then God would war with Job against the devil. According to List, Julian the Arian interprets Job's tearing his garments, in Job 1:20, as a sign that he was "preparing for combat" against persecution.[225] Job wrestling evil is also portrayed in the writings of Hesychius, Didymus the Blind, the *Testament of Job,* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.[226] Importantly, these works all reconstrue Job's test as wrestling against the devil—not God—to preserve his faith.

Supporting this interpretation is the notion that, according to Simonetti and Conti, the church fathers expressed "almost near agreement" that Leviathan symbolized Satan.[227] In Job 41, Leviathan proudly resists humanity's attempt to conquer him, but God boasts that He can do so. Fyall and Ortlund argue that this is the unmasking moment of the enemy's unseen occupation and rebellion, within God's world, that has persisted through the whole book.[228] In Meeks, Julian the Arian implies that God desires to do this with humankind; He does not "forbid" evil so that the overcoming of it might be done

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[224]Origen, *Fragments on Job 28:21* (PTS 53:327); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 208.

[225]List, 4.

[226]List, 2; Meeks, 30.

[227]Simonetti and Conti, 212.

[228]Fyall, 183; Ortlund, 145.

together.[229] A theodical perspective emerges, claims Abhishek Solomon, that God faces chaos in His creation alongside humanity, wrestling with them and through them, to conquer rebellious forces.[230]

If this seems like a radical recasting of God's sovereignty, it can be. Fyall and Wright defend a traditional view of sovereignty.[231] But, others go further by saying battles like Job's are "open-ended."[232] Gregory A. Boyd, for example, promotes the open theist position that God opens some moments to be decided by human or angelic variables. In Boyd's mind, Job's battle is one of those moments. He claims the point of Job "is that it teaches . . . that evil is a mystery of a war-torn and unfathomably complex creation, not the mystery of God's all-controlling will."[233] Moreover, Boyd argues that Job reflects one of the biggest problems in interpretation, which is "not permitting it to inform us on the largest metaphysical issues." Instead, he claims that theologians

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[229]Meeks, 29–30.

[230]Abhishek Solomon, "The Book of Job: Betwixt and Between Irenaean and Augustinian Theodicy," *TrinityMethodist.org*., 2 October 2021, n.p., https://www.trinitymethodist.org.nz/post/the-book-of-job-betwixt-and-between-irenaean-and-augustinian-theodicy/ (11 March 2023).

[231]Wright, 70–74; Fyall, 177–178.

[232]Donald Viney uses this word in his definition of open theism in Donald Viney, "Process Theism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Plato.stanford.edu,* Summer 2022, n.p., https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/process-theism/ (10 March 2023). Note that Viney does not use this in the context of Job specifically.

[233]Gregory A. Boyd, "The Point of the Book of Job," *ReKnew.org,* 16 October 2018, 1, https://reknew.org/2018/10/the-point-of-the-book-of-job/ (15 September 2021).

interpret Job in light of their own presuppositions.[234] Agreeing with Boyd's reframing of Job, to be about the "warfare that engulfs creation,"[235] Solomon expresses an open theist sentiment that: in Job, God shows He is "as much involved in seeking answers and wrestling with evil as we are."[236]

As many have noted, unrestrained open theism can lead to cosmic dualism. The abridgment of God's sovereignty, providence, and omnipotence can terminate in process theology, which, as described by Donald Viney, denies the eschaton and any future justice of the Lord.[237] It can also frame Job as a victim of spiritual warfare, as the ANE comparative myths did. These are not orthodox theodicies. Yet, Boyd's working assumptions of the book of Job are shared by many in the "wrestler" paradigm. One of these is his basic stance that "things go on 'behind the scenes' that are not part of God's plan, are not directly under God's control, and in fact resist Him . . . but yet nevertheless affect human lives. Another is that Job is not in a character-building journey, but is participating with God in a great, cosmic battle.[238] "Job has been selected as the principle subject in a great contest of the heavens," Yancey claims.[239] Like Adam, he is testifying

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[234]Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 56–57.

[235]Boyd, "The Point of the Book of Job," 11.

[236]Solomon, n.p.

[237]Viney, n.p.

[238]Boyd, "The Point of the Book of Job," 11.

[239]Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 51. The great "cosmic contest" in Smick, 243.

"before spectators in the unseen world"[240] to win "an important cosmic victory" in "God's grand plan to redeem the earth."[241] Yancey does not embrace open theism, but he rejects that God has an abstract desire or tolerance for evil within an essentially ordered system.

The mitigation of God's sovereignty, and downstream implications, separate Job as "wrestler" views from classic educative-determinism and free will theodicies. Yet, the paradigm shares an important affinity with greater good reasoning, and that is: Job learns to fight and participate with God. List and Solomon believe this alone justifies God's permission of the test, and significance of the book.[242] As in the Irenaean paradigm, Job learns that he is free, an enemy exists, and God is distinct from that enemy. As in the educative chastisement paradigm, pain remains an effective tool to tutor him to wisdom. However, in the wrestler paradigm, pain is not meant to teach people to submit, but to fight. This theodicy encourages recognizing God's mission against evil, and—instead of blaming God or self while in pain—choosing to side with God against evil. Keeping in mind this critical view, an overall assessment of educative theodicy follows.

Assessment of Educative Theodicy

The key question of educative theodicy is how well it interprets what is going on, in Job specifically. Did God permit the trial for its educative benefits, or is there a

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[240]Yancey, "A Fresh Reading of the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 144.

[241]Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 72, 66.

[242]List, 4; Solomon, n.p.

different explanation? The next section will survey some of the strengths and weaknesses of this overall approach.

Strengths

Educative theodicy in Job tends to evoke strong reactions among interpreters: they either find the perspective incredibly satisfying, or incredibly repugnant. One of its greatest strengths is that educative reasoning is taught throughout the New Testament. Passages in James 1, 1 Peter 4, and Hebrews 12 exhort believers to endure persecution with joy and God's glory in mind. Suffering for His Name's sake (Acts 5:41; Phil 1:29), developing patience and perseverance (Rom 5:3–4, 2 Cor 4:17, Jas 1:2–4), and allowing His strength to be made known through human weakness (2 Cor 12:9–10), are all educative and teleological ways of viewing trials.

Romans 8:28 also supports a providential view: "And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose." Andersen has rightly noted that educative theodicy shifts explanations from rational to purposive: to the way God is working all things together for good, even if they are thoroughly evil at the moment. Andersen posits that sufferings like Job's find their explanation "not so much in origins as in goals. The purpose of suffering is seen, not in cause but in its result."[243] Laato and de Moor agree and suggest that Joseph's betrayal, Naomi's losing her son, and even Jesus' death are examples of Romans 8:28 theodicy.[244]

[243]Andersen, 181.

[244]Laato and de Moor, xli, xlvii.

They caution that God's plans "transcend human horizons," so it may take several generations to see the redemptive result of present tragedy.[245]

Consequently, a teleological perspective of what greater goods come about as the result of Job's tragedy is biblical, even if it does not provide an efficient cause. Such an analysis should not enable what D. Z. Phillips calls "religious utilitarianism,"[246] in its calculus, but rather an awareness that God turns evil into good. Ash pushes this point further, saying, "Any government of this world in which good is ultimately to triumph, must necessarily have within it a plan to overcome evil with good."[247] In other words, a good God must have a Romans 8:28 plan, and be able to bring it about. God must be sovereign enough to have the final word, and good enough to continually forge redemption through all the ways evil manifests. In this context, it makes sense why so many look at Job this way.

Furthermore, Job 42:6 indicates that Job "sees" God, and understands something very new about Him. While this may not make his losses "worth it," whatever Job sees makes him able to retract his accusations against God, forgive the awful dispute with his friends, and, as Belcher notes, carry on without asking for healing.[248] It is therefore logical for Maimonides, Gordis, and those who emphasize the importance of the

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[245]Laato and de Moor, xli.

[246]D. Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 109.

[247]Ash, 421.

[248]Belcher, 370.

theophany, to conclude that whatever revelation Job grasps in Yahweh's speeches is indeed the point of the book. It also makes sense, as Tsevat argues, to assume that Yahweh Himself believed He was clearly communicating something very important to Job that would help him.[249] Consequently, although interpretation of the Yahweh speeches is challenging, educative theodicists are right to look to them for a theology of evil's role in creation, its destruction, and God's management of it. By contrast, the next section of this chapter will explore skeptical interpretations of the theophany and those who believe its content is minimal, dissatisfying, or irrelevant.

Weaknesses

One of the major weaknesses of educative theodicy is that neither the prologue nor the epilogue indicate that any virtue or greater good was in God's mind prior to the test or during it. Morriston asks, "Where in either of the speeches does God say, 'I have a good reason for making you suffer?'"[250] Ortlund and Carson agree with Morriston that God never indicates any secret sins, deficits, or character-building motives He had in mind.[251] Nor does Job express gaining any. Even if he did, Walton's position is worth noting, on discerning the relationship between the results of a trial and God's motives:

> We can . . . conclude that suffering and pain can serve to draw our attention to God, rely on him, and . . . discover behaviors or attitudes that should be corrected. But we should be more cautious about suggesting that pain and suffering be always viewed as God's instrument for accomplishing any of those goals. . . . We

[249]Tsevat, 196.

[250]Morriston, 346.

[251]Morriston, 344; Ortlund, 175; Carson, 374.

> cannot adopt a view of suffering that sets up those potential results as God's reasons for bringing suffering into our lives.[252]

In this light, Ortlund is right to note that Job's repentance, in 42:1–6, does not sound like "a justification for, or explanation of, his prior sufferings."[253] Nor can any virtue, lesson, or greater good gained truly justify the loss of Job's family and first life. Job may have been brash or ignorant while in pain, but these form no part of Satan's case in Job 1–2.

Ultimately, it is biblical that God brings good out of evil, but this does not make it the explanation for why Job's tragedy happened. Fox points out, that according to Zechariah 3:1–2, God could have just refused the Adversary's challenge.[254] Both chastisement and free will have been superimposed onto the text, to make sense of it, but neither provide a satisfying explanation of the sufferings' significance. Chastisement suggests Job's suffering is the necessary byproduct of needing to repent or give God glory. Free will suggest his sufferings are an unfortunate byproduct of freedom and Satanic agency. The Job as "wrestler" view provides a better context, but opposes the portrait of "patient endurance" ascribed to Job in James 5:10–11. It also has few boundaries keeping it out of open theism or process theology.

Consequently, an appraisal of the *sensus plenior* of the text is more likely to yield the impression that, if God was trying to educate anyone, it was Satan and not Job. In this, Boyd has a point in emphasizing angelic warfare as critical to consider.

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[252]Walton, *Job*, 386–387.

[253]Ortlund, 175.

[254]Fox, "Job the Pious," 361.

When probing why not, Walton indicates that providential "explanations" or educative reasons often sound too idealistic, even rosy. The teleological approach, that looks at fruits to diagnose roots, produces a type of "just-so" story which is non-falsifiable. It asks the inquirer to stop thinking about the roots, which is ultimately a form of appealing to mystery. And, it does not help anyone understand God's justice or motives, which drive the quest to derive wisdom from Job. Readers generally seek an application from Job; they want to know why God has sent or permitted something tragic in their lives, or in society. Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered by educative explanation. And when it is, caution must be used to prevent communicating a version of "let us do evil that good may result" (Rom 3:8).

On this point, critics of educative theodicy are especially vocal. Dahl laments that both determinism and free will promote abstract explanations that are utilitarian."[255] Trevor B. Williams says they "disregar[d] the human element—that we are talking about people" which is "a conceptual mistake."[256] This does not forbid the devout from ascribing or sensing sanctification, providence, or discipleship purposes in their own trials. But, when the darkest elements of suffering appear—war, plagues, rape, internment—a greater good may be elusive or even offensive to believe. As Sarah Katherine Pinnock notes, most human suffering on a global scale is incredibly damaging:

[255]Dahl, 6.

[256]Trevor B. Williams, 686.

nations are destroyed, people fall away from God, and abuse escalates.[257] In view of this, Dahl explains that the term "useless suffering" was invented to describe tragedies or accidents where no good seems to come from them; their lessons appear to be "wasted" on humanity.[258] But, the idea of someone's tragedy being described as "useless" or "wasted" may indicate that rational, utilitarian thinking has already gone too far.

A last weakness of educative-free will theodicy is the influence of rationalist philosophy. Concepts such as "the best of all possible worlds," "soul-making," and freedom as a greater good have all been eisegeted into Job. Tilley accuses educative theodicy of being a form of "Enlightenment argumentation" that turns God into a philosophical prop for manipulation.[259] He and Trevor B. Williams lament that those promoting the free will defense are not more committed to the Christian God, Scriptures, or concepts in their philosophical writings.[260] In this, they may be too harsh. Aristotle, Augustine, Lactantius, Aquinas, and many others helped form the abstract metaphysical arguments still discussed today. But, it is right to be concerned that Creation, the Fall, Satan, the eschaton, and other scriptural concepts are often absent from free will theodicy—or are used as intellectual props.[261] Green and Peterson observe, that at some

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[257]Sarah Katherine Pinnock, *Beyond Theodicy: Jewish and Christian Thinkers Respond to the Holocaust* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 133, 136.

[258]Dahl, 43.

[259]Tilley, 231; Burrell also agrees, 13–15.

[260]Trevor B. Williams, 684.

[261]For example, Hick proposes the concept of "transworld depravity," to circumnavigate the biblical Fall; Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy," in Peterson, n.p.

point, the problem of evil becomes so unmoored from Judeo-Christian assumptions that it no longer has coherence.[262] Likewise, Dahl observes, "While there are legitimate reasons for keeping a distance from [philosophizing about] evil and suffering, there comes a point at which the distance is so big, that the source from which it arose is lost in sight."[263] This is definitely a concern when it comes to Job; because, what is clearly in the text and not in the text can easily be lost. However, theodicy in Job should never be drafted from a theodical schema formed mostly elsewhere.

Ultimately, criticism of educative reasoning underscores Brueggemann's warning that Job should not be pursued with individualist, agnostic, or rationalist presuppositions, but as an Israelite trying to serve God through Torah.[264] While Hartley emphasizes that Job is technically an Edomite living prior to Torah[265]— not an Israelite, nor a Christian saved by grace—Brueggemann's point is valid that philosophizing apart from context presents issues for interpretation. To some extent, all theodical schemas present overlays that have been informed by something else, in order to see if Job comes to life when superimposed. However, the quest continues for a schema that clarifies the text and reality.

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[262]Green, 431–432; Peterson, 2.

[263]Dahl, 6.

[264]Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: the Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 294–295.

[265]Hartley, "Job 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background," 346, 360.

Mystery as Theodicy in Job

In realizing that evil and suffering may never be rationally grasped, and that trying to do so may trivialize pain, mystery and anti-theodicy are an ascendant paradigm for theodicy in Job. The classic view of mysterious theodicy says that faith and trust are what God desires most, and Job learns to trust even though no understanding could be given to him. In addition to this classic view, devout anti-theodicy views Job as an exhortation to minister well amidst suffering. There is also cynical anti-theodicy, which views Job as abandoning God. Each of these will be explored in this section.

Theodicy of Faith

Chapter 1 of this thesis opened with quotations from experts who insist the book of Job does not answer the question of suffering. Clines, for example, warns that "readers cannot discover from the book any one clear view about what the reason for their own particular suffering may be, nor any statement about the reason for human suffering in general."[266] Walton, similarly, says "The book does not tell us why Job or any of us suffer."[267] For many like Clines and Walton, Job is not about theodicy—it is about faith. Rather than the book offering Job, or readers, a logical explanation of why Job suffers, it offers an opportunity to trust God by faith: both in general, and about Job's situation in particular. Readers are confronted with the choice to believe in God's goodness and power, in the face of evil, even though a clear explanation or theology is not provided.

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[266]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 129.

[267]Walton, *Job*, 22

Interpreters from diverse backgrounds support mystery as theodicy in Job. The next few sections survey different origins and influences on the paradigm. Ultimately, these converge to support widespread belief in the inscrutability of God as the end of the theodical quest in Job.

Israelite Theology

In Laato and de Moor's description of Israelite theodicy, they discuss a thread of mysterious theodicy running through the traditional, retributive interpretation of Job. Isaiah 55:8–9 declares, for example, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." Laato and de Moor maintain that verses like these were interpreted epistemologically, and in dialogue with their national history, to set expectations that no one could know the mind of God.[268] Brueggemann adds that such verses created, for Israel, a "God beyond God" who transcended "domestication." Divine truth was hidden in Job's whirlwind, and shrouded in the smoke at Sinai; so, if suffering, loss, or tragedy appeared inexplicable, then something higher and hidden in God's mind was at work.[269]

As an example, Charlesworth describes how apocalyptic authors explored the question of Yahweh's presence and wisdom after the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. Second Esdras 5:34 reveals Ezra begging the archangel Uriel to explain why

[268]Laato and de Moor, xlvi.

[269]Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 391.

God permitted it to happen: "For every hour, I suffer agonies of heart while I strive to understand the way of the Most High, and to search out part of his judgment!"[270] But Uriel says that Ezra will never understand God's motives, and the angels cannot either (2 Esdr 5:35, 40). Subsequently, Ezra laments that he was even born; which, Charlesworth connects to Job as evidence that life loses meaning when a person cannot interpret God or suffering (2 Esdr 5:35).[271]

Neusner describes how unanswered questions like these encouraged a Jewish identity built upon faith rather than explanation. The sages, claims Neusner, "mounted argument after argument" and "doctrine after doctrine" to "persuade themselves that somehow the world conformed to rationality and justice." But no theology sufficed.[272] Accordingly, the search for theodicy in Job must end in what Brueggemann calls the "majestic mystery" of relationship with Yahweh. His chastisements and hiddenness provide opportunities to stay faithful, and Job prefigures Israel in this position.[273] Job questions the higher, inscrutable reason for why Yahweh permits his tragedy; but the answer is that Yahweh is high and lifted up, with no director or counselor (Isa 40:13).

This non-answer to suffering, in the Israelite view, is not meant to be cruel but to invite Job into real wisdom, which is not leaning on his own understanding (Prov 3:4–5).

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[270]Unless otherwise indicated, all apocryphal quotations in this thesis are taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV), *Bible Society,* n.d., n.p., https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/read/eng/RSV/2Esd/5/ (28 March 2023).

[271]Charlesworth, 503.

[272]Neusner, 712.

[273] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 389.

Gordis explains how God passes the mysteries of His creation before Job, to show him that the cosmic order has "purposes known only to God, which men cannot fathom."[274] Habel agrees that God's "tour of the cosmos" helps Job discover "the limits of his own understanding."[275] Viberg and Clines both assent to Job accepting that the mysteries of God and suffering are not amenable to human rationality.[276] Yet, the blessing of this mystery is articulated by Estes, who claims that once Job submits to these limits, he learns that Yahweh's ways are "more wonderful" than he had known before.[277] An element of this is reciprocated in Reformed theology, which is explored below as a paradigm encouraging mysterious theodicy also.

Reformed Theology

One of Calvin's overarching concerns in his *Sermons on Job* was that humanity should come recognize a transcendent, free, and impassible God. Yahweh was not meant to be grasped, judged, or predicted. This guided Calvin's interpretation of Job's prologue and epilogue that God was not being coerced by Satan, or Job. Rather, He was acting as a sovereign King who knows the end from the beginning, and can bend evil towards His will. In this context, two associated Calvinist doctrines provided epistemological infrastructure for mysterious theodicy in Job: voluntarism and nominalism.

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[274]Gordis, "Ecology," 198.

[275]Habel, *The Book of Job*, 373.

[276] Viberg, 202; Clines, "Shape and Argument," 138–139.

[277]Estes, 272.

Roger E. Olson defines voluntarism as the idea that God has unlimited control over His own mind. He is radically free to do, think, and judge however He pleases; and, He is not subject to humanity's definitions or expectations. [278] Scholnick, therefore, explains Job's offense in charging Yahweh with "unlawful seizure,"[279] breach of "due process,"[280] and other criminal acts. Yahweh, then, arrives as a "litigant" to "cross-examine" Job. [281] He informs him that He is not guilty because, as Creator, He has "original title." He is King, Lawgiver, and can do what He wants with "no miscarriage of justice."[282] For Scholnick, the theodical resolution is that Job's angst abates when he accepts that God may have mysterious, "executive" reasons for doing what He does—and this is what makes Him God.[283] Clines similarly sees the importance of God being "free either to afflict or to bless," making even retributive theology subordinate to His rulership.[284] For Clines, God having to account for this, or explain Job's suffering to him, would lower Himself under a human being. Instead, Job "recognizes God's right to do what he does" even "making an innocent man suffer."[285] Estes affirms that Yahweh must

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[278]Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 354–355.

[279] Scholnick, "Poetry," 425.

[280] Scholnick, "*Mispat*," 350.

[281] Scholnick, "Poetry," 432.

[282] Scholnick, "Poetry," 428.

[283]Scholnick, "*Mispat*," 352.

[284]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 127.

[285]Clines, "Job," 483.

remain "free" to be "surprising and mysterious" in allowing "a righteous person [to suffer] adversity for purposes that are known only to Him."[286]

Nominalism, another Reformed concept, also encourages mysterious theodicy in Job. Olson defines nominalism as the idea that God defines what is good, rather than the term "good" having a meaning external to God. What God wills is good, because He wills it.[287] This theology encourages mystery, explains Green, because it creates incomprehensibility around the concept of omnibenevolence. If what humanity considers "evil" is actually good—for us, or for God—then a hidden, deeper realm of goodness exists beyond what is normally considered good. Omnibenevolence becomes undefinable and unpredictable, dissolving the problem of evil.[288]

Accordingly, Mears speaks of God "honoring" Job by assigning suffering to him.[289] Likewise, Calvin's opening statement in *Sermons on Job*, about God having already decided His good will for people "to live or to die," should also be accepted as rational and consistent. In being unable to define goodness comprehensibly, God and His foreordained will remain mysterious and unpredictable, which Calvinism argues is the appropriate context. Next, Platonic philosophy will be considered as an extra-biblical source of encouragement towards mysterious theodicy in Job.

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[286]Estes, 5.

[287]Olson, 350–355.

[288]Green, 431.

[289]Mears, 204.

Platonic Philosophy

Platonic philosophy has historically encouraged mysterious theodicy in Job. Epistemologically, it agrees with Israelite and Calvinist theology that humanity is limited in what it can know, because higher truths are hidden in the divine world. As Eric Brown states, in the fourth century BC, Plato wrote the allegory of *The Cave*, where humanity glimpses only shadows of divine truth (e.g., about goodness, justice, order). It is therefore up to the most intelligent people in society to construct, from those shadows, the best way to think and act.[290] Plato's conclusion is that the natural world lives in the shadow of the divine world, and humanity can know truth only in part. Paul makes a compatible statement in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

Maimonides opens his exposition on Job with a Platonic worldview, saying, "However great the exertion of our mind may be to comprehend the Divine Being or any of the ideals, we find a screen and partition between Him and ourselves."[291] Maimonides proceeds to describe how God must reveal things to humanity past this "screen," or else they stumble in the darkness. This metaphysical picture is supported in Job because he, his wife, and friends are ignorant without the divine knowledge from the heavenly courtroom (Job 1–2). The reader knows there is divine agency "behind the scenes," as

[290]Eric Brown, "Plato's Ethics and Politics in The Republic," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Plato.stanford.edu,* Fall 2017, n.p., https://plato.stanford. edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/ (10 March 2023).

[291]Maimonides, 285.

Boyd says.[292] The narrator and audience know there has been a heavenly argument between God and Satan that determines Job's fate. There may even be other agendas, operating procedures, or spectators involved. The world of divine metanarrative and activity is hidden but important, as the Platonic divide suggests.

Furthermore, as Belcher observes, "When God answers Job, He does not explain to him what went on in the heavenly council."[293] Shields and Estes claim this veiling is unintentional; it simply reflects that God's world lies in a supernatural realm where Job cannot know what Yahweh is doing.[294] Olojede also ascribes benign motives to the situation: that "the mystery of the night" shrouds the workings of God and Satan, but permits God's sudden triumph.[295] But, Morriston, Alter, and Fox suggest God may be intentionally hiding from Job that He caused the trouble. [296] This perpetuates mystery.

Additionally, a major theme of the theophany is the Platonic notion that Job is ignorant of the invisible, foundational "plan" or "design" of God (Job 38:2; 42:2).[297] Viberg interprets this to mean that God is leading Job to trust Him by faith, especially in

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[292]Boyd, "The Point of the Book of Job," 11.

[293]Belcher, 361. Note that the previous section discussed Fyall's belief that Yahweh's speeches do reveal Satan was behind the test.

[294]Shields, 31; Estes, 4.

[295]Olojede, 735–736.

[296]Morriston, 345; Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 178–179; Fox, "Meanings," 11.

[297]Tsevat, 204; Shields, 30; Scholnick, "Poetry," 422; Ash, 376; Morriston, 343; Walton, *Job*, 414; Habel, "Design," 413.

the light of a past history, in Genesis 1–3, that Job never witnessed.[298] But Boyd, Plantinga, and Yancey suspect God is implying that whatever is true about theodicy must remain shut up in heaven; it cannot be known, beheld, or changed. Boyd says, "That things happen to people on earth because of chance encounters in heaven, about which these people know nothing . . . is the central point of the whole epic drama."[299] Plantinga affirms "the reason [for Job's suffering] involves a transaction among beings, some of whom Job has no awareness at all."[300] Yancey concludes that the only real theodicy in Job lies mysteriously in the courtroom Job did not see.[301] All of these statements point to the original cause of affliction being hidden in God's mind, and higher purposes. These purposes are likely good, Plantinga concedes, but since they are inaccessible, no one can be certain.[302]The inscrutability of God must ultimately be the terminus of the inquiry. The next section will consider that studies in language, science, and mathematics confirm this.

Modern Philosophy

Modern philosophy is a last major influence on theodicy as mystery in Job. In the early twentieth century, Ludwig Wittgenstein taught that "logical truths do not express propositions at all, and are just vacuous sentences that for some reason or other we find

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[298]Viberg, 202–203.

[299]Boyd, "The Point of the Book of Job," 11.

[300]Plantinga, "Epistemic Probability and Evil," 75.

[301]Yancey, "A Fresh Reading," 143–145.

[302]Plantinga, "Epistemic Probability and Evil," 75.

useful to manipulate."[303] In this, Wittgenstein significantly advanced deconstructionism in theology and theodicy. If the ability of words to express, describe, and define is doubted—especially about God or abstract concepts like suffering—then a rational explanation cannot be formulated. Almost overnight, the field of anti-theodicy was born.

Several scholars directly acknowledge the influence of deconstructionism on their views. Verbin, in particular, argues that theodicy in Job must be mysterious because Wittgenstein confirms that "the verbal expression which we give to such an experience [of suffering] is nonsense."[304] Phillips, also, argues that deconstructionism proves concepts like "omnipotent" or "omnibenevolent" have only contextual meaning; so, theodicy "cannot get off the ground."[305] Terrence W. Tilley adds that discussing the problem of evil in Job is impossible because the narrative itself is deconstructed: the "text cannot be found" in its key moments, and its sense of time and coherence is distorted by pain and emotion. Any theodicy created, Tilley insists, is "indeterminate" because no single idea is defended or explained in the book.[306]

In addition to deconstructionism, modern science and chaos theory have encouraged mysterious theodicy in Job. Boyd and Shields discuss the "butterfly effect" as

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[303]Mario Gómez-Torrente, "Logical Truth," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, *Plato.stanford.edu*, Winter 2022, n.p., https://plato. stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/logical-truth/ (10 March 2023).

[304]Nehama Verbin, "Moses Maimonides on Job's Happiness and the Riddle of Divine Transcendence," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 139, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (3 March 2023).

[305]Phillips, 10–13.

[306]Terrence W. Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 107.

demonstrative of how hard it is to understand why anything happens the way that it does, including tragedy or random evil. In the context of what the theophany reveals, both conclude that God understands and interacts with the infinite, whereas humanity does not.[307] Walton similarly acknowledges the science of complexity, concluding "Here lies mystery . . . We cannot . . . sort it all out and figure out how God works or does not work."[308] Walton stops short of endorsing God as inscrutable, but argues that His motives are: "We cannot *know* reasons, and we cannot assume that there *are* reasons. We should assume that there *are* purposes, but that does not mean that we can or will ever *know* those purposes."[309] Gordis, Habel, and Belcher agree that God's purpose in the theophany was to stun Job with cosmic complexity and incomprehensibility so he would trust Him. This is a traditional viewpoint; but, contemporary science has continued to validate a world of engineered wonder and incomprehensibility. This has helped legitimize, and encourage, trust as theodicy. Now, having surveyed several important influences on theodicy as mystery in Job, a concluding thought is offered.

Conclusion

These past sections have surveyed Israelite theology, Reformed theology, Platonic philosophy, and modern philosophy as epistemologically supporting mystery in Job. These encourage the problem of evil as incomprehensible, and God as inscrutable,

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[307]Boyd, "The Point of the Book," 9; Shields, 30.

[308]Walton, *Job*, 383.

[309]Walton, *Job*, 415.

because the reason why Job suffers cannot be detected, and may be theologically inconsistent. Viberg, therefore, concludes that Job accepts his "limited perspective" and "abandons his case."[310] Clines appraises suffering that, "the only sense it makes, it makes to God."[311] Belcher concurs that trusting God through pain, and the ignorance of what can be known, is the challenge for Job and for humanity.[312] Job's pain kept him questioning God, but silencing himself to trust and believe, is what brought him peace.

A theodicy of faith is therefore left standing, as the devout response to mystery. Carson exhorts that Job trusting God is indeed the main lesson, and getting beyond a rational understanding is the right faith response: "Job teaches us that, at least in this world, there will always remain some mysteries to suffering . . . but Job . . . does not say 'I understand! But rather, 'I repent.'"[313] Walton joins Carson, saying "Our job is to trust, not to explain."[314] These are undeniably scriptural attitudes, but the assumption that explanation is inimical to trust—that the two must be dichotomized—is not as apparent. Carson is likely right that "God is more interested in being worshipped and trusted than in giving us satisfying explanations."[315] But, he assumes God does not provide a

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[310]Viberg, 202.

[311]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 138 in the context of how God showing a hippo-like beast to Job would qualify as a helpful theodical answer.

[312]Belcher, 369.

[313]Carson, 376.

[314]Walton, *Job*, 443.

[315]Carson, 375.

satisfying explanation in Job, and did not want to. He continues, human pride believes everything "ought to be explained to us" like "we are owed an explanation." Walton also affirms that human pride is an issue, saying that "the root [of theodical enterprise] is purely and simply disappointment with God that he did not work things better for us."[316] In this, Carson and Walton imply that theodicy may be more presumptuous and humanistic, than a valid theological quest. The next section, on anti-theodicy, will explore this sentiment further.

Anti-Theodicy

In his study of theodicy in Job, Trevor B. Williams puts forth a provocative statement that "The book of Job is a testing ground for what theodicies get wrong." He explains that theodicy tries to make sense of suffering, but, in doing so, negates sufferers by "justifying the evils that befall them."[317] Looking at Job's friends as the archetype of this negation, Trevor B. Williams argues that the book's main message is to avoid the kind of pretentiousness and reductionism they exhibit. In other words, the purpose of Job is not to formulate a theodicy at all, but to realize the danger *of* forming theodicies.

This sentiment expresses the core conviction of anti-theodicy. As an emerging field within religious philosophy, Lauri Snellman defines the central components of anti-theodicy as: 1) a rejection of theodical reasoning, 2) a rejection of privileged, universal explanations, and 3) a rejection that God and suffering have meaning *only* if they can be

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[316]Walton, *Job*, 379.

[317]Trevor B. Williams, 637.

satisfactorily explained. Nihilist anti-theodicists add a fourth component of rejecting religion and divine justice. Whether devout or nihilistic, however, anti-theodicists reject retributive and educative reasoning, says Snellman, especially character, growth, and greater good defenses.[318] They see these as morally insufficient explanations. A number of theologians and philosophers have influenced this viewpoint.

Foundations of Anti-Theodicy

One philosopher commonly referred to within anti-theodicy is Immanuel Kant. In his 1791 treatise on theodicy, Kant lauds Job's "moral sincerity" over the friends' insincerity, and argues that this factor moves God to show him "the inscrutable depths of his creation." God then dignifies Job's experience, when no one else believed him, and reveals a great mystery that creation (and suffering within it) do not "fit into the human conceptions of purpose and reason."[319] In doing so, Kant became one of the fathers of anti-theodicy in Job.

Hermeneutically, Kant's belief in analysis, as well as his skepticism of analysis, also became fundamental to the field. In Western tradition, right alongside those who study theodicy, have also been those who are skeptical of any forthcoming interpretation. Dahl postulates that this dialectic actually exists inside the human person, which is why neither theodicy-producers nor theodicy-dissolvers feel completely satisfied with any

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[318]Snellman, 201.

[319]Immanuel Kant, "On the Miscarriage of all Philosophical Trials in Theodicy," in *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*, ed. Mark Larrimore (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 232–233.

theodical schema.[320] Dahl posits that while one part of a person cries out for an answer to why they are suffering, the other part rejects any reason given.[321] This dialectic captures the spirit of Kant and much of the anti-theodical field.

In this context, anti-theodicists including Burrell, Phillips, Tilley, and Trevor B. Williams promote Job as iconoclastic of theodicy. Burrell, for example, argues in his book, *Why Job Has Nothing to Say about the Problem of Evil*, that the narrative is intentionally designed to frustrate and deconstruct Western theologies of suffering. As evidence, he points to Job's repentance in 42:6 and the increasing ways this verse continues to be translated. Rather than choosing a preferred translation, however, Burrell claims the poetic narrator was intentionally vague to validate *all* interpretations. Rather than there being only one way Job could have felt, the poet inserted an interpretive gap to open up the text and validate many worldviews of suffering.[322]

This open translation concept, begun by Mikhail Bakhtin and advocated by Newsom, critiques Western theology for being ignorant of the "polyphonic" aspect of Job. By trying to make sense of what he is going through, Newsom argues, theodicists "finalize" him and fellow sufferers.[323] They become new false comforters, who try to grasp what has happened and explain it, while abstracting and distancing themselves from the circumstances. Trevor B. Williams agrees, and claims that the book of Job calls

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[320]Dahl, 65.

[321]Dahl, 57.

[322]Burrell, 114–116.

[323]Newsom, 23.

for this to reverse, and for sufferers to be "unfinalized."[324] Tilley validates this, saying the goal is for people to stop "play[ing] God and silenc[ing] the voice of Job in the ongoing conversation about God and evil, the path taken by much Western theological and philosophical tradition."[325]

The approach of anti-theodicists can be provocative at times, but many agree with their arguments against abstract reasoning. Additionally, they raise an important question about the classical approach to theodicy in Job, and whether theodical explanations have been too eager to declare the right fit. It has been argued well by Gault and List, for example, that history has dehumanized Job by both over-condemning him and over-promoting him.[326] Calvin and Luther struggled to find any good in him, while according to Meeks, Chrysostom and Julian the Arian believed he was a model saint.[327] Roeske, documents Gregory the Great promoting Job as the ideal Stoic, and Aquinas defending him as an impassioned philosopher.[328] Augustine, Pelagius, and Jerome also might have minimized Job's despair to portray him positively, according to Allen.[329]

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[324]Trevor B. Williams, 682.

[325]Tilley, 109–110.

[326]Gault, 147, 165. List, 1 says people feel they must choose between "Job the Protester" or "Job the Patient." This choice is discernible in the historical synopsis of Job's interpretation in Allen, 362–370.

[327]Meeks, 36.

[328]Roeske, 259.

[329]Allen, 366–368.

No era is immune to trying to make a particular portrait of Job fit. Still, in the last few decades, scholars have tried to rehumanize Job. They have appreciated his deep doubt and how God refuses to condemn him for it. Job ends his experience forgiven and rewarded, not for perfection, but for perseverance.[330] There is, therefore, an aspect of God's approach that affirms anti-theodical concern for sufferers. While His speeches are admittedly challenging, Yahweh takes a completely different approach than Job's theologizing friends do, and offers no platitudes or doctrines at all. The next section will examine anti-theodicy further, and the perspective that Job suffices as a grief text.

Lament as Theodicy

In the last few decades, one stream of anti-theodicy has suggested that Job be primarily viewed as a lament or grief text. Westermann, for example, argues that "biblical lament dominates the book," to the extent that it should not be viewed as a theodical text anymore.[331] In this appraisal, Westermann relies on Brueggemann's conception of lament psalms, where the sufferer moves from "orientation," to "disorientation," to "new orientation." Brueggemann suggests that "the whole drama of the Book of Job correlates roughly with [this] grid."[332]

Agreeing with Brueggemann, Olojede explores Job as a "psalm of disorientation," where the theme is patience until God delivers. The idea behind looking at Job this way,

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[330]Ash, 429; Estes, 256; Habel, *Book of Job,* 583; Hartley, *Book of Job,* 539.

[331]Westermann, 60–62.

[332]Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 489.

is that the importance of theodicy or intellectual resolution diminishes. Job can just be about having "vertical communion" with God, says Olojede, not solving Western philosophical dilemmas.[333] The narrative can suffice as an expression of grief, alienation, suspicion, and confusion. It can be eminently emotional, rather than intellectual.

In support of this, Gault directs readers towards trusting God's character. He claims that by giving Job a "deeper experience," and not an explanation, God reveals that the devout must trust "who" they follow more than "why."[334] Kizito Uzoma Ndugbu argues that if this does not comfort people, it may be because they are hoping that theodicy will skirt the obvious: that existence is fragile, human life is vulnerable, and peace comes from wrestling with God. He therefore interprets the lesson of Job as doing less thinking about God, and more listening to Him.[335] Ultimately, those with this perspective make a strong point that Job's personal encounter with God was healing, and this deeper experience was more satisfying than a dogmatic explanation.

Likewise, Jason Alan Carter and Stephen C. Torr have examined Yahweh's model of personally encountering Job, and seen it as a fitting Pentecostal answer to the dark night of the soul Job experiences. Torr observes that the friends "wield their theology as an oppressive battering ram" when they should have been "asking afresh what God is doing." God, moreover, emphasizes "the relational element of covenant" by

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[333]Olojede, 735–736.

[334]Gault, 165.

[335]Ndugbu, 30–31.

speaking to Job face to face.[336] Job has honored this also, by crying out to God to see Him instead of just praying or talking about Him. Torr, therefore, concludes that the book of Job is the "archetypal lament" and perfect anti-theodicy.[337] The healing process of grieving and being heard, understood, and answered is really what the narrative teaches.

As an anti-theodicist and counselor, Sollereder agrees. She sees therapeutic genius in God's approach to Job in chapters 38–41. First, God lets Job lament. Then, instead of giving Job a rational explanation for his suffering, God takes him on a guided, questioning tour to reorient him. In this, Sollereder sees God as actually helping "unsilence" Job in the spirit of Burrell and Williams.[338] She therefore advocates Socratic dialogue to help sufferers create their own theodicy, and to honor them the way Job's friends should have honored him. Pinnock describes similar practices and motives in her work.[339] In doing so, both represent an entire field of practical theodicy seekers who believe the post-theodical message in Job is compassionate engagement with individual sufferers, and not a universal theology of suffering.

Representing a last anti-theodical approach is Jason Alan Carter, who warns that only in the modern West is the idea of evil intellectualized into "dense metaphysical

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[336]Stephen C. Torr, "A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament," 209, Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, UK, 2012.

[337]Torr, 208

[338]Sollereder, 382–383, 392.

[339] Pinnock, 142–143.

discourse."[340] In Equatorial Guinea, where witchcraft is an everyday reality for the Fang Christian community, Job is seen as a practical, spiritual warfare text. Carter describes the "Pentecostalized cosmos" of Job, and praises the poetic narrator for capturing the very real turmoil of "being thrown about between the God and the devil."[341] Carter, like Olojede, interprets Job as disoriented, lamenting, and petitioning God for deliverance. Yet, this is not theoretical in his community; it is practical, and something churches can construct ministry models around.[342]

In conclusion, lament as theodicy approaches to Job take his psychological condition as sufferer seriously. It is very important, counsels Dahl, that individual sufferers do not suffer a second time from "pain is worth it" narratives.[343] Anti-theodicists also assume that since neither Job, nor God, nor his friends are able to offer a cogent theology of evil or suffering, then there must be none. As Chong says, "the deliberate silence" of God and the text "should deter us from using his [Job's] story to construct theodicies."[344] Next, a form of anti-theodicy which uses this reasoning to support a cynical interpretation—that Job provides no reason to stay in relationship with God—will be examined.

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[340]Jason Alan Carter, *Inside the Whirlwind: The Book of Job Through African Eyes* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 150.

[341]Carter, 148.

[342]Carter, 158, 485–487.

[343]Dahl, 44, 47.

[344]Chong, n.p.

Cynical Anti-Theodicy

Alongside devout anti-theodicy is the rapid growth of cynical anti-theodicy. Cynical anti-theodicists understand the book of Job to promote existentialism, or a life liberated from God.[345] Ironically, though, the resolution to abandon God does not actually solve theodicy. The pain of life must simply be braved, and explained another way.

In the first part of this chapter, the section on protest theology introduced some anti-theodicists with cynical viewpoints of Job. Verbin, for example, argues that in 42:2, Job "sees" how God has abused him. Job leaves the relationship in order to end the cycle of enablement and permit God to repent. Alter sympathizes with this perspective, especially the idea that God made a mistake in how He treated Job and is in the process of realizing that. Batnitzky, Blumenthal, and Roth agree that the book of Job encourages functional agnosticism as a necessary boundary between Yahweh and humanity. Believing that God's silence, in the face of evil, fragments moral and relational connection to Him, cynical anti-theodicy teaches that human compassion is superior to God's. Justice on earth is now a human endeavor to be conducted better than divine justice. This view will be developed further below.

Moral Fragmentation

From her study of Job, Newsom predicts that divine-human severance is the inevitable moral. The prologue and epilogue reveal a God that humanity cannot

[345]Captured in Kevin Aho, "Existentialism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, *Plato.stanford.edu*, Spring 2023, n.p., https://plato. stanford.edu/ archives/spr2023/entries/existentialism/ (10 March 2023).

understand. It is not that God's character is unintelligible, but that what is understood is offensive. In Job 1–2, she claims the negotiation between God and Satan reveals them making a dehumanized "spectacle" of Job.[346] Job becomes "an instrument" in God and Satan's argument because both seek "to narrate Job." Newsom continues, "They differ only in laying claim to incompatible narratives" and "are equally certain they know the truth about him, and can state it in a single sentence."[347] Job's objectification ends with God and Satan initiating a test which "permits everything" to establish who is right.[348]

The implication is that Job is too high-minded for the gods, and that God and Satan are not very distinct in character. This is validated when Yahweh returns to speak to Job in chapters 38–41. Instead of offering an apology, or a cogent reason for why Job's "world turned upside down,"[349] Newsom argues that God is confirms the cryptic way He governs creation. In her view, God's "moral imagination" is retributive, mythological, and inferior. In contrast to Gordis, who perceives coherent, moral design in the way Yahweh governs the world, Newsom perceives incoherence. Moral intelligibility is not inferable, but seriously broken. Job must therefore move on with his own understanding, and live life with a demoralized, demythologized sense of justice on earth. Tsevat agrees with this evaluation, arguing that "Justice is not woven into the stuff of the universe, nor

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[346]Newsom, 68.

[347]Newsom, 71, 69.

[348]Newsom, 69.

[349]Newsom, 168.

is God occupied with its administration, but it is an ideal to be realized by society."[350] God has left justice in the hands of humankind, to administrate without Him.

This view encourages an existential gap between God and humanity. God appears not to have a logical or morally superior administration. By implication, His goodness, sovereignty, and justice are suspect. A satisfying theodicy cannot be constructed since God does not evaluate things the way humanity does. This perspective is a cynical interpretation of the nominalist, voluntarist God of Calvinism: God is seen as doing things for His own purposes, which are unquestionable by humanity. But, in Calvinism, inscrutability implies trust. In the cynical view, it warrants abandonment.

To Choose Him or Not?

According to Maimonides, Job himself represents a cynical, anti-theodical perspective of life throughout the dialogue.[351] No rational explanation exists for what is happening to him, so he cries out about the unintelligibility of the world. Nor can God's presence and purposes be trustworthy, since they are indetectable. Olojede affirms Job's descent into nihilism due to God seeming "distant, absent, and silent at the cruelty and chaos of the world, including Job's own chaos."[352] Ortlund validates this type of cynicism as the logical conclusion of anti-theodicy when applied to humanity also.[353] If God is unintelligible or unrelational, it is only one meaningful step from nihilism at that

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[350]Tsevat, 217.

[351]Maimonides, 300.

[352]Olojede 730.

[353]Ortlund, 352–356.

point. Morriston worries about this, aloud, in his interpretation of Job. He posits that providence and moral design must be discernible in the theophany because, if they are not, humanity is left with no one to answer, no one to care, and no one to judge.[354]

Another downstream effect of anti-theodicy is, that if the book was meant to be practical, rather than theological, then it forces a practical but terrifying choice: either to choose Him, or not. But how can a framework of mystery guide this choice? Carson insists that while God does not answer Job's questions, He does make it "unambiguously clear what answers are not acceptable in God's universe."[355] But is this true? What if accepting mystery does not make anything clear? What happens when someone steps over the line of faith into agnosticism because, as Morriston sees it, "nothing in the content of the speeches" motivates faith or trust?[356] List maintains that the message of Job is to grieve and fight, without letting aloneness become despair.[357] Yancey argues that people must choose to love God, rather than curse Him, when the evidence resists this conclusion.[358] But Job himself navigates this confusion poorly. He appears to be seeking deliverance from God more than by God, claims Samuel E. Balentine.[359] Hartley,

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[354]Morriston, 345–355.

[355]Carson, 374.

[356]Morriston, 352.

[357]List, 4.

[358]Yancey, "A Fresh Reading," 147.

[359]Samuel E. Balentine, *Job*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 298.

likewise, views Job for "beseeching the God in whom he has faith, to help him against the God who is punishing him"[360]

It is therefore unsurprising that Gault calls relationship with the God of Job "schizophrenic."[361] Ndugbu, likewise, observes that people seem to struggle with both the hidden God of Job 3–37, and with the revealed God of the epilogue and prologue; neither portrait of Him seems warm or understandable.[362] Consequently, if Chong is right that the book of Job is mostly about the choice of running to Him while in pain, or running away from Him,[363] then there is a dire risk involved in concluding that God does not give—or desire to give—an intelligible, edifying response to Job's suffering. Moreover, this choice is an interpretive one, not one specified by God or Job in the text. In view of this, an mysterious theodicy in Job should be assessed carefully.

Assessment of Mysterious Theodicy

Those who advocate mystery as theodicy are right to emphasize the actual experience of Almighty God and His creation as an awesome, majestic experience. They are right to encourage humility before an omnipotent and supernatural Creator, and to be concerned about pride and humanism. However, as this chapter has asked of previous theodicies, the question for Job is whether this pretext explains his story. Was the book of

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[360]Hartley, *Book of Job*, 295.

[361]Gault, 157.

[362]Ndugbu, 30.

[363]Chong, n.p.

Job written to convey mystery and inexplicability of God, suffering, and why Job in particular suffered? Did God answer Job with a speech about mystery, or with nothing at all? And, if so, was this done to force the issue of faith? Was God's hope for Job, and readers, that they would reject theodicy for the simple choice of believing in Him, or not?

Strengths

The strength of mystery as theodicy is that the classic issue of faith is biblically grounded: people do need to trust God, and this is how relationship with Him works. Hebrews 11:6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who approaches Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." Additionally, those advocating anti-theodicy are right that the human mind cannot construct a comprehensive metaphysical explanation of all evil, for all people, in all situations. It is better to have faith, engage humanity in its suffering, and care about justice. Even the cynical response is valuable, for warning of the existential threat that suffering continually puts on individuals and society.

In addition, interpreters have scriptural, historical, and theological warrant to define God as mysterious. Brueggemann claims that the "remoteness" of God, and difficulty with the "sanctions" of fidelity are part of Israel's historical testimony.[364] Calvin's concern that God be honored, rather than pulled down and manipulated by human reason—even at the risk of appearing distant—is understandable. The human tendency is to define "good" and "just," and to put God on trial for it. There is also a

[364]Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 388–389.

temptation to believe the mind can know all, question all, and understand all. However, Scripture teaches that all wisdom comes from God (1 Kgs 3:9; Jas 1:5); and, that there are mysteries, hidden things, and deep things in His spirit (Matt 11:25; 13:35; 1 Cor 2:10–11). Epistemologically, then, it makes sense to conceive of theodicy as a mystery that will never all be figured out.

Another argument in favor of mysterious theodicy is that the problem of evil is extremely complex. The Epicurean trilemma is baffling: which attribute of God can be compromised to solve it? Theodicy has resisted resolution for thousands of years because evil is hard to comprehend logically and empirically. In addition to the mysteries of the flesh's operation (e.g., Jer 17:9; Rom 7:15–25), if there is merit to Satanic activity, chaos monsters, or creation in process, there is disruption in the system that defies summarization. Theodicy is therefore guaranteed to be elusive, just on the level of comprehension alone.

Finally, the text of Job is mysterious. Its age and interpretive gaps prevent it from being "solved." The language is difficult and the message is unclear, except for the fact that Job is restored at the end. It therefore seems that trust and patience could be the only clear morals. Guilt, ignorance, character deficit, or radical freedom, do not seem like completely worthy explanations. Additionally, there is no lesson learned nor communion gained that could not have been gained another way. This is mysterious. Presumably, God could have been clearer if a clear theodicy was His intent.

Ultimately, mysterious theodicy makes sense for many reasons. The book of Job cannot be expected to answer all questions about evil and suffering. Anti-theodicists are

right to question whether a theology of suffering was even God's intent. If so, Job was still probably not intended to solve a specific, manmade paradox like the Epicurean trilemma. Good exegetical study must consider what questions or expectations are being brought to a text, and ask instead what the book originally intended to communicate. If truth is discerned, good fruit will follow. In the case of Job, the results of theodical inquiry do warrant the kind of critique that proponents of mysterious theodicy have brought. This said, the next section will consider weaknesses of mysterious theodicy, and how reducing theodicy in Job to mystery may be limiting it.

Weaknesses

A first area where mysterious theodicy falls short is, that like retributive theodicy, it does not differentiate itself enough from the friends' theology that God ultimately condemns. Maimonides discusses parts of the friends' speeches that argue for Job to accept what is happening to him because God's nature and ways are inscrutable (e.g., Job 5:9; 11:5–8).[365] On this point, Schreiner reports that Calvin sympathized with much of this theology,[366] and this can be seen throughout his *Sermons on Job*. Walton also maintains that ANE civilizations had robust mysterious theodicy already; the gods were expected to have purposes that were irrational or unintelligible.[367] This can be seen in the

[365]Maimonides, 301–302.

[366]Schreiner, 58.

[367]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 335.

analyses provided by Hartley.[368] As a comparative myth, Job would have very little to offer to this discussion. It would be an awfully long and complicated narrative only to validate tradition and offer no new explanation. Habel, Fyall, and Tsevat argue that the theophany, in particular, would not really be necessary.[369]

Another area where mysterious theodicy falls short is epistemological. As mentioned, there is no scriptural reason to pit faith against intelligibility, as those encouraging trust often do. Scripture indicates a mild epistemic conflict between rationalism, which believes everything to be equally open and accessible to cognitive facility; and revelation, which holds that some truths are hidden and must be surfaced to be known. For this reason, God instructs belief (John 6:29) and describes a process of coming to Him through faith (Mark 10:15; Jas 1:6–7). But, He does not divorce the faculties of mind and spirit to the degree those advocating a theodicy of faith do. A miracle, for example, provides scaffolding for the spirit and mind to work together: to know God, perceive Him, and believe in Him. While optimism about the mind and its redeemed potential does not mean an all-encompassing knowledge about suffering is possible, the pitting of faith against intelligibility is unnecessary. Theodicy may be better thought of as a revelation in process, through faith, rather than a mystery that is closed but outweighed by faith.

With this in mind, Clines' admonition that Job made a "mistake" in trying to understand his suffering, and "intrude[d] into an area beyond human comprehension,"

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[368]Hartley, "Job 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background," 347–359.

[369]Habel, "Wisdom," 313; Fyall, 179; Tsevat, 195–198.

should be reexamined.[370] Also complicated is the statement, by Carson, that human pride demands explanations that God does not owe.[371] While it is true that humanity may at times be demanding, and God does not owe anything to anyone, Job desiring an explanation for his pain should not be confused with a desire for the mysteries of the universe to all be made known to him. Andersen, in response, has called it "smug" for people to suggest that Job should be silent, considering his innocence, wounds, and radical loss.[372] The instinct to want some intelligible explanation for suffering, in view of God's goodness and providence, is not the same as demanding that God reveal all His mysteries and come under the thumb of human understanding. Somewhere in the middle, the desire for a navigational system through tragedy must be seen as permissible to ask for. And, it should not automatically be assumed that God's default desire is for mystery and remoteness.

This is not to discredit the need for trust and faith. But for theologians to prescribe a "question barrier," past which is unfaithfulness, has serious ramifications. What questions are permissible to ask? To what extent? At what point does a good, hard question become prideful? Is God angered, or dishonored, by inquiring why evil befell Job? What if He desires to unlock a mystery here? The implication by those who insist that mystery and faith must displace explanation and understanding assumes that one pleases God while the other does not. This comes dangerously close to condemning

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[370]Clines, "Job," 483.

[371]Carson, 375.

[372]Andersen, 183.

theology, science, and inquiry altogether. It is also unrelational in that it assumes God desires to be guarded, rather than partnered with well.

These theological precommitments become more important when considering that most people seek theodical understanding while in pain. Job's thirty-four chapters of lament unveil the existentialism inside the human heart when it feels it has lost God and His point of reference. Telling others in this vulnerable state that: theodicy is mystery, there is no grid for suffering, that God does not have one, He does not want people to have one, etc., will likely fuel despair. This ministerial element cannot be forgotten in the interpretive quest. In fact, Job is uniquely special because the interpretive project is so closely connected to ministry, apologetics, and counseling.

A final weakness of mystery is that it often presumes God's answer is mystery simply because interpreters have found His response mysterious. But, as Tsevat cautions, it cannot be assumed that God thought He was being mysterious—either in His revelation to Job, or in His revelation to readers through the book of Job. It is possible God intended people to ask, seek, and find something edifying. Job, for his part, expresses receiving something clear about God's power and plan (Job 42:1–6). Presumably, his friends also understand, because they participate in the reconciliation (Job 42:9).

The question, therefore, is not whether God explains everything so there is no mystery remaining in Job; but rather, what part of the mystery did God reveal that makes Job "see"? Ironically, the anti-theodicy perspective which views Job as lamenting and seeking reorientation, generally perceives very little in the theophany so there is little that could have reoriented Job. God's presence and attention are assumed to be satisfying

enough. But, Tsevat argues, the narrator of Job works hard to build up to a theodicy, shape the content of it, and provide a climactic moment. It does not make sense for God to reveal Himself, on earth, face to face, and give a response which Job appears to receive—but has only emotional resolution, and no content. To this effect, Tsevat says it is "lazy man's logic" to say, "The book has no answer to its problem." He exhorts, "The sentence 'I have not detected the meaning should signify . . . 'I have not *yet* detected it'" and encourage further search.[373] Agreeing, Shields cautions that mystery, though popular, should be a last resort. Otherwise, it could be covering that "we are . . . unwilling or unable to decipher the ambiguity."[374]

As this analysis of mystery closes, it is worth considering whether there has been too much pessimism regarding the theophany and God's response to Job. Goldsworthy notes that the point of wisdom literature is to ground human beings in the revelation of God, and to help them trust Him more through the truth He reveals.[375] In the fourth century AD, Julian the Arian wrote similarly, that the theophany was written to reveal God, not to conceal Him. In Meeks, Julian explains that God appeared to Job to "disclose" more of His nature, not to make it "unfathomable."[376] Maimonides also believed the theophany was God's gift to Job, to help him understand.[377]

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[373]Tsevat, 195–196.

[374]Shields, 33.

[375]Goldsworthy, 173.

[376]Meeks, 29–30.

[377]Maimonides, 300–301.

Hence the problem for mysterious theodicy comes down to the view of God Himself: is the God of the Old Testament, as Goldsworthy phrases it, a "distant and aloof deity, cloaked in obscurity?"[378] Or is He a revealing God, who gives sufficient revelation for humanity to anchor their lives on, and displace their own reasoning? If the latter, then the view of God in Job changes from what Habel describes as *deus absonditus*, to *deus revelatus*.[379] Yahweh goes from vague, silent, and protective of His mysteries, to inviting humanity into them, to bring something special to light. What He might be bringing to light will be considered in the next chapter. Prior to closing, however, a few conclusive remarks will be made.

Conclusion: Appraising the Classical Approach

In the end, the classical approach to theodicy in Job resists answering the problem of evil and leads into the Gordian knot of interpretation. After surveying the three most common approaches, it is hard to avoid feeling discouraged that the text does not provide a clearer, meaningful theodicy. The Epicurean trilemma is engaged, but unsatisfactorily solved. Interpreters question whether God's sovereignty, goodness, or justice should be abridged, to make sense of what happens to Job. Various schemas for the prologue, dialogue, and epilogue have all been offered with no agreement on providence, the theophany, or what Job sees. The most important question, about why God permitted Job's test and did not stop it, also resists an answer.

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[378]Goldsworthy, 172.

[379]Habel, "Design," 413. Habel uses these terms in a slightly different context than this thesis uses them here.

Retributive, educative, and mysterious overlays provide insight but confusion. None fit all of the data rightly, and none of them imply consistently good ministerial paradigms. Many experts therefore suggest people are asking the wrong questions. They say the book of Job does not, cannot, and never intended to answer the problem of evil or human suffering. Anti-theodicy proponents dissolve the problem and urge people to live on bravely, either in faith, or without. Is this the end of discussion?

As this chapter closes, it is worth noting how much the classical approach to theodicy in Job is enmeshed with the Epicurean trilemma. It assumes Job will somehow untangle the intellectual paradox of God's sovereignty, goodness, justice, and power, existing alongside evil. To digress for a moment, paradoxes are interesting phenomena. Zeno's paradox, for example, presents the rule of infinite indivisibility which makes it mathematically impossible for any span of length to be crossed, as described by Nick Huggett.[380] However, like all paradoxes, the insolvability lies in a mismatch between the way the world is conceived of, and the way the world actually is. In Zeno's paradox, the answer to the law of infinite indivisibility is to simply walk across the room: infinity being real, the person will still reach the other side.

This is important because the Epicurean trilemma, like Zeno's paradox, presents a logic problem that cannot be solved mentally. If the text of Job is approached assuming that one of God's orthodox attributes must be compromised for logic's sake—His sovereignty, power, goodness, or justice—then the result can only be a compromised

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[380]Nick Huggett, "Zeno's Paradoxes," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Plato.stanford.edu*, Winter 2019, n.p., https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paradox-zeno/#AchTor/ (3 April 2023).

God. Those who resort to mystery to solve the paradox, merely bump the problem back a level, metaphysically: they insist that, somehow, in the heavenly realm where God knows more than humanity does, this complexity works itself out. Or, it does not, but people may still trust the order it represents and carry on. Thus the history of classical theodicy demonstrates that when the text of Job is approached with the trilemma—a paradox—in mind, it yields a paradoxical interpretation. It must; for it cannot deny the orthodoxy that originated it, but denying that orthodoxy is the only way to solve it.

Chapter 3 will therefore consider a different angle for theodicy in Job. It will consider that the problem of evil Job faces, and the trilemma framing it, represent a *lived* paradox rather than an intellectual one. Job is not facing the trilemma mentally, but in reality—as evil is unjustly permitted to breach God's good and sovereign order in his life.

Thus, it is not wrong for readers to perceive and ask the questions about unjust suffering, Satan, and God's providence in the text. It is not wrong to hope that the answer God will give, to explain this to Job, will be satisfying. From a Christian perspective, the trilemma describes the fallen condition of creation: with *two* kingdoms clashing within the Epicurean triangle, not just God's kingdom on its own. The New Testament supports the idea that God's ideal administration has been compromised by an invasive one, just as Job 1–2 demonstrates in the opening scene. So, there appears to be a living contradiction on earth: between what God intended to take root, and the presence of evil that needs uprooting. In the book of Job, it may be that the entire test, dialogue, and resolution is about this, and what God's real solution for this lived contradiction is.

Put a different way, in the same way that getting out of Zeno's paradox requires reality—a person walking across the room—Chapter 3 will suggest that so does humanity's getting out of the problem of evil. Zeno's paradox is a puzzle that is unsolvable mentally. Job's puzzle might also be unsolvable mentally. It may need to be solved in reality, by a person, who takes action.

The next chapter uses this as a warrant to consider if the point of Job is to foreshadow a solution to the problem of evil with a person, rather than a doctrine. It takes a Christological approach to consider what the text suggests this might look like. And it considers whether God might be saying something important about theodicy *through* Job, in addition to what He says *to* Job. Two non-classical forms of theodicy will be proposed as a structure, for reframing the situation of an innocent man being unfairly smitten by Satan, with God's permission; and, also, God Himself suddenly appearing in the field of the paradox, with something passionate to say about its plan and disorder.

The hope is that this different formulation will reopen the text to speak freshly about theodicy in Job. In inviting Christology to enlighten certain touchpoints and interpretive gaps in Job's narrative, the goal is not to reduce the original text in any way, but to redeem the image of God, the theodicy offered, and the potential of warm, devotional ministry lying within.

CHAPTER 3

A CHRISTOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THEODICY IN JOB

Introduction

This chapter will develop two alternative Old Testament theodicies as lenses for interpreting Job. These are uncommon options in the interpretive history, but open up different angles to view the text. Communion theodicy, which emphasizes God's suffering alongside His people, will be examined in the first half of this chapter. Proleptic theodicy, which approaches the problem of evil from an eschatological perspective, will be examined in the second half. The hope is that these two non-classical theodicies will provide different footing to discuss theodicy in Job.

Importantly, Christology will be utilized as a guide through some of the knotty theodical issues and questions in the text. The church fathers, who began this approach to interpretation, did so because they spotted touchpoints between the lives of Job and Christ. They saw commonalities in their confrontations with Satan, in the latter's invasive will for their lives, but also their final outcomes. Consequently, Job was viewed, for almost a thousand years of church history, as a prophetic figure suffering a type of Christ's sufferings. The final chapters of Job were correspondingly viewed as a type of gospel proclamation and victory over evil.

This hermeneutical approach was imperfect for many reasons, but led to some good insights. This chapter will, therefore, attempt to connect perspectives from the church fathers with contemporary Old Testament scholarship in Job, and to reconfigure the classical discussion. The hope is, that embracing Christology as a starting point for some of the mysteries in Job, and investing in two non-classical approaches, will lead to a fresh theodical hope for the text. Now, the chapter will proceed to the first alternative theodical perspective of Job: communion theodicy.

Communion Theodicy in Job

Communion theodicy attempts to dispel the conception that God is distant, unmerciful, and impassible about humanity's plight concerning suffering. Instead, it posits that God is present, compassionate, and indwelling His creation while it suffers. Green defines communion theodicy as the idea that suffering is "an occasion for direct relationship, collaboration, and even communion with God."[1] According to Dahl, this relational view of suffering contrasts with the rationally omniscient and transcendent conceptions of God enforced, historically, in retributive, educative, and mysterious paradigms.[2]

Communion theodicy in Job, therefore, looks at whether God has an empathic purpose, position, or experience during Job's suffering. Does Yahweh suffer while Job suffers? Is there any evidence of relationship or collaboration? And, as Alter asks, "What

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[1]Green, 434.

[2]Dahl, 61–64 argues that communion theodicy is a reaction to Greek metaphysics and Judeo-Christian views that overemphasize retribution, sovereignty, and inscrutability.

does He feel about hideous chain of afflictions the man He supposedly cherishes is made to undergo?"[3] This half of the chapter will examine whether there is communion theodicy in Job, and if it can shed light on why God permits Job to suffer. It will do so, first, by investigating the church fathers' claim that Job is a communion theodicy which anticipates Christ's sufferings and His passion. Then, the prospect of a typological link between Job and Christ will be examined. Lastly, some analysis of whether Messianic suffering can shape theodical explanation in Job will be provided. Can communion theodicy shed light on why God permits Job to suffer, and what this innocent suffering was supposed to mean? To begin answering this question, communion theodicy will first be defined.

Definition and Development

According to Laato and de Moor, communion theodicy has less of a precedent in Old Testament theology because it originated in the Second Temple period (516 BC – AD 70) and grew through the Jewish-Roman war era (AD 66–135).[4] But, communion theodicy has received substantial attention since the Holocaust for emphasizing God's immanent suffering with victims.[5] Abraham J. Heschel, himself a refugee from the Nazis, describes a "divine pathos" where Yahweh feels the sufferings of His people and can

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[3]Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 177.

[4]Laato and de Moor, xlviii–liii.

[5]Two iconic sources engaging theodicy after the Holocaust (*Shoah*) and looking to communion theodicy for a passible interpretation of God are: Abraham J. Heschel, *God In Search of Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976); and Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

partake in them. Heschel claims, for example, that Jeremiah wept on behalf of God, not just on his own initiative.[6] Communion theodicy is also visible in the Psalmist's cry of confidence that the Lord draws near in times of suffering (e.g. Ps 55:17–18; 69:17–18). Neusner discerns communion in Daniel 3, where God enters the fiery furnace with His men.[7] Most relevant to Job, however, is Isaiah 52–53, which Laato and de Moor define as a primary communion theodicy text because the vicarious suffering of the servant brings Yahweh and His people closer.[8]

These examples suggest there can be overlap between communion theodicy and elements of mysterious, educative, or retributive theodicy. C. J. Williams clarifies that communion theodicy is "not a direct answer" to why humanity suffers, but it assures God's "presence and care within the *experience* of suffering."[9] Laato and de Moor add that God is not distant, unjust, or hypocritical, for permitting suffering because He Himself suffers with His people.[10] Ultimately, Green says "God is a suffering God," who not only bears the sins of His people but suffers with them under sin also.[11]

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[6]Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 154–155, 285–299.

[7]Neusner, lii.

[8]For more discussion, see Laato and de Moor, l–liii; Laato, 185.

[9]C. J. Williams, 83.

[10]Laato and de Moor, xlviii.

[11]Green, 434. Also see Holmén, *Theodicy and the Cross,* 1–16 for scholarly criticism and variants of this theodicy between him, Moltmann, and Wiesel.

Job as communion theodicy, then, postulates God as empathically present despite any distance or absence perceived. This is not a common viewpoint, historically. Gordis, for example, says Job is definitely not communion theodicy: God is "all transcendent" in His speeches, coming from a "vast distance" that is "hammered home in every line."[12] Alter agrees, not seeing any divine empathy nor involvement in Job's suffering.[13] Newsom, likewise, argues that God shows Himself inferior to Job in this way: if Job was involved with the plight of the pitiful (e.g., Job 29:12–17), God should have wept or showed compassion.[14] Morriston is prepared to give way a little on the issue. He thinks the poetic narrator is confused over whether Yahweh is above or involved in Job's plight, and wants to have it both ways.[15] But Clines insists on the non-communal view because otherwise the mysterious and corrective nature Yahweh desires to convey, fails. "Job has no right to an explanation for his suffering," Clines maintains. "He is not even entitled to be told whether he is being punished for some fault he has committed, or whether he is indeed the innocent sufferer he believers himself to be."[16] In this interpretation, communion thinking is at odds with transcendence in Job.

This evaluation will be revisited later. But it is interesting to note Job's final response to the whirlwind speeches: "My ears had heard of You, but now my eyes have

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[12]Gordis, "Ecology," 193.

[13]Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 183.

[14]Newsom, 194.

[15]Morriston, 356.

[16]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 138.

seen You" (Job 42:5). After all that Job goes through, what he chooses to express is reconnection to God. It is an incredible ending that resurfaces one of the hardest theodical questions in the text: What did Job see? Is it possible that communion is relevant? The next section will explore this possibility.

"Job's Passion"

In chapter 2, this thesis explored Corey's connection of Job to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52–53, and Israel as the typological fulfillment of both.[17] The New Testament, however, teaches that Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53, connecting Job to Him, potentially. In Luke 22:37, Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12 and concludes "I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in Me. . . . For what is written about Me is reaching its fulfillment." In Matthew 8:17, Jesus claims that His healing fulfills Isaiah 53:4. Also, in Acts 8, the Ethiopian eunuch reads aloud Isaiah 53:7–8 and asks Philip whom the prophet is speaking about, himself or someone else. Then Philip "began with this very Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

For Christians, these passages are important because they link Christ to the mysterious identity of Isaiah's Suffering Servant. This servant is innocent, but receives affliction from God (Isa 53:4); is assumed to be a sinner (Isa 53:12); and is humiliated and deprived of justice (Isa 53:7–8). But, if Job is connected with Isaiah 53, then Christ's sufferings and afflictions could be an interpretive guide to Job's. The first centuries of Christian interpretation viewed Job precisely this way.

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[17]Corey, 122–128.

The result, according to Simonetti and Conti, is that a majority of church fathers saw Job's afflictions as "types of Christ's passion."[18] Gregory the Great, for example, writes: "Job, who embodied such great mysteries concerning the incarnation of God, also had to . . . reveal Christ in his life. He was to shed light on Christ's passion by what he suffered and truly to foretell the mystery of Christ's suffering to the extent that he prophesied it not only by speaking but also by suffering."[19] In this, Gregory interprets Job as prefiguring the human dimension of Christ's sufferings.

Simonetti and Conti add that Origen, Philip the Priest, Hesychius, John Chrysostom, Julian of Eclanum, and Julian the Arian similarly discuss Job as a type of Christ. Philip the Priest compares Job's lament in chapters 16–17—about God pouring out his gall on the ground (16:13), and going down to the prison bars of Sheol (17:16)—as prophesying the crucifixion.[20] Similarly, Julian of Eclanum sees in Job's soliloquy in chapter 9—where "the earth is given into the hand of the wicked" (9:24)—as related to the hours before Christ's death, where "the passion of the Lord is predicted."[21] In their

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[18]Simonetti and Conti, xx.

[19]Pope Gregory I, *Morals on the Book of Job,* vol. 1 (London, Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), 26, *InternetArchive.org,* 31 December 2014, https://archive.org/ details/ moralsonbookofjo01greguoft/page/26/mode/2up/ (20 February 2023).

[20]Philip the Priest, *Commentary on the Book of Job 16* (PL 26:658–659); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 92; Philip the Priest, *Commentary on the Book of Job 17* (PL 26:661–662); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 96.

[21]Julian of Eclanum, *Exposition on the Book of Job 9:24* (CCL 88:28–29); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 54.

writings, the Fathers describe Job's seven days of silence, his flesh afflicted, his betrayal by his friends, and closeness to death, as prophetic of Christ's afflictions.[22] Isho'dad of Merv says Job sitting in exile on the ash heap was so God could "present him as a 'spectacle to the world,'" who would all believe when he was "resurrected" again.[23] Leslie Dossey reports both Pseudo-Origen and Pseudo-Chrysostom comparing Job, sitting outside his city, to Christ being flogged and set on a hill.[24]

Nor was this view of Job merely dogmatic. Dossey describes how fourth and fifth century churches used Job's trials pastorally, during Lent:

> The narrative of *Job's passion* [emphasis added] . . . was read aloud on days of fasting and abstinence, especially when the congregation was commemorating *Christ's passion* [emphasis added] . . . Bishops and priests would deliver sermons on Job, sometimes on successive days . . . discuss[ing] the book of Job line by line, and concentrat[ing] on the first three chapters.[25]

It is interesting that "Job's passion" was received as warm and relevant. Perhaps some communities in the past were able to "unfinalize" Job, and bring his individual suffering into practical, theodical conversation with their own troubles. Dossey recounts Pseudo-Origen, in particular, encouraging churches with the narrative of Job, to stand strong

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[22]Simonetti and Conti, xx–13.

[23]Isho'dad of Merv, *Commentary on Job 2:8* (CSCO 229:239); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 12.

[24]Leslie Dossey, "The Last Days of Vandal Africa: An Arian Commentary on Job and its Historical Context," *Journal of Theological Studies* 54, vol. 1 (April 2003): 64, *JSTOR Journals,* EBSCOhost (5 September 2021).

[25]Dossey, 67.

against persecution.[26] This is a unique example of Job's sufferings being dignified in the manner that contemporary anti-theodicists are concerned about.

It is also noteworthy that communion theodicy had this effect. In viewing Job's experience as a type of Passion Week, the church fathers created communion theodicy as a primary interpretation for the book of Job. Philip the Priest, for example, spotlights Job 17:16, where Job personifies "hope" and asks if it will go down to death's gates with him: "Will *we* go down *together* [emphasis added] into the dust?"[27] Believing that God, in Christ, identified with humanity while suffering for them on the cross, the Fathers believed God must have been suffering with Job also. This is not in the text; but Christ confesses the feeling of abandonment by His Father in the last moments of His passion (Matt 27:46). If Job was experiencing the same forsakenness, then his inability to detect God's presence while suffering might not preclude God being there in actuality. Even in the moment when Christ felt the farthest from the Father, the curse of sin was extinguished and everything was reconciled to God through Him (Col 1:20; c.f., Isa 53:11–12). So, Job's testimony might not convey the complete reality.

Furthermore, Chrysostom points to verses like Job 19:25–27 as evidence that Job did perceive some sort of communion. In Chrysostom's understanding, Job announces the advent of Christ (his redeemer who "will stand upon the earth," v. 25); then His judgment and resurrection (that after he dies, he will see God in new flesh, v. 26); and

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[26]Dossey, 121.

[27]Philip the Priest, *Commentary on the Book of Job 17* (PL 26:661–662); quoted in Simonetti and Conti, 96.

concludes, "How my heart yearns within me!" (v. 27).[28] This last statement suggests Job maintained a kind of prophetic hope in communion.

Ultimately, Job reconciles with God, and God reestablishes communion with him. Job then acts as a reconciling figure on behalf of his friends. Job's innocent sufferings were therefore "an anticipation of our Blessed Redeemer," states Gregory the Great.[29] They were not substitutionary, but they prefigured those to come that would reconcile God and humanity, and reestablish communion.

As suffering theology developed, the Catholic doctrine of redemptive suffering merged strongly with Job and communion theodicy. Redemptive suffering dissolves the essence of suffering as evil by teaching that Christ sanctified suffering: He used suffering to accomplish the holiest mission, the redemption of the world. In *Salvifici Doloris*, Pope John Paul II explains that suffering is now a sacred tool that continues to redeem the earth, with "divine pathos" linking Jesus with whatever suffering remains.[30] Interestingly, John Paul II uses Job as his key example of redemptive suffering. He describes how previous formulations of theodicy were inadequate to reveal "the why of suffering" that explains Job's tragedy.[31] Job presents a mystery to the world that the dogmas of

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[28]John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Job 19:25-26* (PTS 35:130-131); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 105–106.

[29]Gregory I, 27.

[30]Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, *Vatican.va,* 1984, 11–12, 19, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_ salvifici-doloris.html/ (19 September 2022).

[31]John Paul II, 9–10.

retribution, sovereignty, and moral reasoning have been "unable to penetrate," because he was "foretelling of the Passion of the Christ."[32] In Job's innocent suffering, John Paul II maintains, God prophesied how He intended to use the stigma of suffering to, ironically, accomplish salvation, the end of suffering.

It is wise, at this point, to pause and evaluate some of the aspects of this approach. To begin with, the church fathers are theological and speculative on certain matters. The cross is not in the text of Job, and empathic communion is hard to see, as mentioned. There is little evidence for a "suffering God" or redemption of all suffering. Yet, the forsakenness that both Job and Christ feel is an insightful touchpoint, and does raise the question whether God was truly absent. Also, the notion that God is permitting Job to suffer a type of passion to prepare the way for another passion to come, is suggestive. Does modern exegetical research validate a Messianic connection between Job and Christ? Could Christology illuminate any of the mysteries of Job's sufferings?

Job Reveals a Messianic Person

Some contemporary scholars align their perspective with that of the church fathers from the start. Andersen, for example, says that Job reveals the *via dolorosa* as the way to God,[33] and that "the passion of Job was an early sketch of the greatest Sufferer."[34] Ortlund, similarly, claims that "Job's agonies clearly prefigure those of that later Israelite

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[32]John Paul II, 11.

[33]Andersen, 187.

[34]Andersen, 188.

who would innocently suffer the wrath of God."[35] Overall, however, these statements are rare. This section will examine Messianic attributes in Job, Messianic roles, and the Messianic journey described in his narrative, to see if a connection can be demonstrated. Implications for communion theodicy will then follow.

Messianic Attributes

As this thesis has already demonstrated, the opening description of Job as "upright" and "blameless" (Job 1:1) has caused much confusion: how could he be, given the Fall, the curses that come, and his accusatory words? Nevertheless, Fyall observes, God describes Himself as "upright" in Deuteronomy 32:4. And, the sacrificial lamb is called "blameless" throughout Leviticus.[36] These words signal these connotations, and likely intended to, if the author was an Israelite leader such as Moses. Also, the term "My Servant," is used for Job four times in 1:8, 2:3, and 42:7–8. It is used over forty times to describe Moses, who suffered trials typical of the antichrist (Exod 7–12), and years of affliction in the wilderness. If these terms are applied consistently, they indicate Job's singular status as a pure and holy man, also tried harshly. Newsom's perception of Job's "vulnerability," "lack of autonomy,"[37] and "utter trust" that "makes no claims"[38] upon

[35]Ortlund, 185.

[36]Fyall, 35. E.g., Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6, 9; 4:3, 23, 28.

[37]Newsom, 65.

[38]Newsom, 70.

God, in Job 1–2, are striking parallels that suggest a worshipper like the Suffering Servant (Isa 53:7; Ps 39:1–2, 9–10) and the Messiah (Matt 26:62–63; Acts 8:32).

Additionally, Ash and C. J. Williams note the importance of Job as a priestly, intercessory figure in his home and community (Job 1:5; 29:11–17).[39] Ash observes that Job defines faith meaningfully, as loving God from the heart (Job 1:5).[40] Newsom praises Job's mature character and reputation.[41] Then the Lord appraises Job, saying "there is *no one on earth* [emphasis added] like him" (Job 1:8). According to Meeks, Julian of Antioch and John Chrysostom take this to mean that Job is like a saint.[42] But Ash maintains that there is something more significant about Job, to God and Satan: Job is the peak example of humanity, or "what Adam was meant to be."[43]

This is interpretive opinion, but Job does appear to be chosen as the utmost example of relationship with God. Job has a strong hedge of protection around his life in the spiritual realm (Job 1:10). This irks Satan to "consider" Job (1:8), or, as Albert Barnes says, "set his heart upon" him.[44] When Satan is given permission to test Job, Ash adds that God again appraises him as blameless (Job 2:3), saying the affliction was *hinnam,*

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[39]Ash 31–33; C. J. Williams, 60–62, 76.

[40]Ash, 31.

[41]Newsom, 54–60.

[42]Meeks, 28.

[43]Ash, 34.

[44]Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*, *BibleHub.org*, 2023, n.p., https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/job/1.htm/ (16 Jan 2023).

"for no reason."[45] Wright interprets this permission as Satan being given "free reign to vaunt himself on an innocent man."[46] Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch view Satan as receiving "license" from God, in Job 1:12, to steal, kill, and destroy in alignment with John 10:10.[47] In contrast to how much sin has been imported onto Job over centuries of interpretive history, the text indicates that he is not a normal man who needs to repent, or whose faith needs to be a little purer. As the Deuteronomic curses fall on him, his description bears an uncanny resemblance to a sacrificial offering.

The afflictions begin, and Ash and Wright detect a hint of Gethsemane in what happens to Job.[48] He loses everything in rapid succession. He finds himself alone with no one to comfort him, mourn with him, or even pray with him, while he is stricken (Job 1:13–14). His skin is smitten directly by the enemy (Job 2:9), which Ash likens to Jesus' thorns placed on His head by mockers.[49] Yancey and Newsom agree with the church fathers that Job appears as a "spectacle" on the hill of burnt cinders outside his city.[50] It is "unjust, [and] degrading," says Newsom, as if Job is somehow "an example to be

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[45]Ash, 50–51.

[46]Wright, 69.

[47]Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, BibleHub.org,* 2023, n.p., https://biblehub.com/commentaries/kad/job/1.htm/ (15 January 2023). Also Ash, 50.

[48]Ash, 63; Wright, 71, 74.

[49]Ash, 50.

[50]The same word is used in Yancey, "A Fresh Reading," 144 and Newsom, 6.

observed" as part of "the disagreement between God and *ha satan*."[51] The hill is a hellish place where he is physically exposed (Job 1:20–21) and disfigured enough that he is unrecognizable (Job 2:12). Like Christ and the Suffering Servant, Job appears to be divinely rejected. Ortlund claims it probably looked like God was getting ready to take Job's life.[52]

The Christological parallels persist as Job sits for seven days, fixed in a moment, like Matthew 27:46, where he believes God has forsaken him. His friends come, and from the curses in the Law that have befallen him (e.g., Lev 24:14–46; Deut 28; Prov 3:32–35), they assume Job is guilty of significant sin. Job implies his existing relatives are shunning him for this reason also (Job 19:13–19). Job's friends offer him gall in his pain, Pohl suggests, as they pry for the hidden sins that require repentance.[53] Ash concurs that the friends mean well, but mirror the Pharisees, and Peter, James, and John: the former accuse Christ of blasphemy, and the latter should have interceded in Job's hour of need.[54] Yet, "in all this Job did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). This approximates the description of Christ, that "no sin was found in His mouth" (1 Pet 2:22); and also, the Suffering Servant, who "was oppressed and afflicted but did not open his mouth" (Isa

[51]Newsom, 68, 69, 71.

[52]Ortlund, 20.

[53]Pohl, 357–370. He argues, counter to the friends, that Job's lament was not evidence of his blasphemy.

[54]Ash, 63–64, 153. Also Mears, 202; C. J. Williams, 43–44, 49–54.

53:7). Note that these interpretations of "lips" and "mouth" are positive. Unlike the Talmud,[55] they do not suggest superficiality or deeper sin hiding in Job's heart.

From a Christian standpoint, it does seem like Job's account shares many of what James M. Hamilton Jr. calls, "lexical points of contact," with Christ's character and passion.[56] But are there enough points to establish a typological link, or—more importantly—a theodical connection? More examination is needed.[57] Beyond Messianic attributes in his character, several Messianic roles Job demonstrates in his affliction will now be considered.

Messianic Roles

Holmén, who studies New Testament theodicy, lists Messianic roles which contribute to Christ's spiritual conquest of evil, Satan, and alienation from God.[58] Innocent wounding, vicarious suffering, and prophetic redemption are a few of those roles. If Job is truly speaking something about the passion, communion with God, and the conquest of evil, then roles like these should be discernible.

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[55]b. Bava Bathra 16a.

[56]James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022), 112.

[57]Hamilton, 114 for example, argues that parallels should also be seen in the sequence of events and "covenantal significance," when discerning a typological link. Geerhardus Vos affirms the importance of covenantal significance and maturation in his definition of typological outworking, in Geerhardus Vos, "The Nature and Aims of Biblical Theology," *The Union Seminary Magazine* 13, no. 3 (February–March 1902): 194–199. *Biblicaltheology.org*, http://www.biblicaltheology.org/nabt.pdf/ (30 October 2023).

[58]Holmén, "Theodicean Motifs," 612–614.

The Wounded One

Concerning Eliphaz's comment that God's hands wound and bind up (Job 5:17–18), Newsom argues that Job's "wounding" in his flesh becomes the representative symbol of his entire relationship with God.[59] Yosefa Raz similarly discusses how Job's wounding "becomes the lens through which we see God in the text."[60] She argues that the God of Job reveals Himself as "Supreme Wounder," who is interested in displaying His "divine warrior" power over "the frail, mortal human body."[61] While both she and Newsom express repugnance over this, they inadvertently draw attention to key Christological elements which suggest the passion message is intentional in Job.

To begin with, Raz situates Job in the context of Torah and Yahweh's desire to represent His divine reality through sacrificial bodies.[62] Elaine Scarry agrees with this assessment and adds that the New Testament continues this "rhythmic return to the scene of healing," as its source of God's divine power—except located in a real human body (of Jesus) rather than animals.[63] Raz probes Job 13:26–27 in particular, which she translates: "For you write on me bitterness . . . Put my foot in fetters . . . Engrave yourself on the soles of my feet." Her conclusion is that God, for an unknown reason, wants to

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[59]Newsom, 134.

[60]Yosefa Raz, "Reading Pain in the Book of Job," in *The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics, Hermeneutics*, ed. Leora Batnitzky and Ilana Pardes (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 78, ProQuest E-book Central.

[61]Raz, 78, 85.

[62]Raz, 81.

[63]Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 184.

communicate Himself pinning Job down, then "writing and engraving on Job, turning his skin into text."[64] In Job 19:26, Raz adds that God wants the reader to imagine that after Job's skin is stripped apart, then God will be seen.[65] Newsom struggles over a similar point, that Job's "body silently witnesses to the truth" that God has abused him. She imagines Job as a resistor within a totalitarian world, where no one believes that God has hurt him, but his body on display "lays out the scandal for all to see."[66] Because so much of the book is a discourse by a man in great pain, Newsom and Raz see this as morally incomprehensible, even bullying.[67] Why would God want to capture this pain? Why would He want any reader to dwell on it, or enter into it?

From a Christian perspective, the interpretive key that makes sense of these observations is the atonement of Christ. Christ's divine power is continually connected to what His "frail, mortal human body" underwent. His body was crucified and resurrected as a very physical testimony that others were to observe, identify with, and—as Scarry poetically describes—rhythmically return to, as the scene of healing.[68] Additionally, Galatians 5:11 refers to the "offense" or "scandal"[69] of the cross, because the stigma of

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[64]Raz, 91.

[65]Raz, 90.

[66]Newsom, 168.

[67]Newsom, 134; Raz, 79.

[68]Scarry, 184.

[69]James Strong, "σκάνδαλον," *New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, *Biblehub.org*, 2023, n.p., https://biblehub.com/greek/strongs_4625.htm/ (20 February 2023).

crucifixion was a sign of guilt and rejection by God and society. Holmén describes it as "defending the undefendable," for early followers of Christ, because it portrayed Him as unrighteous and powerless.[70] The atonement explains the thematic constancy of sacrifice and scourging that Raz and Scarry observe in the Old Testament. It also illuminates why pain is central to the new reality of Job, even to the extent it disfigures him and his skin. Christ would also experience this. His living body is portrayed as the Word made flesh (John 1:14). And, He was pinned down and pierced, to permit God to be seen (John 19:34–37; 20:25–29).

Christ's atonement also sheds light on Raz and Newsom's concern about the victimization of Job's body, its objectification, and God's appropriation of it in His disagreement with Satan. In particular, the events of the Passion Week (e.g., Matt 21–27) reflect a peculiar conflation of God's and Satan's hands, as well as a distinction between them, and exchange that Job 1–2 describes. In multiple places, Christ's body can be seen as at the mercy of both satanic forces and His Father's will, in order for the atonement to be accomplished. As one example, Judas and the chief priests are moved by Satan to corner Christ (Luke 22:3–5; John 13:2). But, the Father sovereignly permits, and Jesus willingly invites, His own arrest and death (Matt 26:39–56; John 13:27; 19:11). Throughout Christ's entire life there is a sense of both God's providence and Satan's maneuvering. But especially within the passion narrative, God's sovereign permission and Satan's adversarial activity can be sensed as forces combine—for opposite reasons—to have Jesus convicted, deserted, and wounded.[71]

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[70]Holmén, "Theodicean Motifs," 611.

This enmeshment is prominent in Job's testing also, but appears mysterious, even inexplicable, as it unfolds. The initiating party of Job's test is unclear (Job 1:6–9). God and Satan actually appear to be co-initiators, if the arguments for each of them are compiled. The agency involved in the Lord's hand versus Satan's hand (Job 1:11–12; 2:5–6) raises questions, rather than answers them. Raz struggles with this, in Job 10:8, where she asks how God could make Job with His own hands, but then turn around and destroy him.[72] These elements find illumination in the Messiah, whose miraculously begotten flesh was precious, but desecrated by the enemy (Matt 26:66–68) with the Lord's sovereign permission (Matt 26:53–54; John 19:10–11).

Thus the weakness of Job, in the flesh, permits Satan's attack on him to become the ultimate redemptive prophecy. If Christ is not accepted as the fulfillment of this prophecy, then another option could be the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, a priestly Jewish Messiah to come, or a restored Israel. But none of these options quite clarify the unique elements that Newsom, Raz, and Scarry pinpoint in Job. In the next section, another Messianic role will be examined that relates to Job's physical affliction.

Vicarious Sufferer

A related Messianic role Job appears to typologically demonstrate is that of vicarious sufferer. Holmén defines vicarious suffering as an acceptance of pain or penalty on behalf of others, to connect them to God, bring them to a higher place, often without their knowing. Christ, explains Holmén, hands Himself over to Satan to suffer publicly

[72]Raz, 92.

on behalf of others' sins. He does so as the "last Adam," or representative head of all humanity (Rom 5:14–15, 1 Cor 15:45). He receives God's curse onto His body as a vicarious punishment (Gal 3:13). And, He does so innocently, at the cost of death, to bring people to a place of holy communion with God (2 Cor 5:21). Holmén concludes that Christ was chosen by God, rejected by people, and betrayed by friends, to play this vicarious suffering role.[73]

The opening chapters of Job indicate this is true of him, to some degree. Job does not voluntarily hand himself over to God for this role, as Christ does. But, Corey argues that Job is "nominated"[74] by God, to be handed over. Yancey says Job is "selected,"[75] and Mears uses the word "assigned,"[76] for this purpose. Job therefore does receive a divine test as representative of others, and some scholars have argued it is vicarious, in place of them. Paul Ricœur, for example, argues that Job inaugurates the biblical motif of "the suffering Just One," who suffers on behalf of humanity within the "tribunal" of history, where law and penalties bind humankind to God. Ricœur claims that comparative Joban myths in the ANE share this theme, but the Old Testament develops it uniquely, in view of Adam's fall and the "penal character" that "the whole of human experience assumes." For Ricœur, Job is the vicarious one nominated to suffer, publicly, to "record" the

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[73]Holmén, "Theodicean Motifs," 612, 614.

[74]Corey, 127.

[75]Yancey, "A Fresh Reading," 142.

[76]Mears, 204.

"shattering" of the Law's appropriateness in mediating divine-human harmony.[77] Ricœur thus situates Job similarly to Newsom and Tsevat: as the chosen casualty obsoleting retributive theology and the premodern view of the world as moral, just, and provident. Job brings justice to humanity through his suffering, like Christ, but by defying the logic of atonement rather than fulfilling it.

Batnitzky and Slavoj Zizek connect Job and Christ, as vicarious sufferers, more cynically to question pious devotion to God altogether. Batnitzky echoes Raz's concern, that the God of Job is an "inscrutable terror," who must pacify His own wrath through chastisement and sacrifice.[78] Job prefigures Jesus in this way, with Jesus' completely innocent suffering finalizing the "rupture" Job initiated, between retribution and relationship.[79] Zizek concurs, claiming: "What Job suddenly understood, was that it was not him, but God Himself, who was actually on trial. . . . Job foresaw God's own future suffering—'Today it's me, tomorrow it will be your own son, and there will be no one to intercede for him. What you see in me now is the prefiguration of your own Passion!'"[80] Slavoj interprets this irreverently, to mean that God's own system of vicarious suffering will condemn Him, when the injustice prophesied by Job's plight is fulfilled in Jesus.

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[77]Paul Ricœur, *Symbolism as Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 314, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Symbolism_of_Evil/4LeEAxkcEAMC?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (15 April 2023).

[78]Batnitzky, 215.

[79]Batnitzky, 214.

[80]Slavoj Zizek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 126-127, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/TL74DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (15 April 2023).

These interpretations, coming from scholars disinclined to gospel commitment, suggest that Messianic parallels between Job and Christ are visible when traditional theological constraints are loosened to see a bigger picture. Less cynically, René Girard endorses Job as a type of vicarious sufferer in the role of "scapegoat," or an innocent party who absorbs the wrath of his community.[81] Girard argues that "Job foretells Christ" by suffering undeservedly[82] and by facing a community that unites against him, to "stifle his cries" and "erase his words" from reaching God. In 16:18, for example, Job cries out, "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry for help never be laid to rest."[83] Girard likens this to a chain of biblical mentions beginning with Abel's blood, that cries out to Yahweh from the ground, and progresses through Christ's blood, that is also unjustly spilled.[84] The vicarious suffering in this view is more about victimhood than atonement: an ideal, substitute sufferer whose persecution moves God from any wrath He might have had, towards vindication. [85] But, this Messianic trait is also visible in both Job and Christ. The following section will consider Job as partially realizing one more Messianic role: that of prophetic redeemer.

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[81]René Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 4, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Job/34Q_rCMLIVgC?hl=en&gbpv=1/ (15 April 2023).

[82]Girard, *Job*, 166.

[83]Girard, *Job*, 7.

[84]René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, transl. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (New York: Continuum, 2003), 145–155, GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Things_Hidden_Since_the_Foundation_of_th/LVHUAwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0/ (15 April 2023).

[85]Girard, *Job*, 6–7.

Prophetic Redeemer

Holmén lists other Christological attributes which lend evidence to Job foreshadowing a Messianic person who will extinguish evil's existence and assert God's goodness and sovereignty as King. Some of these include: demonstrating the power of forgiveness, obtaining deliverance from evil, ushering in a new way of seeing God, and renewing covenant benefits to those around them.[86] These are all functions of a prophetic redeemer who goes before others to connect them to God.

Hamilton validates that God moves His redemptive story forward through prophetic redeemers and righteous messengers. These chosen ones carry an important message from the Lord, but are not always recognized. In fact, they may be completely rejected by them, kindling the wrath of God.[87] Moses, for example, is rejected as Israel's prophetic leader even though he was sent, specifically, as their deliverer (Exod 14:11, 1 Cor 10:9–10). Noah is another example of a rejected messenger, whom Job is compared to in Ezekiel 14:14–20. Holmén affirms that the righteous do not seem to recognize their messengers, which can be confusing in their lifetime, and ironic in hindsight.[88] To this, Hamilton adds that prophetic redeemers may be victimized by God's own law being used against them.[89] Yet, despite their rejection, God prophetically works deliverance through them and brings people into new circumstances where they see God better. They may

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[86]Holmén, "Theodicean Motifs," 612–614.

[87]Hamilton, 214–215.

[88]Holmén, "Theodicean Motifs," 613, 627.

[89]Hamilton, 214.

have a sanctified knowledge of God—as Israel acquired under Moses—or receive forgiveness or benefits under that leader, such as the Promised Land.[90]

Job meets at least some of these criteria in basic form. By 42:1–6, Job appears to have received and understood the prophetic message God was giving him. He expresses a new way of seeing God (Job 42:5), a new revelation of His plan or design (Job 42:1), and enters a state of restoration after extending forgiveness and mediating God's wrath (Job 42:8). This demonstrates the power and importance of forgiveness, as well as God's desire for reconciliation between Himself and brethren. The miraculous restoration of Job is also an incredible testimony. Walton claims that God's policy of blessing the righteous is successfully defended by Job.[91] And, there is a sense of covenant restoration and expansion over Job's household and lands, with him in a leadership role that was greater than his first (Job 42:10–17; c.f., Job 1:3; 29:2–25).

Theodicy notwithstanding, the knowledge and power of God's forgiveness, deliverance, and covenant blessing presumably increased not just in Job's life, but in all those around him. He therefore resembles a prophetic redeemer who was righteous, and carried an important message for God's message. This may be why he is likened to "one of the prophets of old" in James 5:10–11. Job is not a prophetic book; but, the final chapter functions as a prophecy that testifies to both the reader, and those on the earth at that time, about "the outcome from the Lord" (Jas 5:11) that results from persevering.

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[90]Hamilton, 220.

[91]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 341.

The fact that Messianic roles and attributes are visible in Job does not prove he prefigures Christ. Nor do they delete Job's significance in his own right. But, they do suggest something theodical is going on that has to do with God's redemptive plan. Instead of Job's testimony standing on its own—as an individual lament psalm, for example, or a counseling anti-theodicy—Messianic attributes and roles signal that something significant is happening which Christ's nature may enlighten at those points of correspondence. Before closing this subject, and moving towards implications for communion theodicy, similarities between Christ's Messianic journey and Job's journey will be noted.

A Messianic Journey

In chapter 2, the section on retributive theodicy featured Corey's central idea that Job's journey is intimately connected with the Suffering Servant's journey in Isaiah 52–53. Corey describes Job entering the chastisement trajectory and descending into affliction to be "forged" in the "iron furnace."[92] Afterwards, Job resurfaces as a holy priest, prepared, empowered, and submitted to God's mission.

C. J. Williams proposes a Christological version of Corey's original analysis: that Job is following the path of the Suffering Servant, into "the Messianic trajectory," of descending into death and ascending back out of it.[93] He describes the first step, descension, as "the experience of being cast down from an established position to the

[92]Corey, 128.

[93]C. J. Williams, 16.

depths of undeserved humiliation, then to be exalted by the hand of God to a place of higher honor than the beginning."[94] C. J. Williams has Christ in mind, but explores the life of Joseph as a template for this Messianic journey. Others like Noah, Daniel, and Jonah also fit this paradigm of descension and ascension. Job, for his part, begins in glory as "the greatest in the East" (1:3) and with "no one on earth like him" (1:8). He is rich, blameless, and favored by God. Then, he is cast down to the pit until, as C. J. Williams concludes, "he literally had nothing left to lose but his life."[95] His family and legacy are taken away; his bride turns on him; his property is destroyed; and his reputation as a great, wise, and respectable man ceases. Spiritual confusion brings Job to the brink of hellish torment and despair, where he cannot figure out why God did not take his life completely (Job 3:20–23; 6:8–9), why any of it happened (Job 7:19–21; 9:2–17), and if it will ever end (Job 7:1–4; 9:20–22; 14:13). In this, Ash says that Job is brought to feel "the sting of the gates of hell and death" that Christ will also face.[96] Ortlund agrees that God permits Satan to "bring Job as close to the grave as possible."[97]

In these ways, Job mimics Christ, who starts in glory with the Father. Christ has royal blood, priestly lineage, and fellowship. But, He leaves it all to come down to earth, and be rejected, accused, betrayed, and arrested as a blasphemer (Phil 2:4–8). He then is baptized into death, prophesying His descent into the earth (Luke 12:50, Rom 6:3–4).

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[94]C. J. Williams, 17.

[95]C. J. Williams, 21.

[96]Ash, 383.

[97]Ortlund, 19.

Christ drinks the cup and descends lower into death, through the torments of the passion (Mark 10:38–39). He descends lower still, through crucifixion, death, and burial, all the way until He reaches the locked doors of the grave (Eph 4:8–9; c.f., Ps 68:18; Rev 1:18).

Like Jesus, Job goes right into "the belly of the whale" (Luke 11:29–30). At rock bottom, however, Job cries out in anger and despair, for deliverance. He demands that God answer him, swearing his undeservedness even if Adam's curse, death, falls upon him (Job 31:33). Then, as quickly as he was thrown into the pit, Yahweh's deliverance from the pit occurs. Just like Joseph's promotion (Gen 41:1–45), in rapid succession, Yahweh speaks, corrects, and humbles everyone involved, including Job. Yahweh then exalts Job, vindicating him and his righteousness (Job 42:7–8). From this ascended place, Job immediately forgives and intercedes for his friends. He is healed and restored by Yahweh personally, and physically. From Job's abundant life, more glorious than before, it could be inferred that Yahweh rebuked the enemy off of him. Job lives as a new head, over a new era, for four generations (Job 42:16).

C. J. Williams connects all of this typologically to the resurrected ministry of Jesus, who also cried out for His Father and His justice when pressed, but purely.[98] Like Job, Christ forgives those around him, including the thief on the cross and Peter who betrayed Him. He binds evil (Matt 12:29), triumphs over powers and principalities (Col 2:15), and is publicly justified by God, who pulls Him out of the grave (Acts 2:24, Rom 8:11). In the role of mediator and intercessor of His friends (Heb 7:25), Christ ascends to govern the Kingdom given to Him, through successive generations.

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[98]C. J. Williams, 22–23, 42.

Paul describes this Messianic trajectory in Ephesians 4:9–10: "What does 'He ascended' mean, except that He also descended to the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the very One who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things." Thus, the connection between Job and Christ—as described by Paul, Isaiah 53, Corey, and C. J. Williams—is a blameless one going low, confronting the pit, and being accepted by God. Afterwards, justification leads to a resurrected life and a Messianic kingdom with lifegiving characteristics.

It is perhaps fitting that Newsom, from an Old Testament perspective, describes Job as illustrating "the schema of departure and return to life."[99] From a Christian perspective, Job as a mere man passes through a shadow of the Messiah's path. Though he draws nears to the gates of Sheol (Job 10:21–22; 17:16), tasting its terrors, Yahweh tells him outright in 38:17 that those gates have not been "opened" to him. He implies Job has not penetrated the grave, nor knows it, but One who knows its secrets will. Job does not die because God forbids that pathway (Job 2:6) from all except the anointed Wounded One, Vicarious Sufferer, and Prophetic Redeemer who can walk it. Job cannot ransom the dead, nor the promises being held captive by death. But like Joseph or Jonah, he very much appears to be a type, prophesying the path that the Messiah will take to do so. In this context, he is walking a road of suffering that prophetically leads to communion. There is therefore warrant for reexamining whether a case can be made for communion theodicy, theologically, in the book of Job.

[99]Newsom, 59.

Implications for Communion Theodicy

Pointing out similarities between Job and Christ does not prove that Job is a type of Christ, nor the notion as critical to theodicy. Derek Thomas, for example, argues that Job is not typical of the Messiah, but simply "one in a long line of godly souls who are called upon to suffer in this world as a result of satanic abuse."[100] Others argue that because Job is parabolic, and not historical, then any correspondence with Christ has little meaning. The "lexical points of contact," as Hamilton calls them, are interesting but merely literary motifs: the exile on a hill, the wounded skin, the friends who condemn him with the law. These sorts of links could be discernible in almost any biblical book.[101] There are also considerable hermeneutical and theological concerns about using Job to confirm Christ as Messiah, or prooftext Christian doctrine, which are valid and will be examined in the last chapter of this thesis.

On the other hand, ignoring a typological connection that exists may cause interpretive blockage. And, the classical approach to Job indicates some kind of blockage exists. Theodicy in Job has fostered a labyrinthian discourse because overlays must be suggested to fill in the interpretive gaps in the text. But, if Job is typological of Christ, or foreshadowing His passion, then theodicy cannot be discerned without this as a guide to those interpretive gaps. Even though the book of Job can be appreciated on its own, theodicy derived from only a partial picture will itself be incomplete.

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[100]Derek Thomas, *Job: The Storm Breaks,* Welwyn Commentary Series (Welwyn Garden City, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994), 139. It should be noted that this thought contains its own theodicy.

[101]Hamilton, 112.

Specifically, ignoring a Messianic connection affects theodical interpretation because Messianic deliverance is itself a theodical response to the problem of evil. Messianic deliverance addresses why evil exists, how God feels about it, and what He is doing about it. These questions all arise within minutes of reading the first chapters of Job, so some kind of pre-commitment must be made to decipher the incoming narrative. If that pre-commitment is deciphering the problem of evil without reference to Messianic deliverance, then this will yield non-Messianic paradigms that are drastically different from Messianic ones. This chapter is examining communion and eschatological theodicy with this premise in mind. These two paradigms are not distinctly Christological, but are greatly informed by New Testament notions of God's presence and rescue through Christ. Precritical interpreters, including the church fathers, naturally applied these lenses to the book of Job, albeit imperfectly. Yet, if a reactionary response is taken, which wipes away all Messianic pieces a priori, then this coerces theodical interpretation down pathways Job's narrative may not have been designed to go.

God Communing With Job

Regarding communion theodicy specifically, if Job's sufferings are prefiguring Christ's passion, then some kind of communion theodicy is likely in play, even if it is limited. Job certainly witnesses the need for strong divine-human relationship, and the need for God to be perceived as with people, and people with Him. Put a different way, in order to endure, communion is the strategy; Job shows that suffering is unbearable without it. In the Christian faith, communion with God through the peace of the cross is actually God's primary strategy in confronting evil's existence (John 17:15, 20–25; 2 Cor

5:18–20). Likewise, Colossians 1:17–22 indicates that alienation from God, and the need for reconciliation and indwelling, is His explanation for why evil even exists. In view of this, if Job is typical of Christ, then this may inform the message of his sufferings.

At the same time, Andersen warns about importing the doctrine of redemptive suffering into the book because Job does not experience the requisite empathy with God while he suffers.[102] Job is not atoning for sin, nor receiving in himself the chastisement of God for the world, as Christ did (Isa 53:6; 1 Pet 2:24). Importantly, it is the divine flesh of Christ, and the incarnation of divinity within Him, that permits co-suffering to be a theodical possibility in Christ's afflictions. Because God fully indwelt Jesus (Col 1:19), it can be argued that the Father suffered with the Son. And, because the Son is God (John 1:13–14), He therefore suffered as God. This brings suffering into God's purposes, rather than it being a stigma He is divorced from—which may be the theological point the book of Job is introducing. However, God being "a suffering God" in Job, the way that Moltmann describes it post-incarnationally;[103] or God suffering within Job as he suffered, as John Paul II perceives Him,[104] may be a step beyond the text. The nuance may be: that despite Job's inability to experience Yahweh with him in his pain, Yahweh—from His own vantage point—is with Job and advocating for him.[105] Communion is only partly

[102]Andersen, 186.

[103]Moltmann, xiv–xv, 277–278.

[104]John Paul II, 9–10.

[105]On this point, Fyall, 42–44 argues that Yahweh is the advocate Job longs for (Job 16:19), and is advocating for him in the face of Satan's ongoing test.

realized. Green, however, speaks of "collaboration" as part of communion theodicy,[106] which could be a better schema. Rather than God communing with Job, it may be that communion theodicy is an option because God is prophesying something through Job, about bringing Himself and humanity closer. Some further remarks on this follow.

Communion Through Job

Communion theodicy's prerogative is to demonstrate that God is not impassible, and that He desires to aid, commune, and identify with humanity. This is detectable in the book of Job, in shadow form, because Job remains endeared to God as His servant from beginning to end (Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7, 8). His journey in between is difficult, but Christ's passion helps make sense of this. It should be recalled that Newsom describes Job as a "spectacle" and "example to be observed" in the disagreement between God and Satan.[107] In her view, it is as though God or Satan desire onlookers to get a "voyeuristic" look at this "instrument" who is caught in the middle of their conflict. She adopts a cynical interpretation here, but perceives that God is using Job as a mouthpiece. She says, "Job is not simply the hero whose character is tried, but the vehicle through whom the [theological] resolution . . . will be accomplished."[108] In this, Newsom makes room for purpose in Job's testing, and something that all people will know or achieve from God proclaiming it. Maimonides argues similarly, that the knowledge gained from God's

[106]Green, 434.

[107]Newsom, 68.

[108]Newsom, 56.

righteous ones being tested is not for them, but for the nations and those who do not know.[109]

In a sense, then, a sign of Job goes out which indicates there is a "who" involved in confronting the problem of evil. Job suggests that a man, who is loved, innocent, and who serves God and humanity well, will suffer unjustly. He will be humiliated, misunderstood, rejected, and wounded. Yet, when he is brought down to death, as an offering, he will be accepted by God. Then, God's true nature will be seen. Vindication releases God's goodness, sovereignty, and dominion to begin to overcome evil. This is a Messianic, deliverance-based theodicy. It is also clearly Christological. Morriston describes Job's friends reasoning it was impossible for God to "destroy a righteous person."[110] It just could not be that "God sometimes has good reasons for making the innocent suffer."[111] The retributive, educative, and mysterious views of theodicy do not adequately resolve this dilemma, but communion theodicy informed by Christology offers a compelling interpretation.

To the world, Job appears as a sign or enigma related to innocent retribution and chastisement. He appears to feel and suffer, in his flesh, something which approximates what Jesus would have suffered, had He no divine power or knowledge to overcome. Connected by the Suffering Servant prophecy, their pressing is similar (e.g., Isa 53:10), but Job has no mind of Christ nor indwelling Holy Spirit to help him. Unenlightened and

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[109]Maimonides, 304.

[110]Morriston, 340.

[111]Morriston, 345.

unempowered, he is confronted with the grave, as Philip the Priest says, and so he grieves.[112] He is supposed to defend both God and his innocence, says Viberg,[113] but can only do the latter because he believes God has turned on him.

Job's heart and flesh fail him when they are pressed, but the faith that was fixed on God prior to his tribulation is still visible. Tsevat claims, "Again and again [Job] wants the encounter, longs to see God." It is his "innermost and strongest hope," making Job "the most striking case in the Bible of a man so strongly asserting himself against God while yet remaining so loyal to Him."[114] Job's faith and fixation on God is, admittedly, inverted by despair. Yet, Yahweh knows Job is only flesh. He knows that Job cannot achieve the divine, and cannot know what the test signifies; so, he cannot be punished as though he does. Belcher affirms, Job cannot be prosecuted for not loving God when God is all he wants, even more than his life or health returned.[115] Walton agrees, arguing that Job's fixation on God and his integrity proves his former blessing meant nothing, in comparison to his righteousness.[116] Hence, Job falls short in one way; but in an important way, he also does not. Recognizing a partly realized role of vicarious sufferer, could help navigate confusion arising from the text on this issue.

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[112]Philip the Priest, *Commentary on the Book of Job 17* (PL 26:661–662); quoted in Simonetti and Conti, 96.

[113]Viberg, 203. Also Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 338.

[114]Tsevat, 193, 195.

[115]Belcher, 370.

[116]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 337–338.

Messianic or Universal Application?

Additionally, if Job is "anticipating the Redeemer in His passion," as Pope Gregory I says, then his trial is not primarily humanity's trial.[117] He is suffering uniquely, to reveal a coming passion that is Messianic. Ortlund describes the book of Job as a limited theodicy in that it explains why Job suffers but not everyone else. He continues, "No reader [should] finish the book of Job expecting to be granted their own version of Job 1–2."[118] Yet, people do. On the whole, interpreters side with Raz, that Job is an "everyman" whose life lesson represents the average divine-human relationship.[119] Ash, Clines, and Newsom allow that Job is a peculiar example, illustrating something outlying in Israelite theology. But even they create theodicies from Job's narrative that are immediately applicable to readers.[120]

In this, whether Job is seen as peculiarly Messianic or universal makes a great difference. His experience of suffering and abandonment by God is naturally relatable because he is human, and humanity is united by the common experience of suffering and alienation. But, the universal ability to relate to Job's suffering does not mean its explanation and application must be universal. Practical application changes if Job is understood as primarily Messianic, and prophetic. Job's experience was sudden, innocent, cruel, and premeditated, to an alarming degree. C. J. Williams argues it is

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[117]Gregory I, 27.

[118]Ortlund, 179. Chong, n.p. and Andersen, 187 agree.

[119]Raz, 78.

[120]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 129; Ash, 32; Newsom, 51, 68.

undeniably "extreme." Job is not progressively sanctified, over a lifetime or a season. Rather, he is "divinely moved," "directly and purposefully," from the "outermost limits" of blessing, to those of suffering, and back again. This fits with the Messiah's test being extreme and "beyond the limits of human experience."[121] It does not portend a level of extreme testing as the template or divine will for everyone.

Correspondingly, the right kind of distinction between Job and the reader must occur before applying any theodicy. As when reading the Prophets or the Gospels, readers must continuously make the right kind of distinctions between themselves and Christ, or themselves and Daniel, for example. There are meant to be touchpoints and continuities, but there are also significant discontinuities. Calvin's central lesson from Job, arguably, minimizes discontinuity. It is recalled that he opened *Sermons on Job* with the assertion that people's lives are in God's hands "to order . . . and to dispose of . . . according to His good pleasure" because "we be altogether His, both to live and to die." And if He raises "His hand against us, though we may not perceive for what cause He does it, nevertheless we should . . . not murmur against Him . . . knowing that if we struggle against Him we shall be conquered."[122] This application assumes questionable continuity, in that: if Job is typological of Christ, God is revealing afflictions He has in mind for the Messiah—a divine and sinless sufferer who will take on substitutionary retribution and chastisement, to reveal the mysteries of God. This suffering will uniquely permit the world to be redeemed, while binding Satan.

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[121]C. J. Williams, 21–22.

[122]Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, 3.

These afflictions may therefore not be universalizable to every trial and circumstance. God may not be intending all sufferers to contain their emotions, as Calvin exhorts, and patiently endure Job-like destruction in order to obtain eschatological hope.[123] This does not forbid that sometimes trials should be faced precisely this way. But, as anti-theodicists like Sollereder argue, individual sufferers must make that decision.[124] And, the Holy Spirit aids that decision (Rom 8:25–26). It is presumptuous to use Job to promote a theology of evil and suffering that universalizes random, immoral, and satanic evil as God's permitted or premeditated discipline, to suffer through silently and alone. A much deeper analysis should be performed before reaching this conclusion. With this caveat in mind, a conclusion of communion theodicy in Job is offered.

Conclusion to Communion Theodicy

The material in this chapter has so far presented evidence for Job experiencing a type of Christ's passion and Messianic suffering. While the distinctions between Job and Christ should be appreciated, and the latter should not subsume the former, textual examination of their attributes, role, and journey suggests a typological link between the two. There is therefore room to explore a limited communion theodicy hypothesis in Job, with his and Christ's narratives illuminating one another, on the idea of divine-human communion being central to the problem of evil. The next section will explore a final Old

[123]Calvin, *Sermons in Job*, 72–75, 262–263.

[124]Sollereder, 392. Pinnock suggests something similar, 142–143.

Testament schema for theodicy, to see if it can add anything more to this discussion and approach to Job.

Proleptic Theodicy in Job

The previous section highlighted how Green defines communion theodicy as an opportunity for "collaboration" with God, in addition to personal connection.[125] This idea of God communing with Job to "collaborate" with him is interesting because it suggests that something constructive results from Job's testing and endurance. This part of the chapter will explore that possibility. It will assess a particular form of eschatological theodicy—proleptic theodicy—to examine whether there anything is gained at the end of Job's test that satisfyingly addresses why God accepted Satan's challenge, rather than rejecting it. Does Job's suffering only suggest a typological connection to Christ's passion, or is there something more?

Importantly, proleptic theodicy avoids greater good reasoning and, instead, considers whether God advances something eschatological through Satan's case against Job. As in the previous section, this thesis will survey a variety of contemporary and traditional sources. In particular, it will examine what these sources say about the legal metaphor running through Job, and the motif of courtroom, testimony, and verdict. The hope is that these findings will be compatible with what communion theodicy offers, and elucidate some mysteries of the text even further. To situate this exploration, the definition and development of proleptic theodicy will first be discussed.

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[125]Green, 434.

Definition and Development

Proleptic theodicy is a specific form of eschatological theodicy, which requires definition also. Eschatological theodicy, according to Laato and de Moor, holds that earthly life exhibits temporary injustice for God's covenant followers; but, this injustice will be righted in the age to come.[126] Green explains that the eschaton will be "a future balancing of moral accounts," so that whatever is unjust in the present age will be more than compensated for in a new reign of God on the earth.[127]

To this end, the final chapter of Job suggests he enters some form of eschatological state. Job is given 140 more years. He lives reconciled to God and his friends, with more blessing, protection, and prosperity than he had before (Job 42:10–12). Dahl claims this ending is likely a representation of the eternal age to come. Things are made right, new life has returned to Job, and he has been understood by God; Yahweh cannot help him "go back," but He can help him "move on."[128] Gregory the Great and Philip the Priest interpret this era to be the Gentile age.[129] Corey suggests it is the final

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[126]Laato and de Moor, xlii.

[127]Green, 435.

[128]Dahl, 83.

[129]Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job 35:35* (CCL 143b: 1797); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 221; Philip the Priest, *Commentary on the Book of Job 42* (PL 26:798–799); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 221.

millennial kingdom.[130] Regardless of what phase it may represent, Job lives a second life of covenant blessing to restore what was unjustly destroyed. The situation implies rest, inheritance, and erasure of sorrows, which strongly suggests an anticipated afterlife.

In this regard, it is surprising that the classical approach to theodicy in Job has not emphasized eschatological theodicy as a primary interpretive option. The reason for this is not completely clear. But Laato and de Moor suggest it may have to do with diverse views of the resurrection and apocalyptic hope in Israelite theology, especially prior to Christ's advent.[131] This would explain List's observation that the Testament of Job, Apocalypse of Paul, and Apostolic Constitutions and Canons all interpret Job as about resurrection hope; yet, this schema did not catch on.[132]

Another explanation is that eschatological happiness may be too simplistic of a conclusion. The idea that "in the end, all will be made right" may not be complex enough, or ambiguous enough, to satisfactorily resolve Job's tragedy. It does not solve the literary or theological conflict of why God allowed Satan to test Job. Nor does it provide any specific hope or navigational guide for this life; it may even suggest death is preferrable. For these reasons, Clines has suggested that Job 42 is "cheap" and "unsophisticated."[133] Readers who become invested in the injustice of Job's tragedy, and

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[130]Corey, 127.

[131]Laato and de Moor, xli–xlv.

[132]List, 2–3.

[133]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 126.

the depths of his despair, expect a theodicy that resolves his conflict and explains God's purposes behind it.[134] Additionally, the ending is not about Job's death and heavenly reward, but a second life prior to death. This complicates the interpretation. Thus, while both Jewish and Christian faiths accept that the afterlife, or age to come, morally resolves the pains of earthly life, eschatological theodicy may still be too much of an evasion for the complexity of the issue in Job.

Proleptic theodicy, as a subcategory of eschatological theodicy, is therefore an even less-developed option for theodicy in the book of Job. Proleptic theodicy is the view that God's eschatological reign is being anticipated, or entered into, by its participants. Charlesworth describes it as God beginning to fulfill His eschatological plans and promises in the present, despite how things appear.[135] In history, two Hebrew communities that believed in proleptic theodicy also influenced Joban interpretation. The first were the Qumranians who lived outside Jerusalem prior to Jesus' advent. Charlesworth describes this community as "suffering but celebrating in exile," because they believed they had entered the Last Days and were anticipating the Messiah's arrival.[136] Their apocalyptic literature featured them as "sons of light,"[137] with Yahweh

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[134]Tsevat argues that this is not just imposed by the modern reader, but the poetic narrator crafts the book this way, towards this climactic hope.

[135]Charlesworth, 472.

[136]Charlesworth, 478–483. Also George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 59.

[137]*The Community Rule (1 QS)*, translated by Geza Vermes, *Upenn.edu,* n.d., n.p., http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/other/courses/rels/225/Texts/1QS/ (20 March 2023). Verses 1:9-10, 3:13, 3:25.

inbreaking among them as a "divine warrior," putting everything right, and ushering in a glorious, redemptive reign.[138] This worldview influenced pseudepigraphal works about Job, as well as the Job as "wrestler" interpretations mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis. The theodical purpose of Job was practical and devotional: not to explain the problem of evil, but to invite readers into the eschatological solution for it, with Yahweh.

The second community that Charlesworth describes as immersed in proleptic thought were first-century AD Hebrew Christians. They believed they had seen the Messiah, received His Spirit, and were living in the Last Days awaiting His return. According to Charlesworth, the book of Revelation especially encouraged proleptic theodicy, which shaped subsequent biblical interpretation. Those who were martyred for Christ were seen as reigning with Him from heaven. Any evil remaining in the present was understood to be condemned and powerless, regardless of how it appeared.[139] Early Hebrew Christians therefore interpreted persecution as merely confirming ultimate victory, and that judgment on the wicked was just around the corner. As it regards Job, this afforded a more optimistic view. Job could be seen as allegorical of the entire church age: fighting against Satan's agency and operation, but knowing its defeat was imminent.

This theodicy has strong connections to the contemporary field of inaugurated eschatology. The orienting idea, expressed well by George Eldon Ladd, is that the eschaton is not a quick, final event, but a long progression of events that ends with the

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[138]Laato and de Moor, xl–xliv.

[139]Charlesworth, 504–505. Proleptic scriptures in discussion include John 16:33, Revelation 6:8–11, and Revelation 20:4.

victory and justice that have been promised. Ladd describes this view as recognizing that "while God is the King, he must also become King, i.e. he must manifest his kingship in the world of human beings and nations."[140] Ladd himself believes the return of Christ will consummate this manifestation. But, he describes its rich connection to the prophetic hope, expressed throughout the Old Testament and extracanonical books, that God will break into history, manifest His kingship, and redeem the earth from the curse of evil.[141] A proleptic eschatology like Ladd's creates a proleptic theodicy because the problem of evil is framed as a problem of God's and Satan's kingdoms, coexisting in opposition to each other. Satan's kingdom is condemned, while Christ's is promised to eventually reign unrivaled. Humanity is placed in the nexus of this kingdom coexistence, into a decaying world order that has been legally convicted but does not yet express the fullness of God's kingship.[142] This causes the lived paradox of the problem of evil, which awaits final deliverance.

In Job, specifically, the story opens with a scene that is significantly compatible with a proleptic worldview: a picture of a hostile, unjust, unlawful being who is somehow permitted to operate within God's good and just domain. The trilemma emerges in full color, triggering questions about how God will address this, how He feels about this, and why is this situation even exists. Yet, as the opening scene in Job progresses, a subtle

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[140]Ladd, 58.

[141]Ladd, 58–61, 65.

[142]See Ladd, 58–67 for a fuller discussion.

providential feeling is detectable, that Yahweh has the end in mind and is moving towards that end. Whatever is giving evil legal permission to operate is real and formidable, but proleptically condemned. It is to this theme, within scholarship of Job, that this thesis now proceeds.

The Courtroom Defines the Narrative

Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III describe how God's eschatological plans, in Scripture, are often pictured as legally progressing through seals, decrees, and angelic actions in the heavenly sphere.[143] An eschatological view of Job, therefore, is very conscious of the opening scene being an administrative exchange, in front of the angels, in God's divine courtroom. Seals are also invoked throughout the narrative. They describe the fixed strongholds of God's authority (Job 9:7; 33:16; 38:14), Job's humanity (Job 14:17), and Leviathan's armor (Job 41:5). This suggests that something legal, with eschatological import, may be in play behind Job's testing.

Interestingly, many contemporary scholars emphasize the legal metaphor running throughout the book of Job.[144] Habel and Fyall are among those who contend that the divine courtroom is the integrating and explanatory device of the book.[145] This can be surprising to those searching Job for a theology of suffering. But, once highlighted, the

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[143]Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., "seal," *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 766.

[144]Shveka and van Hecke, Shields, Scholnick, and Walton assent to it being paramount. Tsevat, Clines, Fox, Carson, Gault, Morriston, Ash, and Ortlund use the metaphor to significantly aid their commentaries.

[145]Habel, *The Book of Job,* 54; Fyall, 31.

legal metaphor becomes conspicuous. For example, Job describes in 29:7–22 that he held a role in the community as "chief," and "king" (29:25), deciding and directing cases. Parsons explains that this informs Job's decision to open a lawsuit and petition God, as the Judge.[146] It also explains certain legal terms which appear throughout Job's speeches, including the controversial term, *'ed*, or "witness in heaven," in 16:19, and *go'el*, "redeemer" in 19:25. According to Newsom, these invoke a legal mediator, advocate, or kinsman in a courtroom setting.[147]

Additionally, Hawley argues that Job and his friends' speeches are testimony in the legal sense: God hears these words, even though He appears to be absent, and responds to what has been said "on the record" about Him and His servant.[148] In chapter 42, Ortlund notes that the guilt offering the friends bring is one of the largest in Scripture, as if an enormous payment of some kind.[149] This is explicitly linked by God, in the text, to their verbal testimony that they did not speak accurately (Job 42:7, 8). Walton perceives that they are being "indicted,"[150] while Fox and Verbin construe God as the one

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[146]Parsons, 28.

[147]Newsom, 153. This page provides an excellent overview of the legal words used by Job in chapters 9–23, with analysis of the Hebrew.

[148]Hawley, 460. Tobias Häner has done extensive work on how Yahweh's speeches in Job 38–39 reverse Job's curses on creation that begin in Job 3. See Tobias Häner, "Job's Dark View of Creation," *Old Testament Essays* 33, no. 2 (2020): 266–284. *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 September 2022). Also Habel, "Design," 415, for intentionality in God's response.

[149]Ortlund, 168.

[150]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 337.

found guilty and paying damages.[151] The legal metaphor is operative. This has implications for how Job's situation will be handled, and even why it has has arisen in the first place. The next section will explore this further.

Job's Lawsuit Against God

The legal metaphor goes beyond token vocabulary and into the prospect that, as Michael Brennan Dick claims, "Job's disturbing new relationship with his God" is now expressed legally.[152] Fyall affirms that "Yahweh himself accepts the legal framework and refers to Job as one who has a case with the Almighty."[153] Others validate that God sees Job as a plaintiff in 40:2, calling him "the one who has entered suit against Shaddai."[154] Throughout the dialogue, Job calls for a trial with God where he can clear his name and whatever accusation is mysteriously against him. More than anything, explains Clines, Job longs for a trial on earth—not after he dies—where God will validate his integrity.[155] Job, however, argues with himself in the dialogue (chapters 9–10, 12–13, 23, 27), realizing such a trial is absurd. Still, Dick says, Job knows that the typical preliminary

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[151] Fox, "Meanings," 11; Verbin, *Divinely Abused*, 138.

[152]Michael Brennan Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job,* ed. Roy B. Zuck (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 329.

[153]Fyall, 34.

[154]Tsevat, 204; Habel, "Design," 414; Walton, *Job,* 414; Fyall, 34. Barnes, n.p. argues that Job is trying to "convict" Shaddai, in Job 40:2.

[155]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 135.

negotiations have been skipped.[156] He thus feel entitled to at least a sidebar where God, his accuser, will appear and admit the retribution was undeserved. Throughout, Job's friends tell him this is arrogant, impossible, and blasphemous. God does not make mistakes, and He certainly will not enter Job's earthly court and exonerate him.

Fyall has, therefore, argued that this situation goes far beyond a wager.[157] Dick recounts that, elsewhere in the Old Testament, God invokes the concept of a *rîb*, or "lawsuit," when Israel fails to honor the stipulations in their part of His covenant with them. Dick argues that, by mid-dialogue, Job has boldly done the reverse with God.[158] Job has, according to Newsom's translation, prepared a case (13:22) and is laying it out (23:4).[159] According to Dick, in the context of an ANE trial, Job accuses God of having "bound" him without formal charges. This greatly influences Yahweh's choice of "binding" language in His final speeches.[160] Dick sees Job as playing defendant, with God as plaintiff and judge, but making a "sworn statement of innocence" in chapter 31 to coerce God into formalizing His accusations and presenting evidence.[161] Margulies agrees that Job calls Yahweh to the witness stand for the official "indictment" against

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[156]Dick, 329.

[157]See Fyall's explanation, 31–55.

[158]Dick, 322. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God*, 250–251 agrees on the uniqueness of this posture within the biblical canon.

[159]Newsom, 154.

[160]E.g., Job 38:8, 23; 39:10; 40:11–13, 24; 41:1–2. Fyall, 130–137 exegetes well that binding is the overarching theme of the Yahweh speeches, especially in His question to Job in 40:11–14, if he [Job] is able to bind and judge the wicked.

[161]Dick, 322.

him, in Job 31:35.[162] Walton adds that Job challenges God to appear and smite him further, or else remain silent, which will acquit him.[163]

Fyall thus contends that the construct of "wager" captures the suspense of the situation, but theologically "comes close to casting God as the villain of the piece."[164] Rather, he argues, Yahweh acts to vindicate Job, while Job is deceived about who the villain is. Walton suggests similarly, that Job has opened a "countersuit" against God, misunderstanding that God has not opened one against him.[165] Fyall argues that Job comes close to perceiving a third party's agency, especially in 9:24, when Job asks, "If it is not He [God], then who is it?"[166] However, until the theophany, God remains silent and permits Himself to be accused. Walton affirms that the idea of a third party involved in the accusation never occurs to anyone, and drives the circularity of the dialogue.[167]

As Job's case against proceeds, Scholnick explains that Job accuses God of crimes including unlawful seizure, corruption, and breach of due process.[168] Dick argues, similarly to Clines, that Job's fear is that Yahweh will not appear in court for

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[162]Margulies, 600–601.

[163]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 338.

[164]Fyall, 35. See Newsom, 69 for a classic presentation of the wager and God's acceptance because the "the doubt must be resolved." This underscores Fyall's point.

[165]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 341. See 337–341 for Walton's forensic analysis of the lawsuit and how the parties are arranged.

[166]Fyall, 39.

[167]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 345.

[168]Scholnick, "*Mispat*," 350; Scholnick, "Poetry," 425.

settlement.[169] Job perceives that, in this earthly trial, his three friends are witnesses against him; and, he fears they are God's witnesses in His stead. Tsevat, somewhat cynically, construes Job's desire for God to appear in court as an opportunity for "refuge" for Job: since God is being irrational, if He comes to court He will have to "shed his demoniac features" and deal rationally with Job in front of everyone.[170] Either way, Job appeals for a "mediator" (9:33), "witness" (16:19), and "vindicator" (19:25), who would intercede between him and God in this case of what he perceives as unjust retribution.[171] Indeed, while some interpreters disagree,[172] the general consensus is that Job has opened a formal lawsuit against God, and is giving legal testimony amidst the cycles of lament.[173] So, also, are the friends, who accuse Job of various sins.

Interpreters show remarkable agreement about the courtroom metaphor across the spectrum, but disagree on the conclusion of Job's lawsuit. Dick, for example, says the case Job opens against God is "absurd." He and Parsons see Yahweh as unwilling to bow to Job's petition, because it is theologically misguided: Job has pridefully and wrongfully accused Him. They, accordingly, interpret the whirlwind speeches as Yahweh humbling

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[169]Dick, 329. Clines, "Shape and Argument," 135.

[170]Tsevat, 193.

[171]Parsons, 29–31.

[172]Newsom, 151–157 challenges Habel's classification of Job as a "lawsuit drama." She calls the *rîb* (Job 13:22) and Job's preparing a case (Job 13:18; 23:4) "parody," "accidental," and a "medium of exploration." Her argument is that Job is actually lamenting like the psalmist, but utilizes a more robust metaphor so that his situation will be viewed objectively, rather than subjectively.

[173]Scholnick, "*Mispat*," 352; Walton, *Job* ,125; Tsevat, 194; Shveka and van Hecke, 100; Parsons, 29; Dick, 322.

Job about the idea of taking the Almighty to court.[174] Walton and James G. Williams agree, saying that God denies Job his day in court.[175]

Scholnick affirms that human beings have no right to claim innocence, or exact justice from God, as though God is guilty. However, she disagrees that Yahweh refuses to enter the earthly courtroom. Rather, she views Him as "eager" to visit "the human court of justice" where His rather pathetic opponent has summoned Him.[176] Once present in the whirlwind, Yahweh embraces testifying "in the hero's lawsuit" and "cross-examine[s]" him with more than seventy rhetorical questions. He reminds Job that He is the Creator, and He has "original title" to do whatever He wants to, with His earth.[177] Fyall concurs with the idea of cross-examination.[178] Tsevat validates that the purpose of the rhetorical questions is to humble Job, and reverse the courtroom dynamic from God as defendant to God as plaintiff.[179] The next section will explore just a few more points before returning to this evaluation.

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[174]Parsons, 31–33; Dick, 334.

[175]Walton, *Job*, 414; Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 339; James G. Williams, 370.

[176]Scholnick, "Poetry," 423.

[177]Scholnick, "Poetry," 432.

[178]Fyall, 34.

[179]Tsevat, 199.

Satan's Lawsuit Against God

Complicating things further, is the idea, stated well by Shveka and van Hecke, that there are "parallel lawsuits" going on in Job.[180] Job has opened one lawsuit against God, in response to the perceived one by God against him. Besides this, however, the heavenly courtroom scene in Job 1–2 frames the foundational conflict: between God and Satan.[181] In the literature, the "courtroom" aspect of these chapters is sometimes devalued. Commentators tend to avoid specifying that a case has been opened, and portray Satan as merely interrupting God's day-to-day assembly, as in Estes.[182] Interpretations of the "wager" between God and Satan often follow, which encourages a low view of God's wisdom and omniscience.[183] But, Fox maintains, premodern Israelites believed in the reality of a heavenly courtroom.[184] If this construct is taken seriously, then Satan's wager or accusation becomes an actual lawsuit filed against Yahweh in open court. What plays out is not casual, but of juridical significance.

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[180]Shveka and van Hecke, 100.

[181]See chapter 2, footnote 133 regarding the appellations of God and Satan reflecting the authors' preferences in these sections.

[182]Estes, 9. Ash, Clines, Newsom, and Fox also promote this view, based on their previously discussed theology of Satan being an acceptable part of God's court.

[183]"Wager" is used in Carson, 377; Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 177, Liska, 134. "Contest" is used in Wright, 69; Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read,* 53; and Gregory I, 77. That God is "at risk" with this wager, and "does not fully understand human nature" or "what a person *might* do," is in Michael V. Fox, "Job the Pious," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 117, no. 3 (2005): 361–362, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (5 February 2023). Larrimore chronicles the concepts of bet, experiment, deception, and other constructions that call God's omniscience and wisdom into question.

[184]Fox, "Meanings," 9.

This is where eschatological theodicy begins to appear relevant. Satan accuses God of making fraudulent worshippers and opens a lawsuit against Him, and the way He governs. God, as King, Judge, and Lawgiver, accepts this case. The key theodical question then becomes: why? Why does Yahweh not simply rebuke the Adversary, Fox asks, like He does in Zechariah 3:1–2?[185] What does God, or Job, have to gain by accepting this case rather than rejecting it? The good, wise, and sovereign nature of God is at stake here.

To begin with, Shveka and van Hecke point out that in an ANE context, there was an assumption about what a formal accusation meant. The process was sobering because accusers bringing a defendant to court had to be ready to prove their claims. If they were unable to do so, they themselves were punished with the sentence applicable to the offense. Shveka and van Hecke describe this ethos, *lex talionis*, operative in the Code of Hammurabi, the laws of Lipit-Ishtar, and the laws about false witness in Deuteronomy 19:15–21.[186] They argue that a correct understanding of the judicial protocol of the ANE, as well as the legal framework of Job, permit a significantly better understanding of the text because much was at stake for the Adversary to come into open court and accuse both God and Job. Because ANE lawsuits required plaintiffs to be responsible for proving their cases, Shveka and van Hecke suggest that Job's poetic narrator intended—and the

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[185]Fox, "Job the Pious," 361. Fox does not answer his own question, but accepts the common offering that God wants to know, like Satan, whether true virtue really exists in the most extreme situations. This thesis notes, however, that the soiled high priest accused by Satan and defended by God in Zechariah 3 is very guilty, with no defense, while Job is innocent. This puts the two court cases on very different grounds.

[186]Shveka and van Hecke, 102.

original audience would have immediately perceived—a divine and wise opportunity right in the very opening of Job.[187] The central issue would not have been explaining Job's innocent suffering, although this is relevant. Instead, it would have been the risk the Accuser took, with his motives, and how Yahweh's legal system will interact with those unfounded accusations. With *lex talionis* in play, there is something important to gain for God and Job, and something to lose for Satan.

Meredith G. Kline, therefore, argues that perceiving God as initiating the entire test of Job, for the shaming of Satan, is "to have the key to . . . the fundamental meaning and message of the Book of Job."[188] Kline connects the Accuser in Job 1–2 to the accuser revealed as Satan in Revelation 12:10, claiming that discontinuity regarding Satan's identity is a key hindrance in discerning the good and sovereign purpose behind Job's test. God's biblical mission, Kline continues, is to "render inoperative" the one who accuses the brethren day and night before God (Rev 12:9–11)—which presents itself in the opening scene of Job. Fyall, likewise, exhorts that theodicy should be interpreted in Job only after the embattled, legal framework of the book is understood, especially the "enemy anxious to destroy God's people in court."[189] Walton affirms no one except God knows there is a third party in the court, who concocts a situation that has nothing to do

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[187]Shveka and van Hecke, 118.

[188]Meredith G. Kline, *The Essential Writings of Meredith Kline,* ed. Tremper Longman III (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017), n.p., GoogleBooks, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Essential_Writings_of_Meredith_G_Kline/TpVrEAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1/ (2 February 2023).

[189]Fyall, 32. For more in-depth discussion, see 31–55.

with repentance, guilt, or God's wrath. Fyall further suggests that God reveals Himself as Job's legal advocate at the very outset, even though Job perceives God to be behind the lawsuit that unfolds against him.[190] This situation leads to the important implication of Satan's lawsuit against Yahweh: its parallel lawsuit against Job, as Yahweh's proxy.

Satan's Lawsuit Against Job

Walton explains that God never puts Job on trial, but Satan does. Job is in court as God's "prime witness," to defend His policy that blessing the righteous strengthens the relationship rather than corrupts it.[191] Satan has accused Yahweh and opened a case against Him to prove He does not make authentic followers on the earth. By accusing God in heaven, however, Satan also accuses Job on earth, opening a case against him also. The two are linked because there is a correspondence between the heavenly courtroom and the earthly one: both are rightfully the Lord's (e.g., Ps 148). Ash adds, because Job is like Adam in this lawsuit, then if Satan is right about Yahweh's best man, then by nature he is right about everyone else.[192] The lawsuit against God in heaven, therefore, proceeds to operate against Job, on earth, where Satan has been roaming (1:7).

This accounts for how Fyall can claim that Satan summons God as a defendant; whereas Wright argues that Satan calls Job to the stand.[193] There are two lawsuits opened by Satan, in parallel, because the accusation is about the divine-human relationship. In

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[190]Fyall, 35.

[191]Walton, "Job 1: Book of," 336. For a full explanation, 336–341.

[192]Ash, 34, 44.

[193]Wright, 69; Fyall, 42–43.

the courtroom of earth, Satan will use loss, physical pain, Job's wife, and friends to drive both his cases forward. The friends may therefore be seen as opening a case against Job, as Satan's proxies. By the opening of chapter 3, when Job submits his first petition against God, there are multiple lawsuits in operation; and, each is perceivable despite the interrelationship. Witnesses testify in each one, with *lex talionis* at stake, especially regarding false witness. Chapters 3–37 then play out, as court in session, to discer truth from falsity.

Understanding that God has legally accepted a case that is subsequently binding, and will be played out in His courtroom on earth until its conclusion, is important to contextually understanding the rest of what happens. It also is relevant to theodicy, for theodicy cannot be properly derived until there is a framework for the prologue and epilogue. Clines, interestingly, disposes of the prologue and epilogue to focus on the dialogue. He considers the former "naïve" and "unimportant."[194] For him, the central conflict is reduced to Job's case against God, only, and how the resolution is simple: for Job to be silent, retract his case, and let God run the world as God does.[195] But, this creates a dissatisfying theodicy of mixed retributive, educative, and mysterious views. Ironically, the same approach to theodicy and the text is taken by cynicists, who conclude the opposite: that Job should not be silent, that he should leave the case open, and humanity should run the world as they would. The problem is, as chapter 2 of this thesis aimed to show, that without something like Christology guiding the telos of the Yahweh-

[194]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 139, 126.

[195]Clines, "Shape and Argument," 127.

Adversary conflict—with its foundational assumptions about opposite kingdoms, natures, and agendas—the interpretive gaps in Job collapse the theodical effort. The same approach to the text can actually lead to two opposing conclusions. If Christological assumptions are permitted, however, then the legal framework offered by the text provides great explanatory value that aids resolution.

For example, the issue of God's hiddenness is glaring by chapter 3, when Job curses his life. The friends are present, but God seems absent. As mentioned, for Alter and Olojede, the silence of God is the most disturbing element of Job's tragedy. It echoes the hardest part of humanity's own experience of tragedy: where is God during suffering? How should the issue of God's hiddenness in Job be understood?[196] Within the legal framework, Fox and Ortlund explain that God's presence is probably the most important covenant benefit which must be deprived in the lawsuit.[197] Walton clarifies that Satan's lawsuit discredits God's policy of blessing, yet God's covenant system ensures His presence, prosperity, and protection.[198] All of these must be, in Fox's interpretation, temporarily overridden for Job. For a time, all the physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits associated with faithfulness will be imperceptible.[199]

Because of this, Job will suffer excruciatingly in each of these dimensions. He will believe God is absent, has turned His face away, and is unjustly punishing him. His

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[196]Alter, "Hebrew Poems," 177, 183; Olojede, 730.

[197]Ortlund, 15–17; Fox, "Job the Pious," 362.

[198]Walton, *Job*, 414.

[199]Fox, "Job the Pious," 362.

children, animals, and property will all suffer as the hedge of covenant protection is removed from his household. On top of loss, constant pain, and pressure, the cognitive dissonance from defending himself will force him towards the Accuser's goal in court: if Job curses God and forsakes Him, to die, the enemy has won both his lawsuits. Hence, Satan brings Job as close to death as possible to see if he will capitulate. This strategy is extremely close to the one Satan will use against Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:5–6), and also again on the cross (Mark 15:29–34). However, the testing is permitted only so long. At a point when all of the plaintiffs, in all of the parallel lawsuits, appear to have exhausted themselves, Yahweh breaks the clamor to assert Himself, restore order, and declare a verdict. The next section will examine this action and its effects.

The Judge Arrives

Before examining Yahweh's speeches in chapters 38–41, it is worth restating that proleptic theodicy suggests something eschatological is framing the book of Job. The pretext for the conflict is that Job is innocent and will suffer innocently, and this has something to do with anticipating or entering into Yahweh's defeat of evil. Put a different way, there is something to be gained by God accepting the challenge. This makes Job's situation different from Jerusalem's, in Zechariah 3:1–2, and more similar to Christ's. The thing to be gained is not an educative lesson or chastisement for Job. From a proleptic standpoint, it is an eschatological advance against Satan. Yahweh does not rebuke the Adversary because, as Shveka and van Hecke maintain, there is something

legal to gain by Him accepting the lawsuit.[200] This theodicy reframes the chastisement opportunity to be one against the Accuser, which makes it anticipatory of Christ; and, also others within the deliverance history of God.

Consequently, while many have lauded the Yahweh speeches in 38–41 for being the climax of the book, the legal framework guides interpretation differently from views emphasizing providential schemas or reorientation of Job. God can be seen as coming to formally judge the lawsuits against Himself and Job. Having accepted them in the context of *lex talionis*, He will also end them. They will include damages, that also make Job's test like Christ's. Fyall argues that Yahweh enters the earthly courtroom, against everyone's belief that He would not.[201] If so, this may be to demonstrate that the earth is His domain and not the Adversary's. Yahweh is in a challenging position as Judge, however, because He must set all things right at once, including, as Goldsworthy notes, reorienting Job.[202] Yahweh must judge all lawsuits in operation, including: Satan versus God, Satan versus Job, the friends versus Job, and Job versus God. In just two speeches (Job 38:1–Job 41:34), Yahweh will deliver all the verdicts, clarify the unanimous opinion of the Court, and initiate restitution.

The catch is, however, that Job has opened his own case against God, and none of the other verdicts can go forth until he retracts. In fact, Habel and Gault claim Yahweh's entire goal for Job is not condemnation—for He demands no punishment nor restitution

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[200]Shveka and van Hecke, 118.

[201]Fyall, 34.

[202]Goldsworthy, 172–174. Also Parsons, 27; Häner, 266.

from Job—but only retraction. Job must change his mind, revoke his testimony, and withdraw the charges.[203] Among those punished are the friends, maintain Shveka and van Hecke, for not speaking what is true.[204] They will not be punished too harshly, for they intended to help. But in Job 19:21, Job cries out, "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. Why do you persecute me as God does?" In response, rather than honestly inquiring of Job, or praying for him, they testify on behalf of the enemy that Job is guilty and God is against him, which is false. In other words, they bear false witness of Job, as Satan himself has. According to Deuteronomy 19:15–21, the punishment for false witness against a brother is "to do to him as he had meant to do to his brother." They may have imagined Job bringing a large guilt offering for his heinous sins and humbling himself before them. So, their burnt offering and humility before Job is a fitting act of justice (Job 42:7–8).

Most importantly, however, Satan must be punished. He has borne false witness, and demonstrated a John 10:10 desire to kill, steal, and destroy Job, for no reason other than he serves Yahweh. In considering *lex talionis*, Shveka and van Hecke maintain that Satan desired to shame God: to make Him look bad in front of His court, His creation, and His loved one; as well as be cursed, doubted, and forsaken by the latter. This must somehow be reversed. Shveka and van Hecke liken the theophany to a duel where "the

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[203]Habel, "Design," 415; Gault, 163. Also implied in Estes, 248; Scholnick, "*Mispat,*" 350; Ndugbu, 31; Carson, 375; Clines, "Shape and Argument," 127. Job's hubris is often said to be the motive and problem, and not God's desire to initiate justice on behalf of what Satan has done to him.

[204]Shveka and van Hecke, 116.

two parties can no longer live together under the same sun."[205] It is an interesting remark, given the fact that Satan has conspicuously vanished from the narrative. Some have taken this to mean Satan is completely dispensable to interpreting the message.[206] Brueggemann, for example, states simply, "The role of Satan is marginal to the drama of the book."[207] But, if this is true, then the plot of Job approaches incoherency or moral repugnance. There would be no explanation for why God enters the initial conflict with Satan. Why would God argue with an angel that He commands, who simply disappears? This lends evidence, in fact, to Newsom's thesis that God is tragically, morally incomprehensible.

It makes more sense to see Yahweh's speeches as His final testimony and verdict against the Adversary, who is essential to the drama, and who has been found guilty. Although Satan is not visibly present in this earthly courtroom the way he was in the heavenly one, scholars both ancient and contemporary believe God prophetically and triumphantly describes to Satan and all those listening, the binding and defeat of demonic forces in the earth. This foundational view of the theophany was the predominant view of the church fathers, according to Simonetti and Conti.[208] Origen, for example, argues that Satan is revealed as a dragon in Job 41, as "that ancient serpent called the devil" (Rev

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[205]Shveka and van Hecke, 102.

[206]Verbin, *Divinely Abused,* 24; Fox, "Meanings," 11–14.

[207]Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 490.

[208]Simonetti and Conti, 212.

12:9), and that this was a huge revelation for that time period.[209] Ephrem the Syrian agrees, saying the devil's nature described in Behemoth and Leviathan prefigure the land and sea beasts of Revelation 12–13, which Christ conquers in the eschaton.[210] Gregory the Great and Philip the Priest interpret Behemoth's and Leviathan's features—the jaw pierced, the words of its mouth entered, the scales tightly knit—as symbolizing ways God will conquer the devil, or ways that believers should interact with his schemes. There is also general agreement that, as Philip the Priest claims, the two beasts will be "destroyed and annihilated by the voice of the Lord" as indicated in Revelation 19.[211] Job 40:24, for example, describes Yahweh bringing "His sword" against Behemoth. This is assumed to be His Word, or gospel, in New Testament symbolism.[212] Leviathan, likewise, is baited and caught by a hook in Job 41:1–2. Gregory of Nyssa postulates that the incarnate Christ was that hook, whom the devil bit, yet in doing so, was drawn out.[213]

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[209]Origen, *Fragments on Job 28:95* (PTS 53:353); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 214–215.

[210]Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Job 41:2–3* (ESOO 2:18); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 214.

[211]Philip the Priest, *Commentary on the Book of Job 40* (PL 26:783); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 209–210; Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job* (LF 31:575–99, 606–607, 645–648); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 213–217.

[212]Simonetti and Conti, 208–209, 212.

[213]Gregory of Nyssa, "*Oratio Catechetica*, *xxi–xxvi*," in *Documents of the Christian Church,* 4th ed., ed. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37.

Others, including Olympiadorus, Isho'dad of Merv, and Hesychius, see *Christus Victor* in Yahweh's speeches, and the boast of Colossians 2:15, that "having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."[214] The cross clearly does not figure in Job 38–42. But, in light of the conflict between God and Satan that the cross reveals, Yahweh appears to be describing how two beasts, that no one can detect or wound with any kind of human weapon, will be exposed, bound, and condemned by God Himself. Regarding Job 41:6, where the fishermen "make a banquet" of Leviathan and sell his parts in the market, Isho'dad of Merv references the Talmudic teaching that in the eschaton, Israel will hunt the beasts, feast on them, and keep pieces to memorialize their victory (b. Bava Bathra 75a).[215] The theophany is portrayed as a huge unmasking of evil to Job, in contrast to a providential or free will system. It is a promise that his individual suffering will end, and the whole earth's also.

Contemporary scholarship in Job has developed and refined this body of thought, but continues to support a form of proleptic eschatology theodicy in Job. Fyall tracks Satan's moving throughout the plot of Job, and concludes that Yahweh proudly "unmasks" the hidden "guises" of Satan in chapters 40–41. He argues that Behemoth represents the grave and death, exposed, while Leviathan represents the Satanic personality himself. Fyall also agrees with the *Christus Victor* interpretation, that God is revealing not only the cause of pain and suffering within His creation, but also His plan

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[214]Simonetti and Conti, 212.

[215]Isho'dad of Merv, *Commentary on Job 40* (CSCO 229:265); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 209.

to bind, pierce, and judge that personality who disturbs the earth.[216] Ortlund concurs that the piercing and binding of Satan is the main theme of the Yahweh speeches.[217]

Doing away with premodern allegorism about the beastly features and the cross, René A. López affirms that Behemoth and Leviathan are part of the serpent-dragon motif rivaling God throughout Scripture. After surveying innumerable interpretations of Job 40–41, López concludes that the beasts symbolizing Satan fits the clues best, and Yahweh is judging them in Job 40–41. He claims that Yahweh threatens His "first created work" in Job 40:19, and calls Leviathan "the king over all the proud" in 41:34.[218] He endorses Fyall's and Ash's literary analysis that the book starts with the problem of Satanic conflict, and ends with its resolution.[219] The beasts symbolizing Satan also explains why Yahweh's speech suddenly turns to talk so much about them, and how this could be an answer to all Job has experienced.

Raz affirms this from a different perspective. Dialoguing with some who argue that the theophany is non-sequitur, Raz finds it satisfying that Job's pain is "answered" by a description of recreation, where there is no more pain.[220] God will make "new wounds," she observes, that are no longer in human beings but in his "chaos creatures."

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[216]Fyall, 183.

[217]Ortlund, 144–153.

[218]René A. López, "The Meaning of 'Behemoth' and 'Leviathan' in Job," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173 (October–December 2016): 408, 420, 423. *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (8 September 2021).

[219]López, 417; Fyall, 163–164; Ash, 420.

[220]Raz, 92-93.

This will somehow "reverse" and "leave behind" the pain of the human body.[221] Raz has no role for Satan in her interpretation, but endorses an essentially eschatological reading of the theophany where God "attempts to force a reversal" by redirecting His wrath towards the beasts. She even suggests anticipating it: that perhaps readers will hear "the morning stars singing" as they listen to Job's pain.[222] It is a surprisingly Christological statement, in view of the touchpoints suggested in this thesis about the passion, and the Messiah's role in returning creation back to the good and sovereign rule of God. It is also inherently juridical, in that something about these "new wounds" brings about an entire turnaround.

Lastly, Smick argues that Yahweh's first speech in chapters 38–39 is about asserting His right as the Lord of earth to take proleptic action. He agrees with Scholnick's interpretation that God enters the earthly courtroom to reveal His rights as King.[223] But, the application he makes is that, as King, God desires to chastise the beasts, not Job. Smick accepts that Yahweh corrects Job; and that His speech in chapters 40–41 is somewhat veiled from Job's perspective and the reader's. But, Smick maintains, it is not veiled to Satan. Yahweh boldly proclaims Himself Lord over the grave and cosmic forces of evil, "celebrating his triumph" because "Satan, the Accuser, has been proved wrong even though Job does not know it."[224] Smick makes a big claim. But, it makes

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[221]Raz, 95-96.

[222]Raz, 96.

[223]Scholnick, "Poetry," 423–428.

[224]Smick, 243.

sense of many pieces including God's mighty tone, Job's awe and silence, and why God chooses this particular message to answer Job's problem of suffering. Having considered each of these pieces, within the context of Yahweh appearing to judge all the lawsuits in operation against Himself and Job, the discussion will now turn to consider how this interpretive grid aids theodical interpretation of the book. How does perceiving the plot as a lawsuit drama connect to, or support, proleptic theodicy?

Implications for Proleptic Theodicy

In the classical approach to theodicy in Job, the mysterious purposes of God operating behind the opening scenes are normally considered to be inscrutable. Yet, they are often suspected to be unpalatable. God is assumed to have good or wise reasons for permitting Job's test, but the circumstances transmit doubt. As mentioned earlier, eschatological theodicy is normally ruled out as adequate to providing a sophisticated reason for why Job suffered.

Proleptic theodicy emphasizes the main theme of eschatological theodicy: that justice for the righteous will be resolved through final judgment and restoration. But it is not as simple as "in the end, all will be made right." In the proleptic worldview, eschatology is inaugurated and pushed forward through particular events in the history of God's people. As Ladd articulates, God's eschatological reign is not a quick, final event that occurs at the end of time, but is a progressive, spiritual reality that is entered into by his faithful ones throughout history.[225] The reason why this is a powerful grid for Job is

[225]Ladd, 58–61.

because, if the divine courtroom is indeed the controlling metaphor of the book, then God may have assented to Job's testing in order for him to enter and prefigure Yahweh's eschatological victory over Satan. In essence, Job's test is prophetic, acknowledging the age to come; but, it is also redemptive in real time—an active smiting of the Adversary.

Satan's Progressive Judgment

As discussed, many church fathers saw a prediction of the cross' victory in Job 40–41. This was because they associated Leviathan with Satan, and the cross with binding him. Isaiah 27:1 prophesies, "In that day the Lord will take His sharp, great, and mighty sword, and bring judgment on Leviathan the fleeing serpent—Leviathan the coiling serpent—and He will slay the dragon of the sea." Correspondingly, Nyssa perceived the moment that Christ's flesh was pierced as the moment when Leviathan's was pierced as well, fulfilling Job 41:1–2.[226] In Dossey, Pseudo-Chrysostom does also.[227]

However, without allegorizing about the cross, it is possible to discern Yahweh enacting a moment of divine retribution against Satan right in the text of Job, through Him judging the lawsuits the Adversary has opened. Viberg argues that God shows Job, through His speeches on the beasts, that He initiated destruction of evil within creation in Genesis 3. Job did not see that "taming," but Yahweh began it.[228] Ash describes God's revelation to Job similarly: as Him in the process of rescuing humans from a chaos they

[226]Nyssa, 37.

[227]Dossey, 72.

[228]Viberg, 202.

originally got themselves into.[229] Goldsworthy, also, pinpoints the loss of humankind's authority over the enemy, between Genesis 1 and Genesis 3, as the major conflict God is trying to reverse in all of Scripture.[230] In Job 1:12, where God ominously gives Satan permission to harm His servant Job, Keil and Delitzsch perceive an installment of this very reversal, within a longer, progressive cursing of the serpent:

> The permission [for Job's suffering] proceeds . . . from God's purpose to maintain . . . the righteousness which . . . is peculiar to Job; and if we place this single instance in historical connection with the development of the plan of redemption, it is a part of the conflict of the woman's seed with the serpent, and of the gradual degradation of Satan to the lake of fire.[231]

In this, Keil and Delitzsch interpret Yahweh permitting the case against innocent Job as part of proleptic, eschatological judgment on Satan. Their view affirms Shveka and van Hecke's, that the lawsuits Satan opens (against God and Job) permit a wise opportunity for God to enact retributive sanctions against him.[232]

Others echo the situating of Job's conflict as part of the larger, Genesis 3 narrative regarding the progressive cursing of the serpent. Fyall suggests that the lawsuit appears God-initiated, in Job 1:8, because God initiated the first redemptive step in Genesis 3:15–21. There, God proactively puts enmity between Satan and humanity, to separate them and pronounce the demise of the former."[233] Smick embraces the context of Genesis 3,

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[229]Ash, 422.

[230]Goldsworthy, 93.

[231]Keil and Delitzsch, Job 1:12.

[232]Shveka and van Hecke, 118.

[233]Fyall, 189.

claiming that there is "no totally rational theory of suffering" in Job except for "the same as in Genesis: God permits the Satan to touch Job as part of the cosmic contest."[234] Smick develops the idea that God is working out a type of legal retribution that is faithful to His nature. He condemns sin and orders its wages be paid; but, He also suspends judgment on people and the earth while progressively cursing the serpent. Walton reiterates that this judgment is complicated, and requires great wisdom.[235] Smick claims, "the book of Job brings us a step closer" to seeing how God will perform this.[236]

God's Triumphant Proclamation

Viewing the narrative of Job within this framework, of lawsuit and proleptic theodicy, supports the theophany as the moral climax of the book. But, it does so for different reasons than are normally proposed. In Job 38:2, God rebukes Job for obscuring His counsel with ignorant words. This verse is normally interpreted to mean that Job's pain causes him to deny orthodox tenets of faith including God's attributes, wisdom, or providence. Indeed, Gordis' central theory is that the theophany reveals a grand natural and moral design that Job was ignorant of, but which affirms God's just governance of the earth.[237] In the educative paradigm, Yahweh must re-educate Job on this, and provide

[234]Smick, 243. Yancey has a very similar statement in *The Bible Jesus Read,* 61.

[235]Walton, *Job*, 413, 422.

[236]Smick, 231.

[237]Gordis, *Book of Job,* xxx–xxxi; also significant in Maimonides and Calvin.

extra revelation of how He is faithful to limit evil's operation within His good and sovereign system.

This is possible, but a proleptic paradigm suggests that a larger, eschatological moment is underway. Job has already testified to his belief in God's providence, including over hidden wonders of the earth (e.g., Job 9:5–10; 26:5–14). The mysteries of God and the importance of retributive justice have also been adequately voiced in the courtroom (e.g., Job 11:7–20; 36:5–12, 22–26; 37:19–24). Yet, Job's own case against God is still pending. He needs to retract his case regarding why he has been unjustly punished, as wicked, with no arraignment. The Yahweh speeches may, therefore, begin with a tour of God's providential order because He is calling creation as one of His witnesses in the courtroom. Scholnick is open to the idea of creation functioning "as a testimony in Yahweh's cross-examination speeches."[238] The created order knows the depths of God's kingship, goodness, and wisdom over it. It also knows it does not reveal God's wrath, injustice, or abandonment, as Job said it did (e.g., 14:1–2, 11–12, 18–22).

Tsevat and Yancey additionally suggest that the narrative of Job may be playing out openly, in front of the whole heavens.[239] Even though Job has felt completely alone, Yancey suggests that God's attention is fixed on Job the entire time.[240] Tsevat adds that the angels witness Satan's opening interruption in the heavenly courtroom, and they

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[238]Scholnick, "Poetry," 432.

[239]Tsevat, 199; Yancey, "A Fresh Reading," 144.

[240]Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 63.

could have answered God's rhetorical questions to Job in chapters 38–39; unlike Job, they witnessed creation and "celebrated that great event."[241] It is therefore possible that those in the divine assembly are hearing or watching God testify in the courtroom, as a jury or audience. Both creation and the angelic hosts could be eyewitnesses that Yahweh knows, cares, and sustains His creation. He has done so from its inception; and, when the events of Genesis 3 caused the need for adjustment, they would have witnessed His wise sublimation of evil into His provident design.

Providential interpreters are therefore right to observe that God is correcting Job's inversion about life, the day he was born, and imperception of God's involvement in the earth. But, the explanation to Job may be incidental. The one receiving the most education from this speech may not be Job—it may be Satan. The one who appears conspicuously absent, at that moment, may actually be getting a public shaming and scorning from the Judge's bench: the perfect *lex talionis*. This interpretation is not demanded by the text; Job 1:6 and 2:1 validate only that the angels witness the Adversary's initial challenge to Yahweh. But, the proclamation to every created thing fits with the legal motif of heaven and earth being God's witnesses, and enriches the purposes of God's vehement tone.

Finally, proleptic theodicy in Job appreciates that restoration in the final chapter describes a recreated order, not simply the afterlife. Wright notes it as very important that the book does not end with "Job's death and angels who carry him to a paradise where

[241]Tsevat, 199. Also Fox, "Meanings," 11.

everything was so wonderful that he forgot about the terrible time he'd had on earth." That is "emphatically not the point," he claims.[242] Rather, Wright argues, renewal is the justice Yahweh has in mind—not "scrapping it [creation] and doing something else."[243] Nor is the point simply a lament. Habel and others have rightfully disagreed with those who see empathy or an articulation of deliverance as sufficient to explain Job. Rather, Habel argues, what is needed is a lawsuit that demands a verdict, and a real step towards eschatological justice.[244]

This eschatological justice appears to be proleptically entered by Job at the end. His new lifespan, family, new benefits (Job 42:10–12) indicate that perhaps God's judgment has been received by creation, the angelic hosts, and the forces of evil themselves. Certainly the Accuser appears to be rebuked from Job's life. Job lives through four more generations, reconciled to God, with greater covenant blessings than before. Consequently, his second life carries a different testimony than his previous life. The new one prophesies, as Wright puts it, "a narrative of God's project of justice within a world of injustice."[245] It demonstrates a proleptic view of people anticipating the final state and bringing it into life through the power of God's presence and justification. With this candidate for theodicy in Job now offered, some final remarks will be made.

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[242]Wright, 70.

[243]Wright, 73.

[244]Habel, "Design," 414; Tsevat, 197; Hartley, "Genres and Message," 68–69; Dick, 330.

[245]Wright, 73. Yancey calls it "the Great Reversal" in "A Fresh Reading," 147.

Conclusion to Proleptic Theodicy

Proleptic theodicy in Job is eschatological and, therefore, orients itself differently than retributive, educative, or mysterious theodicies. It supposes that the narrative in Job is significantly connected to the eschatological theology of the cross and return of Christ. It uses Christology to frame the book differently and fill in the interpretive gaps with the legal, cosmic contest begun in Genesis 3 and ended in Revelation 20. In this sense, it is a controversial approach to Job and must be monitored to not overstep its hermeneutical bounds. However, the premise that Yahweh enters a lawsuit with Satan in order to win it, and advance an eschatological step through Job, is not only an edifying theodicy, but fits the text, the historical context, and also the timeless aspect of Job.

This chapter has therefore explored whether proleptic and communion theodicy—two non-classical theodicies—may be more fruitful lenses for Joban interpretation than retributive, educative, or mysterious theodicies. An outline has been sketched for both of these that reconfigures existing scholarship on Job, permits ancient scholarship into the conversation, and invites Christology to guide key interpretive moments in the text. To conclude this chapter, some final remarks will be made about the possible synthesis of proleptic and communion theodicies, and the potential value of furthering this approach in the book of Job.

Conclusion to the Christological Approach

This chapter has presented a Christological approach to theodicy in Job framed by communion and proleptic theodicies. It has done so, not just to resituate age-old questions in a different interpretive grid; but also, from a conviction that the Yahweh

speeches invoke communion and eschatology as theodical answers to the significance of Job's suffering. From a Christian point of view, these two theodicies, together, provide a theodicy of deliverance illumined by Christ and discernible in Job: that an innocent sufferer, chosen by both God and Satan to be afflicted, enters the divine courtroom as God's witness to legally confront evil, and the curses deserved under retributive theology. Through Job's attributes and experience, God can be seen as prefiguring the need for a witness in His courtroom who will look much like Job, but not fall short when pressed on the stand. In Job's particular moment, his undeserved affliction and God's intervention on His behalf, puts the problem of evil on notice. And, a glimpse of eschatological triumph is seen through Job's renewed life.

The primary interpretation of the book of Job, therefore, may not lie in retributive guilt, educative purposes, or anti-theodical mystery. These do not appear to be the substance of what Yahweh reveals in His speeches. When God appears to Job, in 38:1–2, the only rebuke He gives is that Job has "obscured" or "darkened" His *'esa*, or "counsel." Tsevat, Gordis, Fox, Shields, Habel, and Scholnick insist, however, that the word *'esa* should be translated here, contextually, as "plan" or "design."[246] If so, God would be saying that something in Job's demonstration, or testimony, has hidden or clouded God's plan or design.[247] Habel validates this, saying that Yahweh's response to Job "implies

[246]Tsevat, 211; Gordis, *Book of Job*, 436; Fox, "Meanings," 12; Shields, 30; Habel, "Wisdom," 312; Habel, "Design," 413. Scholnick, "Poetry," 422 defines *'esa* as Yahweh's "plan or design for the universe, previously beyond human comprehension."

[247]Gordis' literal translation of God's charge in Job 38:2 is that Job has "declare[d] my plan to be dark, obscure." In Gordis, *Book of Job*, 442.

that Job's unwarranted affliction is to be understood in the light of a 'design' which has been hidden."[248] Gordis exhorts that the affliction should be understood within "the Divine plan or purpose of creation" that underlies "the governing of the world."[249] Fyall, therefore, interprets this passage as God revealing a hidden, fundamental purpose of His heart.[250] Tsevat adds that the references to "the foundation," "basis," and "cornerstone" of creation, in 38:1–6, signify Yahweh addressing "the foundational design of the universe."[251] But what has Job misperceived, or misrepresented, about this? What fundamental plan or design for the world, hidden in God's heart, has Job obscured—but God originally imagined he would bring to light?

A majority of interpreters argue that this foundational, hidden plan is God's providential administration of the unseen world. Maimonides goes so far as to say that the book of Job is a parable about different providential schemas, and Yahweh elucidates the right one at the end.[252] Ash, Plantinga, and others also promote different providential schemas of their own, from more to less meticulous. Clines, however, argues that the most important aspect of any providential schema is the "moral order" of the world, or

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[248]Habel, "Wisdom," 313.

[249]Gordis, *Book of Job*, 442.

[250]Fyall, 177 compares God's use of the word "plan" in Job 38:2 to His use of it in the context of the exile, and what significance that plan had, in His people's identity.

[251]Tsevat, 211. Also Scholnick, "Poetry," 422.

[252]Maimonides, 296.

the principles of justice on which it is governed.[253] Tsevat therefore claims that the hidden plan Job reveals is the annihilation of retributive judgment, which challenges Israelite theology.[254] Ash suggests that grace, rather than the Law, is God's foundational plan which He wanted brought to light.[255] Ortlund and Walton concur that mercy is God's hidden intent, which Job receives personally.[256]

But Habel argues that the word *'esa* carries a "historical" connotation, especially in view of Job's response, in 42:2, that he now understands "no plan of Yours can be thwarted."[257] Shields reformulates the ancient church fathers' hypothesis: that God gives Job an eschatological vision, not a providential one, which indicates how He will deal with evil.[258] The hidden plan God seeks to clarify may not be an operational flowchart of divine governance, but a historical plan, in action, to smite the enemy represented by the two beasts. Fyall, Ortlund, Yancey, and Belcher agree that God is predicting that He will judge and bring justice. [259] Olojede adds that this ends the "nightmare" Job wanted to

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[253]Clines, "Shape," 129–131; Gordis also, *Book of Job,* 560–566.

[254] Tsevat, 212–218. Morriston, 350 acknowledges Tsevat's point.

[255]Ash, 376.

[256]Ortlund, 169; Walton, *Job*, 417.

[257]Habel, "Design," 413.

[258]Shields, 37–38; Andersen, 185 also. Both suggest a proleptic viewpoint, with eschatological victory occurring both at the cross and also in the eschaton.

[259]Fyall, 170–172; Ortlund, 177; Yancey, "Fresh Reading," 148; Belcher, 369–370.

wake up from.[260] Ortlund affirms it was revelatory enough to silence and humble Job, and return him to perfect trust.[261] Shields explains that the "closure" and "comfort" of this eschatological vision is what made the Yahweh encounter substantial and satisfying.[262] It was not just the encounter itself.

In conclusion, Christology suggests that the elements of retribution, chastisement, and mystery that ring true in Job may relate to Messianic and typological connection: the retribution Christ satisfied (Isa 53:4; Rom 4:25); the chastisement He received to obtain peace with God (Isa 53:5; 1 Pet 2:24); and the mystery of the Lamb slain before the foundations of the world (1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8). It can be recalled that Morriston believed Job's friends did not have a place for the idea that "God would destroy a righteous person," or that He would have "a good reason for making an innocent man suffer."[263] It is equally baffling, to many, how God could permit Satan to test Job within a sovereign paradigm. Yet, these come together if Job's experience—as prototypical of Christ's nomination, suffering, descent, and ascent—was supposed to reveal or bring to light a hidden plan of God: one that was in His higher purposes, embedded within ancient Israelite faith, and is intricately connected to His governance. Job was rebuked, but not punished, for clouding this witness. He spoke out of the flesh, but God knew he was enduring a Messianic testing of it.

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[260]Olojede, 730.

[261]Ortlund, 177.

[262]Shields, 38.

[263]Morriston, 340, 345. Newsom, 51 also refers to this "contradiction" in Israelite theology being exposed through Job.

This explanation also helps distinguish Job from other theodical and wisdom texts. Scholars note the significant parallels between Job and the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, apocryphal texts, and the comparative myths of the ANE. But Job becomes distinct for suggesting that it will not be a doctrine, but a person who looks something like him, who will resolve the paradox of the Epicurean trilemma. A righteous and favored one, who appears as God's "best man," as Tsevat calls Job,[264] will go through a passion experience that brings him down to the gates of Sheol. Yet, in view of God's rhetorical questions to Job, someone who has the authority to limit the seas, bind the beasts, and judge the wicked (Job 38–39; 40:9–14) will overturn the Adversary's case; and, bring in a renewal where God's justice and goodness can be seen.

The book of Job also uniquely exposes the Adversary's work in this, and God's goodness and sovereignty in active work against that agency. God enters Job's painful existence, declines to earth's courtroom, and shows him the sinister presence within creation that resists human conquest. If Christ's testimony is permitted to finish this story, then justice and love are seen by God becoming the Job; He fulfills His own call to suffer and overcome evil. The latter is not required to interpret the book of Job. But, if parts of the gospel are detectable in Job, it is because there is a subsequent part of the biblical narrative where God is said to solve the problem of evil existing in His domain, through a suffering servant. With this in mind, the next chapter will discuss implications of a Christological approach to theodicy in Job. Important ways that this methodological shift affects theodicy, hermeneutics, and ministry will be considered.

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[264]Tsevat, 193.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS OF A METHODOLOGICAL SHIFT

Introduction

This thesis has surveyed theodicy in Job and encouraged a Christological approach, for a fresh angle on old questions. Chapter 1 opened with the problem of theodicy in Job, and how its interpretive history is "at an impasse," according to C. J. Williams,[1] having made "little to no progress" on why Job suffers, Westermann claims.[2] Chapter 2 surveyed this interpretive history and the most common, historically rooted theodicies in Job. Chapter 3 then put forth two non-classical theodicies, with a resynthesis of existing material, as a bridge for permitting Christology to speak to mysteries in Job. This concluding chapter will end with implications for this approach, specifically in theodicy, hermeneutics, and ministry.

Implications for Theodicy

This thesis has aimed to encourage new hope for theodical enterprise in Job, partly because theodicy has great apologetical and ministerial value. Every person encounters the problem of pain, and Job is uniquely part of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and secular traditions. It is therefore worth investing in, so that instead of a pessimistic,

[1]C. J. Williams, xi.

[2]Westermann, 52–53.

cynical, or sad reputation, it could witness hope and optimism. Ortlund says Job is "God's assurance that He will one day get rid of evil."[3] Boyd agrees, adding that God "identifies" with Job and humanity in the fight against the Fall.[4] Shifting how theodicy is approached in Job could significantly change its perception and potential.

In this context, the exploration of Job as communion and eschatological theodicy, in this thesis, is not a definitive argument as much as a movement in this direction. Contemporary research reunited with ancient research, and cast from a Christological perspective, is one way to develop a positive approach and vocabulary around why Job suffers—and why God is good and sovereign to permit it. It does not answer everything. It simply offers that Job does not have to be painful.

The book does not have to stand for retribution or chastisement. These are likely biblical theodicies substantiated elsewhere. But in Job, they yield unedifying or incomplete explanations. Job representing the national history of Israel, or pious believers, who are chosen to be afflicted or chastised until the Lord's deliverance, mitigates the refuge of His kingdom and covenant. Scripture certainly affirms that choosing God means entering sanctification and possibly persecution. It also adjures accepting the Lord's discipline. But these lessons may not be the main message of Job's 34 chapters of pain. Raz observes that it is almost as if God desires to capture Job's pain, for some reason; or, to portray him as specially communicating, even characterized by,

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[3]Ortlund, 176.

[4]Boyd, "The Point of the Book," 5.

intense pain.[5] She rightfully senses that Job's situation, which is inexplicable and extreme, must be conveying something inexplicable and extreme about God also.[6] This is where it makes sense to consider the Messianic journey as an interpretive key, with its communion and eschatological underpinnings.

What about the other paradigms? Mystery and anti-theodicy are the most accepted lenses of Job today. But, as Tsevat argues, it is strange to think that a long, poignant narrative, complete with a rare, extended theophany, would conclude with agnosticism, anti-theodicy, or the inscrutable purposes of God.[7] Westermann, Gault, and Torr rightly emphasize the appearance of Yahweh as the answer to Job's alienation.[8] However, a long, contentless speech would not bring Job through a process that results in worship and retraction.

Similarly, Job is not a simple free will defense in the classic way Christian theists propose. Plantinga and others have offered a compelling theodicy overall: that Job is suffering due to Satanic abuse and the effects of the Fall in the created order. But the free will defense, by itself, does not explain the significance of Job. Why is he chosen by God and Satan to be tested so severely? What does this gain or prove? How does free will explain Job's protection before and after the test, but not during it? These kinds of questions are not adequately answered.

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[5]Raz, 79.

[6]Raz, 87.

[7]Tsevat, 192–197.

[8]Westermann, 55–58; Gault, 165; Torr, 208–209.

Lastly, practical theodicy, which emphasizes how to respond to suffering, is a welcome application of Job's narrative. But it also cannot interpret Job's experience or significance. Counselors therefore are divided between those who believe encountering God is desirable, and those who believe it is not. The interpretation of Job, through this lens, provides no good way to choose.

Consequently, this thesis has argued that if Job is recapitulating anyone's experience, it is not Israel's, nor the saved, nor the sinner's—it is the Messiah's. His pain and restoration may not primarily serve to demonstrate mystery, free will, nor a practical response. Rather, Job's journey is prophetically revealing the suffering involved in the eschatological defeat of evil. It also reveals a certain type of communion in that pursuit and through that pursuit. The Lord Himself is intricately involved with the initiation and execution.

In the view of this thesis, the book of Job is therefore rightfully positioned as a theodical text speaking directly to the problem of evil. The common suggestion that Job does not answer the question of suffering, in his case or anyone else's, is misguided.[9] The corresponding advice to ask the text different questions, or put aside questions altogether,[10] may also be misplaced. There is wisdom in this advice, but it ignores how the text is functioning. Tsevat argues the book has been designed to answer the questions

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[9]Walton, *Job*, 22, 414; Ash, 42–4; Viberg, 202; Fox, "Meanings," 14–15; Ortlund, 173; Trevor B. Williams, 687; Clines, "Shape and Argument," 138; Burrell, 86.

[10]Clines, "Job," 483; Morriston, 352–356; Gordis, "Ecology," 198–199; Carson, 374–376.

it itself raises; it also portrays God as yearning to answer the conflict that is introduced.[11] Julian the Arian, likewise, portrays God as desiring to make Himself "accessible" to Job and the reader: to reveal His purposes rather than conceal them.[12] Yahweh's coming to earth is a sign that validates Tsevat and Julian's perspective rather than the alternative one.

Yahweh then dignifies Job, judges and corrects, and brings new knowledge of His plan or design. There is healthy debate over precisely what this knowledge is, but this thesis maintains that Job and God are looking at the problem of evil squarely—the trilemma in its broadest sense—and accepting those questions. The conundrum is what the text is about; it is what it begins to answer; and, it is what readers are supposed to ask. The next section will consider hermeneutics and what view of Scripture best supports this line of investigation in Job.

Hermeneutical Implications

Hermeneutics guide what scholars expect from, and find in, a biblical text. It is therefore important to examine how rules of interpretation, and assumptions about Scripture, have affected Joban interpretation. In his article, "Hermeneutics or *Zeitgeist* . . . ," Stanley N. Gundry warns of the steering influence that cultural mood has on theology and hermeneutics. He quotes the central theory of James Orr, that the dogma

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[11]Tsevat, 195–197.

[12]Meeks, 30.

of today becomes the systematic theology of tomorrow.[13] Ultimately, while Gundry allows for a contextual element in theology and hermeneutics, he maintains that cultural mood and dogma determine interpretation and methodology much more than they should.[14]

Context is Important

This insight is relevant to Job and theodicy. Especially since Job is ancient, poetic, with corruptions, gaps, and no knowable historical context, it is particularly susceptible to the prevailing *zeitgeist* of the era. Each historical time period has significantly shaped what people found in Job and imagined they could find. In Jewish interpretive history, Job has been examined from apocryphal, Talmudic, medieval, modern, and post-Auschwitz lenses.[15] In Christian history, Job has passed through the apologetical era and controversies of the church fathers; medieval scholastic, mystical, and high Catholic approaches; the Reformation with its concerns about predestination and sanctification; and the Enlightenment era with its foci on freedom and theism.[16] The

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[13]Stanley N. Gundry, "Hermeneutics Or 'Zeitgeist' as the Determining Factor in the History of Eschatologies?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20, no. 1 (March 1977): 45, *AtlaSerialsPLUS*®, EBSCOhost (2 March 2023).

[14]Gundry, 50. Gundry's topic is eschatology, but because it is shaped by historical context, his insights are relevant to theodicy also.

[15]For generalizations about Jewish historical eras regarding Job, see Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary for America, 2011).

[16]The generalizations about Christian historical eras are informed by Gundry and Olson.

contemporary era adds multiple defining lenses that have shaped hermeneutics and theology in Job: higher criticism, deconstructionism, and evangelical pietism are a few of them. Each era contains its own historical dogmas and cultural moods which shape theological trends and approaches to the text.

Job, therefore, acts much like a mirror. It reflects what is believed, and sometimes feared, about God or biblical faith. If God is believed to be morally incomprehensible, or chastising, or forsaking humanity, then at the end of a long exegetical journey, it may be discovered that Job says what the interpreter believed it would. Additionally, the problem of evil itself is such a culturally conditioned topic, that it also is susceptible to historical mood and changing rules for examination. Rules for approaching both the biblical text and the data to be understood change with Job, reflecting the priorities of the age. They determine, for a time, what will be found, and even what is desirable to find.

This contextualism is not meant to demean the text or theodical endeavor. Rather, it provides hope. It may be that Job and theodicy are not objectively at a standstill, but are culturally at one. Torr and Carter, for example, both report relative positivity towards Job and theodicy in Africa. Because Job is seen as validating the reality of spiritual warfare, but also encounter and deliverance by God, there is less angst theologically over the text. Torr diagnoses the root of Western negativity about Job in a rejection of the supernatural,[17] whereas Carter locates it in a theological preoccupation with God's

[17]Torr, 208.

sovereignty.[18] But both agree that "the entire conversation of theodicy in Africa" entails a "radical re-framing" of the dialogue within Western tradition.[19] This suggests hope, because at least some of what is perceived as exegetically objective in Western scholarship may turn out to be subjective and temporary. Job, as a universal text, has potential if a warm, interpretive grid can be recovered.

Hermeneutical Suggestions

To examine this prospect, two hermeneutical premises require discussion. The first is the distinctly Christian position that Christology should be permitted to speak to the mysteries of Job. As noted in chapter 1, Wallace and Green define Christology as the nature and journey of Christ, and what the Father accomplishes through Him.[20] Vern S. Poythress claims that Christ Himself taught that He was "the focus of the message of the Old Testament, especially His death and His resurrection" in Luke 24:13–49.[21] Kevin J. Conner and Ken Malmin add that 1 Corinthians 10:6 supports the Old Testament as God's record of events that are "examples" or "types" of events to come.[22] In view of

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[18]Carter 146, 148, 166, 170. Carter argues that the "Pentecostalized cosmos," 170 of the Fang in Equatorial Guinea causes them to be unafraid to say the devil is "causally responsible" for evil.

[19]Carter, 146.

[20]Wallace and Green, 239.

[21]Poythress, 5.

[22]Kevin J. Conner and Ken Malmin, *Interpreting the Scriptures,* (Portland, OR: City Publishing, 1993), 137. They also add the central importance of Christ fulfilling these events and being the anti-type for many things in the Old Testament.

this, where interpretive gaps in Job make tone, motive, and theological constructs ambiguous, scriptural touchpoints with Christ's person and work should be permitted to illumine those areas.

The second premise is related to the first: that there is one problem of evil, spoken to by both testaments. The alternative would be two different problems of evil, or two theodicies, one given in the Old Testament and the other in the New Testament. Ortlund speaks to this in his research on the Adversary. He argues that Christians "must connect" Satan and the Adversary at the risk of having "two heavenly beings, both with the same title, both of whom accuse God's saints, one malicious and the other apparently not so."[23] His point extends beyond semantics, and into hermeneutics, because a broader connection between the Old and New Testaments is required to identify *ha satan* in Job with the Satan narratives affecting Christ. Correspondingly, theology that circulates those two clusters would also have to connect. From a Christological perspective, therefore, it is not just the theology of the Adversary and the theology of Satan which require connectedness. The theodical resolution of evil itself does, even though the two testaments express their understanding of that resolution differently.

A biblical theological view of Scripture emphasizes continuity between Old and New Testaments, as well as typical fulfillment. It therefore best underlies the approach and theology presented in this thesis. New Testament interpretations of the Old Testament have sometimes been unbalanced in the past. But because the New Testament offers so much theology surrounding key issues in Job—especially Satan, the

[23]Ortlund, 13.

eschatological battle over evil, and significance of suffering—reforming the methodology is better than rejecting it. Poythress attempts a balance when he says, on one hand, Christ teaches that the express purpose of the Old Testament, including the Psalms, was to reveal that the Messiah would come, suffer, and then enter His glory (Luke 24:25–27, 44). Yet, this does not permit interpreters to "fancifully impose" on the Old Testament what it meant to say, or should have said. Rather, readers must see what the text really does say, and appreciate that New Testament truths have long chains of teachings and tensions that begin in Genesis 1, not at the cross. The application to Job, for Poythress, is that Job is "remarkably like" and "remarkably unlike" Christ at the same time, and differences should not be obscured with a theological agenda.[24]

Conner and Malmin, likewise, emphasize that a type "resembles" the anti-type but is still "essentially different."[25] So, on the one hand, Christ is spoken of as the entryway point to mysteries contained in the Old Testament (1 Cor 2:7; Col 2:2–3), which may illumine Job's experience and any doctrine revealed by it.[26] On the other hand, points of correspondence should not be forced upon Job, nor used to silence "unlike" features.

Goldsworthy makes a slightly bolder claim: that theodicy in Job cannot be discerned apart from Christ, because scriptural wisdom and revelation are "ultimately pointed towards Christ and the gospel." By this, Goldsworthy means they are not oriented

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[24]Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Press, 1991), 6–8.

[25]Conner and Malmin, 137.

[26]Conner and Malmin, 138 also argue that doctrines should not be built on types alone.

around something else, even something noble like solving the problem of evil. Rather, they are part of revealing "the Lord of history who . . . is steering everything that exists to its final destiny."[27] Yet, even in this position, Goldsworthy is careful to say that the Old Testament is "not Christian," nor are Old Testament saints like Job "living Christian lives."[28] He would disagree with Christian interpretations that Job is getting saved or sanctified.[29] While contending that the book of Job should be understood by its relationship to the gospel, Goldsworthy discusses the important differences between Old and New Testament theologies of salvation, the afterlife, and the coming Kingdom. He approaches Poythress' schema that similarities between Old and New Testament theodicy are "remarkably like" yet "remarkably unalike."[30] Ultimately, Goldsworthy advocates viewing Job as "a hint of glory and glimpse of what is to come,"[31] especially covenant redemption and the future regeneration of all things.[32] He therefore connects Old Testament and New Testament theodicy by describing the problem of evil as something Messianic deliverance is meant to resolve.

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[27]Goldsworthy, 73–75.

[28]Goldsworthy, 22.

[29]Job is being born-again in J. Sidlow Baxter, *Baxter's Explore the Book*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan,1987), 23–80; Mears portrays Job as an example of sanctification by the purging of the flesh.

[30]Goldsworthy, 73–75.

[31]Goldsworthy, 175.

[32]Goldsworthy, 32, 173–175.

Still, Christological interpretation of the Old Testament is concerning for many. Brueggemann discusses a desire to "deliver" the Old Testament from Christian "misrepresentation."[33] Alter describes his translation work as "rescuing" the Psalms and wisdom literature from the "theological theater" of Christianity.[34] Paul L. Redditt endorses Alter's approach, claiming that the materializing of words like "soul" to "belly" causes the "earthiness" of Hebrew deliverance to prevail over New Testament abstraction.[35] Brueggemann similarly validates Alter's quest to "recover the historical materiality of the faith," calling Christian influence a "gnostic" and "otherworldly seduction" that still "haunts" the wisdom literature.[36] Since Brueggemann views Job as an extended lament psalm, he indicates Job's deliverance message should be confined to Yahweh appearing and restoring Job's earthly life—nothing more, nothing less. This hermeneutical approach is considerably at odds with the approach supporting this thesis.

Additionally, among Christian scholars, Christology is often avoided. Some scholars are sensitive to voices like Alter's and Brueggemann's, and do not want to appear as though they are appropriating the text. Others are convicted about the

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[33]Brueggemann, *Psalms,* 51–52.

[34]Alter, *Psalms,* xxxiii–xxxiv.

[35]Paul L. Redditt, review of *The Book of Psalms*, by Robert Alter, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 27, no. 2 (2009): 201, *ProjectMUSE,* EBSCOhost (20 October 2022). Find a concerned response to Alter's emendations in Gary A. Anderson, "Altering the Psalms," review of *The Book of Psalms*, by Robert Alter, *First Things* 179 (January 2008): 45-48, *Points of View Reference Center*, EBSCOhost (5 November 2022).

[36]Brueggemann, *Psalms,* 53, 52.

historicity of the Old Testament and dignity of the book of Job as it is, without it being eclipsed by subsequent revelation. Clines therefore claims that the best thing Christian interpreters can do in Job is "forswear" a Christological reading.[37] James G. Williams concurs, saying the pre-critical view which assumes Job is a type of Christ is outmoded.[38] Both scholars are critical of the church fathers' readings of Job, their allegorization of certain passages, and their defense of church dogma through the text.[39]

Also to be avoided, in their evaluation, is a kenotic view of wisdom literature promoted by Augustine and still popular in Catholic and Orthodox hermeneutics today, according to O. C. Edwards Jr.[40] Jason Byassee articulates the view well, explaining that God incarnates Himself in hearers during liturgical readings, which permits Christ to keep leading and transforming His Body, the Church.[41] Edwards describes modern Protestant exegesis as prioritizing Old Testament study in isolation as much as possible,

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[37]Clines, *Job 1–20*, lv.

[38]James G. Williams, 360.

[39]For example, Ephrem the Syrian's teaching was that the three friends symbolize the Jewish high priests, priests, and prophets who condemn national Israel; while Job's seven sons post-restoration represent New Testament church offices: apostles, presbyters, deacons, etc. See Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Job 42:11* (ESOO 2:3); quoted in *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. VI, ed. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 13.

[40]O. C. Edwards Jr., review of *The Book of Psalms*, by Robert Alter, *Anglican Theological Review* 91, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 146, *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost (2 February 2023).

[41]Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007). Byassee's concern is the personal and sociological effects of removing Christology from Old Testament exegesis.

except for texts that would shed light on vocabulary and historical context.[42] This reduces dogmatic readings of the text, but, according to Poythress, can lead to focusing on the original author's meaning at the expense of greater significance. The Holy Spirit, speaking the mind of God from an eternal perspective, may give prophetic testimony through authors who were unaware at the time.[43] A Christological approach to Job depends on accepting the latter.

Despite disagreement about the permeability of Old and New Testament boundaries, diverse conversation exists and should be nurtured to promote more optimism and healthy Messianic discussion. Considerable theological and hermeneutical agreement exists, for example, between Jewish and Calvinist conceptions of divine chastisement: Corey's framing of Job's journey of suffering and election has much in common with C. J. William's framing of Job's journey into descension and ascension. Likewise, Maimonides' view of providence in the theophany, which Gordis has reinvented well, agrees with Reformed and free will views which emphasize providential revelation as the key to Job. Newsom dialogues well with Habel over the legal metaphor, even though they disagree on its depth. Tsevat and Ash agree that Yahweh replaces retributive justice as the guiding principle of creation, even though they disagree on what He is replacing it with. These are just some of the areas where convergence is visible, despite different hermeneutical convictions.

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[42]Edwards, 144–145.

[43]Vern S. Poythress, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture," in Greg K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrongs Texts: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 85–94.

To conclude this matter, a Christological approach to Job requires caution but could be developed further within a biblical theological view of Scripture. In presuming continuity about the theodical message, and using the New Testament to inform mysteries in the text of Job, the aim would not be to repeat errors from the past. The goal would be to have a rigorous, robust analysis that non-cynically examines why Job is suffering, in order to construct the right theodicy for his narrative. Points of correspondence should not be forced. However, from the perspective of this thesis, if the mystery of Job is examined in light of the revealed mystery of Christ, the Lord's sufferings and glory are detectable in it. In fact, it appears that the Holy Spirit was, at an early period of history, prophesying a Messianic theodicy: that in the future, an unjustly afflicted servant would be chosen by God to suffer, and have his sufferings accepted, in order to bind satanic evil within His good and sovisreign reign.

Ministerial Implications

Finally, there are implications for ministry if a Christological approach to Job is taken. The most important is that Job could cease being viewed as an existential book of Scripture about why God sends pain and remains silent during it.[44] There is a more edifying way to see Job, and other eras and contexts indicate this is possible.

Some commentators have already made this ministerial concern, about insensitive theodicy, a priority. Ortlund, for example, corroborates that common lay theodicies for Job appear to be that God is either punishing someone, or making them grow; which,

[44]A brief testimony about this is located in the preface.

become platitudes scarcely different from Job's friends'. He mentions: "Maybe you've opened a door for the devil," or "God is trying to teach you something." Also common is, "God is making you more like Jesus through this," and "In the end, it will all make sense."[45] Walton shares similar mantras.[46] Dahl argues that these continue to circulate, despite falling flat, because a theodicy instinct compels sufferers to ask why they are suffering and what God wants from them. This then triggers helpers to offer doctrine, hoping this will guide the sufferer through.[47]

These observations indicate why theodical endeavor in Job is so important: because it becomes a grid for ministry. Theodicy may begin as a search for a rationally excellent explanation, but it bears good or bad fruit as a proactive and responsive schema for suffering. People naturally minister what they believe is true to those who are hurting, believing it will help them. Additionally, hurt people are often vulnerable, inquisitive, and open to revisiting their ideas about God for a short time. A small window may exist where God can be witnessed well. This puts Job in a unique ministerial situation.

If theology reinforces the wrong messages, more people may turn away from God in a moment of questioning. If experts conclude that God is indeed hidden, gruff, or designing tests that people must pass honorably, then a person may fear God, fear the tests, or both. Anti-theodicy dispels this schema as inaccurate, but offers nothing in its place that can be said about Job or the problem of evil. One Bible study opens, "Think of

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[45]Ortlund, 179–180.

[46]Walton, *Job*, 440–444.

[47]Dahl, 65–66.

Job as Everyman . . . representative of us all. Job is any man who suffers, questions, cries out . . . sometimes with no apparent success, for God. You are Job."[48] This moral conclusion is similar to *Waiting for Godot's*: God is distant from the world, and people cannot expect God to be there when they need Him. No one can know why there is pain, or how to interpret it, because no one can know Him. The mantra becomes, "It is just how it is," or "Trust God. His ways are higher than yours, but He is with you." Existential confusion results, however, as the cry to understand evil is rendered meaningless. People must simply have faith that God is trustworthy, even though Job's experience does not validate that. Ash exhorts to give Him glory and worship Him anyway.[49] This is not unbiblical, but it is somewhat tone-deaf.

This thesis has argued that if Job is viewed as typological of Christ, and experiencing a type of His passion and resurrection, then the anguish Job suddenly experiences—with God's permission—is recontextualized. Job is not an "everyman," justifying why someone gets cancer or killed in an accident. His sufferings do not demonstrate that pandemics, war, or other intrusions of evil are committed in His Name for mysterious purposes. Job is a peculiar example, being removed from the default relational presence of God, for a prophetic reason. His case is exemplary, not one God is

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[48]William M. Ramsey, "Job, the Story of a Man Confronting Adversity: A Seven Week Bible Study for Men," (Louisville, KY: Office for Men's Ministries of the Presbyterian Church - U. S. A., 1996), 5; *Presbyterian Mission*, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/job.pdf/ (6 March 2023).

[49]Ash, 51 says, in context: "The glory of God really is more important than your or my comfort." Also his signature conclusion, that "The book of Job is . . . about how God treats his friends," which is witty but terrifying if someone believes it, 42–43.

seeking to purposefully replicate, in exactly the same way, in all His followers' lives. Alternatively, Boyd suggests, God's will in Job might be better seen in "His loving and powerful response to Job's afflictions" rather than the afflictions themselves.[50] People can be encouraged to fight in His Name for healing, justice, or reformation, because that is what God personally returned to Job. Even if victory is long in coming, or does not come about at all, the trust in Job lies in Yahweh's "plan" or "design" to end evil, which resonates with humanity's deepest heart cry.

Conclusion

Lastly, there is an aspect of faith in viewing Job that is not reducible to theology: a commitment to hope. If this has been destroyed by a postmodern *zeitgeist*, then it should be reclaimed prior to study. Otherwise, the eye will only see great darkness, and this will fill the soul (Matt 6:23).

Importantly, hope is not an unwarranted assumption. The narrative of Job itself invites hope in chapter 42. But, in light of the arguments Greenstein, Newsom, and Margulies make, the passage cannot coerce hopeful interpretation. It is an interpretive choice, as C. J. Williams emphasizes:

> I have always thought that . . . one of the greatest ironies of the book . . . is that . . . at the end . . . Job seems to understand the intent and impact of God's speeches better than we ever will . . . Whatever he understood, his response was more wise and faithful than any commentator's analysis. He did not puzzle over God's rhetorical questions . . . He did not say, "You didn't answer my question!" Judging from his humbled response, he understood God's answer perfectly.[51]

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[50]Boyd, "The Point of the Book," 5.

[51]C. J. Williams, 86–87.

Williams makes an important point. Although he does not hypothesize why Job is satisfied, practical experience suggests that Job might have known the true goodness of God, prior to his world being turned upside down. Confusion about Job's blamelessness has made it normal for readers to question his piety. But if Job truly was blameless, and faithful from the heart, then it is likely he experienced the goodness of God in worship. He momentarily lost this orientation in his tribulation. Yet, God's response seems to have triggered Job's immediate and unquestioning trust as if he recognized the God he had worshipped before. His eyes saw the one he had hoped and believed in (Job 42:5).

This moment in the text, not Job 1–3, is arguably where the average person should invite themselves into the narrative of Job. This thesis has argued that Job's sufferings are Messianic and eschatological, and therefore should be filtered for points of discontinuity before arriving at points of continuity. However, what seems applicable is that Job, a regular human being, had to choose whether he would persist in a dark appraisal of what had happened to him, or whether he would connect to God in hope again. Although the cynical interpretation argues otherwise, the text literarily and theologically indicates that Job chooses hope and worship again.

If it is good enough for Job, can it be good enough for the reader? Olojede says Job realizes that God had been with him in his darkness.[52] Shields says that Yahweh gives Job "closure."[53] Tsevat claims that Job had "desired confrontation" but "received

[52]Olojede, 730.

[53]Shields, 38.

communion" instead.[54] Yet, readers as Job's witnesses, must choose whether the darkness in Job's story will encourage their own separation from God, or unity with Him. The interpretation comes down to what the book is really for. If the eye is dim, the darkness in Job's narrative will cause the reader to feel worse about God after reading it. If mystery or chastisement is the theodical grid, then hope for theodicy may also dim. There must be conviction brought from the full counsel of Scripture, and Job's own testimony in 42:1–6, that God plans to draw near and destroy what rivals His goodness and sovereignty. This is in process, from Job 1 to Job 42. Through Job, Yahweh advances a step in His promise to enter the unjust system, defeat evil on humanity's behalf, and suffer the curse of its existence with them until its complete demise.

This interpretation requires optimism like many stories in Scripture do. Whether the event is the flood of Noah, the sacrifice of Isaac, or the cross of Christ, there must be a commitment that God is not hiding, but He is coming. He is not concealing Himself, but He is revealing Himself. And, He is not ignoring, but He is acting. Supported by Christology, Job can be seen this way. It is the position of this thesis that the latter approach should be explored and expanded until the book that has been iconic for pain, hiddenness, and mystery, has a chance to minister the solace, revelation, and explanation that is also contained within it.

[54]Tsevat, 206.

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