READING JOB:
RICOEUR'S TEXTUAL THEORY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF JOB

by

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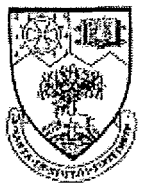

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Abstract:

Biblical Studies is said to be in a time of crisis. This context requires a clearer understanding of the relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics. Paul Ricoeur is a Christian philosopher who has intelligently articulated this relationship. This thesis offers a description, an evaluation and an application of his textual theory. Ricoeur identified four dimensions of textuality: (1) the text as a written communication; (2) the text as a structured work; (3) the text as a projection of a world; and (4) the text as a mediation of self-understanding. These dimensions are examined as they related to general hermeneutics (chapter 1), and to biblical hermeneutics (chapter 2). After an evaluation of Ricoeur's theory (chapter 3) each of these dimensions of textual interpretation are applied to the book of Job (chapters 4-7). Although Ricoeur's hermeneutics is not above criticism it does provide a creative way forward in a time of crisis.

For my family, Elsie, Leah, Luke and Jordyn
in recognition of their loving patience and support

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> *Protests, then, against the postmodern readings of the Bible are likely to be ineffectual. Unless, that is, those who care about serious reading of the gospels set about exploring ways in which to articulate a better epistemology, leading to a better account of what happens when a text is being read, a better account of what happens when a sacred text is being read . . . There is a sense . . . in which this demands a full theory of language. We need to understand, better than we commonly do, how language works.*[1]

Biblical studies is in a state of crisis today. The din from the innumerable interpretive approaches vying for a voice is deafening. Many scholars continue to utilize the traditional methods of historical-criticism. However, an excess of methods has emerged in the last half century suggesting that historical criticism's hegemony in the academy is slipping. These approaches have emerged as a reaction and a critique of the modern façade of objectivity and the atomizing tendencies in critical scholarship.

Although there are many aspects of this new literary turn to affirm there is also reason for concern. Moderate literary approaches maintain the integrity of the given form of the text and shift the focus from the world behind the text to the world present in the text. More radical ideological approaches, including deconstruction, and feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial critiques, maintain a posture of extreme suspicion toward the ideology of the text.

The real problem for Christian biblical scholars in this context of crisis is not which method to choose from the multitude; moreover, the solution is not to keep doing theological interpretation as though nothing has changed. Rather, what is crucial is a

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[1] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 61-63; cited in Craig G. Bartholomew, "Before Babel and After Pentecost: Language, Literature and Biblical Interpretation," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 131.

critical engagement and thorough evaluation which penetrates to the philosophical and/or epistemological foundations of these methods.

Although biblical studies today is in a state of crisis, this is also a time of opportunity. A number of creative and capable Christian scholars have sought to seize this opportunity, including Brevard S. Childs with his canonical approach,[2] Francis Watson and Stephen E. Fowl with their own respective theological hermeneutics,[3] and Kevin J. Vanhoozer with his trinitarian hermeneutic,[4] to name a few. These proposals hold out the hope for a hermeneutic formed and driven by Christian presuppositions.

While these new hermeneutical proposals present exciting new ways forward in the present crisis, the question has been raised whether or not they have adequately met the *philosophical* challenge of modernism/postmodernism.[5] Whether explicitly or implicitly these proposals conceptualize the relationship between philosophy and theology (reason and faith) in distinct ways. The way forward in biblical hermeneutics will involve an attempt to overcome the dichotomy between faith and reason and to recognize that "biblical hermeneutics has theological *and* philosophical dimensions and *both need to be informed by faith seeking understanding.*"[6]

One scholar who has grappled with the philosophical challenge of modernism and postmodernism is the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). The purpose of this

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[2] Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection of the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).
[3] Stephen E. Fowl, *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997); Francis Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994); Watson, *Text and Truth, Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997).
[4] See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in this Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).
[5] Craig Bartholomew, "Philosophy, Theology and the Crisis in Biblical Interpretation," in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 1; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 29.
[6] Ibid., 33 (emphasis added).

study is to explore the complex relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics, using Ricoeur's groundbreaking work as a starting point. Ricoeur was a creative and prolific hermeneutical theorist and a person of faith who struggled to articulate the relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and theological hermeneutics. Although he was not a biblical scholar, he produced studies which reveal the implications of his hermeneutics for biblical interpretation. Indeed, Ricoeur found himself perplexed by the ambiguous relationship between philosophy and theology. In one sense, theological hermeneutics appeared to him to be a regional hermeneutics in the more general category of philosophical hermeneutics. However, in another sense, theological hermeneutics has a universal claim and, in this light, philosophical hermeneutics functions as an instrument of theological hermeneutics.[7]

Ricoeur's articulation of the significance of symbol and his openness to religious experience makes his hermeneutics attractive to theologians, and there is a growing number of works focusing on the value of Ricoeur's hermeneutics for theological purposes.[8] He was a competent scholar who was able to synthesize creatively the thoughts of many different philosophers and theologians, from Aristotle to Bultmann to Derrida, in a way that actively criticized the foundation of modernism while avoiding the extremes of much that goes under the category of postmodern. His concerted focus on

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[7] Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics: Ideology, Utopia and Faith* (Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture 17; Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union and the University of California, 1976), 1.

[8] For works devoted strictly to Ricoeur and his value for theologians and biblical exegetes see Loretta Dornisch, *Faith and Philosophy in the Writings of Paul Ricoeur* (Problems in Contemporary Philosophy 29; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mark I. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale Theology* (Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990); James Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics: Paul Ricoeur and the Refiguring of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Dan R. Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Gregory J. Laughery, *Living Hermeneutics in Motion: An Analysis and Evaluation of Paul Ricoeur's Contribution to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002).

the text and his determination to avoid a system which looks for meaning behind the text are positive developments. Moreover, while his insistence that meaning is constituted by the reader is problematic, he has argued that this must take place within the bounds of the text, and there appears to be room in his proposal for legitimate hermeneutical critique which is rare in postmodern theories.[9] Finally, the terms in which he expressed the text's existential call for the reader to participate in a re-created reality is particularly persuasive and has significant implications for biblical hermeneutics. Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory is not without fault but he has certainly raised many key issues in hermeneutics and brought the discussion to a new level.[10]

Charles E. Reagen, a protégé of Ricoeur, said of his mentor: "Above all, Paul Ricoeur is a *teacher* of philosophy. He taught us to do a careful reading of philosophical texts, to always give the most generous interpretation to ambiguous or obscure texts, and to give full credit to those we have read and from whom we have learned."[11] The present study is an attempt to interpret Ricoeur's hermeneutics (especially his theory of textuality) in such a charitable manner. Commentators have noted that a great amount of ambiguity exists in the writings of Ricoeur. This ambiguity has allowed both "left-wing" and "right-wing" commentators to appropriate aspects of his theory but has also left Ricoeur vulnerable to attack from both "sides," and this seems to be the destiny of the great mediators.[12] The examination of Ricoeur's hermeneutics will try to draw out the

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[9] Craig Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory* (Analecta Biblica 139; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1998), 25.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Charles E. Reagan, "Philosophical Essays: Personal Identity," in *Paul Ricoeur: His Life and His Works* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 74.
[12] See Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative,* 286, where he uses the terms "left-wing" and "right-wing." Although he thinks that the so-called "left-wing" interpretations will predominate, he prefers the "right-wing" view.

valuable contributions Ricoeur has made to the discussion of general and biblical hermeneutics without ignoring the inconsistencies.

The test of a legitimate hermeneutical theory is in interpretation proper. Thus, in the present study the book of Job will serve as a test case for the proposed hermeneutical model. The book of Job has perplexed readers for millennia and raises many key hermeneutical issues. Anthony Thiselton notes that Job, along with Ecclesiastes and many of the parables, functions "not to supply some packaged piece of information, but to place the reader in a position where he or she can work their way towards certain perspectives or even conclusions first hand . . . [Such texts] do not function *primarily* as raw-material for Christian doctrine . . . Their primary function is to invite or provoke the reader to wrestle actively with the issues, in ways that may involve adopting a series of comparative angles of vision."[13] In fact, the book itself is an existential exercise in hermeneutics: the struggle to reconcile conviction or religious belief with human experience.

This study as a whole is structured around Ricoeur's theory of textuality. He articulated four dimensions of textuality upon which his textual hermeneutics is based: (1) the text as a written communication; (2) the text as a structured work; (3) the text as a projection of a world; and (4) the text as a mediation of self-understanding. The first chapter describes the general tenets of this textual theory as it applies to all texts. The second chapter attempts to elucidate how these four dimensions of textuality relate to the specific region of biblical hermeneutics. Chapter three pauses to consider some of the strengths and weaknesses of Ricoeur's textual theory. In the second half of the study, the book of Job is examined according to these four dimensions. Chapter four considers the

[13] Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 65-66.

speech which is prior to the book of Job, i.e., the way in which Job contributes to a broader discussion within the Israelite wisdom tradition; moreover, it will be necessary to consider the relationship between this broader dialogue and the Torah. Chapter five considers Job as a structured work with special attention to the genre, structure, and style of the book. Chapter six, the most substantial chapter of this study, explicates the projected "world" of the book of Job which the composition of the book creates. Finally, chapter seven attempts to understand the ways in which the book of Job serves to mediate self-understanding. John Calvin's interpretation of Job will be the subject of attention in this chapter particularly because of my roots in the Calvinist tradition. This chapter will try to show how Calvin's theological assumptions influence the way in which he interprets Job and how the book of Job challenges Calvin's assumptions. The final section of this chapter will show some of the ways in which the book of Job stimulates my own self-understanding.

It is hoped that a study of these dimensions of the book of Job will elucidate the message and meaning of the book. Rigorous exegesis of the whole book will not be feasible for this study, and some sections of the book will receive more attention than others. However, the aim is to penetrate to the heart of the book of Job through a general study of the book as a whole. The hope is that the proposed hermeneutical model will bear fruit in understanding the *message* of the book of Job.

Finally, the issues raised in this study are not intended merely as the "stuff" of ivory tower conjecture. While this study recognizes the legitimacy of genuine pluralism in biblical scholarship, it also seeks after a hermeneutical model which attempts to recover the living voice of God. Issues of language are already and at all times at work in

interpretation, and they cannot be avoided.[14] It is often the case, though, that exegetes are not conscious of what views of language are at work in their own interpretation. There is much to gain from becoming more aware of the assumptions at work in exegesis and holding these assumptions up to critical examination. It is hoped that this study will stimulate such thinking. The model which this study seeks aims not primarily at reconstructing the history of Israel or the history of Hebrew literature, nor at challenging the ideological claims of the text but at listening/reading carefully in order *to hear God's address.*

[14] Bartholomew, "Introduction," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), xxv.

CHAPTER 1

RICOEUR'S THEORY OF TEXTUALITY

[Modernity] holds in reserve both the possibility of emptying language by radically formalizing it and the possibility of filling it anew by reminding itself of the fullest meanings, the most pregnant ones, the ones which are most bound by the presence of the sacred to man. It is not regret for the sunken Atlantides that animates us, but the hope for a re-creation of language. Beyond the desert of criticism, we wish to be called again.[1]

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to understand Ricoeur's theory of the text (i.e., textuality). Ricoeur's textual theory did not evolve in a vacuum, and though the dimensions of interpretation permeated his ongoing understanding of the self, he engaged in a concerted effort to work through the issues of *textuality* and *textual hermeneutics*, sub-categories within his larger hermeneutical project, in the 1960s and 1970s. This effort came in reaction to Freudian psychoanalysis and structuralism, both of which are highly suspicious of the communicating subject, *and* to the romanticist bias against explanation in German hermeneutical theorists such as Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer.[2] While Ricoeur's textual theory provides the structure of this whole study, one must realize that this dimension of Ricoeur's thought is

[1] Paul Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil* (trans. Emerson Buchanan; New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 349.
[2] Mark Muldoon, *On Ricoeur* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2002), 45; Mark I. Wallace, "Introduction," in Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (trans. Mark I. Wallace ed. and David Pellauer; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 9. Note that Ricoeur held that all of these schools had vital insights and did not reject any of them but rather sought (more or less successfully) to enfold them into his hermeneutical theory and to hold them in creative tension.

only a part of his larger project of philosophical anthropology.[3] Although Ricoeur found it necessary to adjust his textual theory as he engaged with new developments in literary theory, linguistics and philosophy, it has remained remarkably stable.[4] Ricoeur identified four dimensions or "problematics" of the text upon which he based his textual hermeneutics: (1) the text as a relation between writing and speaking; (2) the text as a structured work; (3) the text as the projection of a world; (4) the text as the mediation of self-understanding.[5] This chapter consists of an explanation of these four dimensions of Ricoeur's textual theory.

1.2 The Text as Discourse: From Speaking to Writing

One of Ricoeur's primary concerns was to account for the relationship between writing and speaking, and he identified discourse as the overriding category under which this discussion should take place. He contended that "no interpretation theory is possible

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[3] Recently scholars have attempted the complicated task of systematizing the corpus of Ricoeur's writing into some kind of coherent whole. His academic "narrative" usually proceeds on the basis of (1) his early exploration of phenomenology, (2) his hermeneutical turn, and (3) his focus on narrative. See for example Wallace, "Introduction," 1-15; Loretta Dornish, "Symbolic Systems and the Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction to the Work of Paul Ricoeur," *Semeia* 4 (1975): 1-21; Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 344-368; Lewis S. Mudge, "Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Lewis S. Mudge; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 9-15.

Some might find my decision to isolate Ricoeur's textual theory and apply it to a biblical text objectionable; see Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative*, 275, 276, who notes that, "While it is true that many followers of Ricoeur limit themselves to applying various aspects of his interpretation theory to biblical texts . . . fully to understand Ricoeur's hermeneutics involves relating it to his earlier (and continuing) project of philosophical anthropology." I am sensitive to Vanhoozer's concern and hope to provide as much context as possible. The limits of this thesis do require a great deal of generalization and, perhaps, distortion. Nevertheless, dialogue between philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics is vital but too often ignored, and Ricoeur's textual theory permits a manageable entry point into the discussion.

[4] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language* (ed. and trans. John B. Thompson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (ed. Don Ihde; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974 [1969]); Paul Ricoeur, *Action and Interpretation, and Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976); Paul Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 4 (1975): 63-73. Additionally, his lecture published as *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics: Ideology, Utopia and Faith* (Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture 17; Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union and the University of California, 1976) contains a thorough summary of his understanding of textuality.

[5] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 3.

that does not come to grips with the problem of writing."[6] He defined a text as "any discourse fixed by writing."[7] Discourse is an event whereby a subject communicates to another subject with the intention of relaying information or affecting action. Ricoeur discussed the act/object structure (or event/meaning dialectic), a structure which he found perplexing. The act of discourse is temporal and fleeting but the object, made up of propositional content, can be reappropriated based upon its meaning. According to Ricoeur, "[t]his dialectic between the utterer's utterance and the utterance's meaning is the basis of the problem of writing."[8] One might raise the objection that not every text so clearly relates or refers back to human speech. Ricoeur maintained, however, that "all writing is added to some anterior speech . . . [and] writing as an institution is subsequent to speech, and seems merely to fix in linear script all the articulations which have already appeared orally."[9]

Regular discourse can be signified as such:

SPEAKER — MESSAGE — HEARER

In this case, the hearer has a measure of immediacy not afforded when discourse is written down. For example, a reader does not have access to hand gestures, body language, facial expression, and vocal intonation. Moreover, the dialogical nature of question and answer is lost in inscription. According to Ricoeur, in spoken discourse the meaning of the discourse is identical to the speaker's intention. Thus, in spoken discourse the "ability of discourse to refer back to the speaking subject presents a

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[6] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 25.
[7] Paul Ricoeur, "What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language* (ed. and trans. John B. Thompson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 145.
[8] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 5.
[9] Ricoeur, "What is a Text?" 146.

character of immediacy because the speaker belongs to the situation of interlocution. He is there, in the sense of being-there, of *Da-sein*. Consequently the subjective intention of the speaker and the discourse's meaning overlap each other in such a way that it is the same thing to understand what the speaker means and what his discourse means."[10] Not so with written discourse.

Something distinct happens when a discourse moves from speaking to writing. Ricoeur's conception of a discourse model of interpretation is based on the following framework:

AUTHOR — TEXT — READER

According to Ricoeur, writing affords the text a measure of autonomy on a number of levels. He argued that the meaning of a text cannot be reduced to what it originally meant, i.e., the psychological meaning of the author (*contra* Schleiermacher and Dilthey). Thus, he referred to the semantic autonomy of the text with respect to (1) its author, (2) its initial audience, and (3) its original reference.[11] Understood as such, the writing-reading relationship is distinct from the speaking-hearing relationship—the essential dialogical characteristic is lost, it is exploded, in the move to writing.[12]

First, when a discourse is inscribed, the meaning of the text and the author's intended meaning no longer coincide; "What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it."[13] It is easy to misrepresent Ricoeur on this matter, concluding that the meaning (or significance) of the text has nothing to do with the

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[10] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 29.
[11] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 5. The first two are briefly considered here, and the third, the autonomy of the text with regard to its original reference, is discussed below under the heading "The Text as a Projection of a World."
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 30.

author, that the text is completely indeterminate.[14] Ricoeur, nevertheless, maintained that a text's original meaning is a clue to its contemporary meaning. He writes,

> The semantic autonomy of the text makes the relation of event and meaning more complex and in this sense reveals it as a dialectic relation. The authorial meaning becomes properly a dimension of the text to the extent that the author is not available for questioning. When the text no longer answers, then it has an author and no longer a speaker. The authorial meaning is the dialectical counterpart of the verbal meaning, and *they have to be constructed in terms of each other.*[15]

Therefore, Ricoeur felt that a legitimate interpretation theory must avoid two fallacious extremes. On the one hand is W. K. Wimsatt's intentional fallacy which posits that the author's intent is the criterion for a valid textual interpretation.[16] On the other hand, Ricoeur felt that it was imperative to balance this lopsided hermeneutical criterion with what he called the "fallacy of the absolute text." Proponents of this error regard the text as authorless, and as a closed system of related signs (e.g., structuralism). Thus, "[i]f the intentional fallacy overlooks the semantic autonomy of the text, the opposite fallacy forgets that a text remains a discourse told by somebody, said by someone to someone else about something. It is impossible to cancel out this main characteristic of discourse without reducing texts to natural objects, i.e., to things which are not man-made, but

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[14] Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 131-136, accuses Wolterstorff on this score: "Wolterstorff unnecessarily distances himself from Ricoeur by seeing Ricoeur as implying a kind of incoherent notion of an 'authorless text'. . . [T]his is too extreme. In fact, Ricoeur's discourse theory is predicated on the basic paradigm of 'someone saying something about something to someone.' Wolterstorff confuses the distantiation of texts from their authors with denial of authors altogether" (133). See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 38-44; and Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Importance of Hermeneutics for a Christian Worldview," in *Discipline Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective* (ed. Roger Lundin; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 41-44. In fact, Stiver notes that this is a common misconception about Ricoeur. If Stiver is right about Wolterstorff, Vanhoozer is perhaps also guilty; see Vanhoozer, *Is there Meaning,* 109, where he accuses Ricoeur of advocating an "authorless text." Clearly Vanhoozer, Wolterstorff and others have identified an ambiguity within Ricoeur's textual theory, and it remains to be seen whether or not this ambiguity can sustain critical scrutiny (see chapter on evaluation below).

[15] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 30 (italics added).

[16] W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954).

which, like pebbles, are found in the sand."[17] Ricoeur held on to the analogy of spoken discourse and maintained that in a sense, "reading is a kind of *response* to what the text says and, also in this sense it is that act by which a certain recognition of the author's intention takes place."[18] Therefore, the sender (i.e., the author) in Ricoeur's framework is an important factor in the interpretive equation.

Second, a written text is liberated from its original audience and creates, as it were, a potentially universal audience.[19] Moreover, it is the response of the reader which *makes* a text meaningful. An indefinite number of readers creates the possibility for an indefinite number of interpretations. This reality has significant hermeneutical implications: "It follows that the problem of the appropriation of the meaning of the text becomes as paradoxical as that of the authorship. The right of the reader and the right of the text converge in an important struggle that generates the whole dynamic of interpretation. Hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends."[20] Formulated as such, while readers ultimately have the constitutive role in creating meaning, both the author and text have a part to play in that process—they serve to limit the range of possible meanings.

1.3 Composition and Codification of the Text: Discourse as a Work

A text is more than merely written discourse; it "is a discourse written in the form of a *work*."[21] A work is an arrangement of sentences which constitutes a discourse. Ricoeur likened the author to an artisan who utilizes a number of techniques in the production of a work. A written discourse as a work displays three characteristics: (1)

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[17] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 30
[18] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 16.
[19] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 31.
[20] Ibid., 32.
[21] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 8 (italicized by Ricoeur).

codification, (2) composition, and (3) style, and the analysis of these dimensions of the text contains a high degree objectification. By identifying these three characteristics, Ricoeur attempted to hold in tension the science and the art of literary production.[22] First, codification refers to the use of genres in the production of a literary work.[23] Like the study of a text's structure, literary genres allow for a more or less objective explanation of the text. Ricoeur did not offer a categorization of the various literary genres and in fact resisted an understanding of genre as merely taxonomic classification.

It is difficult to understand exactly what Ricoeur meant by genre. On the one hand, he seemed to equate genres with forms of discourse.[24] On the other hand, he distinguished between various forms of discourse (e.g., poems, narratives, and essays) and genres which "are the technical rules presiding over their production."[25] For Ricoeur literary genres "provide rules for encoding and decoding a message produced as a poem, a narrative, or an essay."[26] Moreover, they serve several functions:

> [F]irst, they provide a common ground of understanding and of interpretation, thanks to the contrast between the traditional character of the "genre" and the novelty of the message. Second, they preserve the message from distortion, thanks to the autonomy of the form as regards speaker and hearer . . . Third, the "form" secures the survival of the meaning after the

[22] Ibid.
[23] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 32-33.
[24] For example Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 68, 69; Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 9. See Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in *Essays on Biblical Hermeneutics* (ed. Lewis S. Mudge; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 90-91, where Ricoeur wrote, "The mistaken assumption would be to take these forms of discourse as simple literary genres which ought to be neutralized so that we can extract their theological content. This presupposition is already at work in the reduction of the originary language of faith to its propositional content. To uproot this prejudice we must convince ourselves that the literary genres of the Bible do not constitute a rhetorical façade which it would be possible to pull down in order to reveal some thought content that is indifferent to its literary vehicle." A careful reading of this quote reveals that the "mistaken assumption" is not that forms of discourse are literary genres but that they ought not to be neutralized as so many literary critics are in the habit of doing. The confusion between genres and forms of discourse is noted in the secondary literature as well; Gregory J. Laughery, *Living Hermeneutics*, 40; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is there Meaning*, 343. See also Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur,* 122, who works with the assumption that "forms of discourse" are synonymous with genres.
[25] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 33.
[26] Ibid., 70.

> disappearance of its *Sitz im Leben* and in that way it starts the process of "decontextualization" which opens the message to fresh reinterpretation according to new contexts of discourse and life. In this sense the "form" not only establishes communication, thanks to its *common* character, but it preserves the message from distortion thanks to the *circumspection* which it imposes upon the work of art, and it *opens* it to the history of its interpretation.[27]

Ricoeur maintained that genres are the technical rules which mediate the message in the production of discourses, and not merely a means of classifying literature as so many literary critics seem to think.[28]

Second, the composition refers to its structure and organization, and "makes discourse into a finite and closed whole."[29] Ricoeur found the work of Russian formalism and French structuralism very helpful for defining the arrangement of a text.[30]

Finally, the style refers to the particularity of a literary work. Attention to conventions of literary production (i.e., genre and structure) ought not to reduce the meaning of a text in terms of its relation to other similar types of texts. Rather, the specific configuration and codification of each individual text gives it a unique style, and

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[27] Ibid., 71.
[28] Ibid., 69.
[29] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 8.
[30] Both of these methods constitute a concerted focus on the text, both believe that the text is a closed system and meaning is intrinsic to the text, and both hold that meaning is not construed in terms of authorial intention. Formalism is a type of literary criticism which engages in a sophisticated analysis of genre, structure, rhetoric, style, etc; see Michael E. Travers, "Formalism," in *Dictionary for Biblical Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 230-232. Structuralism regards a text as the interplay between signs in a closed system, and more broadly analyses inherent structures in cultural productions in general. See J. T. Robertson, "Structuralism," in *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (ed. Stanley Porter; London: Routledge, 2007), 345-346; Bruce Ellis Benson, "Structuralism," in *Dictionary for Biblical Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 772-773. In "Structure, Word, Event," in Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (trans. Don Ihde; Evenston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 79, Ricoeur noted that "the type of intelligibility that is expressed in structuralism prevails in every case in which one can: (a) work on a corpus already constituted, finished, closed, and, in that sense, dead; (b) establish inventories of elements and units; (c) place these elements or units in relations of opposition, preferably binary oppositions; and (d) establish an algebra or combinatory system of these elements and opposed pairs."

is a means of producing a distinctive communication.[31] Because every discourse is the production of an individual, it will be uniquely configured, a characteristic which is discernable in all texts.[32]

Ricoeur formulated his conception of the text *as a work* to oppose two problematic notions of textuality. First, he was able to overcome the extreme dichotomy created by Dilthey between explanation and understanding.[33] According to Dilthey, explanation refers to an objective inquiry and is relegated to the natural sciences; on the other hand, the human sciences seek to understand, i.e., to encounter shared experience between author and interpreter. Contrary to Dilthey, Ricoeur posited that language as a system (*langue*) allows for an explanation, that is an objective study, of the text. Therefore, linguistics is a necessary pole of textual hermeneutics.[34] However, he sought to avoid the opposite extreme which completely objectifies the process and reduces hermeneutics to linguistics, a tendency Ricoeur associated with structuralism. Ricoeur noted, "linguistics considers only systems of units devoid of proper meaning, each of which is defined only in terms of its difference from all of the others."[35] Ricoeur recognized the need to analyze language as a system of related signs, but again, this is only one pole of hermeneutics. According to Ricoeur, explanation and understanding are dialectically related, and textual hermeneutics involves distinguishing but not separating

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[31] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 67-70.
[32] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 8. Unfortunately, Ricoeur did not elaborate upon this point.
[33] His well known articulation of this distinction is in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Introduction to the Human Sciences: An Attempt to Lay a Foundation for the Study of Society and history* (trans. Ramon J. Betanzos; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).
[34] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 153.
[35] Ibid.

language (*langue*) and discourse or speech (*parole*).[36] Thus, the "task of hermeneutics is not to recover a certain contemporaneity with the act of creation [*contra* Schleiermacher and Dilthey]; but neither is it merely to reconstruct the structure of the work [*contra* Ferdinand Saussure and structuralism]. I would say that the task of hermeneutics is to explicate the 'world of the text.'"[37] What Ricoeur means by the "world of the text" requires further clarification.

1.4 Text as the Projection of a World

Another problem which emerges when a discourse is inscribed is that its reference is made ambiguous. In oral discourse, the speaker indicates the thing referred to by showing or by describing entities which are contemporaneous to both speaker and hearer.[38] Writing, as it were, "abolishes the common situation within which an ostensive reference could point."[39] How does one overcome this gap and facilitate the fusion of the two horizons?

Ricoeur maintained that it is no longer legitimate to define hermeneutics in terms of explicating what exists behind the text (e.g., the author's psychological intention); rather,

> [T]o interpret is to explicate the kind of being-in-the-world displayed *before* the text. What is then submitted to interpretation is the *pro-position* of a world in which I could dwell, a world created by the

[36] This distinction between linguistics as a system and speech as a particular instance of communication was emphasized by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure (1857-1913). See Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 80-92.
[37] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 11-12. In his writings, Ricoeur returns time and again to the relationship between explanation and understanding. See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Volume I* (trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*; Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 8-11; Ricoeur, "What is a Text?"
[38] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 12.
[39] Ibid. One can hear the echoes of Gadamer's two horizons.

> projection of my own utmost possibilities. For every unique text there is such a 'world of the text.'[40]

Ricoeur held that virtually all discourse tends toward reality.[41] He used the expression "world of the text" to designate the *reference* of the text as a whole. Both the writer of history and of fiction aim to describe or project reality. Through an historical account a reader experiences the past not without mediation but through the text. Therefore, a projection of the Roman 'world' "is not to imagine anymore what were the situations for those who lived there, but to designate the nonsituational references displayed by the descriptive accounts of reality."[42] Literature, no less than history, seeks to project or represent reality. Thus, "there is no discourse so fictional that it does not connect up with reality."[43] Whereas first-order reference (i.e., reference to an entity in time) is abolished in poetry or fiction, a potential for the liberating of second-order reference (reference to reality through the world of the text) opens up. This second order reference "reaches the world not only at the level of manipulable objects but at the level that Husserl designated by the expression *Lebenswelt* [life-world] and Heidegger by the expression *being-in-the-world.*"[44] For example, the New Testament parables or the metaphorical depiction of reality in Revelation 12 depict reality in a most vivid way. The referents of poetry and fiction open up new possible modes of being. According to Ricoeur, the Bible exemplifies a text's capacity to project a new reality which the reader is called to

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[40] Ibid. (emphasized by Ricoeur).
[41] Ibid., 12.
[42] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 36.
[43] Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 85.
[44] Ibid., 86.

appropriate.[45] The "new being" of the text is central for hermeneutics and constitutes the object of interpretation.

1.5 Text as the Mediation of Self-Understanding

Contrary to radical postmodern theories of interpretation, Ricoeur held that the reader must become subject to the text and not vice versa:

> Far from saying that a subject already mastering his own way of being in the world projects the *a priori* of his self-understanding on the text and reads it into the text, I say that interpretation is the process by which disclosure of new modes of being . . . gives to the subject a new capacity for knowing himself. If the reference of the text is the projection of the world, then it is not the reader who primarily projects himself. The reader rather is enlarged in his capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself.[46]

According to Ricoeur, "the text is the medium through which we understand ourselves."[47]

To a certain extent, all the previous dimensions of textuality culminate in this fourth dimension. First, the explosion of a discourse when it is written down results in the text's autonomy with regard to its author's intention and the text's audience; the implication is that the text reaches forward in time and "creates" its own audience, namely subsequent readers of the text. Moreover, appropriation is understanding at a distance, identifying the writer in terms of an implied author.[48] Second, self-understanding is mediated through the structure of the text; "What would we know of love and hatred—and, in general of the feelings and the values which support the Self—if they had not been brought to language and articulated by works of art and discourse?

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[45] Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 97.
[46] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 87-88.
[47] Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," 87.
[48] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 16.

The texture of the text is the bearer of this mediation."[49] Finally, it is ultimately the world of the text (which the texture of the text evokes) which mediates self-understanding. The projected world, namely, the mode of being-in-the world disclosed before the text, is what readers ought to make their own.[50]

Humans come to know and understand the self through the symbols of humanity deposited in the works of culture.[51] The world of the text mediates self-understanding, and, thus, it is necessary to apply or, better yet, to appropriate the world of the text.[52] Ricoeur identified a number of fallacious conceptions of interpretation which he sought to avoid. First, appropriation does not involve a fusion of isolated consciousnesses as in Romanticism and some forms of phenomenology.[53] Second, appropriation is not limited to the meaning which the original audience would have derived from the text as in historicism.[54] Finally, it is wrong to suppose that "the appropriation of the meaning of a text would subsume interpretation to the finite capacities of understanding of a present reader."[55] Here, Ricoeur sought to counter the supposition in much postmodern hermeneutical theories that in interpretation it is solely readers who project themselves. Rather, the text projects new modes of being whereby reading subjects might broaden their capacity for self-examination. Ricoeur conceived of this aspect of his model by clarifying his understanding of the relationship between appropriation and distanciation.

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[49] Ibid., 17.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ricoeur uses the terms "appropriation" and "interpretation" interchangeably.
[53] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences,* 191.
[54] Ibid., 192.
[55] Ibid.

According to Ricoeur, appropriation is dialectically related to its counterpart, namely distanciation.[56] All of the previous "problematics" of the text involve a level of distanciation or alienation: a distance between discourse and text, sense and structure, and reference and fiction. Appropriation functions to bridge the gap created in the previous points.[57] It is necessary to unpack this. First, the distanciation of a writing whereby a text becomes autonomous with regard to its author's intention creates the situation where readers must appropriate the meaning through distance. Second, readers appropriate the sense or meaning of a text as it is mediated through its structure. Third, the reader must stand before the world of the text and submit to a critical examination.[58] In other words, explanation involves a measure of objectivity whereby the interpreter pulls back or is alienated from the text. Yet there is another dimension of distanciation, namely the otherness of the context of the discourse in terms of cultural and historical distance. According to Ricoeur, reading is "the 'remedy' by which the meaning of the text is 'rescued' from the estrangement of distanciation and put in a new proximity, a proximity which suppresses and preserves the cultural distance and includes the otherness within the ownness."[59]

Further, a reader's ideology or subconscious necessarily stand in the way of a genuine self-evaluation. Ricoeur noted that the "critique of ideology is the necessary detour that self-understanding must take if the latter is to be formed by the matter of the text and not by the prejudices of the reader."[60] Appropriation involves willingness to

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[56] Ricoeur, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics," 16.
[57] Perhaps the phrase "bridge the gap" is not entirely appropriate here. Because Ricoeur wanted to maintain the dialectic, appropriation does not abolish the distance but mediates or understands through the distance.
[58] Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," 87-88.
[59] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 43.
[60] Ibid.

submit to the text. In summary, "[o]nly the interpretation which satisfies the injunction of the text, which follows the 'arrow' of meaning and endeavours to 'think in accordance with' it, engenders a new *self*-understanding."[61]

1.6 Hermeneutical Implications

This is where Ricoeur introduced the concept of a hermeneutical arc, i.e., a movement from initial understanding to explanation, followed by a movement from explanation to comprehension (or from naïve understanding to critical distanciation to a second naïveté).[62] He proposed that the initial act of understanding requires a guess on the part of the reader because of the text's autonomy with regard to the author's intent. Not only is the author's intent most often unknown (perhaps unknowable), it is "sometimes redundant, sometimes useless, and sometimes even harmful as regards the interpretation of the verbal meaning of his work."[63] Thus, to construe meaning in terms of the verbal meaning of the text is to conjecture. This initial guess work involves construing the structure of the text and relating the parts to the whole, it involves situating the individual work generically, and it involves assigning levels of meaning to metaphorical language.

However, the reader may not remain in this initial stage of naïve understanding. The guesses which each reader proposes must be tested. Here Ricoeur wanted to avoid the language of empirical verification, but rather preferred validation in terms of a logic

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[61] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences,* 192-193.
[62] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 74. Stiver, *After Ricoeur,* 56-78 explains that Ricoeur actually developed two hermeneutical arcs. The one represented here reflects his thoughts on the matter while he was developing his theory of the text in the 1970s. The second arc emerged in the 1980s when Ricoeur was making a more concerted focus on narrative. While there is overlap between the two the reader should note that a distinction exists.
[63] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 76.

of probability. At the same time, this stage in the move toward comprehension requires a level of distance whereby the text is examined as an object. One can perceive Ricoeur's attempt to mediate modern and postmodern sensibilities. Although texts are indeterminate, there are "criteria of relative superiority" by which one can arbitrate conflicting interpretations. Thus, "if it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal. The text presents a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and skepticism."[64]

This second stage, that of explanation, involves giving attention to words and sentences, the relation between sentences, the progression of narrative, etc. The tools of Propp's school of Russian formalism and Barthes' and Greimas' school of French Structuralism can be of some use in this stage. Nevertheless, these methods are limited because they remain fixed upon the internal features of the text (i.e., the sense) while avoiding the external reference (i.e., the world of the text). The "logic of operations" within the text may be analyzed and explained but the text has yet to be interpreted.[65] Ricoeur argued, however, that the depth semantics which structural analysis attempts to uncover, has the potential to disclose the reference of the text, i.e., a potential world and a potential way of reorienting oneself therein. Thus, the move from explanation to comprehension is the progression from sense to reference, from what the text says, to what it talks about.[66] The ultimate aim of hermeneutics for Ricoeur is "to 'make one's

[64] Ibid., 79.
[65] Ibid., 84.
[66] Ibid., 88.

own' what was previously 'foreign,'" and this "goal is achieved insofar as interpretation actualizes the meaning of the text for the present reader."[67]

Thiselton summarizes well Ricoeur's hermeneutical arc:

> What remains central for Ricoeur is the double function of hermeneutics: the hermeneutics of suspicion which unmasks human wish-fulfillments and shatters idols, and the hermeneutics of retrieval which listens to symbols and to symbolic narrative discourse. Where criticism operates, this is only to arrive at post-critical creativity on the yonder side of the critical desert.[68]

1.7 Conclusion

The preceding describes Paul Ricoeur's theory of textuality and some of the hermeneutical implications of such. Ricoeur thought that hermeneutics involves the interpretation not merely of texts but of texts *as discourse*. Although the act of writing liberates texts from their original context, understanding texts as discourse nevertheless grounds interpretation in some anterior speech. While the author's intention is beyond reach, the text itself bears witness, through its structure, genre and style, to a verbal intentionality. Through a more or less objective examination of the text *as a work* by way of a critical distantiation, the *world of the text* is revealed. This "world" is a place where readers can realize possible modes of being in the world. In this way the world of the text *mediates self understanding*.

Ricoeur's textual theory is both creative and valuable. Although he approaches the question of textuality from a philosophical perspective, the theological implications are apparent. He has masterfully exposed the façade of objectivity which is characteristic of modernity and has managed to avoid the skepticism of post-modernism and hold on to

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[67] Ibid., 91-92.
[68] Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 372.

a sense of trust with regard to the text. Ricoeur held that hermeneutics is animated by a double motive: "willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow to rigor, vow to obedience. In our time we have not finished doing away with *idols* and we have barely begun to listen to *symbols*."[69] In many ways his textual theory is helpful and can be critically appropriated into a model for biblical hermeneutics. It remains to be understood in what way Ricoeur's theory of the text relates to biblical interpretation. The next chapter will examine how Ricoeur thought his general theory of textual interpretation applies to biblical hermeneutics.

[69] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (trans. Denis Savage; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.

CHAPTER 2

RICOEUR'S THEORY OF TEXTUALITY AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

> *[A]bove and beyond emotions, dispositions, belief or non-belief, is the proposition of a world which in the biblical language is called a new world, a new covenant, the Kingdom of God, a new birth. These are the realities unfolded before the text, which are certainly for us, but which begin from the text. This is what one might call the "objectivity" of the new being projected by the text.*[1]

2.1 Introduction

A central issue which has concerned biblical interpreters for centuries and which still demands serious consideration is: should the Bible be read/interpreted as any other book? This is arguably one of the most important questions for interpreters whose faith derives from the biblical text itself, who regard the Bible as God's Word. If a great deal of generalization is permitted, one can perceive certain trends in this regard over the history of biblical interpretation: from treating the Bible as wholly transcendent in "pre-critical" interpretation, to the tendency in modernity to subject the biblical texts to methods of scientific verification, arguably more rigorous with regard to the Bible than to other historical texts.[2] The contemporary scene in biblical studies also tends to read the Bible as any other book, though the situation is very complex and much more could be said concerning these new developments.

In his writings specifically regarding biblical hermeneutics, Ricoeur struggled with the relationship between general theories of text interpretation and biblical

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[1] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 13-14.

[2] For a good discussion of this hyper-critical tendency in historical criticism see Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 24-47.

interpretation.[3] He thought that in the first place, biblical hermeneutics must be conceived of as a regional application of philosophical hermeneutics. Yet, he noted,

> [M]y thesis is that only the treatment of theological hermeneutics as *regional*, as applied to a certain category of texts—in our case biblical texts—can prepare [for] a reversal in the relation between both hermeneutics. Only the specificity of the task of interpreting these specific texts will require that theological hermeneutics ultimately encompass philosophical hermeneutics and transforms it into its own organon.[4]

In other words, reading the Bible as a book like any other, i.e., according to the principles of general textual hermeneutics, reveals the uniqueness of the Bible as a book unlike any other.[5] Ricoeur maintained that a meaningful biblical hermeneutics ought to account for the four problematics of textuality which fall under the category of a general theory of textual hermeneutics, namely, (1) the text as a relation between writing as speaking; (2) the text as a structured work; (3) the text as the projection of a world; (4) the text as the mediation of self-understanding. The following will reexamine these dimensions of textual theory and how Ricoeur thought they apply to biblical texts.

2.2 The Bible as Discourse: From Speaking to Writing

Ricoeur noted that philosophical hermeneutics provides a warning to biblical hermeneutics to pay attention to the move from speech to writing, and that in the specific region of biblical interpretation with its emphasis on the Word this warning is particularly apt.[6] When one considers the roles of narrator, psalmist, sage, prophet, and preacher, one is struck by the characteristically oral nature of their function. Jesus Christ, the very

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[3] The most important works of Ricoeur in which theological or biblical hermeneutics dominate are: Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*; Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics"; Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred;* Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*; Paul Ricoeur and André LaCocque, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies* (trans. David Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
[4] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 4.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 6.

center of biblical faith, was a preacher and not a writer. Ricoeur pointed out that the relationship between speech and writing is somewhat unique regarding the Bible. For example, Jesus interpreted the Torah in his teaching and preaching, and Paul interpreted the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ through the lens of the Prophets and the ceremonies of the old covenant.[7] Notice that in these examples there is a reversal of Ricoeur's formulation; in these biblical examples writing precedes speaking. Ricoeur noted, "It seems therefore that writing must precede speaking, if that speaking is not to remain only a cry. The very newness of the event requires that it be transmitted by means of an interpretation of the preliminary signs—already written down—and available within the cultural community. In this sense, Christianity is from its very beginning an exegesis."[8]

Moreover, in addition to being fixed to a prior writing, the preaching itself becomes inscribed and establishes a new writing. These new writings are gathered and adjoin to the Hebrew Scriptures so that there are not two Scriptures but one containing two witnesses. According to Ricoeur, Christianity was established upon the hermeneutical liberty which the early witnesses took when they interpreted both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christ event.[9] There was a recognition, though perhaps not articulated, that in light of Christ, the writings of the Hebrew canon mean more than what they meant in their original contexts (i.e., they undergo a measure of autonomy with regard to the original speech-event).[10]

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 7.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

The implication here is perhaps a way forward for anyone who has tried to understand the use of the Old Testament in the New: to the proclaimers of the first century, the fact that Christ is the referent of the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures is more important than what the texts referred to in their original situations. The speech-writing relationship, therefore, "is constitutive of what we call proclamation, Kerygma, preaching."[11] Whether according to the sequence speech-writing-speech (as the prophetic literature stands between the speech of the prophets and early Christian preaching; or the Gospels which mediate the preaching and teaching of Christ and Christian preaching today) or the sequence writing-speech-writing (as Jesus and the apostles' preaching between the Old and New Testaments), tradition is a key to the transmission of a message.

2.3 The Bible as a Work

Once again, attention to the Bible as a structured work is merely an application of the more general hermeneutics of the text. One will recall that in the explanation phase of textual interpretation, Ricoeur argued that a text becomes the object of the interpreter's inquiry which focuses on (1) the genre or codification of the text, (2) the structure or composition of the text, and (3) the style or unique character of the text which results from the particular choice of genre and structure. The same more or less applies to biblical hermeneutics.

2.3.1 The Codification or Genre of the Biblical Text

Ricoeur identified five main discourse types specific to the biblical literature: (1) prophetic discourse, (2) narrative discourse, (3) prescriptive discourse, (4) wisdom

[11] Ibid.

discourse, and (5) hymnic discourse.[12] Ricoeur attempted to show how each of these discourse types in their own way embody the idea of revelation; thus, the following is already moving beyond general hermeneutics to consider the distinctives of the biblical texts.

Ricoeur found in *prophetic discourse* the nucleus of the traditional conception of "revelation."[13] This type of biblical discourse purports to speak the word of God, or in God's name; Yahweh's speech is behind the speech of the prophet.[14] The oracle, however, should never be separated from the other forms of discourse in the canon.

Narrative discourse is no less revelation than is prophetic discourse.[15] Ricoeur wanted to avoid the supposition that the biblical authors were merely recording the dictations of the Holy Spirit. Rather than seeing God as the double author of narrative discourse, he ought to be seen as the double actant—indeed the ultimate actant. Reflection upon the events of Israel's history gives rise to a confession concerning the acts of God. The biblical narratives, then, constitute the history of Yahweh's redemption of his people, and are presented by a narrator to the faith community. Ricoeur finds the work of Gerhard von Rad in his *The Theology of the Old Testament* especially helpful with regard to the interpretation of biblical narrative.[16] Revelation in narrative discourse is not as much a revelation through the word as it is a revelation through God's deeds.

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[12] He enumerates these five discourses in a number of places, and chiefly in Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 75-90.
[13] Ibid., 75-77.
[14] The concept of God's voice being prevalent in prophetic literature is perhaps even more complex. For example, a prophecy is often found in the context of a narrative. Moreover, within the context of the oracle itself, there is often an alternation between Yahweh's voice and the voice of the prophet. An interesting examination of some of these issues is found in R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[15] Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 77-81.
[16] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper, 1962).

Prescriptive discourse designates the practical dimension of revelation.[17] Prescriptive discourse is illustrated, but by no means reduced to the Decalogue. In fact, this type of discourse expands beyond moral, civil or cultic domains. Moreover, the biblical laws, especially in the Torah, which lay claim to every recess of the human life, must not be separated from their context in the historical narratives. The Decalogue, for example, cannot properly be understood and appreciated apart from the Exodus from Egypt: "I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall . . ." (Ex. 20:2). Thus, "At the level of literary genres this signifies that the legislative genre is in a way included in the narrative genre. And this in turn signifies that the memory of deliverance qualifies the instruction in an intimate way. The Decalogue is the Law of a redeemed people."[18] Covenant is another dimension of prescriptive discourse: the "idea of Covenant designates a whole complex of relations, running from the most fearful and meticulous obedience to the Law to casuistic interpretations, to intelligent mediation, to pondering in the heart, to the veneration of a joyous soul."[19] Throughout the history of redemption, the Law of God is developed and transformed as its adherents find themselves in new situations; although there is an apparently endless multiplying of prescriptions, the fundamental demand of Torah is the direction of one's heart toward holiness.

Wisdom discourse exists not only in the traditional Wisdom books (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, and including Ben Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha), but permeates all the genres.[20] Although on the surface the wisdom of the

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[17] Ibid., 81-85.
[18] Ibid., 83.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 85-88.

Bible appears as secular advice for prosperous living, this type of discourse, like the prescriptive discourse, must not be separated from the Covenant. Wisdom does indeed reach (by extension) every human being, but it does so through the framework of the Covenant, which is the framework of Israel's election and promise. Wisdom discourse binds the sphere of human action (*ethos*) and that of the world (*cosmos*), especially in the arena of human suffering (tragic *pathos*): "Wisdom does not teach us how to avoid suffering, or how magically to deny it, or how to dissimulate it under an illusion. It teaches us how to endure, how to suffer suffering. It places suffering into a meaningful context by producing the active quality of suffering."[21] The revelation of God in wisdom discourse differs from that in prophetic, narrative and prescriptive discourses. The God who is revealed is at the same time hidden, and his design is mysterious. Wisdom reveals "the possibility of hope in spite of . . ."[22] Moreover, intimacy with the illusive Lady Wisdom (see especially Proverbs 9) is intricately associated with intimacy with Yahweh, and, thus, both the words of the prophet and of the sage were held to be inspired by God.

Hymnic discourse includes expressions of praise, supplication and thanksgiving.[23] Hymnic discourses abound in the various biblical genres including narrative. Celebration transforms into invocation as in Exodus 15, the famous Song of Moses, where God performs a mighty act of salvation and the people are moved to praise: the first six verses refer to God in the third person until in verse 7 and onward God is addressed as Thou. The expressions in the Psalter especially are noteworthy, and the fact that human expressions to God somehow become revelation about God is mysterious.

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[21] Ibid., 86.
[22] Ibid., 87.
[23] Ibid., 88-90.

Whenever Ricoeur discussed forms of biblical discourse these five forms invariably appear. These forms are rather broad and encompass much, perhaps even all of the biblical literature (at least all the Old Testament literature), but one is left to speculate if Ricoeur meant this as a complete list. There are some indications that he is aware of other biblical discourse types.[24]

2.3.2 The Structure or Composition of the Biblical Text

Ricoeur thought that an appropriation of Gerhard von Rad's genetic approach, which works back diachronically from the kernel (the credo), coupled with the structuralist method, which works synchronically across the plain of the text, could effectively serve biblical interpretation.[25] Unfortunately, Ricoeur was not more specific regarding how one might go about applying this to a biblical text but immediately broadens his scope to include the vast canonical plain.

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[24] See, for example, Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic," 90 where in addition to the hymns he appears to identify supplications and thanksgiving as distinct forms of discourse. Moreover, in Ricoeur, "Naming God," in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (ed. Mark I. Wallace; trans. David Pellauer; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 224, which was originally published in 1979, Ricoeur identifies the following forms of discourse: narratives, prophecies, laws, proverbs, prayers, hymns, liturgical formulas, and wisdom sayings. He is also aware, as I have noted above, that wisdom and prescriptive materials are often embedded within narrative discourse which suggests that interpreters ought to be sensitive to various generic forms within the broader forms of discourse.

[25] Ricoeur noted his fondness for von Rad, though the reasons for this fondness is hard to understand in light of his critique of historical criticism; see Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 10; Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutics," 78; Ricoeur, "On the Exegesis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a," in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (ed. Mark I. Wallace; trans. David Pellauer; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Even as late as 1998 Ricoeur noted affinities with von Rad; Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically,* 31. Ricoeur thinks the centrality of the confession which von Rad emphasized is significant, and perhaps he saw in von Rad a kind of "narrative" structuring of the biblical texts coupled with sensitivity to the convictions of historical criticism. See von Rad's *Old Testament Theology*; Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966). In transcribed conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay published in 1998, Ricoeur notes that the historical-critical "edifice is being demolished," a situation which invites new possibilities for understanding the biblical text(s); see "Biblical Readings and Meditations," in *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay* (trans. Kathleen Blamey; New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 140-141.

According to Ricoeur, structural analysis ought to move beyond the level of individual pericopes or even the level of a biblical book. Ricoeur suggested that, "Perhaps we would even go so far as to consider the closing of the canon as a fundamental structural act which delimits the space for the interplay of forms of discourse and determines the finite configuration within which each form and each pair of forms unfolds its signifying function."[26] In the move to comprehension one must give attention to the mode of biblical discourse through which the message of the text is conveyed, *as well as* the interplay of the contrasting biblical discourses (e.g., the interaction between oracle and chronicle, wisdom and law, and proverb and hymn). Ricoeur noted:

> Throughout these discourses God appears differently each time: sometimes as the Hero of the saving act, sometimes as wrathful or compassionate, sometimes as he to whom one can speak in an I-Thou relation, or sometimes as he whom I meet only in a cosmic order which ignores me. Perhaps an exhaustive inquiry, if one were possible, would disclose that together these forms of discourse constitute a circular system and that the theological content of each of them receives its signification from the total constellation of forms of discourse. Religious language would then appear as a polyphonic language sustained by the circularity of the forms. Then again perhaps this hypothesis is unverifiable and confers on the closing of the canon a kind of necessity which would not be appropriate to what should perhaps remain a historical accident of the text. At least this hypothesis is coherent with the central theme of this analysis, that the finished work which we call the Bible is a limited space for interpretation in which theological significations are correlatives of *forms of discourse*. It is no longer possible to interpret the *significations* without making the long detour through a structural explication of the *forms*.[27]

Perhaps Ricoeur's understanding of the interplay of inner-biblical discourse offers a way forward in the much-debated discipline of biblical theology, a way which does not

[26] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 9.
[27] Ibid., 11.

violently harmonize the polyphony of biblical voices while at the same time allowing them to exist in the same musical score as it were.[28]

However, there is a gap in his theory concerning how one ought to handle individual texts. James M. Reese in his application of Ricoeur's textual theory to Wisdom of Solomon indicates his frustration in this regard: "Does Ricoeur's attention to the closing of the canon—a step that takes him away from individual books—offer any help in interpreting this unusual expression of faith [i.e., Wisdom of Solomon]?"[29] Moreover, Reese notes,

> But the question to be resolved now is whether Ricoeur's research into the problematics of a text as a structured work provides interpreters . . . with direction for uncovering the flow of its discourse . . . Does the complicated structure and range of topics relate organically to his vision? Unfortunately, at this point Ricoeur's hermeneutics turns toward more general concerns.[30]

It is unfortunate that those who wish to utilize Ricoeur's textual hermeneutic are left to imagine how to interpret individual biblical pericopes and books.

2.3.3 The Style of the Biblical Text

Ricoeur does not add anything new to his understanding of the style of the texts in general in his discussion of the style of the biblical texts. The way in which the biblical authors utilize the conventions of literary production in unique and creative ways gives the biblical literature the externality of a unique work.

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[28] Nevertheless, as with the canonical approach to biblical theology there appears to be a theoretical leap involved wherein the theological reflection across the plain of Scripture (synchronically) fails to do justice to the historical development of the canon (diachronically).
[29] James M. Reese, "Can Paul Ricoeur's Method Contribute to Interpreting the Book of Wisdom?" in *Sagesse de L'Ancien Testament* (ed. M. Gilbert; Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1979), 385.
[30] Ibid., 391.

2.4 The Bible as the Projection of a World

Ricoeur maintained that at this third level of textual interpretation (that of the *reference* of the text), the relationship between general hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics reverses: general hermeneutics becomes the *organon* of biblical hermeneutics. However, this reversal takes place through the ordinary application of general hermeneutics in biblical hermeneutics.[31] Ricoeur wanted to find a balance between the excesses of structuralist explanation and a kind of existential procedure in which the primary task of hermeneutics is to invoke a decision on the part of the reader. Many believers proceed too quickly to a decision or direct application so that they miss the reference of the text. The *world of the text*, then, becomes the necessary mediation between structural analysis (the second problematic of the text) and self-understanding (the fourth problematic of the text). Therefore, according to Ricoeur "above and beyond emotions, dispositions, belief, or non-belief, is the proposition of a world which in the biblical language is called a new world, a new covenant, the Kingdom of God, a new birth."[32]

According to Ricoeur, for revelation or inspiration to be meaningful and legitimate terms with regard to the Bible they must refer to the world which the text projects, or new self which the text reveals; revelation is a quality of the biblical world. In this regard, it will not do to choose from the various pictures of God or the world portrayed by the text by way of a canon within the canon. God is revealed as a divine warrior and as a benevolent father, as the hidden one who can be discerned only in the created order and as the patient one to whom one can confide as a friend, as one turning

[31] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 13.
[32] Ibid.

over the tables of corrupt merchants and driving them away with a whip and as one who showed kindness to tax-collectors and sinners. The world which the Bible projects is multidimensional; it "has aspects which are cosmic—it is a creation; which are communitarian—it speaks of a people; which are historical and cultural—it speaks of Israel and the kingdom of God; and which are personal. Man is reached through a multiplicity of dimensions which are as much cosmological, historical, and worldly as they are anthropological, ethical, and personalistic."[33]

Ricoeur's use of the term revelation is interesting and worthy of note, especially the way in which new modes of being are projected by the various forms of biblical discourse. He thought that it is legitimate, in fact necessary, to understand all of the forms of biblical discourse as revelation. However, he argued for a polysemic and polyphonic conception of revelation which honours the distinct forms of discourse. In prophetic discourse one discerns the double author of the text, divine and human, and this constitutes the "original nucleus of the traditional idea of revelation."[34] In narrative discourse God is not the speaker behind the narrator but is the actor behind the founding events in the history of salvation.[35] In prescriptive discourse, which must be understood in light of the covenant, God's design for humans (typified in Deut. 6:5-6, "You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words which I urge on you today be written on your heart") is revealed to his people in new and changing contexts.[36] In wisdom discourse, the God who is hidden

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[33] Ibid., 14. Ricoeur thinks it is necessary to interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament and vice versa, making his hermeneutic conducive to biblical theological approaches.
[34] Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 75.
[35] Ibid., 79.
[36] Ibid., 83-84.

reveals himself mysteriously in the impersonal cosmic order or even in the alienation of unjust suffering. According to Ricoeur, wisdom "recognizes a hidden God who takes as his mask the anonymous and non-human course of events."[37] But even in these writings the "mundane" and the "sacred" are wedded as ordering one's life according to wisdom (or intimacy with Lady Wisdom) constitutes intimacy with God.[38] Finally, in hymnic discourse the emotions of the supplicant transcend their ordinary modes to reveal appropriate modes of being before the face of God.[39] Thus, the idea of revelation, not in the traditional understanding of a double author but in a more dynamic understanding, stands out in Ricoeur's conception of biblical hermeneutics and has the potential to give a sort of unity within the diversity.

How does the reader access this world? Just like with any other text, the world of the biblical text is mediated through the conventions of literary production (structure, genre, and style). For the Bible this means that:

> All that we said above about the relations between, for example, the narrative form and the significance of Yahweh as the actor, or about relations of the form of prophecy with the signification of the Lord as menace and promise beyond destruction, constitutes the only possible introduction to what we are now calling the biblical world. The power of revelation is born in the contrast and convergence of all the forms of discourse taken together.[40]

The whole of Scripture, according to Ricoeur, functions to project a world. On the one hand, Ricoeur held that the world which the biblical text projects is the new creation, the new covenant and/or the kingdom of God.[41] On the other hand, the world of the text

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[37] Ibid., 89.
[38] Ibid., 88.
[39] Ibid., 90.
[40] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 1.
[41] Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 103.

culminates in its reference to "God" and more specifically "Christ," a word which "adds the power of incarnating all the religious significations in a fundamental symbol, the symbol of a sacrificial love, of a love stronger than death."[42] Every text refers to some sense of being, but the biblical reference to God moves beyond the philosophical notion of being. The task of biblical hermeneutics is to explicate God's relation to us as gracious and our relation to him and all the implications of this reality.[43]

Thus, on the one hand, biblical hermeneutics is a general application of Ricoeur's textual hermeneutics in that the new being of which it speaks is found in the world of the text.[44] On the other hand, it is an exceptional case because "all the partial discourses refer to a Name which is the point of intersection and the index of incompleteness of all our discourses on God . . . But biblical hermeneutics can only claim to say something unique if this unique thing speaks as the world of the text *which is addressed to us*, as the issue of the text."[45] How ancient biblical texts can be said to address contemporary readers concerns Ricoeur's fourth problematic of textuality.

2.5 The Bible as the Mediation of Self-Understanding

Following the trajectory from the previous dimension of the text, it is the world of the biblical texts and the new modes of being opened up by this world that serves as the mediation of self-understanding. In the process of reading and interpreting the readers are themselves subject to interpretation. The reality of the world of the text, whether the kingdom of God or the new being, is a world to which the individual is called to submit

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[42] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 15.
[43] Ibid. See also Ricoeur, "Naming God," 221, where Ricoeur argued that God is the ultimate referent of the biblical texts.
[44] Remember that Ricoeur developed his textual theory in the context of his philosophical anthropology.
[45] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 16 (emphasis added).

and which the individual is called to inhabit. This involves an affirmation of the world and a denial of the self. Ricoeur noted, "we understand ourselves in the mirror of the word [i.e., the Bible]. The relation between the text and the mirror—*liber et speculum*—is basic to hermeneutics."[46] Moreover, Ricoeur claimed that the biblical world accurately portrays reality above any other texts.[47]

It is important to note the peculiarity of biblical faith in that faith is prior to the interpretation of the text and yet is "constituted, in the strongest sense of the term, by the new being which is the 'issue' of the text."[48] Moreover, faith is meaningless if the hermeneutical task of interpreting the signs and symbols of faith is neglected—the Exodus and the Resurrection manifest to readers the utmost possibilities of their own freedom. However, even a Christian reader's preconceptions and illusions can transform the symbols of faith into idols. The word becomes the mirror of the reader's faith, serving to critique the reader's own prejudgments.[49] Thus, because human limitations prevent the reader from fully grasping the new being of the biblical text, the hermeneutical task is never complete.

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[46] Ricoeur, "Preface to Bultmann," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Lewis S. Mudge; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 54.

[47] It is not clear on what basis he makes this claim except perhaps upon his own faith. An excellent example of his belief that the biblical world reflects reality *par excellence* is his analysis of various myths which account for sin. He maintained that above all, the "Adamic myth" with its supposition that sin is a stain best reflects the reality of sin and evil in creation; Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil.*

[48] Ibid., 18.

[49] In his discussion of these issues in *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* 19, Ricoeur introduced the hermeneuts of suspicion (Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) who, outside of the hermeneutical process, can serve as a critique of ideology: "Today a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is an integral part of all appropriation of meaning. And with it follows the 'de-construction' of prejudgments which impede our letting the world of the text be." Ricoeur did not give absolute reign to these critics, and he believed that Marxism, Nihilism, and psychoanalysis are also subject to their own suspicion.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents Ricoeur's theory of the text as it applies to biblical hermeneutics. In his general theory of textual hermeneutics the first step is to account for problems that arise when a text moves from speech to writing. Inscription results in the threefold autonomy of written discourse (with respect to the author's intention, the original audience and the original reference). Yet, because it remains discourse, the text continues to be something said by someone to someone else and the first step is to try to discern the speech which is anterior to the written discourse. Second, although the event of the original discourse is lost, the meaning of the discourse becomes fixed according to literary conventions. The meaning of the text is not the author's intention but the sense of the text mediated through the genre, structure and style of the text, which one can analyze objectively. Third, by examining these aspects of the text, one is able to discern the reference of the text which is not some entity in the past or some thought in the mind of the author but is nothing less than the world of the text. Finally, readers ought to enter this projected world and engage in meaningful self-examination in front of the text.

In the case of biblical hermeneutics, the first two dimensions of textuality (the text from speech to writing and the text as a structured work) are more or less general applications of Ricoeur's broad theory of textual hermeneutics.[50] The general application of the third dimension of the text, the explication of the world of the text, reveals that the reference of all the partial biblical discourses is God. The subordination of textual hermeneutics to biblical hermeneutics is completed in the fourth dimension of textuality.

[50] The most notable exception is the special relationship between foundational texts and speech in biblical hermeneutics.

All texts open up a world of possibility and serve to "interpret" readers, but the biblical text projects the utmost possibilities of humanity.

The purpose of the second half of this study (i.e., Reading Job) is to explore some of the implications of Ricoeur's textual theory in the service of reading the book of Job. However, it is necessary first to offer an appraisal of Ricoeur's project thus far.

CHAPTER 3

AN EVALUATION OF RICOEUR'S THEORY OF TEXTUALITY AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

The Word is Ricoeur's kingdom, and his hermeneutic philosophy is at the service of this sovereign. Ricoeur marshals all the resources of his philosophical anthropology and hermeneutics to come to the aid of this Word in a critical time . . . Ricoeur does not proclaim the Gospel. Rather, like John the Baptist, Ricoeur serves the Gospel by baptizing our imaginations, philosophically preparing for the Word.[1]

3.1 Introduction

It remains to make some evaluative remarks regarding Ricoeur's textual theory, especially as it influences biblical interpretation. Perhaps a few preliminary comments regarding context are in order. First, the genius of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics cannot be fully comprehended without a fairly comprehensive grasp of the history of interpretation. He is in constant dialogue with historical giants; some of his regular sparring partners include Plato, Aristotle, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, Foucault, Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and Saussure, to name only a few. Understood in this context, Ricoeur emerges as a masterful synthesizer of many streams of thought, showing himself able not only to criticize but also to adopt and adapt. Moreover, he stands as a transitional figure between modernism and postmodernism, offering an effective critique of the abuses of modernity and avoiding the extremes of postmodernism (e.g., deconstructionism).[2]

Second, Kevin Vanhoozer has cautioned those who favour Ricoeur's hermeneutics not to separate his hermeneutics from his larger project of philosophical anthropology. Therefore, according to Vanhoozer, it is not appropriate simply to apply

[1] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative,* 288.
[2] Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur,* 248.

Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory to biblical texts.[3] Vanhoozer's concern is a legitimate one. One does well to investigate the philosophical assumptions which undergird his hermeneutical theory and his biblical hermeneutics for that matter. Nevertheless, Ricoeur's sensitivity to theology is latent in all his philosophical treatises, and his struggle to understand human existence did not cause him to be absolutely introspective but to look beyond the self (*ego*) to pine after the divine. The comprehensiveness of Ricoeur's hermeneutics and the fact that it is funded by a trust in the divine Logos have allowed Christians, like Dan R. Stiver, James Fodor, Gregory J. Laughery, and even Vanhoozer himself, to appropriate "Ricoeur in a critical way."[4]

3.2 Commending Ricoeur's Textual Theory

In this time of crisis in biblical studies, Ricoeur's textual hermeneutic is a breath of fresh air. The application of historical criticism in liberal traditions, with its atomizing tendencies and its preoccupation with sources, ultimately did violence to the text and alienated biblical interpretation from the believing community. On the other hand, application of the grammatical-historical approach convinced conservatives that they were the sole possessors of the author's "intention" and caused them to ignore the vital role which the reader plays in interpretation. Ricoeur's hermeneutics permits Christian interpreters once again to hear the summons of the text beyond the arid deserts of the modern legacy.

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[3] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative*, 275-276.
[4] Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 248; Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*; Laughery, *Living Hermeneutics*; Vanhoozer, *First Theology*.

Ricoeur's formulation of a text as discourse is very helpful, and there appears to be a trend in biblical studies toward discourse or speech-act theories of interpretation.[5] Moreover, by basing his discourse model upon the framework author/text/reader, and by assigning each of these dimensions a role in interpretation Ricoeur demonstrated that he understood the complexity of interpretation and offered a creative way beyond the modern/postmodern impasse. Although he feels that Ricoeur's textual hermeneutic is somewhat problematic, Nicholas Wolterstorff holds that Ricoeur "was right to look for a practice of interpretation located in the space between Romanticism and structuralism."[6]

Furthermore, Ricoeur understood the basic role of an individual's presuppositions, and by placing readers in front of the text, the text becomes a mirror by which readers understand themselves better. Understood in terms of biblical hermeneutics, self-evaluation and self-understanding are some of the chief aims of biblical interpretation.

Moreover, Ricoeur's textual theory allows for a somewhat objective analysis ("explanation," to use his term) without discounting the situation of the reader. The historical study of the text, including *a critical use* of some of the methods of historical criticism,[7] *and* study of the formal structure of the text are important for a proper understanding and appropriation of a text. Yet the text is meaningless until the interpreter is made subject to the text. Ricoeur has appropriated Gadamer's valuable

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[5] Most notably Vanhoozer, Wolterstorff, Thiselton. Moreover, in seeking to respond to the crisis in biblical interpretation, the participants of the Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar deemed "to consider speech-act theory as a possible resource for responding to it." The product of their consultation is found in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene and Karl Möller; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

[6] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 152.

[7] See Paul Ricoeur, "The Bible and the Imagination," in *The Bible as a Document of the University* (ed. Hans Dieter Betz; Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 53. Here Ricoeur indicates that historical criticism is legitimate but he distinguishes it from what he cares to do with the biblical texts.

insight concerning the situatedness of all readers but has effectively avoided Gadamer's false dichotomy between Truth and Method.[8]

Ricoeur's interpretation theory is a hermeneutics of retrieval because in the end it advocates trust.[9] Because of the importance of promise, hope, and possibility in Ricoeur's biblical hermeneutics, his theory has much potential. However, it is not immune to criticism.

3.3 Criticizing Ricoeur's Textual Theory

There are a few minor issues along the way which one might question. For example, however insightful his belief that hermeneutics must account for the move from speech to writing is, one wonders if he has exaggerated his point here. On the one hand, in face-to-face dialogue the propensity for misunderstanding as a result of distance (cultural, gender, lingual, etc.) between two individuals is perhaps as significant as the distance which results when discourse is inscribed. On the other hand, Ricoeur's definition of a text as any discourse fixed by writing seems too broad. In academic journals authors at times will respond to a reviewer's "interpretation" of their work in order to clarify a point. Do such responses have any influence on how one ought to reread the author's work or is it completely liberated from the author's intention. One expects that a note left to one's spouse or an email to a fellow-employee will be read and followed according to the intention of the author. In Ricoeur's article "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," his articulation of this dimension of his theory is more nuanced.[10]

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[8] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975).
[9] Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 371.
[10] Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 100-104.

Ricoeur's consideration of genre is an annoyance that perhaps might be overlooked since he is not a literary theorist or a biblical scholar *per se*. His distinction between a form of discourse and a genre is less than clear. In the section of this study which deals with the genre of Job, it will be necessary to be more specific than Ricoeur when he wrote that Job is a wisdom discourse.[11] While there are elements of wisdom in the book, it is questionable whether or not it is possible to define the book in terms of a single genre.

Perhaps even more problematic than these difficulties is Ricoeur's articulation of the role of the author in interpretation and his distinction between sense and reference. Ricoeur's belief that a written discourse becomes disconnected from its author is perhaps disorienting; however, it is an attractive way to understand a distinctly biblical phenomenon. While it is legitimate and necessary to interpret the biblical literature in its historical context, the collection of this diverse material into the canon creates new interpretative possibilities.[12] Furthermore, in some instances, the way in which the New Testament authors used texts from the Old Testament seems to confirm Ricoeur's belief.

Although it is necessary to bear in mind that Ricoeur did maintain that a text remains a discourse said by someone to someone else, perhaps Vanhoozer and Wolterstorff are correct to identify the danger in Ricoeur's articulation of semantic autonomy. Wolterstorff's complicated argument against textual-sense interpretation deserves serious attention.

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[11] Ibid., 86-88.

[12] The Psalter is an excellent example of the semantic shifts that take place when the psalms are placed in new literary contexts. Although practically all of the psalms were written for a specific time and circumstance, they were compiled into collections which make up five books which make up the Psalter as whole. Other interpretative contexts include the Writings, the Hebrew Bible, and the Christian Canon as a whole. Each new literary context has an impact upon the interpretation of the individual psalm.

It will be remembered that Ricoeur sought to find the middle ground between romanticism which found meaning in the psychological intentions of the author and structuralism which regarded texts as a closed system without any external reference. According to Wolterstorff, Ricoeur was correct to formulate his textual theory in terms of discourse, but his "textual-sense interpretation" is untenable. Wolterstorff argues that apart from the author, "there is no such thing as *the sense* of the text."[13] The meaning of a discourse is more than the sum of the "totality of those contextual senses of its constituent sentences."[14] Some sentences are ambiguous, others are ironic, and without recourse to a speaking/writing subject (as in textual-sense interpretation), interpreters have no way to arbitrate between senses.

According to Wolterstorff, Ricoeur was shortsighted when he determined that textual-sense interpretation was the only alternative to authorial-intent interpretation.[15] In many cases the author's intent may indeed be completely beyond the reader's purview. Yet, Wolterstorff rightly argues that in "addition to an author's intentions, and in addition to an author's text, there is what the author did in fact say by authoring his text. Not what he *intended* to say; what he *did* say."[16] Wolterstorff thus promotes authorial-discourse interpretation which aims to discern what an author did in fact say. Wolterstorff's criticism suggests that perhaps Ricoeur's textual theory does not achieve that fine balance with regard to the specific roles of author, text and reader.

Additionally, Ricoeur's supposition that a text's reference is a projected world is at the same time both valuable and problematic. There is no doubt that the Bible projects

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[13] Wolterstorff, "The Importance of Hermeneutics," 42.
[14] Ibid., 38. See also Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (trans. A. Bass; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981) who shows that textual-sense interpretation is vulnerable to deconstruction.
[15] Wolterstorff, "The Importance of Hermeneutics," 41.
[16] Ibid., 44.

a world. Not only do the biblical narratives present new realities which the reader is called to inhabit, the biblical meta-narrative, including both Old and New Testaments, exhibits the story of world history from creation to re-creation, from the garden to the Great City.[17] The Bible reveals what the world is like, and it also manifests the potential of creation including humanity. Ricoeur's textual theory urges interpreters to be sensitive to these aspects of the text.

By emphasizing a text's reference to a projected world, Ricoeur created a measure of ambiguity with regard to historical reference. He dealt with the relationship between narrative and history in *Time and Narrative*; unfortunately, the scope of this chapter does not allow for a thorough analysis of his articulation of this relationship.[18] He stressed that the nature of historical narrative is that the reader does not gain immediate access to the events themselves but to the events mediated by the author. Moreover, by formulating history in the form of narrative, a measure of interpretation is already involved. Ricoeur is certainly correct in this regard; a look at the differences between the books of Chronicles and the books of Samuel and Kings or any of the synoptic gospels reveals that the biblical texts are mediated by the author's interpretation of the events. The real danger here is to disregard historical reference in favor of the world of the text or the world in front of the text so that the biblical narrative becomes, in Vanhoozer's words, "a kind of existential allegory" (e.g., Hans Frei or G. A. Lindbeck).[19]

To his credit, Ricoeur does show sensitivity to this danger:

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[17] Ibid. Ricoeur thinks it is necessary to interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament and vice versa, and, thus, his hermeneutic is conducive to biblical theological approaches.
[18] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative.*
[19] Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). G. A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SCM, 1984). Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative,* 277. According to Vanhoozer, Ricoeur showed an unbalanced preference for fictional narrative and poetry over history (281).

> In the encounter with what we could call the idealism of the word event, we must reaffirm the realism of the event of history—as is indicated today by the work of a theologian such as Wolfhart Pannenberg in his attempts to rectify the one-sided emphasis of Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling.[20]

Perhaps part of the frustration of sorting through Ricoeur's theory is that he develops endless dialectics (e.g., sense and reference, explanation and understanding, history and fiction, distantiation and appropriation, event and meaning) in order to find a balanced hermeneutic. In many instances his dialectics create a great deal of ambiguity. Vanhoozer suggests that a functional ambiguity exists in Ricoeur's theory, that he avoided committing himself on disputed issues (e.g., the role of the author) in order to maintain a posture of epistemological humility.[21] While this may in fact be the case, the ambiguity has left him vulnerable to attack from both the left and the right.[22]

3.4 Conclusion

Ricoeur's textual theory is in many ways insightful. He has demonstrated how a balanced hermeneutic must be sensitive to literary, theological and historical dimensions of the text. Although he has been criticized for his ambiguous treatment of the historical dimension of the text, there is room within his theory to do justice to this dimension (e.g., through the speech which stands behind the written discourse, and through an examination of the genre and form of the text). Notwithstanding some of the reservations indicated in this chapter (including the ambiguity with regard to genre and the marginalization of the historical dimension of interpretation), the rest of this study will attempt to interpret Job using the helpful insights of Ricoeur's textual theory.

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[20] Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 80.
[21] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative,* 286.
[22] Ibid.

INTRODUCTION TO READING JOB

> *The craftsmanship in the finest details, the rain of metaphor, the never-failing imagination of the poet, is surpassed only by the variety and delicacy of the theological ideas and the cunning of this most open of texts at confronting its readers with two new questions along with any answer.*[1]

The following is an attempt at reading the book of Job, utilizing some of the valuable insights of Paul Ricoeur's textual theory. First, chapter four will attempt to account for the move from *speech to writing* in the book of Job. What is the speech that is anterior to the text of Job? Job appears to be contributing to a larger discussion within the tradition of Israelite wisdom to which both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes belong. Part of this chapter will seek to understand that dialogue. However, the wisdom debate which is anterior to and between Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes also needs to be situated in the broader context of the Torah. The Torah provides the basic framework or worldview upon which the established sapiential tradition rests. Thus, this chapter will also explore the relationship between Israelite wisdom and Torah. Second, chapter five will focus on the genre, structure and style of the book of Job in an attempt to understand Job as a *structured work.* This chapter will offer perhaps a more nuanced consideration of genre than was offered by Ricoeur, and will try to find some orientation amid the confusing landscape of scholarly research on the structure and genre of Job. Third, the more or less objective analysis of chapter five will reveal the *world of the text* which will be the subject of more serious attention in chapter six. This world is one of paradox where a sovereign God allows his blameless servant to suffer intensely. It is also a world in

[1] David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (WBC 17; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), xii.

which the faithful sufferer is given a voice, a mediator as it were, and a platform to speak boldly, loudly, and long-windedly, and in the end receive God's approval. This chapter will examine the broad contours of the book as a whole and some key passages in detail in order to show how this world is projected. Finally, chapter six will explore the book of Job according to its ability to mediate self understanding. Because of my personal identification with Calvinism I have chosen to engage in a dialogue with Calvin and the book of Job. This will provide an avenue toward self-examination. However, before applying Ricoeur's textual theory to Job, a few words are necessary about the state of Joban studies in the academy in order to understand the context of this examination of Job.

This reading of Job seeks to understand the book in its integrity. However, any interpretation of Job in the academy must to a certain extent grapple with the legacy of modern historical-critical approaches.[2] The various apparent inconsistencies and awkward placements of some of the chapters have caused scholars to rearrange the content of the book. Edwin Good exposes this practice and effectively challenges scholars concerning this tendency. He notes that terms like textual "correction" or "emendation" are simply euphemisms for "rewriting" the text. He writes:

> The scholar finds for some reason (and sometimes the reasons are of the best) that the text is incomprehensible or violates some structure of coherence the scholar thinks must apply. In order to make it compatible with that structure, the scholar "repairs," "corrects"—rewrites—the text. Now the scholar can be comfortable that the "corrected"—rewritten—text permits interpretation, and he . . . almost always argues that the emended—rewritten—text is closer to the "original" than the "erroneous" one. He generally forgets that the grounds on which the text achieved its

[2] The book of Job presents many text-critical challenges, but the following discussion pertains to a tendency in modern critical scholarship to remove whole sections and rearrange others. See the discussion below.

> interpretable condition were his own supposition that it would cohere with acceptable meaning if only it said something else. The result is that the scholar proceeds to interpret not the text but his own rewriting of the text.[3]

Modern critical scholarship has reconstituted the book of Job in fairly typical fashion. First, some have separated the prose folktale (1:1-2:10 and 42:7-17) which frames the poetic speech cycles (2:11-42:6) since their messages apparently contradict each other (in the prose frame Job is blameless and the doctrine of retribution is upheld; in the poem Job challenges the justice of God). Second, some have eliminated the Elihu speeches (32-37) because he appears out of thin air (though not out of a whirlwind!) and then disappears again without mention. Considering Elihu's speeches to be a later addition to the poem, some scholars argue that they disturb the flow from Job's final speech to Yahweh's speech, and that his take on suffering contradicts that of Yahweh. Third, some have eliminated the poem on Wisdom in chapter 28 because it seems out of place. In their view, it is inappropriate in the mouth of Job, and its place in the book makes Yahweh's speeches redundant. Fourth, some are inclined to believe that the divine speeches of chapters 38:1-42:6 are a later addition and, thus, subject to the critical chopping block. Finally, various other apparent inconsistencies (e.g., the "corrupted"

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[3] Edwin M. Good, *Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job with a Translation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 184-185. The terms "correction" and "emendation" with their association with textual criticism might create some unnecessary confusion. Good is not criticizing the craft of textual criticism, and this is clear from the example he gives of a scholar who has "rewritten" the text of Job. The example is the influential commentary on Job by G. Fohrer (*Das Buch Hiob* [Kommentar zum Alten Testament 16; Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshow Gerd Mohn, 1963]) where Fohrer articulates his conviction that Hebrew poetry proceeds only in couplets and never in tercets. Good notes, "wherever the Hebrew text presents a tercet, Fohrer must decide which of the three lines is to be eliminated or to which of the three a fourth line must be added. And he succeeds every time! In chap. 3, for example, Fohrer eliminates the first line of verse 4, the second line of verse 5, the first line of verse 6, and the second line of verse 9 (he also deletes verse 16 because he thinks it upsets the context). Georg Fohrer is a learned, eloquent scholar. But the man has the nerve to claim that he is interpreting the Book of Job. He is not; he is interpreting a book that he has written himself. I object to that, no matter who does it. And the scholarly tradition has taught us that it is acceptable."

third speech cycle in chapters 22-26) or contradictory statements from the mouth of Job (e.g., 27:13-23) should also be rewritten.[4]

Any study of the structure and message of Job will have to engage these issues and the apparently contradictory content of the book.[5] How is it that Job can argue so strenuously (for some eighteen chapters) to maintain his innocence only to capitulate in a most unexpected manner following Yahweh's speeches (which do not give an adequate answer to Job's questions)? Similarly, Job's friends, who stringently uphold the orthodox, traditional Israelite doctrine of retribution against Job's ranting, also recant for not speaking what was right like Job had (42:7), and they offer sacrifices for their offense. Perhaps the most glaring contradictions surround the words and the actions of Yahweh himself. Yahweh says to Eliphaz, "My anger burns against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (42:7). When did Job speak right, and if his speech was so righteous what was the purpose of Yahweh's rebuke from out of the whirlwind (38-42)? Moreover, even more detrimental to Yahweh's integrity is that although he rebukes the friends for not speaking rightly (apparently their rigid articulation of retribution theology) in the end he affirms the doctrine of retribution by restoring (in fact doubling) the possessions of Job so that "the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning" (42:12a). Thus, as Polzin puts it so poignantly:

> Immediately after God *says* that Job was originally correct in questioning the universal validity of the principle of divine retribution, He proceeds to reward Job for his repentance. God apparently acts like the kind of person

[4] Robert M. Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 57, summarizes well these tendencies in modern critical research in Job.
[5] Ibid., 58-61.

> he praises Job for denying him to be. Concerning Job's friends, at the same time as He *says* they are wrong in their naïve insistence that he always punishes the evil, He threatens to punish them for being evil . . . He will avert disaster from them if they repent and admit that He does not always avert disaster from the repentant! Clearly what God *says* in the book of Job and how he *acts* within it provide us with the central paradox.[6]

A meaningful interpretation of *the book of Job*, as opposed to a rewritten work, must grapple with these apparent contradictions.

An implication of the previous chapters of this study is that the following interpretation of Job will privilege the "final form"[7] as opposed to a reconstructed text. This is not to disparage the whole historical-critical project. Scholars from this school have generally practiced an extremely close reading of the text, and this is why they have often found gaps and apparent contradictions. In many cases these are the places in the text where interpreters ought to take notice. The following is an attempt to learn from these insights but to move beyond the historical-critical impasse (what the rewritten text

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[6] Ibid., 61.

[7] I share with Bartholomew a reluctance to use this term; Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes,* 214. The assumption of the term "final form" which is in vogue today in such approaches as Childs' canonical approach is "that we have access to the earlier forms of *this* text but that we choose to make the final form the object of our exegesis. In this case 'final form' falsely implies that this *same text* existed in a number of different forms. In fact this is never so. We only have the OT texts that we have, and any reconstructed earlier 'forms' are generally speculative and based on readings of the 'final form.' This is particularly problematic when one bears in mind the cultural and time gap between these ANE texts and our era. Furthermore, a reconstructed earlier version is a different text . . . A text may of course have a very complex pre-history but in its literary form it is far more than the sum of its component parts" (emphasis added).

It is true that the Greek versions of some of the books (e.g., Esther and Daniel) are considerably different than the Masoretic Text. This is in fact the case with the book of Job. The Greek version is shorter than the MT by some 400 lines (according to some scholars the number might be closer to 600; Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Job: Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with Commentary* [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1946], xliv). Even though the Greek version offers a much earlier witness to the original book, there is reason to believe that it is a condensed version of the MT, shortened because perhaps the translator could not understand the Hebrew text or because perhaps he found some of the passages redundant. See Peter Gentry, *The Asterisked Material in the Greek Job* (SBLSCS 38; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). Even so, *not a single manuscript exists* which contains only the poetic core of the book of Job or only the narrative found at the frame of the book. No manuscripts of Job exist without the speeches of Elihu or the poem on wisdom. Thus, the assumption that "earlier forms" excluded one or more of these sections is nothing more than modern speculation.

of Job should look like) and begin with the assumption that the book as a whole is a sophisticated piece of literature and should be read in this way.[8] Indeed, there appears to be a trend in biblical studies, such as in literary critical, narrative and canonical readings, toward interpreting the biblical books in their integrity, and these approaches are producing much fruit.[9]

An observation of this study is that the book of Job, quite like Leviathan, is not meant to be domesticated; Christian theologians will find that the book of Job is not easily tamed and that its teachings defy tidy theological systematization.[10] Thiselton notes that texts like Job and Ecclesiastes

> function not to supply some packaged piece of information, but to place the reader in a position where he or she can work their way toward certain perspectives or even conclusions at first-hand . . . Behind both books lies the recognition that if some packaged "answers" were to be offered independently of the reader's struggle, the reader would perhaps cease prematurely to worry away at the problem . . . Their primary function is to invite or to provoke the reader to wrestle actively with the issues, in ways that may involve adopting a series of comparative angles of vision.[11]

Thus, there is an inherent danger in offering a commentary on Job. The following study does not claim to offer the definitive answer on the meaning of Job or to exhaust the layers of meaning which exist in Job. The actions of Job's friends are instructive in this

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[8] The validity of this assumption must rise or fall according to the interpretation of the various parts of the book. The following will try to come to terms with the apparent contradictions and "misplacements" but the full breadth of the literary artistry cannot receive the attention it deserves because of the limits of this thesis.

[9] Ellen F. Davis, "Job and Jacob: Integrity of Faith," in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse* (eds. Stephen L. Cook, Corrine L. Patton and James W. Watts; JSOTSup 336; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 100, notes the following works which maintain the coherence of the book of Job: Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985); J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985); Y. Hoffman, "The Relationship between the Prologue and the Speech Cycles in Job," *Vetus Testamentum* 31 (1981): 160-170; C. R. Seitz, "Job: Full Structure, Movement , and Interpretation," *Interpretation* 42 (1989): 5-17.

[10] Thiselton, *New Horizons,* 65.

[11] Ibid., 65-66.

regard. The wisest behavior of Job's three "comforters" is recorded at the beginning of the book:

> And when they saw [Job] from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, *and no one spoke a word to him*, for they saw that his suffering was very great. (2:12-13)

Their folly began when they opened their mouths to explain Job's predicament. I am aware of the great danger involved in trying to comprehend the complexities of such a literary masterpiece as Job but since degrees are not conferred upon individuals for submitting blank sheets of paper this study of Job is offered as a modest attempt to wrestle with Job. The hope is that this study will provoke the reader to return again to the text of Job itself in order to actively engage it from a new perspective.[12]

[12] See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987). In the introduction to his book on Job (xi-xiv), Gutiérrez has a valuable discussion about the *mystery* of God and the *deficiency* of all kinds of God-talk (i.e., theology), perhaps one of the most valuable lessons from the book of Job. In response to José Maria Arguidas' question, "Is not what we know far less than the great hope that we feel?" Gutiérrez writes, "This question will bring an unhesitating, humble yes from those who believe in the God of Jesus Christ" (xi). It is this sense of hope that the book of Job, and perhaps this study of Job, should inspire.

CHAPTER 4

JOB AS DISCOURSE: FROM SPEAKING TO WRITING

The authors of the books of Job and Ecclesiastes differ from the more optimistic views of traditional wisdom, but they stay in dialogue with it.[1]

The relationship between the Israelite nation and its Lord God was governed from the time of the Sinaitic revelation, by the terms of three Covenants, in the Book of Exodus, Leviticus and, in a revised form, Deuteronomy. Quotations from each of these solemn agreements are to be found in the text of the Dialogue [of the book of Job], while that of Deuteronomy is the disguised but unmistakable model for the descriptions of the prosperity and downfall of Job in the Prologue.[2]

One sage tells us that had it not been for his anger, we would be invoking the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and *Job.*[3]

4.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to understand Job in light of the problems which arise when a discourse moves from speaking to writing. This discussion will seek a balance between Ricoeur's belief that a discourse fixed by writing continues to be said by someone to someone else about something, and his conviction that inscription affords a text a level of semantic autonomy with regard to its original context and referent.[4]

The book of Job is a book which in large part centers on the wisdom and folly of speech and silence. Moreover, the book is made up almost primarily of speeches, whether dialogues or monologues. However, in considering the move from spoken to written discourse in the book of Job it would be a mistake to try to determine the

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[1] Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (WBC 22; Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1998), 266.
[2] David Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness: The Book of Job, Essay and a New English Translation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 14.
[3] Ellie Wiesel, "Job Our Contemporary," in Ellie Wiesel, *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends* (trans. Marion Wiesel; New York: Random House, 1976), 219.
[4] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 30.

historical context in which these specific dialogues took place. Although I think that Job was likely a historical figure, the account of his calamity in the book of Job is not a historical account as such.[5]

That is not to say that searching after the historical setting of the book's composition would be fruitless. The book of Job was indeed written by someone for someone else about something. However, for all the theories and conjecture, the definitive date, authorship, and setting have eluded readers both ancient and modern. Indeed, there "is probably no complete book in the O.T. which is more difficult to date exactly than Job."[6] Thankfully, it is also true that "there is probably no book whose date of writing is less significant for the message as a whole."[7] Scholars have argued for the appropriate dating of Job on the basis of theology, language, literary dependency with other literature (biblical and extra-biblical), and historical issues, and still no consensus exists. The setting of Job is ancient and Job himself is much like one of the patriarchs: his wealth is measured in the number of heads of livestock he owned, his religious beliefs are simple and there is no apparent cult-centralization, the Sabeans and Chaldeans are nomadic raiders and not established political entities, and Job's longevity is akin to that

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[5] For example, people do not speak in poetic verse as the characters in Job do. That Job is mentioned elsewhere in the Canon suggests that he existed as an historical figure (Ezek. 14:14, 20; Jas. 5:11). Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis* (trans. Charles A. Muenchow; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 6-7, is correct when he argues that the choice of a real life person and real life events gives the book a concreteness and credibility. He writes, "the poet depicts an event, one which happens to a definite, real, living human being with a specific name and living in a particular place. In like manner, his three friends are not just any sort of characters, but men with names and personalities. The poet presents a true story about real people. Now this does not mean that Job and his friends are historical in our sense of the word, namely, that their existence can be established on the basis of documentary evidence. However, it does mean that Job is not just an instance in which something is to be demonstrated."

[6] Anthony and Miriam Hanson, *The Book of Job: Introduction and Commentary* (Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM Press, 1953), 30.

[7] Ibid.

of Abraham. Based upon this evidence early commentators came to the erroneous conclusion that the Book of Job was composed sometime around the second millennium B.C.[8] While it is certainly true that Job is represented like a patriarch and that the book is set in patriarchal times, it is a mistake to confuse the date of the setting with the date of its composition.[9] Moreover, because patriarchal clans akin to Job's family have existed in the Middle East throughout the ages (even to this day), perhaps it would be equally mistaken to limit the setting of Job to the earliest patriarchal clan period of Israel's history. More recent scholarly work tends toward a later dating; Hoffman's guess that Job was written in the "late biblical period" (sometime between the sixth to fourth centuries) is probably the safest and most compelling guess (though less than definitive).[10]

Most do agree, however, that the author was a member of the covenant community,[11] even though one cannot definitively say the same about the characters, and the setting is not likely within the boundaries of Israel.[12] The context of the author within

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[8] Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (3[d] ed.; The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1979), XXXII. That Job is regarded as a contemporary of Moses might explain the placement of the book of Job after the Books of Moses in the catalogue of St. Epiphanius and in the Syriac Bible (see Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* [trans. Harold Knight; London: Nelson, 1967], x). Canonical approaches to biblical interpretation have given much attention not only to the final shape of the biblical books but to the shape of the Canon as a whole. Thus, scholars have debated what canonical ordering to use in order to do Old Testament theology. While there is good reason to fit Job within the Wisdom books and the Psalms, Job would also function very well as a bridge between the book of Deuteronomy and the book of Joshua.

[9] H. H. Rowley, *Job* (The Century Bible; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1952), 22.

[10] Yair Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection: The Book of Job in Context* (JSOTSup 213; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 19.

[11] Without knowing the date of the book, it is very difficult to be precise here with our terms.

[12] So Murphy, *Proverbs,* 273, who notes, "Although the book does not feature any particular basic tenets of Yahwism as popularly understood (Exodus, Sinai, etc.), the God of Job is not *Urhebergott*, or god of origins. He is not a stranger to the reader, even if he is a mystery; it is YHWH (יהוה) who appears in the whirlwind to argue with Job. Despite the non-Israelite identity of the main characters, Job and the three friends, the book is obviously written from an Israelite point of view, and it was received without any hesitation as being part of the broader revelation to the people of God." See also Dhorme, *Job,* cxiv; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 15-17; Rowley, *Job,* 23.

the fold of Israelite religion combined with Job's place in the Hebrew canon provide a frame of reference for a discussion about the movement from speech to writing in Job.

The speech, therefore, which is anterior to the text of Job is primarily a discussion within the Israelite wisdom tradition (see 4.2 below). One will recall that in biblical texts there is a unique relationship between speech and writing. Ricoeur held that if the speech which is anterior to the biblical text is to be anything more than a hollow cry it must itself be preceded by writing. Thus, the "very newness of the [speech] event requires that it be transmitted by means of an interpretation of the preliminary signs—already written down—and available within the cultural community."[13] This indeed is the case with the book of Job, and as such will require that the wisdom dialogue which precedes Job be properly situated with reference to the founding documents of Israel's faith, namely the Torah (see 4.3 below).

The following breaks down into two main sections. The first is a consideration of the book of Job in conversation with Israelite wisdom, with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes providing the available evidence of this conversation. Second, an attempt will be made to situate this dialogue in the context of the Torah. This section consists of a discussion of Job's God, an examination of intertextual links between Job and the Torah, and exploration of the shared epistemology in Wisdom and Deuteronomy, and a proposal for understanding the contours of Job's religion.[14]

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[13] Ibid., 7.

[14] Ricoeur stressed the "conversation" between the various biblical discourses, and therefore I have chosen to focus solely upon the inner-biblical dialogue. An interesting study would study the conversation between Job and the opposing pagan worldviews which were contemporary with the author of Job. Such a study would likely prove that the book of Job functions also as a polemic against pagan views of the creation and of moral order.

4.2 Job in Conversation with Israelite Wisdom

In the study of Israelite wisdom, many recognize that, although the main sources for Israelite wisdom are Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes, the book of Proverbs above all represents traditional or mainline wisdom.[15] The mistaken assumption which sometimes accompanies the belief that Proverbs is prior to Job and Ecclesiastes is that these books fundamentally contradict one another, that the uncertainties of Job and Ecclesiastes undermine the dogmatism of Proverbs.[16] Although it is true that Job and Ecclesiastes exist "in dialogue" with the traditional articulation of wisdom in Proverbs they function to elaborate and nuance dimensions which already exist within Proverbs and not to contradict conventional wisdom. That Proverbs represents an unyielding commitment to the doctrine of retribution is a misreading which fails to be sensitive to the thrust of the book as a whole.

Differences in form between Proverbs 1-9 (prose and poetry) and 10-29 (the proverbs proper) represent only outwardly a deeper tension within the book as a whole. Indeed, chapters 1-9 represent the kind of dogmatic theology of retribution which the characters in Job dispute. Ryan P. O'Dowd's fascinating study of the epistemology of wisdom and Deuteronomy helpfully articulates the overriding tension within Proverbs as a whole. He shows how,

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[15] See William Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 60; and Michael V. Fox, *Qohelet and his Contradictions* (JSOTSup 71; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989). For two very different studies which try to establish the coherence of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes see Tremper Longman III, "Reading Wisdom Canonically," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew *et al*; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 7; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 352-373; and Ryan P. O'Dowd, "Wisdom as Canonical Imagination: Pleasant Words for Tremper Longman," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew *et al*; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 7; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 373-392.

[16] See R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), 136-189, who treats Job and Ecclesiastes under the assumption that they represent "wisdom in revolt."

> Proverbs 1-9 and 31 enclose the book and provide readers with a worldview grounded in a theology of Yahweh's created order—"the world as it really is." Second, when readers then come to the material in chapters 10-29 they encounter images of "the world as it seems" which are interpreted through the ontological foundation of Yahweh's created order in chapters 1-9. Together, these constitute the bi-polar performative hermeneutics where readers learn to get wisdom in a sustained tension between experience and reality.[17]

Wisdom, beginning with "the fear of Yahweh" (יראת יהוה, Prov. 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 10:27; 14:27; 15:33; 19:23; 22:4; 31:30), gives the wise a proper ontological grounding to "survive" the variety of human experiences, including the pain of unexplained suffering (Job) and the enigma of life under the sun (Ecclesiastes). The epistemology of Proverbs, then, is one of faith seeking understanding in the ambiguities and mysteries of life.

Moreover, there are nuances within the book of Proverbs itself which witness against a rigid deeds-consequence relationship.[18] The following provides a few important examples.[19] First, read in isolation Prov. 3:9-10 appears to suggest a concrete example of the deed-consequence relationship:

> Give honour to Yahweh from your riches and from the firstfruits of all your income;
> Then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will burst with new wine.

In other words, doing a good deed (paying the tithe) results in pleasant consequences (abundant food and wine). However, read in the context of the next verses (vv. 11-12) a more complex picture emerges:

> My son, do not reject the discipline of Yahweh and do not spurn his reproof,
> For Yahweh loves the one he reproves, as a father, the child in whom he delights.

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[17] Ryan Patrick O'Dowd, "The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2005), 42.

[18] Craig Bartholomew, *Reading Proverbs with Integrity* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2001), 11, thinks it is fitting to speak of the "character-consequence" pattern.

[19] See also the section entitled "The Limitations of Proverbial Sayings" in Murphy, *Proverbs,* xxv-xxvi.

The deliberate contradictory juxtaposition of these two sayings opens up a gap in the reading and implies that in this mysterious world sometimes those who honour Yahweh find their cupboard bare and their wine cellars empty.[20]

Second, a number of passages state that the righteous will be delivered from trouble/evil, and that they will be recompensed (11:8, 21, 31; 20:22). Implied in these statements is the reality that the righteous can experience calamity. Other verses allude to the wealth of the wicked and sinners (10:2; 13:22). Still other passages warn that striving to be rich is vain (23:4, 5), that riches are not enduring (27:24) and that a man who has material riches can at the same time be (spiritually) impoverished (13:7). In Proverbs 30:8, of the proverbs of Agur, the sage asks that he might have "neither poverty nor riches." The sage recognized the need to subsist while at the same time the danger of much wealth.

Third, in the "better-than" proverbs, the sages recognize that the truth of the character-consequence theme does not rule out the possibility of injustice or the inexplicable. Therefore, though the sages taught that the wise will receive material blessing, this material wealth is far inferior to the fear of God (15:26), righteousness (16:8), wisdom (16:16), integrity (19:1, 21; 28:6), and an honourable name (22:1).

Finally, in a number of passages, the sages clearly acknowledge what von Rad has termed, the limits of wisdom.[21] A couple of examples represent the sentiments of these many proverbs: "A man's heart plans his way, but Yahweh directs his steps" (16:9),

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[20] Raymond Van Leeuwen, "Proverbs" in *The New Interpreters Bible,* Vol. V (eds. L. E. Keck *et al*; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 50. For a discussion of the literary function of contradictory juxtaposition see Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Literature: Ideological Literature and the Drama of* Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 242-247.

[21] Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 97-110.

"There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless, Yahweh's counsel—that will stand" (19:21).[22] The individual in these verses is the one who is seeking to follow Wisdom's ways, and even such a one must bend to the will of Yahweh.

All of these qualifications place the focus squarely on what is vital: the fear of God. Through these proverbs the sages recognize that following wisdom's way may at times involve poverty and hardship. In this light, it is legitimate to regard the books of Job and Ecclesiastes as identifying and developing tenets of traditional Israelite wisdom which *already exist* within Proverbs. To be sure, a number of views of reality emerge from these books (i.e., Qoheleth's empirical approach to reality under the sun, and Job's friends' view of reality through the framework of rigid retribution). However, Qoheleth's struggle to balance what he knows of reality and the enigma (הבל) of his life-experience is in the end affirmed by the epilogue (12:9-14);[23] moreover, Job's great effort to apprehend what he knows about God and the creation and his intense suffering is also eventually affirmed by God himself (42:7). The result of this is, as O'Dowd notes, that

> [T]he epistemologies that come from what are called the 'crisis' books of wisdom (Job, Ecclesiastes) indicate that wisdom and knowledge, as conceived in the OT, have come to the knower *engaged* in the 'bi-polar' effort to balance experience with revelation. In these books, concepts like tradition and experience, worldview and perception are held not in opposition but in healthy tension . . . [T]he bi-polar nature of epistemology

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[22] See also 16:1, 2; 19:14; 20:24; 21:30.

[23] For studies on the epistemology of Ecclesiastes see Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes,* 229-237; O'Dowd, "Wisdom of Torah," 16-31; Michael Fox, "Qohelet's Epistemology," *HUCA* 58 1 (1987): 137-155; Fox, "Wisdom in Qohelet," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (eds. Bernard Brandon Scott, William Johnston Wiseman and Leo G Purdue; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 115-131; Fox, "The Innerstructure of Qohelet's Thought," in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom* (ed. Antoon A. Schoors; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 225-238; Fox, A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999); Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions.*

> in Ecclesiastes and Job . . . in fact affirms the foundation of 'traditional' wisdom [i.e., Proverbs].[24]

The dialogue or discourse, therefore, which exists prior to the book of Job ought to be understood within this context.

Apparently there were individuals, or perhaps even schools, which had misinterpreted the messages of the biblical sages.[25] Although not convinced that wisdom schools existed, Whybray is willing to concede that the term חכמים (wise men) "was used in the Old Testament as a technical term denoting a class of authors."[26] James L. Crenshaw on the other hand argues that the sages were prepared to meet the challenges which presented themselves in the changing historical circumstances.[27] The book of Job, a long and complicated narrative concerning justice, righteousness, suffering and evil, can be seen as a contribution to this broader dialogue and a polemic against a rigid, unyielding view of divine retribution.

4.3 Job in Conversation with Torah

Scholars have long noted the disconnect between the book of Job and Israelite religion, and one of the valuable consequences of this apparent disconnect, along with the foreign setting, is that the book has a universal appeal. Indeed, the connection between Job and the Torah is not initially apparent; after all, Job appears to be a foreigner from

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[24] O'Dowd, "Wisdom of Torah," 40-41.
[25] The existence of wisdom schools is a debated subject in wisdom studies. For a thorough examination of the philological evidence see R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament* (BZAW 135; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 38-43.
[26] Ibid., 49.
[27] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 210. See also Brian Kovacs, "Is There a Class-Ethic in Proverbs," in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics* (eds. James Crenshaw and John Willis; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974), 173-189, who discusses a class of sages.

Uz, and the book as a whole avoids the distinctives of Israelite history and religion (e.g., there is no direct reference to the special covenant between Yahweh and Israel, or to the distinctive history of Israel's redemption, or to the particular cultic system of the Israelites).

Few, however, argue that the author of Job was a Gentile, even if, as Clines observes, "the author has succeeded well in disguising his own age and background in his creation of the character of his hero."[28] Carol Newsom, for example, notes: "The Job tale ambitiously undertakes to expose and resolve a hidden contradiction within the religious ideology of ancient Israel. Thus, even though within the bounds of its own discourse the prose tale is a thoroughly monologic text, it is a part of a larger cultural conversation."[29] Moreover, the book's incorporation into the Hebrew canon attests that Job is in some way connected to the traditional theology of Israel. However, although commentators on Job are divided on the issue, there is good reason to believe that the book of Job (and the wisdom books in general) ought to be regarded as participating in a broader discussion that takes place within the sphere of Torah.[30]

According to Ricoeur's theory of biblical interpretation, nothing would prevent one from reading the book of Job alongside or through the lenses of the Torah. One will

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[28] Clines, *Job 1-20*, lvii.
[29] Newsom, *Job,* 51.
[30] Among scholars who read Job in light of the Torah: William Scott Green, "Stretching the Covenant: Job and Judaism," *Review and Expositor* 99 (2002): 569-577, and Samuel Balentine, *Job* (Smyth and Helwys Commentary; Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2006), 15, who think Job operates within the Levitical cultic system; Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: Testimony, Dispute Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 686, and Rowley, *Job,* 18, who see Job as reacting against a view of retribution which is a distortion of the teachings of Deuteronomy; Susannah Ticciati, *Job and the Disruption of Identity: Reading Beyond Barth* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 59-65, and Ticciati, "Does Job Fear God for Naught?" *Modern Theology* 21.3 (2005): 356-366, who sees Job as a struggle not with a particular distortion or an application of the Deuteronomic covenant but with the covenant itself. Ticciati's insightful and provocative reading of Job will receive further attention in chapter 6.

recall that Ricoeur thought that the closing of the canon was a structural event in which the individual forms of discourse in some way receives signification from the total accumulation of forms.[31] Thus, Canon or Scripture is not merely a collection of individual books but a structural *work*, and, therefore, a synchronic plain across which interpretation can take place. However, Ricoeur's approach does not sufficiently account for the historical dimension of biblical interpretation.[32] Nevertheless, there are grounds on which one can legitimately read the book of Job in light of the Torah, and the following is an attempt to place the discussion of Job within the fold of the Torah.

4.3.1 Job's God

The fact that the covenant name of God, יהוה, is used throughout the book is significant though easily overlooked. It is true that the concepts and theology of the book of Job, such as retribution, and the existence of moral and natural order span across the ancient religious spectrum. However, in Job, they are established and maintained by Yahweh, the covenant God.[33]

Many scholars have studied the use of names for God in the book of Job but have done so primarily for the purpose of source criticism. Scholars have duly noted that the

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[31] Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 11.

[32] Although canonical criticism (or the canonical approach) gives serious attention to historical matters, I would argue that it makes a similar theoretical jump. Many have identified the duality in the canonical approach whereby initially the methods of historical criticism are applied with rigor to the text followed by a reading in light of the canon as a whole; see the critique of this duality by Al Wolters, "Reading the Gospels Canonically: A Methodological Dialogue with Brevard Childs," in *Reading the Gospels Today* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 179- 192. It appears that the basis for this leap is the appeal to the function of canon in the founding community; see Brevard S. Childs, "The Canon in Recent Biblical Studies: Reflection on an Era," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew *et al*; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 7; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 33-57.

[33] Exodus 3; 6:1-9; 19:3-6 are essential for a proper understanding of God's revelation of himself as Yahweh.

prologue and epilogue use Yahweh and Elohim while the dialogue contains El, Eloah, Elohim, and Shaddai.[34] Moreover, almost uniformly, neither, Job, nor his three friends, nor Elihu invoke the name of Yahweh, and scholars have attributed this to the fact that they are foreigners and the author would be reluctant to put the sacred name on the lips of outsiders.[35]

Perhaps another proposal could sufficiently explain the use of various names for God, and serve to show an important connection between Job and Israelite religion.[36] A dominant character in the prologue is Yahweh the God of Israel, with whom the (implied) audience was sure to be familiar, and Job is clearly portrayed as a worshiper of this God. In fact, six times (1:8, 2:3, 42:7, and three times in 42:8) Yahweh identifies Job as his "servant" (עבד), demonstrating the special relationship between Job and Yahweh.[37] Of all the characters in the book of Job, only Job invokes the covenant name of God, and this is very significant given the fact that in antiquity the name of Yahweh was used with

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[34] The argument follows that because the prologue/epilogue utilizes the former two names and the core utilizes the latter four names the two sections of the book derive from different sources. See Pope, *Job,* xxiv. The exception is 12:9 where Job states it is Yahweh who governs the destiny of the wicked and the righteous. The appearance here of the Tetragrammaton is anomalous, and, in fact, *BHS* notes that a few manuscripts contain אלוה (Clines identifies them as: three from Kennicott and two of de Rossi; Clines, *Job 1-20,* 279). Dhorme, Pope, Habel, Hartely, JB, NAB, adopt the variant reading.

Dhorme, *Job,* lxv-lxxii, examines thoroughly the uses of divine names and offers some intriguing observations about the pattern of use in the book as a whole. A complete description and examination of his study is not necessary here. It is sufficient to note his conviction, based upon his study, that "one may say that the author, who used the name Yahweh in the prose narrative itself, obeys the same scruples as the poet when it is a question of making his characters refer to God . . . This surely is a very clear indication of the common origin from which the prose narrative and the poetic book alike stem" (lxxi-lxxii).

[35] See Rowley, *Job,* 11. The exceptions are the above-mention use of Yahweh by Job (n. 17) and the use of Yahweh by Job in the prologue where Job worships Yahweh after his first affliction (1:21).

[36] To see how the names are distributed throughout the book and which characters invoke which names see Appendix I, Tables 1 and 2. The following theory is the result of my own reflection upon this critical issue in the study of Job, though that is not to say that someone else has not already made this proposal. Ellen Davis offers some important insights into the use of names in the book of Job, though perhaps she does not recognize the full implications of her observations; see Davis, "Job and Jacob," 107-108.

[37] Job's characterization as the servant of God puts him in elite company, including the likes of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Caleb, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and Zerubbabel.

great sensitivity.[38] When Job is afflicted the first time, although he recognizes that Yahweh was the one who "has taken away," he nevertheless blesses the name of Yahweh (1:21). Clines notes, "Our narrator writes for alert readers, and no simplistic generic explanation of why 'Yahweh' is used will satisfy; the point is that Job, Israelite or no, behaves and speaks at the crisis moment as if bound by covenant with Yahweh, God of Israel. Even if only temporarily—and certainly *sub rosa*—this 'pagan saint' . . . becomes a Jewish proselyte."[39]

However, after his second affliction, Job has abandoned the more personal name of God in favor of Elohim (though note that he admits in faith that one should be willing to receive both הטוב, "good," and הרע, "evil," from Elohim). In chapter three, Job realizes the full force of what has befallen him, and his complaint (or better, his self-curse) represents the virtual implosion of his world. God has become hidden to Job, he is essentially a stranger to Job, and this is represented throughout the rest of the poetic dialogue by the fact that Job uses generic names when referring to God. Davis picks up on this peculiarity, noting that the choice of names in the poem has the effect of representing God as a "foreigner."[40]

When God finally makes himself known, Job is assured that this is not some generic God, but the God of the covenant: "Then יהוה answered Job out of the whirlwind" (38:1, see also 40:1, 6). Conversely, when Job finally "sees" the one who had become a stranger to him it is יהוה the God of the covenant whom he perceives and

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[38] *Contra* Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 165-166, who maintains that the apparent use of the Tetragrammaton by Job in 1:21 and 12:9 appear "within well-known formulations; hence, they are not refutations."
[39] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 39.
[40] Davis, "Job and Jacob," 107.

answers (40:3; 42:1). Moreover, in the six verses from 42:7-12, the covenant name of God appears no less than eight times. The God who was long hidden from the sight of Job is fully revealed as Yahweh, and in these verses he is the dominant actor (speaking, commanding, restoring, giving, and blessing).[41]

Accordingly, the use of divine names throughout the book serves a rhetorical purpose and does not indicate distinct sources or merely universalize the story. Davis perceptively notes that "if the poet wished to avoid particularism, then it is strange that the God whose appearance marks the climax of the book is identified as Yhwh, and more strikingly so because the appellation was previously avoided. The poet does finally anchor Job's experience in a distinctively Israelite tradition—but the 'finally' is all-important to the message of the book."[42]

The same sort of dynamic takes place with regard to Job's friends. When they were lengthening their words about God, they were not representing Yahweh but a god of their own theological construction. Yahweh also appears to them in order to rebuke them for misrepresenting him (42:7). They, in turn, repent and submit to Yahweh, and fellowship is restored. Thus, one is on firm ground to regard Job and his friends as worshipers of Yahweh.[43]

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] See David J. A. Clines, "Job's God," in *Job's God* (ed. Ellen van Wolde; Concilium 2004/4; London: SCM Press, 2004), 40, who writes, "Together, the three friends of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar represent the traditional theology of Israel, a theology that Job himself also has adhered to until recent days."

4.3.2 Intertextuality Between Job and Torah

Recently, much scholarly energy has gone into the exploration of intertextuality and inner-biblical allusions in biblical interpretation, and a number of recent studies have applied such approaches to the book of Job.[44] Hoffer notes,

> It is striking that a number of verse segments in the opening chapters of Job are replicas of phrases in Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Esther. It is also clear that these chapters are highly stylized, and that many verses have elaborate tropal patterns . . . Ambiguity, allusion, and polysymbolic images join forces to conceal—in (perhaps) a borrowed foreign folktale—a nation's treasured, variegated identity as preserved in its literary corpus.[45]

The following will identify lexical links between Job and four passages (Gen. 1; Gen. 6-9; Gen. 22; and Deut. 28), and a small selection of intertextual links can be found in Appendix II.

Michael Fishbane has drawn intertextual links between Job 3 and Genesis 1 and 2, and many recent commentators on Job concur with his assessment.[46] While these allusions are not verbatim, the poet has used words and images from the creation account

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[44] Most notably, Victoria Hoffer, "Illusion, Allusion, and the Literary Artifice in the Frame Narrative of Job," in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and the Theology of Jane Morse* (eds. Stephen L. Cook, Corrine L. Patton and James W. Watts; JSOTSup 336; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2001), 84-99, who argues for a number of intertextual links between Job and other books of the Bible, including especially Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Esther; Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah iv 23-26 and Job iii 3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *VT* 21 (1971): 153; Michael Fishbane, "The Book of Job and Inner-Biblical Discourse," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind* (eds. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 86-98. See also Hartley, *Job,* 11-15, who succinctly identifies the various affinities between Job and other books of the Old Testament, with a section devoted to the parallels between Job and Isaiah 44-55. This little section in his introduction is very helpful though he has overlooked some key parallels (for example between Genesis 1-2 and Job 3, and between Jer. 20:14-18 and Job 3). Hartley does not publish his criteria for what constitutes an "affinity," and he does seem to limit his observations to similar phrases.

[45] Hoffer, "Illusion, Allusion," 85.

[46] Good, *Tempest,* 154; Habel, *Job,* 102-106; Hartley, *Job,* 101-102; Leo G. Purdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job* (JSOTSup 112; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 91-98. See Appendix II, Table 3 for the lexical connection between Job 3 and Genesis 1 and 2.

of Genesis in order to express the utter torment of Job's affliction. Overwhelming darkness is Job's desire rather than light, barrenness rather than fruitfulness, the peace of oblivion rather than the turmoil of life. The scholars who recognize these intertextual links argue convincingly that the lament of Job 3 is a verbal undoing of the created order.[47] Following upon his command, "let there be darkness" (יהי חשך), Job employs sixteen jussives and imperatives (exactly one more than God uses when he speaks creation into existence[48]), he invokes both the Sea and Leviathan to cause their disorder, and he wishes for the reversal of his life.[49]

The biblical accounts of two pillars of piety, Noah and Abraham, provide further intertextual links between Job and the Torah, and although Israel Knohl denies a connection between Job and the Priestly Tradition, he admits that "[f]rom the language and style of the book of Job it is clear that the author wished to assume the atmosphere of the Genesis period and the time of the patriarchs."[50] Both these figures were patriarchal figures, both performed a kind of pre-levitical sacrificial rite, both are blameless (תמים[51]), and both are singled out by Yahweh for a covenant relationship. Moreover,

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[47] Purdue, *Wisdom and Revolt*, 133, notes that the reference to "Job's 'rest' is also an ironic reversal of that associated with repose (*nūaḥ*) in the promised land (Deut. 5:14). Job seeks to subvert not only creation and blessing, but all life-giving traditions of salvation in Israelite faith."

[48] Purdue, *Wisdom in Revolt,* 98.

[49] Good, *Tempest,* 205. To comprehend the virtual reversal of creation which Job announces it is necessary to consider the intertextual links between the calamities of Job and Deuteronomy 28 (Appendix II, Table 4) which will be considered in chapter 6. Suffice it to say that Job regards his calamity as an application of the covenant curses of Deut. 28. Since he knows that he is innocent, he concludes that God has broken covenant. Job 3 is comprehensible in light of this perception of Job, i.e., if it is possible that God could break covenant then the whole created order is in jeopardy.

[50] Knohl, *Sanctuary of the Silent,* 167. See Appendix II, Tables 1 and 2 for the intertextual links between Job and the Noah account (Gen. 6-9) and the Akedah (Gen. 22) respectively.

[51] This adjective which is not identical but is related to the word used in Job's description in 1:1, 8; 2:3 (תם). Nevertheless, the term תמים does apply to Job (see 12:4). The only other figure in scripture to which תם is applied is Jacob (Gen. 25:27). However, Jacob the "trickster" hardly measures up to the stature of Job. Yet, according to Davis, "Job and Jacob," 111, by virtue of his election, he proves to be a man who clings to God and who in the end is transformed by his face-to-face encounter with Yahweh.

Noah is one who faithfully followed Yahweh's instruction (pertaining to the ark, 6:22; 7:5, 16). Even more remarkably, Yahweh says of Abraham, he "obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws (תורתי)" (26:5). Apparently, Abraham, who existed before the reception of the Torah, was regarded as a keeper of Torah. This fact will be important below where the possibility of Job as existing within the fold of Torah is considered.

Other intertextual links exist between Job and Torah, some of which can be found in Appendix II. The connection between Job and Deuteronomy 28 is very significant and receives detailed examination in chapter 6. These few examples strongly suggest that the author of Job was familiar with the Torah of Moses and weaved some of the images and language into the story of Job.

4.3.3 Epistemology in Wisdom and Torah

These lexical connections between Job and the Torah are interesting and shed valuable light upon the interpretation of Job (some of which will be pursued in chapter six). However, it seems clear that these intertextual links are evidence of a more wide

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Davis states that, "What marks him as a person of integrity, then, is the object of his obsession, God's blessing, which he can never possess as fully as it possesses him; and his fitness to bear it is proven by his capacity to sustain that obsession until at last he is transformed by the weight of glory" (111). Thus, according to Davis, the author of Job connects Job and Jacob through the motifs of integrity, blessing and transforming vision. Davis is, perhaps, stretching to account for the use of this very specific word to describe two figures who are so different. In terms of moral stature, Noah and Abraham at least seem in the same league as Job (though even these two have their moral lapses, e.g., Noah's fondness for the produce of his vineyard in Gen. 9:20-21, and Abraham's "marriage problems" Gen. 16:1-16). The faith of Noah and Abraham, unlike Job, averts unthinkable calamity from befalling them. Perhaps the connection with Jacob makes the story of Job even more outrageous: Yahweh blessed the scoundrel Jacob even though he was constantly scheming; Job on the other hand received only unimaginable affliction for a life of purity and submission. Perhaps the link to Jacob lends some credence to the theory that Job is an allegory of the exilic/post-exilic community.

reaching reality: that the same worldview and epistemology provide the foundation for Israelite wisdom in general (and Job in particular) and the Torah.[52]

Moses' series of sermons in Deuteronomy climaxes in chapter 30 where he sets before the people two ways (v. 15, "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil"): the way of worship and obedience to Yahweh which leads to life (v. 16) or the way of rebellion and disobedience which leads to death (v. 18). These two ways are reminiscent of the two ways and the two women in Proverbs 1-9: Lady Wisdom who represents the favor of Yahweh and life (Prov. 8:35) and Dame Folly whose house leads to Sheol and the chambers of death (Prov. 7:27). Moreover, Bartholomew and Goheen could be referring to the teaching of biblical wisdom when they note:

> Religion is no merely *private* affair: the LORD wants his law (*torah*, "instruction") to permeate every part of his people's experience. His words should frame the personal life of each individual (being present in the mind and the heart, whether one is waking or lying down). They should shape the thoughts and actions of his people, each day of their lives (being present on the "forehead" and the "hand"). The torah claims both family life and public life. Upon leaving the house one sees God's words of instruction written on the gate. Upon returning, one sees them again, written on the door of the house. The detailed laws that follow in Deuteronomy all relate to how to make this vision a reality.[53]

Perhaps the teaching of Deuteronomy and Job might seem to be at polar opposites of the spectrum, i.e., Deuteronomy teaching a tight correlation between obedience and blessing/disobedience and cursing and Job calling that truth into question. Duane Christensen argues that the interpretation of Deuteronomy that sees a rigid application of retribution is misguided. Rather,

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[52] See Ticciati, *Identity,* 60, who notes, "it is likely that the doctrine of retribution at work in Job has been informed and shaped by specifically Deuteronomic developments of the doctrine of retribution, and must be understood against this background."

[53] Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 77-78.

> A close reading of Deuteronomy itself shows the folly in a simplistic interpretation of blessings and curses in terms of moral behavior alone. Israel's wealth is presented as a gift of God, not something earned (8:18). God did not give the blessings of the land to Israel because they were more righteous than other nations (9:4-6). In the episode of the golden calf, the people were spared because Moses interceded for them, not because of righteousness on their part (9:25-29).[54]

O'Dowd summarizes the salient features of epistemology within the wisdom books, revealing some key parallels to the worldview of Deuteronomy.[55] First, true knowledge is rooted in the order of Yahweh's creation.[56] Second, it is founded upon the fear of Yahweh.[57] Third, wisdom recognizes the incongruity between ontology and the experiences of human life.[58] Fourth, the interpretation of the world and the need to respond "appropriately" to life-situations, "creates a continual dependence on, and encounter with, the author of the created order."[59]

All this prepares one to notice the connection between wisdom and Deuteronomy and the Torah of Moses as a whole. First, the terms of God's relationship with Israel which exist in the book of Deuteronomy are a part of the larger narrative, beginning with the creation of a good and orderly cosmos, recounting humanity's fall into sin, and presenting God's consecutive promises of redemption and renewal (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 9:1-

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[54] Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12* (WBC 6B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 674. The same point is made in J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 268; and William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1984), 123-126.
[55] O'Dowd, "Wisdom of Torah," 169. I will try to give fitting examples from the respective books.
[56] For example the over arching theme of creation in Prov. 1-9, in Job 28, 38-42, and its place in Eccl. 3:1-8.
[57] Prov. 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 10:27; 14:27; 15:33; 19:23; 22:4; 31:30; Job 28:28 and see also 1:1, 8; 2:3; 6:14; 22:23; 37:24; Ecclesiastes does not contain the phrase "fear of Yahweh" but see 3:14; 5:17; 8:12, 13.
[58] See above for the discussion of "life as it seems." This is the fundamental issue with Job: he knows he is innocent and he knows God is just but he is unable to deny his experience of intense suffering. Notice the opposition between the "*carpe diem*" passages (2:24-25; 3:10-15; 5:10-20; 8:7-9; etc.) and the *hebel* (הבל) passages (2:26; 4:4; 8:10; etc.). See Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes,* 237-353.
[59] O'Dowd, "Wisdom of Torah," 169. See especially Prov. 26:1-12; Job 42:7; Eccl. 12:9-14.

17; 12:1-3, and so forth). Israel's election functions to fulfill (potentially) God's design for the created order.[60] Second, Israel's role as God's elected people is rooted in the "fear of Yahweh." In fact, in many passages submission to Torah and the "fear of Yahweh" are intimately interrelated.[61] Third, for Israel, existence in the present depends upon the performance of God's past deeds: (1) reciting the events of Israel's past as the basis of her identity in the present; (2) knowledge of God's faithfulness of the past provides a reliable standard for interpreting the future (i.e., new historical, ethical and ideological contexts); (3) all of this contributes to Israel's distinctive worldview which can guard her from opposing worldviews (pagan idolatry), moral failure, and uncertainty.[62] Finally, "Moses' Torah therefore presents the standard and means for future actualization of Yahweh's powerful presence among his people in subsequent generations. Torah ultimately requires one to be engaged in an obedient, fearful relationship with Yahweh to access the knowledge he alone reveals."[63] Thus, wisdom's worldview and Torah's vision of reality are in harmony with each other.

4.3.4 Reevaluating Job's Religion: A New Proposal

Finally, this section will consider whether or not it is possible to say more than that Job and the Torah share a common view of reality. Is it possible that Job himself adheres to Israelite religion, that he somehow exists in the fold of Torah?

Recently, a few scholars have argued that the question of Job's religion ought to be revisited.[64] What follows is an attempt to show not only that the book of Job reflects a

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Deut. 4:10; 5:29; 6:1-25; 8:6-9; 10:12-22; 13:4; 14:22-23; 17:19; 28:58-59; 31:12.
[62] O'Dowd, "Wisdom of Torah," 169-170.
[63] Ibid., 170.

theology and worldview that is well within the tradition of Israel, but that the author portrayed Job himself as one who existed, at least to a certain extent, within the sphere of Torah.[65]

What are the defining features of ancient Israelite and early Judaic religion? Green admits that a measure of variety existed in the manifestation of the ancient religion throughout its history; however, three characteristics, namely monotheism, covenant, and cult, distinguish it from the pagan religions in antiquity.[66] Moreover, he argues that these fundamental tenets of ancient Judaism provide the framework for the book of Job, even though the relationship is complex. The book is "resolutely monotheistic," and that there is one God who is sovereign over all things is one of the few things upon which Job and his friends can agree.[67] The relationship between Job and covenant and cult is, however, more complicated.

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[64] Arguably the most important essay in this regard is William Scott Green, "Stretching," 569-577. In his new commentary, Balentine expresses his appreciation for Green's "perceptive exploration" with regard to these issues; Balentine, *Job,* 35. Ticciati's thesis hinges upon the assumption that Job is one of the chosen of God, that Deuteronomistic theology forms the background to the book, and that to a certain extent Job defines his identity within the law; Ticciati, *Disruption.* Leo G. Purdue, *Wisdom and Cult: A Critical Analysis of the Views of Cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the Ancient Near East* (SBL Dissertation Series 30; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), examines the cultic devotion of Job in the frame narrative and the roots of the proposals for penitence in the dialogues. Another important work in this regard is Wolfers, *Deep Things*, even though his claim that Job is an allegory of the assault of Assyria on Israel and Judah in the 8th century is unconvincing.

[65] The danger here is to claim too much. The argument that Job exists within the fold of the Torah is not to say that he in every way prescribes to the Torah but that his identity and worldview is shaped by the founding documents which gave shape to the relationship between Yahweh and his people in the history of redemption.

[66] Green, "Stretching," 570-571.

[67] Ibid., 573. See for example, Job: 9:8; Eliphaz: 5:5-18; Zophar: 11:7-11; Bildad: 25:1-6 Indeed, many commentators have misinterpreted the mythological allusions and content, arguing that the book betrays a polytheistic worldview (e.g., the references to the בני האלהים in 1:6 and 2:1, to mythological creatures such as Leviathan [3:8; 41], Behemoth [40:15-24], and Rahab [9:13], and to images of the forces of chaos in need of harnessing [26:12-16], among other allusions). However, one must distinguish between the use of mythological language and an espousal of the polytheistic worldview out of which these ancient myths emerged. The use of mythological language is indeed significant but paying careful attention to how these references function within the book reveals that the book falls within the framework of monotheism; C. Hasel Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books: The Wisdom and Songs of Israel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 80-82.

The covenant is based upon God's election and salvation of Israel which founds a relationship of inter-personal investment. God promised to bless faithful obedience and curse rebellion, and this is clearly established in the book of Deuteronomy. Furthermore, as Green notes, "In Israelite religion and early Judaism, the covenant is the charter of the cult."[68] In other words, the covenant established the relationship between Yahweh and his people, and the cult was an important means of perpetuating that relationship. The very existence of the priestly sacrificial system recognized that ethical, social, and physical ruptures would indeed take place. The levitical system provided a means whereby God's people could mend these broken relationships (i.e., to repair breaches in the covenant relationship), thereby facilitating the presence of God.[69] Balentine articulates this reality well in his comments on the book of Leviticus,

> In sum, the ritual order, like the cosmic order, establishes the boundaries and categories that enable a holy God to dwell in the midst of a world vulnerable to sin and defilement. When these rituals are faithfully enacted, God's presence is palpably available; when they are ignored or breached, God's sacred space on earth is compromised, and the harmony between God and the world is subverted.[70]

From the references in Job 1:5 and 42:8-10, Job appears to be functioning within some sort of priestly framework. There is perhaps a connection between Job's pious practice of offering sacrifices (העלה עלות) for his children's inadvertent sins in Job 1:5 and the regulations in Leviticus 4 which provide atonement for unintentional sins.[71]

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[68] Green, "Stretching the Covenant," 574.
[69] Ibid., 572.
[70] Samuel Balentine, *Leviticus* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1999), 4.
[71] Perhaps the earliest extant interpretation of Job (as early as the second century B.C) is the Greek translation. In the Old Greek version of Job, the parallel to Leviticus is heightened. In addition to stating that Job offered the burnt offerings, the Greek translation includes the words, καὶ μόσχον ἕνα περὶ ἁμαρτίας περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν ("and one bull-calf for the sins of their souls"). In the Septuagint, the word μόσχον appears most frequently in Leviticus (twenty-seven times), and when the congregation committed unintentional sin, the μόσχον was the ordained animal for the sacrifice (Lev. 4:13-14). Perhaps one should

However, this does not on its own establish that Job was fulfilling regulations of Torah; after all, the practice of sacrificing animals existed long before the giving of the Torah (e.g., Gen. 4:4-5; 8:20), and the patriarchs had the practice of making sacrifices on behalf of their families (Gen. 15:9-10; 22:13; 35:14).[72]

However, there is some evidence to suggest that connections exist between Job and the Priestly literature. Purdue notes that the "feast" (משתה) of Job's children could connote a cultic festival especially since it lasted seven days and was consummated by the consecratory sacrifice.[73] Moreover, the use of the word נקף (suggesting a continuous cycle) and the phrase עשה משתה (which means "to celebrate a cultic festival" in Isa. 25:6 and 1 Kgs. 3:15) in this context add further connections to cultic celebrations.[74] Purdue also examines the sacrifice and intercession in 42:8-10. He notes that what is of primary significance is that

> the sacrifice made by the friends, again underlining the patriarchal character of the setting, is accompanied by Job's petition, and corresponds exactly to the cultic practice of offering עלות accompanied by petitions (e.g., Jer 14:12 and I Kgs 3:4f.). This also reflects a common Old Testament idea that the "intercession" of a just and righteous person has tremendous power and

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not make too much of this addition by the hand of the Greek translator, except to note that as early as the second century B.C. Job was regarded as a keeper of Torah. This fact is reiterated in Job 34:27 where the Greek translator rendered the Hebrew:ὅτι ἐξέκλιναν ἐκ νόμου θεοῦ, δικαιῶματα δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν ("because they turned aside from God's law and did not accurately know his ordinances"). The Hebrew does not have a direct reference to "God's law" but merely סרו מאחריו ("turn from following him"). Deuteronomy 7:4 has a similar phrase: כי־יסיר את־בנך מאחרי ("because they will turn your sons from following me"). Again, these observations are not to suggest this is how one ought to read these verses; rather, the subtleties of the Greek version of Job offer an early attestation of how Jews in antiquity understood Job, i.e., as a worshiper of Yahweh and a keeper of Torah. I am grateful to Claude E. Cox who brought these nuances in the Greek version of Job to my attention in conversation. Through correspondence Cox noted his conviction that the Old Greek version of Job particularly "brings [Job] into the fold of the law."

[72] Clines, *Job 1-20,* lvii.

[73] Purdue, *Wisdom and Cult,* 167.

[74] Ibid.

> influence (Moses: Ex 32:11, Num 11:2, 12:13; Abraham: Gen 18:22f., 20:7f., and Job, Noah, and Daniel in Ezek 14:12-23).[75]

Additionally, Balentine shows further links between Job and the Priestly literature and suggests that "perhaps Job also received the same *priestly* deposit as Ezra and Nehemiah."[76]

Indeed, what has brought Job to the edge of insanity is his perception that God has broken covenant, and this causes Job's world to implode (see Job 3).[77] Clearly God's affliction of Job is gratuitous (i.e., "for naught," חנם, according to Yahweh in 2:3), and, therefore, repentance and sacrifice are ineffective. Green writes, "from a cultic or halakhic perspective, there is nothing concrete Job can do to repair his relationship with God . . . Job cannot atone for a transgression he did not commit. No offering, no change of heart, can appease divine caprice or undo an affliction that happens for no reason."[78] Similarly, Balentine holds that the author's subtle framing of Job's ordeal "with cultic (sacrificial) language" suggests that one aim of the book is "to probe a critical concern conventionally associated with the priestly agenda. How can cultic rituals—such as the sacrifices Job offers for his children and for his friends (Job 1:5; 42:8)—'comfort and console' (Job 2:11; 42:11) an innocent sufferer like Job?"[79] Thus, while Job's situation

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[75] Ibid., 170.

[76] Samuel E. Balentine, "I Was Ready to be Sought Out by Those Who Did Not Ask," in *Seeking the Favor of God: Volume 1, The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 21; eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 20. *Contra* Knohl, *Sanctuary of Silence*, 165-167.

[77] It may seem presumptuous to say that Job perceived that God has broken covenant. The lexical connections overwhelmingly suggest that the calamities of Job ought to be read in light of the covenant curses of Deut. 28; see Ticciati, *Identity,* 63; and the thorough investigation done by Wolfers, *Deep Things*, 111-118. The details of this reading will be fleshed out below.

[78] Green, "Stretching the Covenant," 574.

[79] Samuel Balentine, "Afterword," in *Seeking the Favor of God: Volume 1, The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 21; eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 204.

seems to suggest the inadequacy of the levitical system, deuteronomistic theology, covenantal reciprocity, and even divine justice, the book (and Job himself), nevertheless, proceeds with the assumption that these things exist and are true.[80] The book of Job, therefore, represents more properly a wrestling with rather than a rejection of these tenets of Israelite religion.[81]

The combination of Job's status as the "servant" (עבד) of Yahweh (mentioned above) and his character as a man who is "blameless" (תם and תמים) and one who "fears God" (ירא אלהים) gains significant importance read in light of Ps. 19. Psalm 19 is a powerful poem in which the majesty of God's revelation in creation is combined with the wonder and wisdom of God's revelation in the Torah. After praising the perfection, reliability, truth, and potential of Yahweh's Torah and the purity of the "fear of Yahweh" (יראת יהוה), the psalmist petitions God: "Keep back your servant [עבדך] from presumptuous sins . . . Then I shall be blameless [איתם] and innocent." For the psalmist, as perhaps for Job, being blameless and innocent is intricately bound up with his status as Yahweh's servant and in his capacity to keep Yahweh's Torah.[82]

It is recognized that reading Job in light of the Torah is not without assumptions, and that some will not find this reading strategy compelling. One could legitimately lay the charge that to suppose Job, who is depicted as an ancient patriarch, perhaps a

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[80] See Valerie Forstman Pettys, "Let there be Darkness: Continuity and Discontinuity in the 'Curse' of Job 3," *JSOT* 98 (2002): 90-104, who discusses the relation between Job 3 and Genesis 1 as one of continuity and discontinuity between traditional theology. She notes that "Job's cry, 'Let there be darkness!', grasps life by the thread of received tradition and threatens to break it. In the process, he affirms the vehicle of his dissent, even as he insists on its change" (103).

[81] Green, "Stretching the Covenant," 573. See Ticciati, *Identity,* 61.

[82] It is significant that in this psalm the themes of creation, wisdom and Torah culminate. Some scholars classify Ps. 19 as a wisdom psalm; see Roland Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature,* (3[d] ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 103

contemporary of Abraham, as a keeper of the Torah is plainly anachronistic. However, the story of Abraham is itself an example of this anachronistic phenomenon (see above). Thus, that the author of Job used the distant figure of Job in order to examine the essentials of Israelite wisdom and the Deuteronomic covenant is not inconceivable.[83] Although the author was likely aware of the anachronism, he still chose to tell the story of Job in Deuteronomic terms.[84] Perhaps the evidence for reading Job in light of the Torah is not as definitive as the skeptics would like, though such a reading does, arguably, shed valuable light upon the text of Job (this will require a suspension of judgment until the pertinent passages receive attention). The original audience would likely have identified with Job in spite of the foreign setting.[85] Features of the story which seem subtle to the modern reader would perhaps have been blatant to the ancient reader who was steeped in Torah. The following consideration of the book of Job will explore the implication of the fact that Job, at least to a certain extent, existed within the sphere of traditional Israelite theology. His identity is rooted in his relationship with Yahweh (i.e., as an elected "servant" of Yahweh).

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[83] Ticciati, *Identity,* 62-63.

[84] Ibid., 31. R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 36, identifies a similar phenomenon in Genesis. He holds that "the use of the name YHWH in Genesis conveys the perspective of the storytellers who tell the originally non-Yahwistic patriarchal stories from within the context of Mosaic Yahwism." For example Noah and Abraham are regarded as having faith in Yahweh. Modern examples of this phenomenon in the arts abound. Think, for example, of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* whereby Shakespeare explores the contemporary political issues in England (the dread of rebellion and civil war, potential regicide, legitimate royal succession, and the longing for a stable ruler) through the events of the Roman emperor Julius Caesar; or Arthur Miller's 1952 play *The Crucible* which explores the fear of communism in the United States as a result of McCarthyism through the lenses of the Salem witch hunts of the seventeenth century; or Archibald MacLeish's creative appropriation of Job in his 1958 play *J.B.* in order to comprehend the horrors of the twentieth century (e.g., the World Wars, the holocaust, the use of the atom bomb).

[85] See Clines, *Job 1-20,* 10, where he notes, that the setting in Uz "does not mean that Job necessarily *is* a foreigner, for most Jews of the exilic period and beyond—if that is the time of the book's composition—lived outside the borders of Israel, and the patriarchs themselves—since that is ostensibly the time in which the story is set—were almost as often to be found outside the land as within it."

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to do justice to Job as a written discourse. It has attempted to show how the book of Job represents one aspect of a larger dialogue within the Israelite wisdom tradition. Furthermore, it has identified the Torah as the foundation upon which the discussion in wisdom took place. Thus, the book of Job emerges as one voice in a larger conversation, or to use another analogy, Job is neither in unison or in dissonance with the rest of Scripture with regard to human understanding of God and the world but rather contributes to the harmony of the biblical witness. However, the meaning of the book today cannot be reduced to what it meant to the sage who wrote the book but must be understood as moving beyond its original context and referent. The book of Job is a work of universal appeal, which is attested by the fact that so many have used this book to gain insight into their own suffering.[86] Because of its lack of a clear author, date of composition, and context, the book of Job is afforded with a great deal of semantic autonomy. Moreover, Job is pregnant with meaning, and the complex layers of meaning allow one to read and reread it from new and different perspectives without exhausting the text's meaning.

According to Ricoeur, the meaning of the text is not understood as the author's intention, and the meaning of the text today is more important than the event of speech

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[86] There are many examples in which the book of Job is read in various contexts of suffering and oppression. See for example the reading of Job in light of the oppression in Latin America, Elsa Tamez, "From Father to the Needy to Brother of Jackals and Companion of Ostriches: A Meditation on Job," in *Job's God* (ed. Ellen van Wolde; Concilium 204/4; London: SCM Press, 2004), 103-111; Gutiérrez, *On Job*; in light of the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa, Gerald West with Bongi Zengele, "Reading Job 'Positively' in the Context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa," in *Job's God* (ed. Ellen van Wolde; Concilium 204/4; London: SCM Press, 2004),112-124; and in light of the Jewish holocaust during World War II, Darrell J. Fasching, "Can Christian Faith Survive Auschwitz," *Horizons* 12 (1985): 7-26; Wiesel, "Job," 211-238.

which precedes it. Although the author's intention is inaccessible, the conventions of literary production used in the composition of a text provide interpreters with an object to study through which the meaning of the text is mediated. The next chapter will attempt to explain the book of Job according to its genre, structure and style.

CHAPTER 5

JOB AS A WORK

The design of the book . . . reveals that its central message is not about suffering, but it is about holding on to one's integrity and faith.[1]

5.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to examine the book of Job according to Ricoeur's second dimension of textuality, namely the text in the form of a structured work. This aspect of textuality constitutes the most objective dimension of textual interpretation. The first dimension of Ricoeur's theory is an attempt to hold in dialectical tension the fact that a text is a discourse which continues to be something someone said to someone else and the fact that inscription liberates a text from its original intention, audience, and reference. Nevertheless, even though the move from speech to writing liberates the meaning of the text from the author's intention, the composition and codification of a text allow interpreters to reign in the meaning or sense of the text. Moreover, studying the genre, structure and style of the book will lay a foundation for an exploration of the projected world which constitutes the reference of the text (chapter six).

This chapter is structured according to the three criteria of a text in the form of a work: (1) genre, (2) structure, and (3) style, but a few introductory remarks about each of these are in order. First, the ambiguity in Ricoeur's thought over the relationship between a form of discourse and a genre make this part of the examination somewhat

[1] Andrew Steinmann, "The Structure and Message of the Book of Job," *VT* 46.1 (1996): 95.

tenuous, and the fact that Joban scholars cannot agree on the genre of Job only compounds the difficulty. It will be vital to make a distinction between the genre of the book as a whole and the genres of the component parts. Second, the distinct structure of Job will be identified. Although the book of Job has a fairly clear structure, commentators have disagreed over the function of that structure. The dimensions of literary genre and structure are closely related and treating them separately is somewhat artificial; thus, there will be some overlap between these two sections. Finally, the distinct style of the book of Job will receive consideration, concentrating on the individuality of the book of Job.

5.2 The Genre of the Book of Job

Perhaps the extent to which commentators disagree concerning the genre of Job is exemplified by two articles on the subject which appeared in *Semeia* twenty-five years apart from one another, namely William Whedbee's 1977 article which classifies Job as comedy and Roger C. Schlobin's 1992 article which argues that Job is a prototypic horror.[2] Many other genre proposals for the book of Job exist along the continuum between these two extremes. However, it is necessary to distinguish the genre of the book and the genres of the various passages.

5.2.1 Subgenres in the Book of Job

There is no doubt that the book of Job contains many types of literature which conform to various genres. The most dominant of these sub-genres are lament, law and wisdom. First, some of the most powerful laments in the Old Testament grace the pages

[2] William Whedbee, "Comedy of Job," *Semeia* 7 (1977): 1-39; Roger C. Schlobin, "Prototypic Horror: The Genre of the Book of Job," *Semeia* 60 (1992): 23-38.

of Job including Job's opening speech (ch. 3) and closing speeches (chs. 29-31). Moreover, many of Job's discourses within the dialogue cycles appear in the form of lament (7; 10; 12:2-6; 13:13-28; 14; 16-17).[3] Second, passages which fall under the genre of law abound in Job, including Job's lawsuit against his friends (13:4-12) and with God (9; 23:3-7) and accusations by all of Job's friends (8:2-4; 11:2-6; 15:2-6; 18:2-4; 20:2-3; 22:2-9).[4] Third, elements of wisdom permeate the book, including proverbial sayings (5:6-7; 6:5-6; 8:11-12; 12:12-13; 17:5), numerical sayings (5:19-21; 13:20-22; 33:14-30), wisdom instruction (4:7-11; 8:8-10; 15:7-16), and other didactic forms (5:1-7; 15:7-16; 18:5-21; 20:4-29).[5] Moreover, throughout the book many other genre forms exist, including but certainly not limited to: lines of hymnic praise to God by the friends (5:9-16; 11:7-11; 25:2-6) and by Job (9:5-13; 12:13-25), wisdom disputation primarily in the speech cycles (4:2-19; 8:2-22; 15:2-35; 22:2-30), and narrative (1-2; 42:10-17).[6]

5.2.2 Genre Classification of the Book as a Whole

It is clear that the book of Job is made up of a number of literary genres; however, is it possible to classify the whole book according to a single overriding genre? Many attempts have been made in the history of the interpretation of Job. The following presents the dominant proposals.

Traditionally, the book as a whole is recognized as wisdom literature together with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, although some have questioned to what extent it affirms

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[3] Roland E. Murphy, *The Psalms, Job* (Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 78; Hartley, *Job,* 40.
[4] Hartley, *Job,* 39-40.
[5] Katherine Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 58-62; Murphy, *Psalms, Job,* 78; von Rad, *Wisdom,* 39; Hartley, *Job,* 39-40.
[6] Dell, *Job,* 58-62; Hartley, *Job,* 37-43.

traditional Hebrew wisdom.[7] The debate surrounding the source of wisdom is indeed a significant theme of the book, and the controversy remains within the perspective of Israelite wisdom.[8] Perhaps there are grounds to classify the speech cycles as wisdom disputation; however, it is not altogether clear where the rest of the book fits into this classification.[9] As the discussion in chapter four revealed there is no denying that Job is wisdom literature (that it contributes to a larger discussion within Israelite wisdom) but this category is far too general to constitute a genre.

Another typical classification of the book of Job as a whole is theodicy.[10] A central issue of Job is the question "how can an all-powerful and benevolent God allow an innocent human to suffer?" The scholarly trend seems to be moving away from this classification because, after all, the book (or more precisely Yahweh) does not offer an adequate solution (if it is a solution at all).[11] Moreover, there is a growing realization that Job is not an intellectual reflection upon the question of suffering (i.e., a theoretical problem); though the book struggles with the question of suffering it is an existential and not an intellectual struggle.[12]

Two other attempts to define the genre of the whole book are worthy of mention. A number of scholars have noticed the dominating role played by the legal metaphor, and therefore class the book as a lawsuit or a lawsuit drama.[13] Richter thinks that the

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[7] See for example, Scott, *Way of Wisdom,* whose treatment of Job falls under the chapter heading "Wisdom in Revolt."
[8] Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 207; Murphy, *Tree of Life,* 33.
[9] See Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation,* 124-126.
[10] Though it is not entirely clear that this is in fact a literary genre.
[11] See Steinmann, "The Structure and Message," 85-100; and Ticciati, *Identity.*
[12] See Clines, *Job 1-20,* xxxviii; and Westermann, *Structure of Job,* 1-2.
[13] Habel references six studies which have developed this thesis: H. Richter, *Studien zu Hiob* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959); B. Gemser, "The *rîb*—or Controversy—Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," *SVT* 3 (1960): 120-137; S. H. Scholnick, *Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis

structure of Job strictly corresponds to the procedures of a lawsuit,[14] and Habel, who does not see the need to classify the whole book in terms of a lawsuit genre, argues that the book is structured chiastically around the legal motif.[15] The proposals of Richter and Habel are commendable because they attempt to connect the structure or form of the book with its genre, and as a result they find a place and function for the speeches of both Elihu and Yahweh. No doubt the legal metaphor is significant but to classify Job in terms of a lawsuit genre or even to see the legal metaphor as the dominant motif is not compelling.

The problem, especially in Richter, is that the theory demands too much from the text; it is too one-sided.[16] Furthermore, although one of the main issues of the dialogue is the authenticity of Job's innocence, the readers, along with Yahweh (1:8; 2:3), Job's wife (2:9), the narrator (1:22; 2:10b), and of course Job, know that he is innocent. One is led, therefore, to wonder whether or not God rather than Job ought to be the subject of

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University, 1975); J. B. Frye, *The Legal Language of the Book of Job* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 1975); J. J. Roberts, "Job's Summons to Yahweh: The Exploitation of the Legal Metaphor," *RQ* 16 (1973): 159-165; M. B. Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in Job 31," *CBQ* 41 (1971): 37-50.

[14] Hartley, *Job,* 37-38 summarizes Richter's structuring: "The first section is the procedure to reach a settlement through a pre-trial hearing (chs. 4-14). Since this attempt fails, a formal trial follows (chs. 15-31). The friends' silence after Job's oath of innocence means that they have conceded their case and Job has won. Deeply disturbed by this state of affairs, Elihu enters and appeals the decision (chs. 32—37). Finally, God appears as litigant (chs. 38-41). Under his questioning, the defendant Job withdraws his complaint so that reconciliation between God and himself is achieved (42:1-6).

[15] Habel, *Job,* 54. Habel's perceived structure is as follows:

A Ironic Anticipation (1:6-11; 2:1-6)
B Contemplating Litigation (chs. 9-10)
C Challenging the Accuser (ch. 13)
D Announcing an Arbiter (16:18-21; 19:21-29)
E Testimony of the Accused (chs 29-30)
E[1] Oath and Challenge by the Accused (ch. 31)
D[1] Verdict of an Arbiter (chs. 32-37)
C[1] Challenging the Accused (38:1ff; 40:6ff)
B[1] Retracting Litigation (42:1-6)
A[1] Ironic Exculpation (42:7-9)

[16] Hartley, *Job,* 38.

investigation.[17] On the other hand, the importance of the legal metaphor will become dominant, however, in the final series of Job's speeches (especially chs. 29-31) when he turns his attention away from his friends' empty words and demands a divine hearing.

Claus Westermann agrees that the legal language in Job is significant, but he argues that it serves the overall purpose of the book which is a *dramatized lament.*[18] Westermann's classification is also closely tied to the literary structure of the book.[19] Westermann thinks that the presupposition that the book is dealing with a problem (i.e., the problem of suffering) has severely coloured the exegesis of many interpreters. On the contrary, the book is about Job's question, "why am I suffering?" which is an existential and not a theoretical question; moreover, this question is a lament. He also disagrees that the dialogue (chs. 4-27) is a disputation per se, though it does degenerate into dispute. The intended purpose of the friends was to console their suffering brother.[20] Job's lamentation frames the dialogue (chs. 3 and 29-31) and is not answered until Yahweh's

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[17] In reference to Job's words in 3:25 "the thing which I feared has come upon me . . ." Ticciati writes, "as is signaled by the occurrence of the same word for fear, פַּחַד (*pachad*), in Deut. 28:66 in reference to the dread that Israel experiences under the curses of God, [Job's fear] is, of course, more specifically the fear that God will break the Covenant—by cursing Job when blessing was due. And this is indeed what happens!" Ticciati, *Disruption of Identity,* 71. This is a serious accusation and one which deserves (and will receive below) more attention.

[18] Westermann, *Structure of Job.*

[19] Unfortunately, though, Westermann is at a loss to find a place for the Elihu speeches and tacks a chapter at the end of his book to deal with them. He writes, "Even if the interpretation of the structure of the Book of Job as given here should prove to be accurate only in its broad traits, still that interpretation allows us to say with certainty that the speeches of Elihu are an insertion that could not have originated with the poet of the Book of Job; on the contrary, they quite obviously represent an early critical response to the Book of Job"; ibid., 139.

[20] Westermann notes that in real life consolation is not merely offering a word of encouragement but often involves back-and-forth dialogue. He notes, "What it comes down to is that a repeated exchange of words belongs to the very essence of the process of consolation. In real situations of consolation—as experience demonstrates thousandfold—it almost never happens that the sufferer speaks only once and the consoler replies only once. It is furthermore essential to the process of consolation that the one doing the lamenting be allowed to express himself. Therefore an attitude of reservation is incumbent upon the consoler in such a conversation, whereas the one doing the lamenting has the right to be expansive in his lament. The particular structure of the dialogue in the Book of Job shows precisely this arrangement"; ibid., 10. It could be questioned to what extent the friends demonstrate an "attitude of reservation," and Westermann notes that where consolation is intended by the friends "disputation has intruded" (10).

speeches. In fact, if one brackets chapters 4-28, there is a straight line from Job's initial accusation against God and his desired confrontation with God at the close of chapter 31. Together with the dialogue, there "is then only one way to see the whole of the Book of Job: the encompassing confrontation is that between Job and God, while within this confrontation is that between the friends and Job."[21] Thus, Job's conflict with his friends is subsumed within his lament against God. In fact, the words of his friends only increase Job's suffering and become cause for further lament. Westermann maintains that in only one place "do thesis and antithesis stand in clear juxtaposition: in chapter 21 . . . Job sets his thesis over against that of the friends regarding the fate of the transgressor,"[22] the rest of the time Job's laments break up the arguments of the friends.[23] The prose narrative which frames all of this is essential because it functions to validate the event of Job's suffering; in other words this is not some abstract intellectual exercise but is depicted as something real and authentic. Thus, according to Westermann, taken as a whole including the narrative frame, the book of Job is a lament in the style of a drama.[24]

Though Westermann is not without his critics, many agree that reading Job in terms of lament is very helpful. The critics may indeed be right when they argue that Westermann's classification is too broad[25] or that the genre "dramatized lament" does not in fact exist.[26] Genre classification is a helpful interpretative tool because it allows one to

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[21] Ibid., 5.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Westermann identifies individual psalms of lament (e.g., Pss. 4 and 6) in which the lamenter shifts from talking about his opponents to addressing them directly; "In these places there really is a dramatizing of the lament!"; ibid., 11.
[24] For the complete argument see ibid., 1-15.
[25] For example Hartley, *Job,* 38, which states, "Westermann describes the genres in the book of Job, but 'dramatized lament' . . . fails to categorize the entire work"; or Dell, *Job*, 90, which notes, "the category 'dramatization of the lament' as genre . . . is too wide to be useful as a literary term."
[26] So Hartley, *Job,* 38: "dramatized lament" is a descriptive term, not a literary genre. See also Roland Murphy, *Wisdom,* 16-17.

compare literature of the same generic type, but the book of Job is, in many ways, in its own literary class. The prototypical lament in the book of Psalms reveals a three-way relationship between the complainant, the enemy and God. In Job, the latter two collapse into one another. To be sure, Job's enemy could be defined as his misery, his ill health, the scoffers who deceive with their lips, his isolation, his misfortune (all of these are typical "enemies" in the psalms), but the root and source of all of these, according to Job, is God—God has become Job's enemy.[27]

The fact that the classification is more descriptive than prescriptive[28] is, perhaps, the strength of Westermann's proposal.[29] The book of Job does not conform strictly to the prescripts of any one genre, but as a descriptive classification, "dramatized lament" will arguably make the best sense of the whole book. To add a further dimension to Westermann's proposal, perhaps the lament which plays out in the book of Job should be understood especially in terms of laments such as Pss. 5, 7, 17, and 26 in which *the innocent* appeals for deliverance or vindication. As William Morrow suggests, Job "fits in most clearly with the language of individual complaint, in particular with psalms emphasizing the innocence of the petitioner."[30]

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[27] Habel, *Job,* 42-43.

[28] This is the objection of Hartley, *Job,* 38, and Murphy, *Wisdom,* 17.

[29] One of the weaknesses of much form-critical analysis is that genres are somehow pure and prescriptive, and if certain anomalies or deviations occur then the literature is defective or sub-par. Obviously Westermann is taking a great deal of license when he articulates the "genre" of Job.

[30] William Morrow, "The Affirmation of Divine Righteousness in Early Penitential Prayers: A Sign of Judaism's Entry in the Axial Age," in *Seeking the Favor of God: Volume 1, The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 21; eds. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 109. Morrow identifies the affinities between Job 6:28-30; 16:16-17; 23:10-12; 27:2-6 and Pss. 17:3-5; 26:2-7.

5.2.3 The Book of Job as *Sui Generis*

Some commentators have concluded that the book of Job as a whole defies literary classification, that it is *sui generis*.[31] Perhaps it may help to consider once again Ricoeur's articulation concerning literary genres.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Reese questioned whether or not Ricoeur's articulation of the codification of the text was adequate to deal with particular books of the Bible, and it is worth recalling again his dissatisfaction:

> [Ricoeur] concentrates on the fact that biblical texts use their forms to express confessions of faith, and he is concerned with the closing of the canon. How do these questions apply to the variety of minor genres employed in [Wisdom of Solomon] . . . [I]ts wide range of content and diversity of forms presents commentators with an extremely problematic "work." Does Ricoeur's attention to the closing of the canon—a step that takes him away from individual books—offer any help in interpreting this unusual expression of faith?[32]

The frustration which Reese feels trying to work out what Ricoeur meant with regard to genre is equally applicable to the book of Job. Perhaps, though, Ricoeur's distinction between form of discourse and genre provides a way forward for the genre aspect of the book of Job.

As noted, Ricoeur held that Job is a wisdom discourse, and in light of the discussion in the previous chapter ("Job as a Written Communication") the book of Job does indeed find its source within a broader sapiential discussion. However, it is the overall effect of the amalgamation of all of the various genres which produces this wisdom discourse. Ricoeur held that "[l]anguage is submitted to the rules of a kind of

[31] For example, Pope, *Job,* xxxi; Hartley, *Job,* 38; Norman K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1959), 472; W. Lee Humphreys, *Crisis and Story: Introduction to the Old Testament* (Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1979), 202.
[32] Reese, "Ricoeur's Method," 385-386.

craftsmanship, which allows us to speak of production and works of art, and, by extension of works of discourse. Poems, narratives, and essays are such works of discourse. The generative devices, which we call literary genres, are the technical rules presiding over their production."[33] It may be possible to regard the various genres of Job (lament, law, wisdom, hymn, etc.) as presiding over the book's production as a wisdom discourse. Even so, the dramatized lament functions to bind the book together into a coherent whole and also to provide a context in which to engage in the wisdom discourse.

5.3 The Structure of the Book of Job

A great deal has been written about the structure of the Book of Job as the introduction to this chapter has indicated. Clines is right that taken piecemeal the book of Job is incomprehensible, and "What we need to do, with this book more than many others, is to start by identifying and becoming familiar with its shape."[34] A cursory glance at the book as a whole clearly reveals a deliberate structure with the core of the book (3:1-42:6) set within the context of a narrative frame (1:1-2:13; 42:7-17). One can fairly objectively delineate smaller divisions within these large sections. In the narrative prologue the necessary introductory information about Job (1:1-5) and that of Job's friends (2:11-13) frames two pairs of corresponding scenes: the first heavenly scene (1:6-12) and the loss of Job's possessions and children (1:13-22), and the second heavenly scene (2:1-7a) and the loss of Job's physical health (2:7b-10). One could perhaps break

[33] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 33.
[34] Clines, *Job,* xxxiv. Clines proceeds to say that "The shape of a book, as of anything, is not an intrinsic property of the object itself, but a design in the mind of the observer" (xxxv). While there is always a measure of subjectivity in these examinations, this study will proceed along the lines of Ricoeur who holds that the structure of a work is tangible and reflects the hand of its author.

down the narrative prologue into two parts, namely Yahweh's rebuke against the friends (42:7-9) and Yahweh's blessing of Job (42:10-17).

The poetic core of the book is more complex, made up of a number of speeches with very little comment from the narrator (apart from the rather descriptive introduction to Elihu in 32:1-5, and the detail that Yahweh spoke from the whirlwind in 38:1). This section begins with a powerful and provocative lament from the lips of Job (ch. 3). Job's words cause the friends to break their silence, marking the beginning of three speech cycles in which the friends make a speech followed directly by a speech from Job (thus, Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Zophar, Job, etc.). Almost without fail, the beginning of each new speech is marked off with the words, "[speaker] answered and said," (ויאמר [speaker] ויען). At the end of these speech cycles, the friends' speeches become shorter and Zophar's expected third speech is non-existent. Following the speech cycles is the hymn to wisdom (ch. 28), Job's final claim of innocence which is comprised of three speeches (chs. 29-30), Elihu's speeches (chs. 32-37)[35] and finally, a pair of Yahweh's speeches (38:1-40:2; 40:6-41:34)[36] followed each by Job's responses (40:3-5; 42:1-6). Thus, the overall picture of Job looks like this:[37]

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[35] Based upon the narrator's interjections (ויען אליהוא ויאמר in 32:6; 34:1; 35:1 and ויסף אליהוא ויאמר in 36:1) one can clearly discern four distinct speeches from Elihu.

[36] Cf. Steinmann, "Structure and Message," 85-100; James E. Patrick, "The Four-Fold Structure of Job: Variations on a Theme," *VT* 55.2 (2005): 185-206. Based upon the narrator's introductions to the speeches (e.g. "the LORD answered and said," etc.) Steinmann and Patrick discern four speeches by Yahweh: (1) 38:1-39:30; (2) 40:1-2; (3) 40:6-41:34; and (4) 42:7-8.

[37] I have tried to follow the indication of the text itself (for example, the introduction of the speeches found throughout the book are key), though some subjectivity is inevitable. Moreover, there is flexibility in the structuring found here. It is justifiable to end the speech cycles at chapter 26 because there is a clear shift in the address of Job from the second person singular in chapter 26 (vv. 2, 3, 4) to the second person plural in chapter 27 (vv. 5, 11, 12). Whereas Job was addressing Bildad in chapter 26, in chapter 27 he addresses the whole group. While most scholars argue for some variation of the three-cycle theory, I am aware of two alternative theories. Steinmann, "The Structure and Message," argues for a four-fold pattern throughout the book as a whole, and this perceived structure causes him to divide chapters 3-27 into four

I. **PROLOGUE (CHS. 1-2)**
- A. Introduction of Job (1:1-5)
  - B. The First Heavenly Scene (1:6-12)
    - C. The Loss of Job's Possessions and Children (1:13-22)
  - B'. The Second Heavenly Scene (2:1-6)
    - C'. The Loss of Job's Health (2:7-10)
- A'. Introduction to the Three Friends (2:11-13)

II. **JOB'S LAMENT (CH. 3)**

III. **THE SPEECHES CYCLES (CHS. 4-26)**

A. First Speech Cycle	B. Second Speech Cycle	C. Third Speech Cycle
1. Eliphaz (4-5)	1. Eliphaz (15)	1. Eliphaz (22)
2. Job (6-7)	2. Job (16-17)	2. Job (23-24)
3. Bildad (8)	3. Bildad (18)	3. Bildad (25)
4. Job (9-10)	4. Job (19)	4. Job (26)
5. Zophar (11)	5. Zophar (20)	
6. Job (12-14)	6. Job (21)	

IV. **THE BEGINNING OF JOB'S EXTENDED MONOLOGUE (CHS. 27-28)**
- A. Job's Indictment Against His "Comforters" (27)
- B. Hymn to Wisdom (28)

V. **MONOLOGUE CONTINUED: JOB'S AVOWAL OF INNOCENCE/LEGAL CASE AGAINST GOD (CHS. 29-31)**
- A. Job's Remembrance (29)
- B. Job's Lament (30)
- C. Job's Oath of Innocence (31)

VI. **ELIHU'S SPEECHES (CHS. 32-37)**
- A. Narrative Introduction to Elihu (32:1-5)
- B. Elihu's Speeches
  1. First Speech (32:6-33:33)
  2. Second Speech (34)

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section: (1) Job's complaint (ch. 3), (2) the first four-fold cycle of speeches (ch. 4-17), (3) the second four-fold cycle of speeches (ch. 18-26), and (4) Job's final reply to his friends (ch. 27). The speech cycles, then, represent two pairs of two cycles each containing four speeches. More recently, Patrick, "The Four-Fold Structure," picked up Steinmann's perceived four-fold structure and carried it forward with considerable sophistication. Alternatively, David Wolfers, "The Speech-Cycles in the Book of Job," *VT* 43.3 (1993): 385-402, argues that the speeches at the core of the book represent two speech cycles consisting of seven speeches each, both beginning and ending with a speech by Eliphaz. This requires him to split Eliphaz' speech in chapter 15 in half (vv. 2-16 which ends the first cycle and 17-35 which starts the second), and to argue that chapters 23-31 are an extended monologue with a brief interjection by Bildad in chapter 25 in order to answer Job's challenge in 24:25). These innovative studies are intriguing but they do not lead to compelling new insights into the meaning of the book of Job. Patrick's nuanced examination of the structure of Job consists merely of his observations and, unfortunately, he leaves off a discussion of the theological/interpretative import of his findings.

3. Third Speech (35)
4. Fourth Speech (36:1-37:24)

VII. YAHWEH'S SPEECHES AND JOB'S RESPONSES (38:1-42:6)
Narrative Introduction to Yahweh (38:1)
A. Yahweh's First Speech (38:2-40:2)
B. Job's First Response (40:1-5)
A'. Yahweh's Second Speech (40:6-41:26)
B'. Job's Second Response (42:1-6)

VIII. THE EPILOGUE (42:7-17)
A. Judgment on Friends (42:7-9)
B. Blessing of Job (42:10-17)

While one could refine even further these sections (e.g., the pericope in 1:13-19 has a deliberate four-fold literary structure and the hymn to wisdom is carefully crafted into three sections) the preceding outline offers the basic structure and contour of the book as a whole. Any further literary breakdown must follow a closer examination of the specific sections.

Perhaps it is fitting to note some preliminary observations of scholars regarding the structure of the book. First, it is difficult to imagine what kind of meaning an interpretation of merely the poetic core or merely the narrative frame would yield. Polzin is most likely right when he complains that source criticism and other such methods "ultimately destroy the message(s) of the book and moreover make impossible the first step toward understanding how, *in its present form*, it has affected men so profoundly down through the ages."[38] The prologue offers the reader the necessary information in order to understand the poetic core: Job is blameless, and his affliction is indeed from God (if not at least sanctioned by God). Thus, readers know a great deal more than Job

[38] Polzin, *Structuralism,* 61.

or his friends do, and while this information does not fully relieve the tension within the dialogue it allows readers to orient themselves in the core of the book.

Second, much has been made of the "corrupted" third speech cycle, i.e., Bildad's relatively short speech (ch. 25), Zophar's "missing" speech, and Job's relatively long response (chs. 26-28). Scholars have provided various "solutions" to the problem involving a cut-and-paste approach in order to make sense of the perceived corruption.[39] Although the present study attempts to avoid such rewriting, this is not meant to diminish the fact that reading the text as we have it presents some serious challenges. However, it is fitting that the last speech cycle is truncated. The friends have exhausted their arguments against their unrepentant friend and while their speeches grow progressively shorter throughout the speech cycles, Job's never wanes in the conviction that God has wrongly afflicted him, and on the whole his speeches expand.[40] The friends' speeches get shorter with the exception of Zophar's two speeches, the first of which is sixteen lines shorter than the second;[41] according to Hartley, this aberration indicates to the reader that Zophar would not speak again after his second speech. The affect of this literary structure complements the movement of the book: as Job maintains his integrity, the friends lose steam, and, thus, Job demands a divine hearing (chs. 29-31).

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[39] The various proposals will not be dealt with in this study. For the most up-to-date (and refreshingly brief) overview of the theories see Clines, *Job 21-37,* 644. Reflecting upon the range of hypotheses, Hartley, *Job,* 25, notes, "Each construction is still faced with very rough transitions between sections and lacks the full character of the speeches of the other two cycles. The wide variety of the multiple constructions cautions further against major reapportioning of the verses in chs. 24-31 in order to achieve a full third cycle." Indeed, the "final form" of Job presents difficulties to any reader, for example how to reconcile some of the words of ch. 27 in the mouth of Job.

[40] Hartley, *Job,* 25.

[41] The number of lines in each of the friends' speeches are: Eliphaz: 98, 68, 58; Bildad: 43, 41, 11; Zophar: 40, 56; ibid. Moreover, Hartley holds that of the three friends Zophar is the least creative and the most convinced of Job's guilt, and, thus, his disappearance is of little loss (contra Habel, *Job,* 37-38).

The majority of scholars are not able to reconcile the words of 27:13-23 (which seem to affirm the doctrine of retribution) in the mouth of Job, and therefore attribute them to either Zophar or Bildad.[42] However, one could perhaps understand these words from Job in one of two ways. Job begins his response to Bildad's last speech with these words (26:2-3):

> How you have helped the powerless!
> How you have saved the feeble arm!
> How you have counseled the unwise,
> And revealed your advice in abundance!

In chapter 27, the continuation of Job's discourse, Job holds firm to his integrity and refuses to admit that the friends are right (v. 5). Moreover, in v. 11, he declares that *he* will instruct the friends, and in v. 12, right before the disputed verses, he says, "Surely you have seen [the power and purpose of God], why then all this vain talk?"[43] In light of these words from Job, 27:13-23 should not be seen as Job affirming the arguments of the friends, but rather as Job reiterating the arguments of the friends. In other words, it is as if Job is saying, "Your wise counsel is nothing but folly, and you claim to know the ways of God, so 'why then all this vain talk,' namely . . ." and what follows is his summation of their vain arguments. There is perhaps a second way one might understand the words of 27:13-23 on the lips of Job. It is conceivable that Job is using the arguments of his friends against them. Verse 7 suggests that Job regards his friends (i.e., "his enemy" and

[42] Dhorme, Terrien, Gordis, Habel, Hartley, Skehan; Clines, *Job 21-37,* 644.

[43] The second half of this verse (ולמה־זה הבל תהבלו) is more literally rendered, "Why then *are* you empty with respect to emptiness." This vanity concerns the emptiness of the friends' pathetic arguments; Clines, *Job 21-37,* 643; Habel, *Job,* 376.

"his assailant") as "wicked" and "unrighteous." Thus, vv. 13-23 represent what Job thinks is fitting for the wicked (i.e., the friends who pile up their vain arguments).[44]

This interpretation of vv. 13-23 also permits one to see these verses as flowing right into the hymn to wisdom (ch. 28). Job is already speaking of the appropriate place for the wicked, and chapter 28 continues this theme—there is a place for silver and gold (28:1-11), but where can wisdom be found (vv. 12-28)? The famous hymn to wisdom is not as inappropriate upon the lips of Job as scholars have supposed.[45] If indeed chapter 28 is from Job's lips the concluding sentence is telling:

> To *fear the Lord*, that is wisdom [יראת אדני היא חכמה],
> And to *shun evil* is understanding [וסור מרע בינה].

In spite of the friends' claim to traditional wisdom (8:8-10; 11:6; 15:1-13; 20:3) it is Job, the man who "fears God and shuns evil" (1:1d, 8e; 2:3e: וירא אלהים וסר מרע), who shows by his character that he is wise and discerning.

Therefore, the preceding has shown that scholars' propensity to rewrite the third speech cycle is not necessary. In fact, close attention to the text reveals that reading this final cycle in its "final form" is not only legitimate but also may give one insight into the elusive hymn to wisdom.

This leads to the third observation concerning the structure of the book. The end of ch. 28 marks a shift in the book whereby Job, frustrated with his friends' vain words, demands a divine hearing. Chapters 29-31 are clearly outside the dialogue per se, i.e.,

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[44] I am delighted to discover that the same argument is put forward by Alison Lo, *Job 28 as Rhetoric: An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22-31* (VTSup 97; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 192-193.

[45] Some see the poem as a kind of editorial interruption; in other words, the hymn does not belong to one of the interlocutors. So Hartley, *Job,* 373, "Since its abstract reflective tone does not match well any of the speakers, it is taken to be a piece that stands outside the dialogue."

Job is not addressing either one or all of his friends. Chapter 29 is reflective in tone and represents Job's remembrance of his blessed existence in the past. In chapter 30 Job describes and laments his present affliction as a result of God and his friends. Unlike chapters 4-27 where the friends are addressed in the second person, Job here refers to his friends in the third person, punctuating the marked shift; conversely, Job turns in 30:20-23 to cry out to God in the second person. In chapter 31 Job uses legal rhetoric, avows his innocence and calls down curses upon himself. Thus, from chapter 3 to chapter 31 Job is back where he started with curses upon his lips.[46] Then at the end of chapter 31 the narrator announces that "the words of Job are ended" (תמו דברי איוב).

Fourth, in addition to the announcement that Job's words are at an end, the narrator notes at the beginning of ch. 32 that, furthermore, "These three men ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes (וישבתו שלשת האנשים האלה מענות את־איוב כי הוא צדיק בעיניו). One would expect that following upon the heels of Job's challenge in ch. 31 and the announcement that his words and his friends' words are ended God would appear and answer Job. This, however, is not the case. Instead, the young upstart, Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram enters (32:2). Clines notes that the speeches of Elihu are commonly regarded as a later addition.[47] What might motivate a later editor to insert this new character with a new argument? Apparently the answer is clear: the editor "was angry with Job because he declared himself rather than God to be in the right; and he was angry also at the three friends of Job because they had not found an answer, and because they had not shown Job to be in

[46] Good, *Tempest,* 294. This is not to say that Job has not changed or progressed in his thinking.
[47] Clines, *Job 21-38,* 708.

the wrong" (32:2b-3).[48] Clines convincingly shows that the supporting evidence for the supposition that chs. 32-37 are a later addition is very weak, and more recent scholarship has argued for the integral role of these chapters.[49] Indeed, the speeches of Elihu serve a number of important purposes. First, because one expects God to answer Job directly following the end of his words, the interjection of Elihu serves to heighten the suspense as the reader waits for a final resolution. Second, Elihu is quite unlike Job's three friends. In contrast to the friends who more-or-less maintain the same argument about Job's suffering, Elihu does offer a distinct interpretation of suffering, namely that suffering serves a didactic purpose.[50] Although one might question the sufficiency of Elihu's take on suffering, his speeches do offer a perspective distinct from the rest of the book. Finally, while most scholars admit that in the "final form" of the book of Job Elihu functions in these two ways (i.e., as an interjection serving to build suspense and offering a fresh perspective on suffering), there is reason to believe that he serves a more normative function within the book as a whole.

Ticciati offers an intriguing interpretation of Elihu and this will be explored in more detail below; but to anticipate this discussion the following serves as a summary. Although he is indeed angry with the friends and with Job (four times in three verses [32:2-4] the narrator refers to the anger of Elihu), it appears that he is somewhat

[48] This is following Clines' translation; ibid., 680.
[49] See ibid., 708-709, for a brief but thorough discussion of the scholarly debate over this matter. Clines himself is compelled to cut and paste the Elihu speeches. He places them before the hymn to wisdom in ch. 28 which he also attributes to Elihu. Whether or not his reasons are compelling this arrangement clearly distinguishes Job's final address to his friends in ch. 27 from his lengthy monologue in chs. 29-31. It also removes the "obstacle" standing between Job's final plea and Yahweh's appearance, and it provides an answer to the difficult question concerning who is speaking in ch. 28. See especially David J. A. Clines, "Putting Elihu in his Place: A Proposal for the Relocation of Job 32-37," *JSOT* 29/2 (2004): 243-253.
[50] Good, *Tempest,* 321.

sympathetic to Job's plea.[51] Ticciati observes that at the beginning of his speeches Elihu desires to mediate Job's case before God.[52] After he waxes eloquently about his credentials in spite of appearances (32:6-19), he announces that he must be permitted to speak his opinion and that he vows to avoid partiality (vv. 20-22). Then, perhaps benevolently, Elihu turns to Job and asks him to hear his instruction. Although this ends up being a one-sided conversation, he states that he wants to understand Job and encourages Job to respond (33:5, 32). Perhaps it is easy to overlook the fact that Elihu's stated purpose for speaking up is his "desire to justify you [Job]."[53] Elihu does not want to prove Job wrong but longs for his restoration."[54] In the end, Elihu's rational approach leads him to a position not altogether unlike that of the friends. His articulation of the unquestionable and ultimate authority of God undermines his role as Job's mediator with God and transforms him into a spokesperson for the Divine.[55] Understood in this way the need for God to appear is even more apparent than before Elihu speaks.

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[51] The tone and direction of Elihu's speeches are extremely difficult to gauge. Clines, for example, admits that Elihu is prolix, but his opinion is that some of the finest lines of the whole book are found in these chapters; Clines, *Job 21-37,* 709. Good, on the other hand, notes, "I do not deal with Elihu in as much detail as with the other persons in Job, not because the speeches may have been interpolated along the way, but because I think they are harder to understand than their substance warrants. I find Elihu a pompous, insensitive bore: an opaque thinker and an unattractively self-important character. His language is pretentious, often difficult, sometimes quite unintelligible"; Good, *Tempest,* 321. Moreover, the fact that scholars cannot agree whether Elihu's speeches are constructive or obstructive is further evidence of the ambiguity. It seems as though Yahweh cuts him off from speaking any further. His absence from God's pronouncement against the friends in 42:7 is conspicuous but not definitive. Some suggest that he is absent because he indeed spoke rightly of God (Hartley, *Job,* 538) although his absence might just as well suggest that there is no reconciliation for him after such pretentious and arrogant words. Incidentally, Elihu is given a more thorough introduction than the friends receive, and it is up for debate what interpreters should do with his lengthy appellation. Good, *Tempest,* 320, offers two translations of אליהוא בן־ברכאל הבוזי ממשפחת רם which the Hebrew can support, and they are: "My-god-he, son of Bless-El, the Contemptible, of the clan of Uppity," or "My-god-he, son of Curse-El, the Contemptuous, of the clan of Exalted." Apparently, the meaning of Elihu's full name and ancestry does little to move the debate forward.

[52] Ticciati, *Identity,* 125-126.

[53] Clines, *Job 21-38*, 742, calls this the "penultimate, climactic line of [Elihu's] opening speech." Contrary to the norm, Clines appears to be somewhat sympathetic to Elihu.

[54] Ibid., 743.

[55] See Ticciati, *Identity,* 125-130.

Fifth, although much more will have to be said about the remainder of the book, the speeches of Yahweh function to "answer" Job and to issue a retraction from Job. The mysterious prologue brings resolution and reconciliation between all parties. These sections will receive their due attention in the next chapter when the world of the book of Job is considered.

5.4 Style of the Job

Ricoeur held that in addition to genre and structure every text has a distinct and discernable style, i.e., the unique way which the author utilized the conventions of literature in order to create an individual text. Most agree that the book of Job is a literary production quite unlike any other, whether modern or ancient, and the creativity of Job's author is demonstrable.[56] For example, setting poetic dialogues within the frame of prose narrative gives the book a distinct character, and although some argue that the story in the narrative frame betrays a naiveté on the part of the storyteller which does not cohere with the superior style of the poetic core, Clines is correct to see this as a sophisticated use of false naiveté on the part of the author.[57] Moreover, the author made good use of structural techniques for creative and unexpected rhetorical purpose. Thus, the balanced and structured prologue (e.g., alternating between heaven and earth, the use

[56] There are a few pieces of literature from the ancient world which parallel the book of Job, for example, the so-called Sumerian Job ("Man and his God") and an Akkadian poem called "I will Praise the Lord of Wisdom." Moreover, compositions from Egypt, "Harper's Songs," and "The Man Who was Tired of Life," bear some similarities. Nevertheless, Job clearly stands apart from these other works in its composition, genre, and literary style; see Murphy, *Psalms, Job,* 80-81.

[57] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 23. Hoffman, *Blemished Perfection,* 203-212, proposes that the book's difficult language and the appearance of so many *hapax legomena* is a deliberate stylistic feature (archaism) which the author utilized in order to give the book the semblance of age and wisdom.

of repetition, the symbolic use of numbers to indicate completeness) is juxtaposed to the speech cycles which themselves have a structure but one that is broken and incomplete.[58]

The author's creative use of many different genres in the composition of his work also sets Job apart as a singular work.[59] The author of Job adopts typical genres of Hebrew literature and uses them in atypical ways.[60] A comparison of Ps. 8 and Job 7:17 demonstrates this phenomenon:

מה־אנוש כי־תזכרנו ובן־אדם כי תפקדנו (Ps. 8)

מה־אנוש כי תגדלנו וכי־תשית אליו לבך (Job 7:17)

The fact that the transcendent God would give attention to humanity brings forth this question which is at the very pinnacle of the psalmist's hymn of praise to God. For Job, though, this question reflects his frustration—God's attention has become his affliction and he would like nothing better than to escape the all-seeing eye of God (7:20). The author of Job has taken up and transformed the formulaic מה־אנוש from a sense of wonder and praise to one of frustration and distress.[61] Typically hymns are used to praise God for his power and control as observed in creation; Job 9:5-10 contains similar language but the observations fill Job with a sense of dread because God apparently uses his power arbitrarily to crush Job (9:17). Finally, Job 27:7-13 resembles a typical wisdom poem ("the fate of the wicked") wherein the wicked are punished and the righteous are blessed but the thrust of Job's poem is that the wicked do indeed prosper.

[58] The proposals which see a four-fold pattern binding all the parts of the book together (Steinmann, "Structure and Message" and Patrick, "The Four-Fold Structure") are intriguing and helpful to a certain extent. However, attempts to conform the speech cycles to a four-fold pattern miss the rhetorical effect of the juxtaposition of the four-fold pattern in the narrative (and Elihu's speeches and arguably Yahweh's speeches) and the three-fold pattern (or more accurately a broken three-fold pattern) in the speech cycles.
[59] See Hartley, *Job,* 38, 41.
[60] Katharine J. Dell finds this practice so pervasive as to suggest that the book of Job belongs to a genre of "parody." See Dell, *Sceptical Literature.*
[61] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 161.

Thus, according to Dell, "in Job we are seeing by the author a deliberate *improper use of genre* to convey on the level of form what is already conveyed in content, namely the radical scepticism of the book. The author is here deliberately stepping outside literary conventions to make a protest."[62] Hartley agrees and maintains that in the book of Job a particular genre's immediate literary context (*Sitz im Buch*) is far more important than its original use (*Sitz im Leben*).[63] Thus, for the book of Job it is not only necessary to give attention to what literary genres are used but also how the author made use of those genres in distinct ways in order to produce a distinct piece of literature.

5.5 Conclusion

This overview of the basic genre, structure, and style of the book of Job has begun to reveal the significance of the distinct sections in the overall purpose of the book. The book of Job is about a man desperate to maintain his integrity in the midst of his utter wretchedness. Set in the form of a dramatized lament, the book of Job engages the difficult issues which were debated in the schools of Israelite wisdom (e.g., human integrity, divine blessing, and the nature of reciprocal blessing in God's relationship with his people).

In the last chapter the book of Job was understood primarily as contributing to a debate among the Israelite sages. Because of the semantic autonomy of the text, the meaning of the text cannot be reduced to the mental thoughts or intention of the sage who wrote Job. Thus, rather than looking behind the text, interpreters must engage in a

[62] Dell, *Job as Sceptical Literature,* 149.
[63] Hartley, *Job,* 43; Dell, *Job as Sceptical Literature,* 112-113. Both Hartley and Dell identify the origins of this distinction in Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob.*

concerted focus upon the text, examining its codification and composition and thereby discovering the reference of the text (i.e. the projected world of Job).

The book of Job will be analyzed as a wisdom discourse which more or less resembles a dramatized lament. The next chapter will attempt to show how the conventions of the literary production of Job, its genre and structure, mediate the world of the text. The prologue successively establishes Job's integrity and his experience of divine blessing and then chronicles the ultimate challenge to his integrity by way of the various calamities. Throughout the speech cycles, Job's integrity is further challenged while he struggles to maintain it and cries to against God. The clearest articulation of Job's integrity is found in the laments of chs. 29-30. Before Yahweh appears to broaden Job's perspective, Elihu emerges as the would-be mediator between Job and God. In the end, Yahweh allows Job to see him and affirms Job's integrity. In the prologue, order and reconciliation is restored.

The next chapter will build upon the foundation which this chapter has laid, examining the component parts of the book in order to bring into clearer focus the projected world of the book of Job. Readers are called to place themselves before world of the text, which will allow the text to interpret them and ultimately to mediate self-understanding (chapter 7).

CHAPTER 6

JOB AS THE PROJECTION OF A WORLD

> *The Eternal does not tell Job what order of reality justifies his suffering, nor what type of courage might vanquish it. The system of symbols wherein the revelation is conveyed is articulated beyond the point where models for a vision of the world and models for changing the world diverge. Model of and model for are rather the inverse sides of one indivisible prescriptive and descriptive symbolic order.*[1]

6.1 Introduction

The lament of Job which is set within a narrative frame reveals a world in which apparent paradox and mystery exist within a structured and ordered creation. This is a world where a sovereign God allows his blameless servant to suffer intensely. It is also a world in which the faithful sufferer is given a voice, mediated through the text, and a platform to speak boldly, loudly, and at length, and in the end receive God's approval. This chapter will attempt to fill out and bring depth to this somewhat one-dimensional world of the text, showing how the various parts of the book contribute to this world.

6.2 Job's Integrity Established: Job 1:1-6

> *There was a man in the land of Uz, Job was his name. That man was blameless* [תם] *and upright, a fearer of God and a shunner of evil. (1:1)*
>
> *The Satan answered Yahweh, saying, "Does Job fear God for naught?"* (1:9)

In her book *Job and the Disruption of Identity: Reading Beyond Barth*, Susannah Ticciati argues convincingly that the "principle agenda of the book of Job is . . . a critical exploration and reappraisal of the concept of integrity, interpreted most fundamentally, as

[1] Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 86.

in the question posed by the Satan, in terms of a relationship to God 'for naught.'"[2] Moreover, a growing number of scholars recognize Job's integrity as a dominant theme in both the prose framework and the poetic core.[3] It appears that perhaps more than any other theme or motif running through the book, the notion of human integrity binds the book as a whole into a literary unit. According to this theme, the above verses (1:1, 9) serve as a hermeneutical key to the rest of the book.[4] The questions one might ask at this point are: what is the nature of Job's integrity? How is his integrity depicted and where is it rooted?

The story opens with a sentence about a man with a rare name who came from an indistinct place.[5] While the narrator does not afford much information about who Job

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[2] Ticciati, *Identity,* 1.

[3] Steinmann's reappraisal of the structure of Job in "Structure and Message," 85-100, concludes that "Job's main message revolves around the subject of faith and integrity, not the theodicy of suffering . . . All that is relevant is trust that God can sustain a righteous person's integrity and faith throughout the most severe crises" (100). Lael Caesar's "new thesis" in "Job: Another New Thesis," *VT* 49 (1999): 435-447, is that human integrity "is shown to function as a common and unifying element of frame and poetry, as well as a major focus of the story's dénouement." Rick D. Moore in "The Integrity of Job," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983): 17-31, maintains that "the interpretation of the Book of Job pivots on the issue of integrity." Finally, Ellen F. Davis' main objective in her essay "Job and Jacob: The Integrity of Faith," is "to show, first, that the matter of Job's תמה ["integrity"] is indeed the central question of the book and provides the perspective from which the complex unity of its message may be discerned" (101).

[4] Ticciati, *Identity,* 1. See also Gutiérrez, *On Job,* 4, who says that in light of the glowing description of Job's faith, the Satan's challenge in 1:9-11 "contains a point that is a key to the whole book."

[5] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 9-11. Other than the figure Job, the name is not attested elsewhere in Hebrew. Some suggestions about the meaning of Job's name have been made especially in relation to the Hebrew verb for "hate" (איב); thus, איוב could be a passive participial form meaning "the hated one," though its precise meaning and significance is not clear (11). The same could be said about the land of Uz. In Lam. 4:21, Uz parallels Edom, and an appendix to the Greek version of Job locates the setting in the same general location as Edom (10). Why the author chose to set the book outside of the borders of Israel is a mystery (perhaps, this is simply where the original legend took place). See also Daniel Berrigan, *Job: Death and No Dominion* (Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2000), xvii, who makes the somewhat elusive suggestion that the choice to depict Job as an Edomite, sworn "enemy of the chosen," was intentionally ironic, preventing the original audience from identifying with Job and suggesting rather that the original audience perhaps ought to be implicated with the friends. This theory is intriguing though it runs counter to the belief of many that Job is a metaphor for those suffering as a result of the exile or the poor conditions following the exile. As Clines points out, many Jews living through the Exile and beyond lived outside the boundaries of Israel, and, therefore, the fact that Job is residing in Edom does not rule out his identity as one of the chosen; Clines, *Job 1-20,* 10. Even this, though, is not entirely unproblematic because it appears as though Job is living long before the establishment of the Israelite nation. For the reasons enumerated in chapter 4

was, he does provide plenty of information about what Job is like. The two pairs of descriptors "blameless and upright" (תם וישר) and "God-fearer and Evil-shunner" (ויראאלהים וסר מרע) become formulaic in describing Job (1:8; 2:3) and are familiar in Proverbs (the former: 2:7, 21; 28:10; the latter: 3:7) and Psalms (the former: 37:37; 25:21).[6]

The adjective תם, the first word to describe Job's character, is especially important. It is a rich word encapsulating the sense of completeness (wholeness), moral innocence, and integrity.[7] Edwin Good renders תם as "scrupulously moral,"[8] and while Clines argues that it is probable that תם means "sinless" (contra Peake, Rowley, and Gordis), he notes that, in context, Job's "integrity" is "posed in the simple terms of innocence and guilt, suffering deserved and undeserved . . ."[9] The related Hebrew word תמים (integrity), which also applies to Job (12:4), appears in countless passages in connection with "spotless" animals ordained for sacrifice. The only other time the word תמים is used in combination with people is with reference to Noah (Gen. 6:9) and Abraham (17:1), two exemplary biblical figures who are renowned for their faithfulness (Heb. 11:7, 17-19, respectively).

Yahwistic religion provides the foundational perspective of the book, and Job ought to be regarded as existing more or less within the fold of Torah.

[6] See also Prov. 14:16; 16:6; 29:10.

[7] *BDB,* 1071.

[8] Good, *Tempest,* 47.

[9] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 12. See S. R. Driver, *The Book of Job in the Revised Version* (London: Clarendon Press, 1906), 1, who says תם is "not (as the expression might be supposed to mean) *sinless*, but, generally *without* (moral) *blemish, blameless.*"

Job is a man of integrity. Furthermore, his piety encompasses all of his existence including spiritual, social, economic, and familial spheres. The Hebrew word ישר ("upright") suggests ethical honesty in a broad sense and often pairs with טוב, "good" (Deut. 6:18; Ps. 25:8), and צדיק, "righteous" (Pss. 32:11; 33:1).[10] Chapter 29 offers examples of Job's behaviour in society where he is depicted as a champion of the oppressed, and his regular offering of sacrifices for his children exemplifies his character as a loving and concerned father. The opening line is vital for the whole book because it establishes without-a-doubt the integrity of Job.

It is necessary to understand Job's character (according to the four-fold description in 1:1, 8; 2:3) in terms of his status as God's servant. There is a complex dialectic between Job's character and his status and both need to be held in tension. Chapter four presented a proposal for understanding Job as one whose religious identity derives from the foundational tenets of Israelite religion. In light of that discussion, Job's identity can be regarded as founded upon the God's covenant relationship with his people.

Verses 2-3 describe Job's vast wealth in terms of his ten children, his many heads of livestock, and his abundant household.[11] This description of Job's wealth is as important as the description of his character because the Satan challenges Job's integrity on the grounds that his character (blameless and upright . . .) is contingent upon his

[10] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 12.

[11] The use of numbers is an important poetic feature of Job. See Athalya Brenner, "Job the Pious? The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book," in *The Poetical Books: A Sheffield Reader* (ed. David J. A. Clines; The Biblical Seminar 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 303-307.

affluence. The narrator adds the note that in terms of Job's character and his abundant wealth, "that man was the greatest of all the people of the East" (v. 3b).

Verses 4-5 continue the idyllic picture and recount Job's practice of preemptive sacrifices. As any responsible and loving father, Job's concern is for the spiritual welfare of his children. Job's chief fear with regard to his children is not that they might commit some act of violence or some other immoral deed but that perhaps they "have sinned and cursed (ברך) God in their hearts" (v. 5b). His children's posture toward God is pious Job's primary concern, and his regular practice of preemptive sacrifice is meant to prevent or repair any possible breach in the wholeness of their world.[12]

The first five verses of the book of Job present a picture of the ideal man in an ideal world. Harmony and symmetry characterize the poetry and contribute to the sense of balance and wholeness of the reality of this word.[13] Job 1:1-5 projects a kind of paradise where everything is right: Job is a man of integrity, he has a large family, many possessions, and a relationship of mutual blessing with God.

6.3 Integrity Challenged: Job 1:7-2:13

After the characterization of Job, the prologue proceeds to chronicle the events of Job's undoing in four scenes which alternate between heaven and earth (1:6-12; 1:7-22;

[12] Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55.

[13] Newsom notes that v. 1 is structured according to a "pleasurable" pattern of phrases (three two-word phrases, a three-word phrase, and another three two-word phrases. Verses 2-3 continue the symmetry but this time with numerical conventions: seven sons plus three daughters, seven thousand sheep plus three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen plus five hundred she-asses. The significance of these literary conventions, according to Newsom, is that they suggest "a world in which everything adds up, a world of coherency and wholeness. This, I would argue, is the most fundamental desire the prose tale elicits and offers to satisfy, the desire for a world that can be experienced as supremely coherent, a world of utterly unbreachable wholeness." Ibid.

2:1-7a; 2:7b-10). In 1:6, the reader is transported into the heavenly council where the first of the book's many dialogues takes place. The picture is of a royal court, to which the king's agents or courtiers have assembled to give an account of their endeavors. Along with the heavenly beings or "the sons of God" (בני האלהים) came the Satan (השטן).[14] For a book which centers on dialogue and the merits of speech and silence, the characteristics of the discourse between Yahweh and the Satan are intriguing. Although Yahweh initiates the exchange his words are clipped and brief especially in contrast to the waxing speeches of the Satan.

Yahweh's first question, "From where have you come?" represents only two Hebrew words (תבא מאין) and calls the Satan to account for his activities. At first glance, the question betrays a naiveté on the part of Yahweh. Is God ignorant of the activities of his kingdom? The question of naiveté in the prologue will be addressed below, but to anticipate, if Yahweh's question demonstrates a naiveté, it is a false or "superficial" naiveté.[15]

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[14] The exact identity and function of the Satan is disputed. Scholars have duly noted that he is not equivalent to Satan who appears upon the pages of the New Testament. The use of the article suggests that "Satan" is not a proper name but a title: "the Accuser." Perhaps he did have a distinct role in the court of God as the prosecuting attorney, and, thus, his interest in Job is to maintain the integrity of God. The Satan appears in a similar prosecuting role in Zech. 3:1. In the Old Testament, the figure of Satan as a clearly evil force occurs only in 1 Chron. 21:1. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that no link exists between the Satan in Job (and in Zech. 3 for that matter) and Satan who is more fully revealed and understood in the New Testament. I perceive more than innocent motives at work in the figure of the Satan. The phrase "and the Satan also (גם) came among them (בתוכם)" is peculiar and may suggest that the author meant to distinguish him from the other angels (though it is impossible to know for sure). Hartley, *Job,* 72, remarks about the Satan, "he reveals numerous characteristics which suggest that he is contiguous with the later Satan, God's primary antagonist. He answered God's question obtrusively and brusquely, reflecting a contemptuous attitude. He sought to misconstrue a person's actions by imputing impure motives to good deeds. Thus he immediately doubted what God affirmed and sternly resisted persuasion to a different viewpoint. In the second scene before Yahweh the Satan would not even debate the issue of Job's integrity, but rather denied it in an impudent style by challenging God with verbs in the imperative."

[15] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 23.

The Satan's eloquent answer, that he has been "going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it," reveals very little about what he has been up to. Yahweh's second question is if the Satan has considered or "set his heart" (השמת לבך) upon Yahweh's servant Job, and he describes the character of Job affirming the narrator's description (exemplary in the earth, "blameless and upright, a God fearer and an evil shunner"). Again, Yahweh's boasting in Job appears to be a cosmic blunder on the part of God, and the Satan's answer attests that he was hoping that Yahweh would mention Job.[16] The Satan does not necessarily question Job's piety, but rather challenges the *motivation for* his piety. He probes into (perhaps challenges) the relationship between Job's pious character and his experience of blessing with the pinnacle question, "Does Job fear God for naught?" (החנם ירא איוב אלהים). He goes on to ask if God has not protected Job and everything he has on every side, and if he has not blessed Job and made him prosper in the land (v. 10).

It is important to notice the subtlety of the Satan's speech. According to Good, the Satan exaggerates the extent of Yahweh's blessing of Job when he says that Yahweh has blessed Job so that his possessions burst out over the earth.[17] The embellishment serves to strengthen the Satan's case against Job. Moreover, he clearly questions Job's integrity though he knows his place and realizes that it would be reckless simply to deny Job's sincerity which Yahweh had clearly endorsed—hence the rhetorical questions.

[16] Good, *Tempest,* 194, considers Yahweh's words an incautious boast. Clines, *Job 1-20,* 24-25, on the other hand, holds that "God's question is both guileless and pregnant with implication. To hear it simply as a challenge to the Satan is too sophisticated; to take it at its face value is to fall prey to the artful naivety of the narrative."

[17] Good, *Tempest,* 194. Good does not notice, however, that the exaggeration results in an apparent paradox in the Satan's words. The choice of words ("hedging in" and "bursting out" of Job's possessions) is an interesting pairing.

The Satan then suggests a test which will indicate the true source of Job's piety: "Indeed stretch forth your hand and touch all he has and he will surely curse you to your face" (v. 11). With these words, the Satan demonstrates an increasing boldness which is softened somewhat through translation. On the one hand, he brashly incites God to act with the use of two imperatives (גע and שלך). On the other hand, he utilizes a peculiar oath formula.[18] The second half of verse 11 begins with the Hebrew particle אם, and can be accurately rendered, "If he does not curse you to your face—." The formulation is unique in that the apodosis, i.e., the consequence of breaking the vow, is absent. Sheldon H. Blank has studied the various oath and curse formulas in the Bible and notes, "although the conditional curse is an essential part of the oath, the actual words of the curse, defining the calamity which is to befall the oath-taker if he has sworn falsely, are almost never spoken. They are evaded, as in the oath formula, or wholly suppressed, as in the truncated form of the oath."[19] The formula in Job 1:11 is an example of the latter (see also Neh. 13:25; Job 2:5; Ps. 132:3-5), and the impact of the Satan's vow should be understood as a curse, something like: "If Job does not curse you, Yahweh, may your wrath burn against me." Good suggests that by formulating this curse, the Satan draws Yahweh into his plan with the consequence that Yahweh will face the consequences of the curse if the Satan's suspicions are realized: "By the risky expedient of putting himself under a curse, the Prosecutor has tied Yahweh in a knot from which only Job can extricate him."[20]

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Sheldon H. Blank, "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell and the Oath," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (1950/51): 90.

[20] Good, *Tempest,* 194. Good admits that the suggestion that Job's suffering is a result of the Satan's curse upon himself is somewhat controversial; it suggests that once the oath is uttered Yahweh is helpless to stop

Even though the wheels of Job's calamity are set in motion Yahweh asserts his authority and puts a limit on the Satan's plan. Though he permits the Satan to afflict Job ("Look, all that he has is in your hand, but upon him do not put forth you hand," v. 12a), he refuses to dirty his hands with the dastardly deed which the Satan incites God to perform ("stretch out your hand and touch all he has," v. 11a). Moreover, he limits the extent to which the Satan can torment Job, excluding bodily harm to Job (v. 12b).

The first heavenly scene represents a sophisticated exchange between the Satan and Yahweh. The Satan is dissatisfied with the apparently harmonious world order demonstrated in the first five verses of the book of Job. Perhaps the original audience would have realized the implication of the Satan's challenge; he was not merely picking

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it. The alternatives, according to Good, are hardly more appealing. If Job's affliction is a test then the Satan has duped Yahweh and Job's suffering is meaningless. If the affliction is the result of a wager then Yahweh appears even more capricious, and Job becomes the pawn in a cosmic contest. If the phrase represents a self-curse, which the Hebrew suggests, then Yahweh receives impunity from any moral wrongdoing. Another significant outworking of this reading is that it securely binds together the integrity of Job and the integrity of Yahweh in a relationship of mutual dependency. In fact, even the destiny of the Satan (and in time the friends, according to the epilogue) is contingent upon the integrity of Job (see James A. Wharton, *Job* [Westminster John Knox Press, 1999], 118 who also thinks that the reputations of both Yahweh and the Satan depend upon Job maintaining his integrity).

Good's argument that the Satan's self-curse "drastically forces" Yahweh's hands in the whole matter is, perhaps, overstated. Good himself admits that Yahweh has the power to place a condition on the Satan's plan (195). Moreover, at least one biblical example of the self-curse suggests that Yahweh has the power to overrule them without the unspeakable conditions being realized. Psalm 132 depicts in poetic form the events of 2 Sam. 7. Verses 3-5 recount the vow that David made to the Mighty One of Jacob to build him a house:

> If I go into the tent of my house;
> If I go upon the bed of my chamber;
> If I give sleep to my eyes;
> to my eyelids slumber;
> Until I find a place for Yahweh;
> a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob—

The formula is identical to the self-curse formula in Job 1:11 with the result of a failure to keep the vow being absent. However, in the case of Ps. 132 the self-curse is made null and void by Yahweh's own vow to build David a house (i.e., an eternal dynasty). Thus, the implication is that, even in Job, there is flexibility within the context of a self-curse, and the question the reader of Job is forced to grapple with is why Yahweh chose not to intervene. Perhaps Yahweh permitted the affliction of Job to demonstrate to the Satan, to Job and his friends, and to subsequent readers of the book of Job (and to himself?), that it is indeed possible to fear God "for naught."

on a pious individual but was calling into question the Deuteronomic doctrine of retribution and the character-consequence law which permeates Israel's sapiential tradition. In such a world where God blesses obedience, is it really possible to serve God with pure motives, to fear God for naught? Such a reality is a farce, according to the Satan, and no one would serve Yahweh without some sort of incentive, least of all Job who is blessed beyond measure. Upon this, the Satan is willing to stake his very existence.

In the exchange, Yahweh is not a passive figure, contrary to what appearances may suggest. He is the one to whom the Satan must answer, the one who initiates the exchange with the Satan, the one who broaches the topic of Job's piety, and the one who sanctions the affliction of Job with a condition. Careful attention reveals that the artist has crafted a sophisticated scene where although Yahweh appears to be a blundering deity who is forced into an unfavorable wager, he is in fact more subtly portrayed than this and proves to be exerting a great deal of control over the situation.

Before moving to consider the Satan's swift and brutal execution of Job's affliction, one does well to pause to consider the interesting and significant dynamic in these first twelve verses (1:1-12, and in the prologue as a whole) between the concepts of blessing and cursing. Blessing, according to Good is a recurring motif in the frame narrative.[21] It is important to note that the Hebrew word which, in English translations, underlies variations of both "bless" (1:10, 21; 42:12) and "curse" (1:5, 11; 2:5, 9) is the same Hebrew word (ברך). Most scholars agree that ברך is used euphemistically in the latter cases in order to allay the otherwise offensive expression, and this use is clearly

[21] Good, *Tempest,* 191.

attested in 1 Kings 21:10, 13 and Ps. 10:13.[22] Habel considers it an ingenious literary device "to heighten the radical nature of this unmentionable sin by employing an antonym to describe it."[23] It is fascinating that the author utilizes the opposing senses of this word in such close proximity, and the effect is disorienting.[24] It is reasonable to assume that an apparent relationship exists between Job's blessing of God and God's blessing of Job. As a God-fearer and an evil-shunner, the most unexpected and inappropriate action from Job would be to *curse* God (notice Job's concern for his children is not that they might commit some sort of moral impropriety but that they might ברך God). The Satan speculates that Job is merely self interested and in the context of a self-*curse* he maintains that Job will indeed *curse* God if God ceases to *bless* him. Thus, the scene is set for the unthinkable calamity of the book's protagonist.

After the exchange between Yahweh and the Satan, the narrator recounts that the Satan removes himself from God's presence (v. 12). Then the reader is transported from heaven to earth on another day. The narrator does not indicate what amount of time passes between the "day" (היום) of verse 6 and the "day" (היום) of verse 13. The narrative leap from the Satan's going out from God's presence to that "day" lends swiftness to the Satan's execution of Job's demise which is matched only by the Satan's thoroughness.

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[22] See for example Clines, *Job 1-20,* 3; Pope, *Job,* 9; Hartley, *Job,* 65.

[23] Habel, *Job,* 88.

[24] Good, *Tempest,* 195-196, offers a warning about this word: "Everyone thinks that *brk* here [1:11] is a euphemism for 'curse,' just as everyone thinks the word had to mean that back in verse 5. But no one blinks at interpreting the same verb as 'bless' in the preceding sentence. We must relax our certainty that we know what this word means." Rowley, *Job,* 30 suggests that the mostly plausible explanation for this peculiarity is that concerned scribes allowed the word ברך to stand in for some form of the word "curse" in order to avoid placing in proximity the words "curse" and "God."

That day was one of those days when Job's children were holding one of their regular celebrations, a foreshadowing of what eventually befell them. In rapid succession all of Job's abundant possessions including the oxen and donkey, sheep and camels, as well as his beloved children are stripped away from him in calamities alternating between human causes (Sabeans in vv. 14-15 and Chaldeans in v. 17) and divine causes (the consuming fire of God in v. 16 and a great wind in vv. 18-19). The intricate literary crafting of verses 13-19 lends to the absolute and determined destruction which the Satan exacts against Job. The loss of Job's possessions (oxen and donkey / sheep / camels / children) occurs in almost exactly the opposite order in which the narrator catalogues them in verses 2-3 (children/sheep and camels/oxen and donkeys). Not only does the Satan reverse Job's possessions he does so with precision and artfulness; it all takes place on the same day and the news comes to Job in rapid succession. The message to Job is clearly that these events are no happenstance but that a supernatural efficiency governs all the events of his calamity.

Job's response to the first set of calamities is one of both deep sorrow and pious submission:

> Then Job arose, tore his garment, and shaved his head, and he fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came forth from my mother's womb; and naked I shall return. Yahweh has given; and Yahweh has taken. May Yahweh's name be blessed." (1:21)

It is remarkable after the devastating loss of everything he owned Job "worshiped" (וישתחו).[25] The rending of the garments and shaving of head are attested mourning

[25] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 2, translates וישתחו as "he did obeisance." It is interesting that David is said to have "worshiped" (וישתחו the same verb in the same form) following the death of his infant son who was the product of David's sin with Bathsheba (1 Sam. 12:20).

rituals (for the former see Gen. 37:29; Lev. 10:6; Josh. 7:6; 2 Sam. 13:19; for the latter see Isa. 15:2; 22:12; Jer. 7:29; 16:6; Ezek. 7:18). Moreover, there is something formal about the words which Job utters. Nevertheless, Job's words are genuine and match his pious actions. He admits that his suffering is from God (even though two of the four calamities come from human sources), and his faithful response is, according to Clines, "the utterance of psychological maturity and thoughtful piety."[26]

Regarding the Satan's conviction that Job will surely ברך Yahweh, the reader is held in suspense until Job's very last word where Job indeed blesses Yahweh's name. If there is any doubt about the true nature of Job's response to the first round of calamities (or the exact meaning of ברך in this instance) the narrator allays them by noting, "In all this, Job did not sin or speak irreverently of God" (1:22). Job proves that his fear of God was indeed for naught. The reader might be correct in expecting the story to be finished: Job's integrity (and by association Yahweh's integrity) is maintained, and, by virtue of his self curse, it is reasonable to suppose that the Satan has met his own demise.

However, for the second time the reader is transported into the heavenly court. This second scene unfolds in much the same way as the first with a few subtle differences. The first difference is that the Satan's appearance in the heavenly scene is more purposeful, "and the Satan came along with them *to place himself before Yahweh.*" Yahweh opens the dialogue with the same curt question about the Satan's activity, and the Satan gives the same ambiguous answer about his roamings. Yahweh again uses identical language to characterize Job but adds (perhaps with some heat): "He still holds fast to his integrity (תם), although you incite me against him to destroy him for naught

[26] Clines, *Job,* 38.

(חנם)." The Satan knows that his existence is contingent upon Job cursing Yahweh, and there is perhaps some urgency to his response. It is likely that the phrase "skin for skin" (עור בעד־עור) is idiomatic and in context the Satan uses it to suggest that a person's health and life is more important than possessions. He then increases the stakes by uttering another self-curse formula: "Indeed stretch forth your hand and touch all he has; if he does not curse you to your face—." The Satan saves his own "skin" (at least for a time) by uttering the self-curse formula, and once again Yahweh allows Job to be put "in the hand" of the Satan with the condition that his life be spared (2:6).

The Satan again proceeds from the presence of God and afflicts Job with "evil" or "loathsome" boils which cover his entire body from "toe" to "crown" (2:7). The nature of Job's bodily affliction is at the same time insignificant and all-important. Much debate has surrounded the exact identity of Job's skin disease, and these discussions are unsolvable and unnecessary.[27] However, the fact that the narrator uses the words, "*he struck* Job with *evil boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown*," to described Job's physical affliction is significant indeed, as they allude to Deut. 28. The import of Deut. 28 with regard to all of Job's afflictions will be explored shortly.

The words of Job's wife after his various afflictions, "[Do you] still hold on to your integrity [תמה]? Curse/bless God and die,"[28] representing perhaps Job's third test, have been the subject of scholarly debate, and this fifth appearance of the difficult word

[27] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 48, lists the pertinent sources in the discussion.

[28] The interplay here between "integrity," תמה, and the command to "die," מת, is a clever play on words.

ברך adds to the confusion.[29] Following the pattern of the word's use previously in 1:5, 10, 11, 21; 2:5 (curse/bless/curse/bless/curse), perhaps ברך in the context of 2:9 ought to be rendered "bless." Regardless of the translation, Job deems his wife's words to be folly, and instead utters another sinless (2:10b) expression of piety. However, directly following this exchange Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar appear, and a period of seven silent days ensues (v. 13). It appears as though perhaps the words of Job's wife resonate in the silence, and when Job finally speaks up, it is with cursing (ch. 3).

The literary features of this passage indeed punctuate the wretchedness of the calamities which have befallen Job, and much more could be highlighted.[30] However, equally illuminating is a close consideration of the content of the calamities.

The Satan had desired to sift Job like wheat, and Job 1:13-19 and 2:7 recount the ruin that he brought down upon Job. However, read in light of Deuteronomy 28 the depths of Job's calamities are given a new and sinister identity. The following chart highlights some of the parallels between Job 1:13-19 and Deut. 28: 31-32, 18 and between Job 2:7 and Deut. 28:35.[31]

[29] See the most recent treatment which offers references to commentators who regard Job's wife negatively, sympathetically, and positively: F. Rachel Magdalene, "Job's Wife as Hero: A Feminist-Forensic Reading of the book of Job," *Biblical Interpretation* 14.3 (2006): 209-258.
[30] See Clines, *Job 1-20,* 6; Habel, *Job,* 79-85.
[31] A much more extensive and comprehensive analysis of the many lexical connections between Deut. 28 and Job can be found in Wolfers, *Deep Darkness,* 111-115.

שורך טבוח לעיניך ולא תאכל ממנו חמרך גזול מלפניך ולא ישוב לך צאנך נתנות לאיביך ואין לך מושיע: בניך ובנתיך נתנים לעם אחר ועיניך ראות וכלות אליהם כל היום ואין לאל ידך Your bull will be slaughtered before your eyes and you will not eat of it. Your donkey will be snatched from before you and will not return to you. Your sheep will be given to your enemies and there will be no deliverer. Your sons and daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes will look all day long and fail [to see] them, and there will be no power in your hand [to do anything about it] (Deut 28:31-32)	ויולדו לו שבעה בנים ושלוש בנות: וידי מקנהו שבעת אלפי צאן ושלשת אלפי גמלים וחמש מאות צמד בקר וחמש מאות אתונות ועבדה רבה מאד Seven sons and three daughters were born to [Job]. His possessions were: seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred pairs of oxen, and five hundred donkeys, and a great many servants (Job 1:2-3; all of which is summarily stripped from Job in 1:13-10)
ארור פרי בטנך ופרי אדמתך שגר אלפיך ועשתרות צאנך Cursed will be the fruit of your belly and the fruit of your land, the increase of your herds and the offspring of your flocks (Deut. 28:18)	
יככה יהוה בשחין רע על הברכים ועל השקים אשר לא תוכל להרפא מכף רגלך ועד קדקדך Yahweh will strike you with terrible boils, on the knees and on the legs, which you cannot be healed from, from the sole of your foot to your crown (Deut. 28:35)	ויך את איוב בשחין רע מכף רגלו עד קדקדו So [the Satan] struck Job with terrible boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown (Job 2:7)

Deuteronomy 28 recounts Moses' speech to the people as they are on the brink of entering the Promised Land. This chapter in large part functions as the covenant stipulations, holding forth both the "carrot" in vv. 1-15 (blessing and life) and the "stick" in vv. 16-68 (curses and death). The evidence strongly suggests that the calamities of Job recounted in 1:13-19 and 2:7 intentionally recall the curses of the Deuteronomic Covenant.[32]

Two vitally important implications emerge when Deuteronomy becomes the

[32] Although some commentators have noted that the wording used in Job 2:7 is identical with Deut. 28:35, Ticciati, *Identity,* 59-65 and Wolfers, *Deep Things*, are alone in exploiting the full significance of the allusion to Deut. 28.

framework for the interpretation of Job. First, the Satan's challenge is brought into full relief; it questions if, within the Deuteronomic Covenant, it is ever possible for human integrity to be more than the counterpart of the blessings of Yahweh. In other words, is it possible for servants of Yahweh (like Job) to serve him for who he is rather than what he does, especially framed in Deuteronomic theology?[33]

Second, the fact that Job's calamities are "garbed" in the language of covenant curse adds a cruel and unusual dimension to Job's otherwise lamentable condition. After all, the unmistakable reality is that Job is a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil (1:1, 8; 2:3). Without the information which the prologue provides the reader, the only possible explanation for the application of the covenant curses is that Yahweh has broken covenant. Readers know that his undoing is part of a larger situation in which the Satan calls into question the divine/human relationship. Job (or the other human characters of the book), on the other hand, is not privy to this information and perceives, arguably, the full implications of his situation: if he is blameless and God is cursing him then God is a covenant-breaker and he is singularly the most wrecked human being to exist; moreover, if it is possible that God could break covenant then all of created reality is in danger of being sucked into a vortex of chaos and destruction.

It takes Job seven days to get over the initial numbness that sets in following his affliction and to realize the full implications of his wretchedness (which he articulates so poignantly in chapter 3). The prologue, therefore, closes with a surface integrity which must be substantiated through a great detour of criticism which chapters 3-41 represent.

[33] Ticciati, *Identity,* 64.

6.4 Integrity Shaken: Job 3

Following the seven days of sustained silence Job shatters the silence with a powerful lament. He neither "curses" (ברך) God to his face as the Satan was banking on (1:11; 2:5), nor does he "curse" (ברך) God and die as his wife suggested he should do (1:9). However, the narrator recounts in v. 1 that he opened his mouth and "cursed" (קלל) his (birth)day (יומו), and the first word from his mouth is יאבד ("perish"). Thus, the chapter represents a curse on the day of Job's birth. Although as a whole the genre of ch. 3 is a complaint it contains elements of both curse (vv. 3-10) and lament (vv. 11-26).[34] Even so, Job's complaint explodes what is typical in these generic forms, punctuating the fact that conventional literary techniques fail to capture the singularity of Job's wretchedness.[35] This chapter is placed at a pivotal point in the book: first, it functions as a bridge between the prologue and the dialogues; second, it functions as catalyst, rousing the friends from their shocked dumbness; third, it functions as prelude to and a foundation for Job's subsequent speeches; and fourth, it functions as a bookend for the poetic core of the book together with the Yahweh speeches (chs. 38-41), of which the latter in large part answers the former. Moreover, this chapter draws from images and language of Genesis; as Pettys notes, "Engulfed by otherness, he fashions words from the one point of contact still held in common with his audience—the ancient syllables of the

[34] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 76; Habel, *Job,* 102.

[35] See Clines, *Job 1-20,* 77, who holds, "So the lament here, like the curse, draws upon conventional forms but goes its own way. Both the curse and the lament are here denatured in such a way as to reflect the futility of the speaker's existence; the curse is no true curse, for it fastens itself upon what cannot be altered [i.e., the past], and the lament is no true lament, for it addresses no one, and what purpose can a lament serve if is spoken into thin air."

biblical word."[36] The weight of this chapter warrants a more detailed consideration than the other sections of the book.[37]

After a brief introduction (vv. 1-2), the chapter breaks down into three strophes (vv. 3-10, 11-19, 20-26) which are marked off by the question "why" (למה) in vv. 12 and 20.[38] There is a general movement of intensification throughout the chapter,[39] perhaps corresponding to the incremental intensification of his suffering in the prologue. This intensification is evident already in the first verse of the first strophe.

6.4.1 Job 3:3-10

Job begins by cursing first the day of his birth and then goes further back to curse the day of his conception. The interplay between light and darkness also demonstrates this intensification. First, Job desires darkness upon the day of his birth with no light to shine upon it (vv. 4-5). Second, he implores darkness to "claim" (גאל) the day of his conception and the blackness of the day to "terrorize" (בעת) it (v. 6). Finally, Job wants even the dim twinkling of the stars to be cast in hopeless darkness (v. 9). Moreover, these verses reference the range of temporal expressions, including day (vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8), night (vv. 3, 6, 7), year (v. 6), month (v. 6), dawn (v. 9), and morning (v. 9), which serve "to support Job's wish that he had never been brought into the cycle of time."[40] In fact,

[36] Pettys, "Let there be Darkness," 102-103.
[37] In this section, I am indebted to the careful work Alter has done on ch. 3; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 75-84.
[38] Ibid., 75.
[39] Ibid., 78.
[40] Ibid., 79.

Job reaches back to the beginning of time and enlists the "cosmic agents" in order to release Leviathan, an ancient symbol of chaos (v. 8).[41]

Beginning with the Hebrew word כי, the last verse of the first strophe (v. 10) is a summary and a conclusion; the effect is: let all these curses descend upon the day of my birth because (כי) "it did not shut the doors of the womb, nor hide suffering from my eyes." This verse pulls together all the previous images, expressing Job's wish for the perpetual enveloping darkness of the womb. Moreover, at this point the concepts of light, life and suffering (and conversely darkness, death and peace) are clearly correlatives, and the fact that in v. 10 Job substitutes "suffering" (עמל) for light captures this correlation creatively.[42]

6.4.2 Job 3:11-19

Job's complaint takes a definite turn in v. 11. The shroud of darkness and peace which the womb affords (v. 10) anticipates the darkness and peace of the grave, and here Job finally voices his death-wish. Job's wishes that he could have made the linear leap from the womb to the grave, thus avoiding everything in between (i.e., the knees that received him and the breasts that nursed him, v. 12). The theme of death as rest is carried in this pericope by the use of almost synonymous words: to lie down (שכב), to be quiet (שקט), to sleep (ישן) and to rest (נוח) in v. 13, to cease (חדל) and to rest (נוח) in v. 17, and to be tranquil (שאן) in v. 18.[43]

[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 80-81.

Verses 13-19 refer to the company Job would have if he is granted his death wish. They include kings and counselors, princes, stillborn children, the wicked and the weary, prisoners, both small and great people, and slaves (and perhaps their masters). According to Job, death is the great equalizer. Although he regards himself as singularly the most wretched human, his death will bring an end to his alienation.[44] It is interesting that until the last line of this pericope, Job refers to all of his would-be companions with plural nouns; however, in v. 19 the references are in the singular (קטן וגדול ועבד). By virtue of the fact that the terms "great" (גדול, 1:3) and "servant" (עבד, 1:8; 2:3) previously apply to Job, perhaps Job has himself in mind in this verse. If this is so, Job's lament is even more incredible because he regards death as liberation from the service of his master (i.e., Yahweh).

6.4.3 Job 3:20-26

The first line of the third strophe returns to the theme of the first strophe, strengthening the connection between "light" (אור) and "life" (חי) established in the first strophe (see also v. 23).[45] The frustrated longing for death that will not come, stated in v. 21, evokes the earlier images of night longing for the dawn which will never come (v. 9)

[44] Contra Alter, *Biblical Poetry,* 81, who notes that "the catalogue of all those who find repose in the grave has the effect of locating Job's suffering as only one particularly acute instance of the common human condition." This misses the import of the whole book in general and chapter 3 specifically. Job's character as exceptionally pious and the character of his calamity as exceptionally brutal conveys (to Job anyway) that Job is to be regarded as perhaps the most wretched man to live.

[45] Most English translations lose the literary effect in this verse whereby "light" and "life" are enveloped by "sufferer" and "the bitter of soul." A rendering which would honour the original chiastic structure would be: "Why does he give to the sufferer light, and life to the bitter of soul?"

and the kings vainly storing up treasure (vv. 14-15).[46] The intense desire of these miserable mortals for death is thus stated most unequivocally.

In v. 23, a number of indications suggest that Job has shifted the focus from *les miserables* generally (vv. 20-22) to his own wretched existence specifically.[47] First, there is a shift to the third person singular in v. 23. Second, when Job says, "Why is life given to a *man* . . ." the word he uses for "man" (גבר), is the same word which he uses in the first line of the poem (v. 3) to announce his own birth ("a *man* is conceived"). Instead of the peace and darkness which being hidden in the womb would afford, Job feels the misery of having to grope around in the land of the living. Finally, the phrase "whom Eloah has hedged about" (ויסך אלוה בעדו), recalls a similar idiom used by the Satan (1:10): "have you not put a hedge about him . . ." (הלא־את שכת בעדו).[48] The protective wall of God's presence has become an affliction to Job, a miserable prison to him.[49]

In v. 24 Job speaks once again in the first person. Here the byproducts of Job's misery, his "groaning" and his "wailing," have become staples of sustenance: "bread" and "water." Ironically, Job's wretchedness is feeding his death wish and at the same time sustaining his life.

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[46] Alter, *Biblical Poetry,* 82.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid. Although the Hebrew phrases in these two cases are somewhat different Alter notes that it is "the very same idiom."
[49] The conception of God's protective guard is a leitmotif which reappears throughout the book; see Gregory W. Parsons, "Literary Features of the Book of Job," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (1981): 215-216. In 7:12 Job laments the fact that God feels the need continually to "set a guard over him" (תשים עלי משמר) as though Job were the Sea or a monster. In 13:27 Job again refers to God's overbearing guard: "You put my feet in stocks and guard all my paths" (ותשם בסד רגלי ותשמור כל־ארחותי). In 29:2 Job ironically pines after "the days when Eloah watched over me" (כימי אלוה ישמרני). The leitmotif culminates in the speeches of Yahweh throughout which Yahweh asks Job if he has the capacity to bind/loose and guard the myriad of mysterious forces in the creation.

The climax of the poem is v. 25 where Job states, "For I feared a fear, and it came upon me; and what I dreaded has come to me." What fear is Job referring to here? Commentators disagree over this issue, and one of two proposals is generally adopted. The fear refers either to Job's present state of anguish or a past fear (i.e., that his state of blessing would be reversed).[50] Ticciati points back to the fear and dread which would imbibe Yahweh's people if they incurred his wrath by breaking the covenant (Deut. 28:64-68). She thinks that Job's fear "is, of course, more specifically the fear that God will break the Covenant—by cursing Job when blessing was due."[51] However, it is hard to imagine that Job could have conceived of such a thing coming to pass. Perhaps Clines has identified the key to Job's fear: "his worst fear has been realized: order has descended into chaos and therewith tranquility into turmoil."[52] The ordered and harmonious world of 1:1-5 has been completely undone. Along with his possessions, Job's resources for making sense of God and the world have been removed. The world has become a bewildering chaos and God has become a stranger.

The final line of ch. 3 summarizes and brings closure to Job's lament in a string of parallel verbs: לא שלותי ולא שקטתי ולא־נחת ויבא רגז (I have no repose, no quiet, no rest. Trouble has come).[53] Alter notes that the word "come" (בוא) is a *Leitwort* in Job's lament. Job tries to undo the coming of his day (v. 6) and the coming of the joyful announcement of his birth (v. 7), but he can no less prevent the coming of these things

[50] Habel, Rowley, Gordis take the former view while Clines, Good, Hartley hold the latter. The latter view may, perhaps explain Job's obsession for the preemptive sacrifices for the spiritual welfare of his children.
[51] Ticciati, *Identity,* 72.
[52] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 103.
[53] Following Cline's translation; Clines, *Job 1-20,* 68.

than the coming of his groaning (v. 24) and the fear that he feared (v. 25). The *Leitwort* culminates in the very last line of the poem with the entrance of "trouble" (רגז).[54]

What is one to make of this incredible poem? Clines captured the thrust of the poem when he wrote, "here we are invited to view the man Job in the violence of his grief. Unless we encounter this man with these feelings we have no right to listen in on the debates that follow; with this speech before us we cannot overintellectualize the book, but must always be reading it as the drama of a human soul."[55] Job's anguish must be regarded as much more than the sum of his afflictions (though that alone would be enough to plunge him into despair). What this poem articulates, perhaps in sighs and groanings, is the rupture of his identity, of his conception of God and of ordered reality. All of his preconceptions have been laid bare.

The allusions in Job's lament to Genesis 1-2 have been noted in chapter 4 (see also Appendix II, Table 3). The cosmic allusions and the lexical connections between these two passages is significant, suggesting that Job's lament, which invokes the forces or darkness, chaos and death, functions to undermine the orderly and good creation of Genesis. The lament articulates the ramifications of God breaking covenant: the whole cosmos is drawn into the vortex of meaninglessness. The ensuing dialogue which appears to follow a cyclical pattern (though this too is broken) must be understood in light of Job's monologue in ch. 3.

[54] This word "trouble" is the last word of the poem.
[55] Clines, *Job 1-20,* 104.

6.5 Integrity Maintained: Job 4-31

6.5.1 Job 4-26

As noted in the previous chapter, chs. 4-26 represent three speech cycles (the last of which is stunted because of the friends' lack of argument). In these chapters, the integrity of Job endures another intense trial as Job's would-be comforters transform into his accusers. Job's suffering becomes the conduit though which the essentials of traditional Israelite theology are discussed in the form of a wisdom disputation.[56]

Job's friends had turned the traditional confession of a God who blesses the righteous and curses the wicked into a syllogism and applied it to Job:

> All suffering is a result of sin;
> Job is suffering;
> Thus, Job's suffering is a result of his sin.

This viewpoint is represented in various ways throughout the dialogues, and especially in the recurring rhetorical question first found in 4:17:

> Can a mortal be righteous before God?
> Can a man[57] be pure before his maker?[58]

It would be a disservice to the friends of Job and to the poet to say that the arguments of the friends are merely circular.[59] In fact, each individual comforter/disputant has his own personality and counsels Job in distinct ways, and in each there is a linear movement. For example, Eliphaz initiates the dialogue with careful and encouraging pastoral words in ch. 4. He even appeals to Job's good character (4:6):

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[56] Purdue, *Wisdom in Revolt,* 124.

[57] The word for "man" (גבר) is the same word Job uses in 3:3, 23.

[58] See also, 11:2; 14:4; 15:14; 22:2; 25:4.

[59] For a study which analyzes the way in which the individual speeches relate to one another see John Course, *Speech and Response: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Introductions to the Speeches of the Book of Job (Chapters 4-24)* (CBQMS 25; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994).

"Is not your fear [of God] your confidence, and the integrity (תם) of your ways your hope?" Moreover, he suggests that perhaps Job's suffering is the blessed discipline of the Almighty who will in the end redeem Job (5:17-26). By his second speech, Eliphaz has abandoned much of his restraint, suggesting that Job has cast off the fear of God (15:4). Eliphaz becomes entrenched in the ideology of distorted ancient wisdom and offers a soliloquy about the fate of a wicked man. In his last speech, Eliphaz asks sarcastically (22:4): "Is it because of your fear [of God] that he reproves you, and enters into judgment with you?" Even so, Eliphaz's pastoral concern still exists in this speech when he implores Job receive God's instruction, repent, and enjoy the pleasure of fellowship with God (22:21-30).

Carol Newsom offers a helpful nuanced consideration of the friends' arguments, in an effort to self-consciously "rehabilitate" the friends.[60] She identifies three responses to the turmoil of Job's suffering: (1) they attempt to "construe Job's experience in terms of narrative structures that integrate and ultimately transcend the present turmoil" (chs. 4-5, 8); (2) they advocate the accepted practices of prayer which hold out the possibility of replacing Job's present turmoil with a semblance of order (chs. 5, 8, 11, 22); and (3) they present symbolic narratives, namely, "fate of the wicked" narratives, which assert metaphorically the moral order of the cosmos in spite of Job's experience (chs. 15, 18, 21).[61]

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[60] Newsom, *Job,* 90. See also Carol Newsom, "Re-Considering Job," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5.2 (2007): 160.

[61] Additionally, they purport to know the insignificance of humanity and the wholly otherness of God (4:12-20; 15:14-16; 25:4-6); Newsom, *Job,* 96.

It appears that as the dialogues progress, Job and his friends become more deeply and firmly entrenched in their own positions—Job holding tenaciously to his integrity and the friends to their skewed interpretation of traditional wisdom.[62] Job counters his friends' attempts to sway him by (1) indicating the radical disruption (or the "nonnarratability") of his own existence; (2) exposing the failure of the cultic system and proposing instead a legal case to argue his innocence (chs. 9, 13, 16, 19, 23, 27); and (3) offering his own iconic narrative wherein the wicked prosper (ch. 21).[63]

The very first speech in response to Job's complaint (ch. 3) causes Job to conceptualize his pain, and what emerges is unexpected (6:2-3):

> If only my anguish could be weighed and my misfortune with it on the scales,
> Then they would outweigh the sands of the sea. That is why my words are unrestrained.[64]
> For the arrows of Shaddai are in me, and my spirit drinks in their poison.
> The Terrors of Eloah stand arrayed against me.

In vivid images, Job identifies the ultimate source of his grief, namely, God. The world which Job deconstructs Eliphaz tries to reinvent into an orderly world in which Job can once more inhabit. To Job, however, his words are nothing but a torment (6:26; cf. 19:2).

In spite of his wretched condition, Job will not forsake his integrity: "Relent! There is no iniquity here; Relent! My righteousness remains" (6:28; cf. 12:4; 17:9). Thus, in Job's initial response, a psychological duality manifests itself which exists in tension throughout the dialogues. His overwhelming feeling is one of unparalleled wretchedness because God has wielded his power arbitrarily and has singled him out for

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[62] See Ticciati, *Identity,* 90, who notes that the friends' "continual references to tradition (e.g., 8.8-10; 15.19-19) are defensive maneuvers intended to impose a law on the unpredictable flow of Job's life and speech. It is in this way that their doctrine becomes ideology, setting tradition in a fundamental hegemonic relation to life."

[63] Ibid., 97.

[64] Cf. Clines, *Job 1-20,* 155; Habel, *Job,* 137.

destruction. On the other hand, throughout his speeches with his friends, he maintains his integrity and hopes that a divine hearing will clear his name (see 13:13-23; 16:16-22; 19:23-39; 23:1-17; 27:2-6 and especially ch. 31).[65] In other words, Job's identity as Yahweh's servant (1:8; 2:3) is violently ruptured when Yahweh afflicts Job to such an extent that Job regards him as a stranger; even so, Job clings to God because he is unable to find his identity apart from God.

Chapter 9 is especially important in this regard and is the chapter where Job speaks in distinctly legal terms. He begins in v. 2 by affirming what the friends have been saying, namely, that mortals cannot be righteous before God (see 4:17). Then, in images and language that anticipate Yahweh's speeches, Job affirms the power and transcendence of God (9:3-12). Nevertheless, Job maintains, "Even though I am in the right, I cannot answer" (v. 15), and "Though I am right, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless (תם), he would prove me guilty. I am blameless (תם); I do not regard myself; I have rejected my life." Job determines that the only solution is for a mediator (מוכיח) to arbitrate between Job and God (v. 33; see also 19:25-26). The legal language which is initiated here is more fully developed into a full-orbed case against God at the end of Job's extended monologue (chs. 27-31).

As the friends become more entrenched in their own distorted view of retribution, Job becomes more entrenched in his own righteousness and he realizes that only a divine council will vindicate him (13:3). By the third speech cycle, the arguments of Job's opponents lose momentum while Job appears to be gaining momentum. In the final speech cycle Job's speeches expand while the speeches of the friends contract. Without a

[65] Ticciati, *Identity,* 95.

final speech by Zophar, the broken speech cycle indicates that the arguments of the friends have broken down.

6.5.2 Job 27-28

In chapter 27, Job directs his remarks to all his friends.[66] This chapter consists of an oath (vv. 1-6), a curse (vv. 7-12) and a "fate of the wicked" narrative (13-23). Job uses this final platform to reiterate his integrity. In vv. 1-6 Job takes an oath upon the existence of God that he is blameless: "Until I die I will not put away my integrity (תמה) from me. I hold fast my righteousness and will not let go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days" (5b-6). Following his oath he calls down an imprecation upon his enemy.[67] While commentators are not sure of the identity of Job's enemy, it is most likely that Job is referring to his friends.[68] In vv. 13-23, Job turns the tables on his friends, implying that they ought to learn from the narrative of the wicked lest they become like such a one. These verses indicate the most fitting portion and place for the wicked. This feature of Job's last speech to his friends provides a smooth segue into ch. 28, the hymn to wisdom.

The end of chapter 27 identifies the appropriate place for the wicked, the first eleven verses of ch. 28 discuss the appropriate place for precious metals, but the central question of the chapter is: "Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?" One cannot mine wisdom or buy it with money. The recurring question

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[66] This is indicated with a shift from the second person singular in ch. 26 (with reference to Bildad) to second person plural in ch. 27.

[67] Notice the juxtaposition of the righteous (vv. 1-6) and the wicked (vv. 7-23).

[68] Habel, *Job,* 381-382, argues that God is the referent because איב is in the singular and because God is Job's adversary in the legal court.

(vv. 12, 20) structures the poem into three sections (vv. 1-11, 12-18, 20-28). The poem is a fitting cap upon the preceding dialogues because for all the many words of "wisdom" touted by the friends one is still left wondering whether this is genuine wisdom? Moreover, it also anticipates the speeches of Yahweh in which the wisdom of God is well nigh inscrutable. Although there is no consensus about who is speaking in ch. 28, this hymn to wisdom is a wonderful affirmation of the reality of divine wisdom without denying the mystery and complexity of human existence.[69]

What does chapter 28 teach about wisdom and how does it contribute to the book? The first section of the chapter (vv. 1-11) praises the advanced technical genius which allows humans to extract riches from the earth, but it also suggests that human ingenuity will ultimately fail in the quest for wisdom. Where then shall wisdom be found? Verses 13-19 describe the unmatchable worth of wisdom, surpassing even the most precious metals and jewels known to humanity. Yet, the attainment of wisdom is still beyond the grasp of mortals. Where then shall wisdom be found? Verses 22-28 show that wisdom is concealed from man and beast, and even Abaddon (Destruction) and Death personified are consulted, though about wisdom they have only heard a rumor. Rather, wisdom resides with God. He knows where it dwells. In fact, he established it when he created the cosmos and used it to fashion the earth (cf. Prov. 8). Even though wisdom is elusive and human attempts to grasp it are futile, God declares it to humanity: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding" (v. 28).

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[69] See the thorough and most recent discussion in Newsom, "Re-Considering Job," 162-163. It is quite reasonably to suppose that the voice in the poem is Job's, though perhaps it is the voice of the narrator.

The thrust of this poem anticipates the speeches of Yahweh. On the one hand, wisdom is inscrutable and beyond the grasp of all human effort. On the other hand, wisdom finds its source in God; he used wisdom to create the world and continues to uphold creation by wisdom, and, therefore, wisdom exists within the creation. Moreover, wisdom is the gracious gift of God to mortals and is rooted in worship of and obedience to God.

6.5.3 Job 29-31

Clines notes that the poem on wisdom distracts somewhat from the question of justice (though perhaps it marks the transition to the inscrutability of God's wisdom).[70] The cry for justice permeates the following three chapters which unite to make a single soliloquy.[71] Wharton rightly distinguishes chs. 29-31 from what has preceded them in the cycle of dialogues:

> In the three self-portraits painted in chapters 29, 30, and 31, Job offers up, as with his last breath, his ultimate response to the crisis that has been thrust on him. Readers will note that these three chapters soar entirely above whatever theological haggling may have gone on between Job and his friends. What we encounter here are the brute facts of Job's experience and Job's response *at the point of his incorruptible integrity.*[72]

The chapter divisions mark off three distinct temporal delineations: chapter 29 considers Job's past; chapter 30 focuses upon Job's present state of wretchedness; chapter 31 although looking to the past anticipates the future.[73]

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[70] David J. A. Clines, *Job 21-37* (WBC 18A; Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2007), 926.
[71] Clines questions whether soliloquy is an adequate classification for these chapters because in 30:20-23 Job speaks to God in the second person; Clines, *21-37,* 978.
[72] Wharton, *Job,* 119 (emphasis added).
[73] Clines, *21-37,* 975-976.

Chapter 29 looks back to the time when Job knew the friendship of God.[74] It was a time when he was honoured and heeded in society, when he delivered the oppressed, when he administered justice, and when he comforted the mourners.[75] This is the first stage in Job's litigation against God.

In chapter 30, Job laments his pitiable existence. Formerly Job was highly regarded (29:7-10, 21-25), but now he is abhorred (30:11, 9-14); the young men used to keep silent in his presence (29:8), but now he has become their mocking song (30:9); he had vitality (29:17-20), but now he wastes away (30:16-17, 30); he frequently sat in an honourable place at the city gate (29:7), but now he makes his dwelling in the mire (30:19); he used to experience the joy of God's protection, favour, and friendship (29:2-6), but now he experiences the pain of his cruelty, ridicule, and harassment (30:19-22). How far Job has fallen from his previous stature.

From the picture of Job's all-encompassing blessing (ch. 29) to his comprehensive forsakenness (ch. 30), Job moves in ch. 31 to his final oath of purity.[76] Job prefaces his oath of clearance with the remembrance of a "covenant" he "cut" (ברית כרתי)[77] in the past (vv. 1-5), and asks that his righteous conduct be examined against it: "Let him weigh me in a just balance, and let God know my integrity (תמה)" (v. 6). This harkens back to Job's desire that his calamity might be weighed in the balances, a desire uttered in his

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[74] Notice the contrast between "light" and "dark" in v. 3 (cf. ch. 3).
[75] Clines, *Job 21-37,* 1038, thinks that the reader ought to be suspicious concerning Job's characterization about himself. In fact, he argues that throughout chs. 29-31 (if one reads between the lines) Job condemns himself by his own admission (e.g., 29:7-10; 30:2-8, etc.). Admittedly, it is difficult to know what to make of some of Job's statements.
[76] See Wharton, *Job,* 129-131.
[77] This is the typical covenant idiom used in the Pentateuch and in the rest of the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 3:15; Ex. 34:27; Deut. 9:9; 31:16; 1 Kgs. 8:21; 1 Chon. 6:11; Jer. 11:10; Zech. 11:10, etc.).

first response in the dialogues (6:2) and which forms an inclusion with 31:6. Job then issues a number of self-curse oaths (sixteen in total!), beginning with the Hebrew particle אם and including the condition of the oath. In these oaths Job maintains his integrity in all aspects of faith and ethics, including the inner recesses of his heart and his outward conduct. The purpose of chapter 31 appears in vv. 35-37, to which the whole of Job's defense seems to be leading.[78] When Job pleas for a hearing, for Shaddai to answer (v. 35), he is clearly summoning God to a legal hearing.[79]

The thrust of these chapters, and ch. 31 in particular, might strike readers as somewhat brash and presumptuous. Wharton notes that in Ex. 21:2-23:8 laws are stipulated, including prescribed penalties, in order to regulate civil conduct in the context of the covenant.[80] Interestingly, Ex. 22:7-11 anticipates situations in which there are no witnesses to a given crime. In such a case both parties, the accused and injured party, are to take an oath in the presence of Yahweh. No restitution would be paid but Yahweh would be the guarantor of the oath and the guilty party would expect to experience the curse of the oath.[81] Job's oath of innocence is not some rash oath uttered flippantly; the reader should regard Job's oath as one taken with the uttermost seriousness and with full awareness of the power of his words. It is important to notice also that Job has not forsaken God but is still clinging to him, demanding a divine hearing. Thus, "All that is left to him is to 'persist in his integrity' beyond hope or fear . . .[T]hat these affirmations

[78] Cf. Clines, *Job 21-37,* 1033, who rewrites the chapter so that these verses come at the end of the speech.
[79] Habel, *Job,* 438-439. His rendering of v. 35 is, "Oh, if someone would conduct my hearing! Here is my signature! Let Shaddai be my respondent! Let my adversary at law draft a document!" (425).
[80] Wharton, *Job,* 130.
[81] Cf. John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Nashville: Nelsons, 1987), 326.

are addressed to God and no other (31:35-37) express his unswerving integrity toward God."[82]

An interesting note by the narrator at the end of the chapter (31:40c) indicates that "The words of Job are ended" (תמו דבר יאיוב). The verb used here (תמם) can mean "to be complete," "finished," "whole," or "sound" and is a word which is closely related to "integrity" (תם).[83] Is it possible that the narrator is saying more than that Job has nothing more to say? Perhaps by choosing this specific word the narrator is subtly affirming the integrity of Job's words to this point.

6.6 Elihu as Mediator of Job's Integrity?: Job 32-37

With the curtain having fallen on ch. 31, the reader expects the stage to be set for God's answer. After all, Job's open challenge must surely have roused God to appear. No one, however, is prepared for the introduction of a new character, Elihu, son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram (31:1). Elihu and his speeches are fraught with ambiguity. Even his name, the only Hebrew name in the book, is equivocal.[84] Commentators cannot agree whether we ought to love him[85] or hate him.[86] Indeed, Elihu strikes one as a young, self-important upstart. He is somewhat impetuous, condescending, and opinionated. Perhaps, though, Elihu deserves a more sympathetic

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[82] Wharton, *Job,* 132.
[83] BDB, 1070. In fact, in the Hithpael it means, "to deal in integrity with."
[84] Good, *Tempest,* 320, 430 n. 7.
[85] This is indeed the minority position. See Clines, *Job 21-37,* 710, who complains that "All [the] hostility is overblown. None of Elihu's critics gives, in the end, an adequate account of what harm he does, or can say why he is so much worse that the other friends." Moreover, he notes that "Elihu is indeed prolix, but in his mouth are also set some of the poet's finest lines" (709).
[86] Good, *Tempest,* 321, typifies this position, "I do not deal with Elihu in as much detail as with the other persons in Job . . . because they are harder to understand than their substance warrants. I find Elihu a pompous, insensitive bore: an opaque thinker and an unattractively self-important character. His language is pretentious, often difficult, sometimes quite unintelligible."

reception. Clines notes that the nodal sentence in Elihu's first speech is 33:32: "My desire is to justify you." He suggests that using this sentence as the key to Elihu's speeches will reveal just how sympathetic he is toward Job's plight.

The narrator gives a lengthy introduction to Elihu, explaining the reason for his interjection (he was angry at Job for justifying himself rather than God and at the friends because they failed to give an adequate answer). Elihu prefaces his remarks to Job by making a defense of his speeches in which, among other things, he claims that his wisdom derives from the spirit of God.[87] He notes that although he is young he has sat patiently listening for wise words; his waiting has been in vain. He sympathizes with Job because the words of the friends were folly. He was disappointed because "there was no one among you who refuted Job or who answered his words" (32:12). He declares that he will be impartial (v. 21), and in chapter 33 he implores Job to hear his speech (v. 1).[88] In vv. 8-13 he does not deny Job's integrity but rebukes his desire to accuse God. He notes that God uses suffering to speak to his people (cf. vv. 19 and 14), and that even though sufferers draw near to death, they will find deliverance (v. 24).

In the second and third (chs. 34 and 35) speeches, Elihu attempts to refute Job's claim that God has been unjust. His take on the issue of divine justice comes down to this: what sense would it make for a mortal to question the justice of the ultimate governor of the cosmos.[89] Elihu supports his argument by citing the fate of evil doers

[87] This is a significant claim. It is likely that Job's three friends belonged to the class of wisdom teachers, though Elihu is clearly not a member of the wisdom school. Rather than appealing to the tradition of wisdom (e.g., the words of the wise), he appeals to a divine deposit. Because of how Elihu is depicted and because this is a self-attested claim it is difficult to judge whether or not he should be trusted. However, in light of the hymn to wisdom (ch. 28) which clearly establishes wisdom as a divine gift, Elihu's appeal to a divine deposit is intriguing.

[88] Really, it is not until 33:8 that Elihu gets down to business.

[89] See Clines, *Job 21-37,* 786.

who at times seem to prosper (34:24), but who in the end are crushed (34:25-28). Moreover, Elihu stresses the transcendence of God so that Job is wrong to accuse him of injustice (35:2-5). Clines is right to note that Elihu is speaking past Job.[90] Job's problem is not that he thinks that God does not exist or that he is not all-powerful, his problem is that God has wielded his power arbitrarily to afflict him beyond what he deserves. Moreover, Elihu gives good advice to suffering people, i.e., to cry out to God in their distress (35:10), but that is clearly not Job's problem. In the final speech, Elihu is most clearly the mouthpiece of God's absolute power and righteousness. It appears that he has strayed from his original intention to justify the integrity of Job (33:32) and is now justifying the integrity of God.

Ticciati argues that Elihu emerges as the potential mediator that Job desired earlier in the speech cycles.[91] In Job 9:33, Job laments that no arbiter (מוכיח) existed to stand between God and him. In 32:12, Elihu expresses his frustration because "there was no מוכיח for Job or one who answered (עונה) his words." It is reasonable to believe that Elihu regards himself as filling the void: "Indeed I will answer (אענה) . . ."[92]

How successful is Elihu as Job's arbiter, as his מוכיח? The friends of Job cannot get past their argument that Job has misunderstood his situation: Job has in fact sinned and that is what has brought upon Job divine displeasure. Elihu understands that Job's chief concern is the question of God's justice and the arbitrariness of the covenant.[93] However, as Ticciati notes, his argument is "that God is by definition just and his

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ticciati, *Identity,* 125.
[92] Perhaps this also explains his statement of partiality in 32:21.
[93] When Elihu accuses Job it is for speaking blasphemously about God (e.g., 34:4-9).

authority is unquestionable: there is no standard of justice to which God is answerable. But in calling God to account, this is exactly what the מוכיח must presuppose. Thus, to defend God's justice, Elihu must take up a role that implicitly undermines it."[94] Therefore, although at the beginning of Elihu's speeches there was some hope that he might provide Job an answer to his plea, ultimately Elihu's role was self defeating, and this heightens the urgency for an answer from God. From a literary perspective, Elihu, like Job's would-be מוכיח, stands in between Job and God (9:33) but his failure demonstrates that he stands in the way of Job's divine hearing.

6.7 Integrity in Perspective: The Speeches of Yahweh (Job 38:1-40:2; 40:6-41:34)

The narrator does not provide a lengthy introduction to the divine speeches but merely notes, "Then Yahweh answered Job from the tempest, saying . . ." There are a couple of important things to note about this introduction. First, it is not a stranger or some generic god who addresses Job but *Yahweh.* After the initial round of calamities, Job was able to worship and confess his trust in Yahweh (1:21). However, all throughout the poetic core, Job's pain prevents him from recognizing his God; therefore, Job uses generic terms for God (Eloah, El, Shaddai) to refer to the God who has become an enemy and a stranger. Now, there is no question that it is Yahweh, the God of the covenant, who manifests himself to Job. Second, the fact that Yahweh appears is alone significant; he does not remain hidden but condescends to reveal himself to Job.[95]

The speeches of Yahweh have a fairly clear literary and topical structure:

Introduction: God Challenges Job (38:2-3)

[94] Ticciati, *Identity,* 129.

[95] The fact that Yahweh appears from out of the tempest may in itself be significant. In other places the theophany is associated with a storm (Ezek. 1:4; Nah. 1:3; Zech. 9:14); Rowley, *Job,* 241.

Cosmogony (38:4-21)
Meteorology (38:22-38)
Zoology (38:39-39:30)
Job's Response (40:1-5) and God's Second Challenge (40:6-14)
Description of Behemoth (40:15-24)
Description of Leviathan (41:1-34)

If readers expect a direct answer by Yahweh to Job's accusation of injustice and wrongdoing they will be disappointed. Rather, in large part, the speeches of Yahweh function to answer Job's challenge in ch. 3.[96] This is not to say that Yahweh's speeches only function to answer ch. 3; Alter demonstrates with many compelling examples that, "[t]he entire speech from the storm . . . is finely calculated as a climactic development of images, ideas, and themes that appear in different and sometimes antithetical contexts earlier in the poetic argument."[97] However, the speeches of Yahweh and Job's initial lament act as bookends for the poetic core, and the way that the speeches of Yahweh evoke specific language and images from Job's lament in ch. 3 suggests that they ought to be regarded essentially as a challenge to Job's deconstructive lament.

When Yahweh asks, "Who is this that darkens counsel with words without knowledge," Purdue notes that the word counsel refers to Yahweh's providential design in creating and sustaining the cosmos.[98] The reference to darkness recalls Job's desire in ch. 3 to cast the creation back into darkness. Whereas Job's lament caused him to incrementally withdrawal inwardly, Yahweh's speech celebrates in every widening

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[96] Alter's chapter "Truth and Poetry in the Book of Job," in *Biblical Poetry,* 85-110, is a superb treatment of the speeches of Yahweh and how they answer chapter 3. The images of light and dark, of generation and birth, and of chaos and order are key links between the two passages. In what follows I will not try to show in detail how the two passages relate in terms of structure, images and themes. I direct the reader to Alter's examination.

[97] Alter, *Biblical Poetry,* 87 (for examples of this see pp. 87-94).

[98] Leo G. Purdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 169 (he references Job 12:13; Ps. 33:11; Prov. 8:14).

temporal and spatial scopes the vastness and brilliance of life in the creation. Yahweh's words "constitute a brilliantly pointed reversal, in structure, image, and theme, of that initial poem of Job's."[99]

Perhaps the most key element of Yahweh's speeches is the relationship between creational order and chaos. It is important to recall that the thrust of Job's lament in ch. 3 was the reversal of the structure and order of the creation. Moving through the speeches of Yahweh, one might be struck by the orderliness which characterizes Yahweh's world. However, a careful reading will reveal that there is a delicate balance between order and chaos. Yahweh's creation is not a mechanistic world ruled by autonomous laws of nature. Rather, order exists through the maintenance of Yahweh and without his providence the chaos which is just below the surface would overwhelm the creation.

Any number of examples reveal this reality concerning order and chaos. First, 38:8-11 refer to the creation act when God tamed the chaotic force of the sea, set boundaries for it, and commanded it: "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves break." Moreover, even the seemingly natural cycle of morning and evening proceeds as a result of God's command (v. 12). Snow and hail are not merely natural byproducts of temperature and humidity but are reserved by God in cosmic storehouses for the appointed times (vv. 22-23), and Yahweh is the father of the rain and the mother of the frost (vv. 28-29). Moreover, God provides the raven her sustenance and her young cry to God for their food (v. 41).

Second, the implicit comparison between the ostrich and the hawk and eagle is a fascinating example that even in the animal world wisdom and understanding are gifts

[99] Alter, *Biblical Poetry,* 96.

from God. The ostrich is the negative example. She leaves her eggs in the ground forgetting that such will leave them vulnerable, and she acts cruelly toward her young as if they did not belong to her (39:13-18). Why such folly? Only because God caused her to forget "wisdom" (חכמה) and withholds "understanding" (בינה) from her (v. 17). Chapter 28 teaches that divine wisdom and understanding are difficult indeed to acquire, and the example from zoology shows that if "the universal provider of life chooses to withhold his understanding—as Job himself is said to lack wisdom and understanding—things can go awry."[100] Conversely, by Yahweh's "understanding" (בינה) the hawk soars to the south and the eagle makes a nest in the high rocky crag and catches its prey (vv. 26-30). These examples show that in the natural order nothing should be taken for granted, and that God apportions wisdom and understanding to the creation as he sees fit (see also 38:20, 36-37).

Finally, running throughout the speeches of Yahweh is the paradox between the beauty and majesty of the creation and its raw power and terribleness. A clear example of this is the description of the warhorse whom God adorns. His snorting is both majestic and terrifying, and he scoffs at fear, and with fierceness and rage he devours the battle ground (39:19-25). The hawk and eagle too are magnificent creatures, soaring effortlessly above the earth, but in their infancy they imbibe blood and devour the slain (39:26-30). Job is compelled to consider Behemoth (40:15-24). Though he is a herbivore and finds rest in the shade of the lotus tree, his loins are strong and his belly is powerful. His bones are like bronze and his limbs like iron. The creation is his playground and he fears nothing. Probably the most powerful and evocative poetic

[100] Ibid., 103.

imagery is reserved for Leviathan, the most powerful and awe-inspiring of God's creatures (41:1-34).

What is the purpose of associating the forces of chaos and order and the images of beauty and terror? If the friends' perspective was too narrow when they perceived that the only explanation for Job's affliction was his sin, Job's perspective was also too narrow when he perceived that the only explanation for his suffering was that God had broken covenant. Readers are given much more information than Job is and realize that his undoing is a part of a larger situation in which the legitimacy of the divine/human relationship is called into question (Job 1:9). Yahweh offered Job a series of pictures so that he could begin to fathom the complexity of God's governance as the creator of the cosmos and the sustainer of life. What is the world which Yahweh's speech powerfully projects? Alter notes,

> God's poetry enables Job to glimpse beyond his human plight an immense world of power and beauty and awesome warring forces. This world is permeated with God's ordering concern, but as the vividness of the verse makes clear, it presents to the human eye a welter of contradictions, dizzying variety, energies and entities that man cannot take in.[101]

Perhaps too, God was demonstrating to Job that although his own life has the semblance of disorder there is a divine order and purpose to his affliction as well.

In summary, it is significant that nowhere in the divine speeches does God question Job's integrity, his תם. Wharton notes that nothing in them "asserts that Job was wrong to justify himself (= 'persist in his integrity')."[102] Job was right to question the justice of his God in his situation (what would his conception of God be if he had not

[101] Ibid., 110.

[102] Wharton, *Job,* 173; moreover, "the *fact* of God's answer to Job 'out of the whirlwind' (38:1) constitutes God's unconditional yes to Job's life of selfless integrity as epitomized in chapter 31" (169).

questioned God?). This may raise a question about the coarse tone of Yahweh's speeches. Job did after all need to place his suffering in the proper perspective and the Yahweh speeches function to put Job in his place, i.e., to situate Job in his proper place in the creation. Wharton writes, "At the critical point, however, there was always something Job did not know or failed to understand about God's role in Job's story, which led to all those passionate outbursts against God as the enemy. What Job could not have known, yet somehow should have known, is that God staked God's own reputation on Job's integrity towards God and people."[103] On the contrary, Fox regards the speech of Yahweh as less harsh than it could otherwise have been: "Through these rhetorical questions God does speak of his own wisdom and power and Job's relative weakness and ignorance, but he does so with compassion and gentleness, albeit a stern gentleness . . . God demands humility, not humiliation."[104]

6.8 Perspective Broadened: Job's Response (40:3-5; 42:1-6)

Job's initial response to Yahweh's discourses on cosmogony, meteorology and zoology reveal his humility and the withdrawal of his accusation (40:3-5). After Yahweh's dazzling verbal display of the creation Job is left silent.

Job's second response indicates that he understood the thrust of the speeches. He admits that he is guilty of hiding "council without knowledge." Moreover he confesses "I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted . . . I uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know" (42:2, 3). There are a number of key lexical links between Job's final response and the

[103] Ibid., 176.
[104] Michael V. Fox, "Job 38 and God's Rhetoric," *Semeia* 19 (1981): 59.

hymn to wisdom, and it is remarkable how many of the links pertain to perception and understanding (ידע: 28:7, 13, 23 and 42:2, 3, 4; עלם: 28:21 and 42:3; בין: 28:23 and 42:3; שמע: 28:22 and 42:4, 5; אזן: 28:22 and 42:5; עין: 28:7, 10, 21 and 42:5; ראה: 28:10, 24, 27 and 42:5; עפר: 28:2, 6 and 42:6). Perhaps the point of this is that although Job was a man of integrity and a God-fearer, up until that point true wisdom had eluded him. His perception of reality was too narrow, especially when he himself decreed to darken the entire cosmos as a result of the singularity of his own grief.

Moreover, in addition to his confession, Job "announces that he has been vouchsafed a gift of sight."[105] What is it that Job saw? Alter rightly suggests that Job caught "the glimpse of an ungraspable creation surging with the power of its Creator: 'By what the ear hears I had heard You, / but now my eyes have seen You.'"[106] Job's suffering blinded him and caused him to conclude that everything was chaos. Yahweh put the creation on display, including the wonderful and horrifying details, and revealed himself as the guardian of this universe. The purpose was not primarily to cow Job into submission; Yahweh was offering Job the gift of his own perspective of reality. In Job's lament in ch. 3 Job's pain caused him to desire the deep darkness of non-existence to envelope the cosmos; the speeches of Yahweh give Job the gift of sight so that he can see the world as God sees it, a world which is divinely ordered but which also contains paradox.

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[105] Alter, *Biblical Poetry*, 110.
[106] Ibid.

Job's last words (42:6) are notoriously difficult to translate.[107] One could render this verse quite woodenly as: "therefore I abhor/reject/despise[108] and I am sorry/suffer grief/console myself on dust and ashes." From the various proposals, it appears that how one understands the function of Yahweh's speeches influences the translation of these difficult words. For example, if Yahweh's speeches are regarded as angry and overbearing then it would seem appropriate to understand the words as a retraction or repentance. It is not likely that Job is repenting here (at least in the sense of repenting of a sin) as "repent" in this sense is not a common use of נחם.[109] Perhaps the thrust of this verse is that Job admits his mortality. With his new vantage point, Job shows remorse for being blinded by his grief to the point of calling into question the cosmic order.[110]

6.9 Integrity and Reconciliation: Job 42:7-17

Yahweh continues after Job's response when he turns to address Job's would-be comforters, and these words serve to allay any doubt about the integrity of Job and his words. Yahweh addresses Eliphaz as a representative of the friends[111] and expresses his

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[107] See Charles Muechow, "Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6," *JBL* 108 (1989): 597-611; Habel, *Job,* 576.

[108] Apart from the problem of translating the words, one of main problems is that the verb נחם is a transitive verb but does not have a (clear) object. What is it that Job rejects?

[109] Good, *Tempest,* 376. Curtis examines the various uses of נחם in the Bible and concludes that the translation "I repent" finds no support in biblical usage"; see John Briggs Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," *JBL* 98.4 (1979): 499.

[110] See Stuart Lasine, "Bird's-Eye and Worm's-Eye Views of Justice in the Book of Job," in *The Poetical Books: A Sheffield Reader* (ed. David J. A. Clines; The Biblical Seminar 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 293.

[111] Conspicuous is the absence of Elihu. I am hesitant to agree with the commentators who imply from his absence that he was affirmed by God, a possibility considered by Hartley, *Job,* 538. On the topic of conspicuous absenteeism, it is interesting that the Satan does not make another appearance. Good, *Tempest,* 201, notes, "The Prosecutor [Satan], it appears, has failed, and because we see and hear no more of him, we may suppose that whatever catastrophe he called down upon himself in his curse came about. His disappearance has greatly troubled some interpreters. But if we take his self-curse seriously, as I believe we must, his absence is not strange. The curse eventuated, by implication, in his banishment or destruction."

burning anger against all of them "because you have not spoken of me[112] what is right as my servant Job has" (42:7).[113] Yahweh curses their folly and advises them to take seven bulls and seven rams and enlist Job to intercede so that Yahweh's anger might be averted. Job's reinstatement as the priestly figure is the first of his reversals that initiates the restoration of the world of Job 1:1-5.

Job's restoration is continued when God returned his possessions two-fold.[114] His calamity had alienated him from his brothers and sisters (19:13-14) but as a part of his restoration they arrive to eat "bread with him in his house" (recalling the celebrations of the sons and daughters of Job in 1:4) and offer genuine consolation for the "evil (רע) that Yahweh had brought upon him" (42:11). Verses 12-17 indicate that after everything Yahweh "blessed" (ברך) Job. This is demonstrated by the exact doubling of Job's livestock, the unequaled beauty of his three new daughters, and the exact doubling of Job's years.

It is important to notice a few things about the restoration of Job. First, it begins with the reconciliation of broken relationships. The right relationship between Job, his

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[112] Although English translations almost uniformly translate אלי as "of me" this is an unusual use of the preposition. In conversation, Al Wolters stated that he prefers the more common rendering of אלי ("to me") which suggests that God was not necessarily affirming everything that Job said (over against what his friends said) but rather affirmed his posture or attitude toward God. This is an interesting interpretation and may provide new possibilities for reconciling the accusatory tone of the speeches of Yahweh and his affirmation of Job in this verse; however, this reading would have to account for the fact that the friends do not talk to God at all.

[113] As if anticipating the readers incredulity at encountering such words Yahweh repeats them in v. 8. For a summary of some of the theories about this verse see Stanley Porter, "The Message of the Book of Job: Job 42:7b as Key to Interpretation?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 63 (1991): 291-304, who regards this verse as the hermeneutical key to the whole book.

[114] Earlier Ex. 22:7-11 was sighted as making provision for a legal case in which there are no witnesses (in which case the accused and the accuser both take an oath before Yahweh). In that same context, the law prescribes, "For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns *shall pay double to his neighbor*" (Ex. 22:9). Perhaps God is making restitution for the afflictions against Job.

friends and God is mediated by Job's intercessory prayers and sacrifices, and fellowship is restored. The restoration between Job and his siblings further emphasizes the importance of right relationships. Second, it appears that the restoration of Job's possessions proves the friend's point about the doctrine of retribution which God condemned in 42:7, 8. While there is no easy solution to this paradox perhaps commentators who see this as a further act of consolation are correct; Habel notes in this regard, "After Job has been tested to the limit, Yahweh restores his fortunes two-fold, as though he ought to be given some consolation for undergoing an unwarranted trial . . . Yet this act of restoration is an act of grace, not a reward for Job's goodness or honesty with God."[115] Finally, there are subtle indications in the prologue that this is not merely a tidy conclusion in which everyone lives happily ever after. Even after his restoration, Job needs "sympathy" (נוד) and "consolation" (נחם) from his loved ones (v. 11) in the aftermath of "all the evil which Yahweh had brought upon him." Moreover, that Job receives ten children, matching but not doubling his previous progeny, insinuates that it would be impossible to replace Job's previous children.[116] Nevertheless, as is fitting for a patriarch and an elect servant of Yahweh, Job dies "an old man, and full of days" (Abraham: Gen. 25:8; Isaac: 35:29). In the prologue, Job's integrity is affirmed and the paradise which is projected in 1:5 before the great fall of Job is once again restored.

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to show what kind of world the book of Job projects. To a certain extent, the various parts of Job offer different and often conflicting "worlds." For

[115] Habel, *Job,* 584.
[116] See Hartley, *Job,* 542; *contra* Good, *Tempest,* 389-390.

example, the idyllic world of 1:1-5 where the abundantly blameless individual is abundantly blessed clashes with the world of the rest of the prologue wherein a man of integrity is subjected to unthinkable pain and suffering. The world which the friends promote is one where the ordinances of God are governed according to a universal principle of retribution, whereas the world which Job perceives as a result of his calamity is one of enduring chaos in which God is capricious and appears as an enemy. Finally, the world projected by the speeches of Yahweh in which chaos and order exist in tension and under the governance of God is at odds with that of Job in ch. 3 wherein the whole cosmos is pulled into the chaotic vortex of Job's pain.

Overall, however, the world of the book of Job is one in which mystery and enigma exist but never outside the providence of God. It is a world where words are powerful. It is also a world where the suffering servant of God is given much liberty, even to the point of questioning the justice of God, and in the end he is affirmed. It is a world where God's people can serve God for naught and where God is willing to stake his own integrity upon the integrity of his servant. Moreover, it is a place where grace can bring reconciliation, renewing broken relationships.

Does this world reflect reality? Is this place inhabitable? Is it possible to read the book of Job and walk away unscathed? These questions deserve attention and the next chapter will offer some remarks about how the book of Job might mediate one's self-understanding.

CHAPTER 7

JOB AS A MEDIATION OF SELF-UNDERSTANDING

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.[1]

We have much to learn from [Job] about our relationship of faith and hope with God and about the doing of theology.[2]

7.1 Introduction

The final dimension of Ricoeur's textual theory involves a process of new self-understanding before the text. It is at this final stage in Ricoeur's textual theory in which readers, who have distanced themselves from the text in the explanatory step, can appropriate the text by way of a second naiveté. Although discourse is addressed to a specific person or group, inscription liberates a text from its original audience. A text creates, as it were, its own audience(s) limited only by the capacity to read. The process of appropriation is less active than it is passive, less a laying hold of a thing than it is a dispossession of the self.[3] However, this appropriation is always an appropriation through distance, i.e., every reader interprets from a distinct context, tradition, and perspective. It seems that according to Ricoeur this reality is not necessarily negative though at some point the reader must engage in meaningful self-critique if theology or tradition is to remain anything more than ideology. The book of Job arguably challenges the assumptions of any theological system; it serves as a warning concerning the limitations of human talk about God.

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[1] James 5:11.
[2] Gutiérrez, *On Job,* xvii.
[3] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory,* 94.

Reece finds this fourth dimension of Ricoeur's textual interpretation the most underdeveloped in Ricoeur's theory, and when he tries to apply it to Wisdom of Solomon it is clear that he is struggling.[4] This process is indeed difficult because it is nearly impossible to evaluate objectively how one's assumptions influence interpretation. Moreover, this process is personal and might be different for every reader. In order to gain some objective distance, the following will bring Calvin, one of the fathers of my own religious tradition, into conversation with the book of Job. In many ways Calvinism provides a helpful lens through which to interpret the book of Job. However, the book of Job challenges Calvinism to reevaluate some important doctrinal teachings. The focus of this chapter is not the quality of Calvin's interpretation of Job. Rather, the aim is to show how Calvin's theological assumptions influence his interpretation and how the book of Job might challenge Calvin and Calvinists to understand themselves better in front of the text. Before concluding this chapter I will make some remarks concerning how I personally might gain self-understanding from Job.

7.2 Reading Calvin Reading Job

Although Calvin did not write a commentary on the book of Job, readers today have access to his thoughts on Job primarily through a series of sermons on the whole book, 159 in total, which Calvin preached every weekday for seven months (1554-1555).[5] The following analysis of Calvin will focus on the concepts of evil, justice, and

[4] Reece, "Ricoeur's Method," 394-395.

[5] In 1584 Arthur Golding translated the complete collection of sermons from the French. This translation is into the old English script which might cause the reader some frustration; John Calvin, *Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin, Vpon the Booke of Iob* (trans. Arthur Golding; London: Thomas Dawson for George Byshop and Thomas VVoodcocke, 1584). In 1993 Banner of Truth published Golding's translation as a facsimile reprint; John Calvin, *Sermons on Job* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1993). Moreover, Leroy Nixon translated from the French a good selection of twenty sermons published as John Calvin, *Sermons From*

providence in his theology and how he grapples with these concepts in his sermons on Job.[6]

Perhaps it would be helpful to begin with Calvin's thoughts about providence and justice. A central tenet of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God. Calvin held that God's providence governs all things. Thus, for Calvin "the universe is ruled by God, not only because he watches over the order of nature set by himself, but because he exercises especial care over each of his works."[7] Moreover, "providence means not that by which God idly observes from heaven what takes place on earth, but that by which, as keeper of

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Job (trans. Leroy Nixon; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952). There is also a surprising amount of secondary resources in English on Calvin's interpretation of Job. Chief among these commentators is Susan Schreiner; see Susan Schreiner, "'Through a Mirror Dimly': Calvin's Sermons on Job," *Calvin Theological Journal* 21/2 (1986): 175-193; Susan Schreiner, "Exegesis and Double Justice in Calvin's Sermons on Job," *Church History* 58 (1989): 322-338; Susan Schreiner, "Why do the Wicked Live?: Job and David in Calvin's Sermons on Job, in *Voice from the Whirlwind* (eds. Leo G. Perdue and W. C. Gilpin; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992); Susan Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found: Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1994). See also P. C. Potgieter, "Perspectives on the Doctrine of Providence in some of Calvin's Sermons on Job," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 54 (1998): 36-49; David J. A. Clines, "Job and the Spirituality of the Reformation," in David J. A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 205; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); and the chapter on John Calvin's perspective on the book of Job in Maarten Wisse, *Scripture Between Identity and Creativity: A Hermeneutical Theory Building upon Four Interpretations of Job* (Ars Disputandi Supplement Series 1; Utrecht: Ars Disputandi, 2003). Additionally, I have found two works which interpret Job from a Calvinist tradition that took root and flowered in the Netherlands and which is my own heritage. This "brand" of Calvinism is founded upon three confessional documents, The Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession of Faith, and the Canons of Dort, and had a significant influence upon culture and politics in Dutch history. Klaas Jan Popma was a scholar of classical languages and eventually taught Christian reformational philosophy at the universities of Groningen and Utrecht. His study of Job can be found in English translation: Klaas Jan Popma, *A Battle for the Righteousness: The Message of the Book of Job* (trans. Jack Van Meggelen; Belleville: Essence Publishing, 1998). The second work is a translation of a series of seven sermons which Rev. Kornelis Sietsma, a minister in the Reformed (*Gereformeerd*) Church, preached between 1938-1939; Kornelis Sietsma, *The Self-Justification of God in the Life of Job* (trans. Roelf C. Janssen; Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 2001). It is interesting to see how these two commentators treat Job in much the same way as Calvin.

[6] The following discussion will not include a consideration of God's omniscience. The so-called wager between God and the Satan in the prologue seems to suggest that God was unable to foresee the outcome of the wager. Although this appears to contradict some of the central tenets of Calvinism, I do not intend to try to explain this feature of the book away except to say that the function of this aspect of the story is not meant to teach, one way or the other, concerning the omniscience of God; rather its function is to punctuate the fact that God was willing to put a great deal of trust in the integrity of his servant Job.

[7] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Louisville: John Knox Press), I.xvi.4.

the keys, he governs all events."[8] However, God does not arbitrarily dispense his sovereignty:

> [W]e do not advocate the fiction of 'absolute might'; because this is profane, it ought rightly to be fateful to us. We fancy no lawless god who is a law unto himself . . . but the will of God is not only free of all fault but is the highest rule of perfection, and even the law of all laws."[9]

Yet injustice seems to abound in this world so that the wicked appear to prosper and the righteous seem to suffer. Calvin maintained that as a result of the fall human perception of reality is unreliable, hence the noetic limitations of humanity.[10] Mortals are unable to discern God's providence in their own experience and in history, and, therefore, ought not to question divine justice and inscrutability. Calvin wrote,

> But we deny that he is liable to render an account; we also deny that we are competent judges to pronounce judgment in this cause according to our own understanding. Accordingly, if we attempt more than is permitted, let that threat of the psalm strike us with fear: God will be the victor whenever he is judged by mortal man [Ps. 51:4; cf. 50:6].[11]

Like any reading of Job, Calvin attempted to hold in tension the dimension of God's sovereignty and goodness and the existence of evil and suffering in the world. The very first words of Calvin in his first sermon provide a window into Calvin's theology and his understanding of what is going on in Job.

> To really profit by the contents of this book, we must first know the scope of it. 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, confessing that He is just and

[8] Ibid. For the full treatment of God's sovereignty and providence see Calvin, *Institutes,* I.xvi.
[9] Ibid., III.xxiii.2.
[10] Calvin dealt with this primarily in Book I of his *Institutes*. See the discussion in Schreiner, "Mirror Dimly."
[11] Calvin, *Institutes,* III.xxiii.2.

> equitable, that we should not murmur against Him, that we should not enter into dispute, knowing that if we struggle against Him we shall be conquered.[12]

Thus, for Calvin the key to the book of Job is that God is permitted to treat his creatures according to his good pleasure, and this coheres with Calvin's position on the sovereignty of God. It will be necessary to return to this and to see how Calvin tempered this position with his conception of double justice, but it is necessary to identify another hermeneutical key which permeates Calvin's sermons.

In order to reconcile the troublesome words of 42:7 ("My anger burns against you and against your two friends because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has") Calvin utilized a reading strategy for the speech cycles which he also identified in the first sermon:

> [W]e have also to note that in the whole dispute Job maintains a good case, and his adversary maintains a poor one. Now there is more, that Job maintaining a good case pleads it poorly, and the others bringing a poor case plead it well. When we shall have understood this, it will be to us as it were a key to open to us the whole book.[13]

Calvin repeatedly returned to this key to understanding the dialogues between Job and his friends.[14]

According to Calvin the good case that Job maintains is that God's affliction of an individual does not always reflect the measure of that individual's sin and that God's ways are sometimes mysterious and mortals must patiently wait for God's revealed will.

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[12] Calvin, *Sermons,* 3.
[13] Ibid., 5.
[14] For example see sermons 7, 21, 33, 71, 72, 119, 158.

The way in which Job pleads his case badly is by overstating his arguments and by showing himself so desperate as to resist God.[15]

On the other hand, Calvin clearly understood that the argument of the friends was that God always afflicts mortals according to the measure of their sin. However, according to Calvin that *was not* the friends' poor case. In fact he held that "there is nothing in that proposition [i.e., the doctrine of retribution] that we ought not to receive as if the Holy Spirit had pronounced it; for it is pure truth, these are the foundations of religion, they discuss the providence of God, they discuss His justice, they discuss the sins of men."[16] What then is the poor case which the friends maintained? That the friends used a good and holy truth in order "to put Job into despair and to destroy him completely is bad."[17]

Calvin was clearly uncomfortable with Job's case. Calvin's anthropology emphasized the depravity of humanity and the reality of original sin, and resisted the belief that mere mortals can, by their good works, merit anything before the face of God.[18] Schreiner has shown how the idea of double justice, a justice which governs creaturely perfection and divine justice which transcends human perception, operated in Calvin's sermons.[19] According to Calvin,

> The justice whereby we must be ruled and whereto we must be subject is above us, but God's will is above that, according to what I have shown already that there is a double justice of God. One is that which he has shown us in his law, by which he will have the world to be ruled. The other

[15] Calvin, *Sermons,* 5.
[16] Ibid. To what extent Calvin accepts the principle of retribution is the subject of some debate. Schreiner, *Wisdom,* 99-100, maintains that Calvin fully accepted it while Wisse, *Scripture,* 69, thinks that Schreiner has exaggerated the extent to which Calvin prescribes to the doctrine of retribution.
[17] Calvin, *Sermons,* 5. It appears that this too was a good case put to use badly rather than *vice versa.*
[18] Although these were especially prominent in Calvin's theological system, Calvin's predecessors also grappled with the characterization of Job; see Schreiner, "Double Justice," 328-329.
[19] See especially Schreiner, "Double Justice," 333-336.

> justice is incomprehensible, insofar as now and then we must close our eyes when God works, and be content to know neither how nor why he does it. Hence, when the reason of any of God's works is not revealed to us, let us understand that it is a mark of the justice that is in his secret will, which surmounts the rule that is manifest and known to us.[20]

This dual conception of justice permitted Calvin to affirm the characterization of Job in 1:1, 8; 2:3 and to denounce Job whenever he criticizes God. In the *Institutes* Calvin wrote,

> [I]n The Book of Job mention is made of a righteousness higher than the observance of the law . . . For even if someone satisfied the law, not even then could he stand the test of that righteousness which surpassed all understanding. Therefore, even though Job has a good conscience, he is stricken dumb with astonishment, for he sees that not even the holiness of angels can please God if he should weigh their works in his heavenly scales.[21]

In other words, though Job may have been righteous according to human standards he could never expect to measure up to the standard of God's righteousness.[22] Schreiner and Wisse who both deal with this aspect of double justice regard it as a shadow over Calvin's otherwise affirmative trust in God.[23] Moreover, both agree that this is "the price Calvin pays for wanting to reconcile complete submission to God's sovereignty on the one hand, and being true to the reality of suffering on the other. In the end, the notion of divine sovereignty prevails."[24]

7.3 Reading Job Reading Calvin

This short summary of some of the salient theological points of Calvin's sermons on Job fails to do justice to this amazing corpus of sermons. Calvin knew what it meant

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[20] This translation is found in Wisse, *Scripture,* 70.
[21] Calvin, *Institutes,* III.xii.1.
[22] Wisse, *Scripture,* 70.
[23] See Wisse, *Scripture,* 70; Schreiner, "Double Justice," 338.
[24] See Wisse, *Scripture,* 70; Schreiner, "Double Justice," 337-338.

to suffer, and his sermons were not only a great comfort to many of his parishioners, they also became popular among the French Huguenots and English Protestants shortly after their publication.[25] Moreover, in the *Institutes* Calvin devotes a section to a proper attitude toward suffering, one that does not resort to a type of Christian stoicism which counts it "depraved not only to groan and weep but also to be sad and care ridden."[26] Rather,

> [T]hus afflicted by disease, we shall both groan and be uneasy and pant after health; thus pressed by poverty, we shall be pricked by the arrows of care and sorrow; thus we shall be smitten by the pain of disgrace, contempt, injustice; thus at the funerals of our dear ones we shall weep the tears that are owed to our nature. But the conclusion will always be: the Lord so willed, therefore let us follow his will. Indeed, amid the very pricks of pain, amid groaning and tears, this thought must intervene: to incline our hearts to bear cheerfully those things which have so moved it.[27]

However, there is a sense in which Calvin misunderstood Job and the implications of the book for those who want to understand themselves before the text. It seems as though in his treatment of Job's words, Calvin sets himself as another advocate of God and, thus, an accuser of Job. Just like the dialogue partners of Job, Calvin could not tolerate any kind of criticism of God. Even though Calvin generally affirms the doctrine of retribution, he realized that in Job's case it did not necessarily apply; however, there is

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[25] Wisse, *Scripture,* 73, points out that Calvin's attitude concerning suffering (i.e., that the faithful sufferer should wait patiently for God's deliverance, and that justice would be meted out eventually) was driven not only by his theological assumptions but also by the political context. Wisse notes, "The attitude of protest in suffering, exemplified by the figure of Job, was not only politically incorrect, but also out of the question for many in his audience, because most of them were not in a life situation in which revolution was a live option. They were much more encouraged by a message that supported their patience and trust in a sovereign God than by an uncertain and chaotic revolution, which would threaten the very basis of their society and religion" (74-75). Wisse notes that there are far fewer exegetical remarks in Calvin's sermons than in the commentaries that he wrote; perhaps Wisse is correct to wonder how the role of the liturgical setting functioned in Calvin's interpretation of Job (73). If Calvin had written a commentary on Job, one wonders if he would have come to some of the same conclusions.

[26] Calvin, *Institutes,* III.viii.9.

[27] Ibid., III.viii.10. Here Calvin offers an active way to suffer but one wonders if the last sentence does not undermine the point he was trying to convey.

very little difference between Calvin's attitude toward Job and his explanation for suffering and that of Elihu.[28] With Job, Calvin never denied that the afflictions of Job found their ultimate source in God, but theological assertions about the sovereignty of God, of his transcendent justice, and about the didactic purpose of suffering fail to answer Job's predicament adequately. Assertions about God's sovereign good pleasure to afflict the righteous, though perhaps true, seem awfully trite, and in the end function to alienate those who suffer innocently.[29] Moreover, the covenant contract seems to involve the self-circumscribing of divine freedom. With regard to Calvin's remarks that the faithful ought to submit piously when it is God's good pleasure to afflict them, Clines notes

> Whether we like it or not, this is the expression, if not the encapsulation, of a comprehensive spirituality on Calvin's part; it is the spirituality of obedience, and obedience that is both mindless ("even when we do not understand") and prudential ("knowing that we would always be overcome"). It by no means does justice to the subtlety and intellectual force of Calvin's thought—nor to his humanity—and will seem to many nothing but the naked "Calvinism" of the least agreeable kind. The worry is that this is what the grand scope of the *Institutes* and the sweep of the Commentaries all boil down to; when the question becomes one of spirituality—no longer "what shall I believe?" but "How shall I live, as a believer?"—the book of Job appears, in Calvin's hands, to lead to nothing more inspiring than recommendation to a quietism that does not doubt or struggle.[30]

[28] The ambiguity with regard to Elihu's speeches makes it hard to discern whether or not he spoke rightly about God; yet it seems fairly clear that although he revealed some essential truths about God he failed to function as a legitimate arbiter between Job and God.

[29] The doctrine of total depravity and original sin do not negate the possibility of innocent suffering. Extreme cases of innocent suffering include persecution based on racial, ethnic or religious differences, rape or child abuse, etc. This is not to say that the victims of these horrors are sinless but that their suffering is unrelated to their sin.

[30] Clines, "Job and the Spirituality," 24. It is necessary to keep in mind the quotation found above where Calvin advocates an active engagement with suffering. Perhaps, though, Clines is correct in his assessment about Calvin's handling of the book of Job.

Clines' insinuated reduction of Calvin's thought is far too broad of an indictment to be taken seriously; however, his judgment concerning Calvin's handling of the book of Job is not far off the mark.

Moreover, although the context of Calvin's "reformation of the refugees" may have prevented him from preaching a more active approach to suffering, Calvin was not able to appropriate a central teaching of the book. In the book of Job, the innocent sufferer receives a platform from which to voice his pain, and he is permitted to do so at length (no one speaks more than Job) and with extreme language; moreover, in the end he receives divine sanction. Calvin thought that God's justice, his essential goodness, and his covenantal relationship with humanity indicate that he is unable to do evil, and therefore Job ought to have quietly endured his affliction and waited for God's deliverance.[31] However, Job perceived that God had broken covenant, and that God's justice and goodness were in jeopardy; so the covenant and God's essential goodness were the very grounds which legitimated Job's lament to God. Thus, Job, as it were, pleaded upon the goodness of God and upon the covenant promises for God to give account for his otherwise incomprehensible actions. The severity of Job's affliction to a certain extent permitted the audacity of his complaint. It is true that in the end Job recognized the limitations of his perspective and is brought to a place of silence. Yet the text does not indicate that Job should have silently endured his suffering; after all God commends Job for speaking rightly concerning God.

[31] See Schreiner, "Double Justice," 337, where she notes, "Most importantly, however, Calvin guarantees God's justice by appealing to the same principle used by Scotus . . . [namely,] God's powerful will is limited both by the covenant or pact and, *de potential ordinata,* by God's nature, which is goodness."

The implication for those who have received the promises of God and who wish to understand themselves before the text of Job is that the attitude of lament is legitimate before the face of God. Perhaps by comprehending Calvin's thought as a whole, it might be possible to hold in tension God's sovereignty, justice, and inscrutability and the believer's authorization to lament affliction upon the basis of God's goodness. The book of Job does not promise that God's people are immune from suffering but it does permit a posture of active suffering which involves a genuine struggling with God.

7.4 Job as a Mediation of Self-Understanding

The preceding detour through Calvin's interpretation of Job has shed some valuable light upon my own interpretation of Job and may perhaps aid in appropriating the world of the text and seeing new existential possibilities. I share with Calvin a reluctance to enter into the world of the book of Job. Not only does the book of Job project an awe-inspiring and sublime world over which God has command, it also projects a reality in which God allows terrifying and untamed beasts, like the warhorse, Behemoth and Leviathan, to subsist. Compared to Job, the world of Proverbs, though not completely void of tension, projects a more easily habitable world, one in which God and the world appear to be more predictable.[32] One cannot help but be disoriented by the fact that God permitted Job to be afflicted in such a manner. The fact that the Satan suggested and carried out Job's calamity does provide some perspective even though apart from the prologue the book and the characters of the book never deny that the source of Job's affliction is with God.

[32] Of course, in light of the discussion in chapter 4 this understanding of Proverbs is an exaggeration.

On the other hand, there is something profoundly comforting and hope-inspiring in the fact that not only does God take pride in Job (Job 1:8; 2:3) he also binds up his own integrity in an intricate relationship with Job's. Raised in an environment in which the depravity of human existence and the worthlessness of even the best works (tenets of my tradition to which I still heartily subscribe), I am inspired by the fact that in the world of the book of Job not only do humans exist for the glory of God but God also finds satisfaction in the lives of his saints. This realization certainly offers the hope for new possibilities for living before the text and before the face of God. Moreover, the book of Job suggests that based upon Job's example, it is perhaps possible to serve God for naught.[33]

Moreover, the world of the book of Job does not permit glib or superficial talk about God. My heritage has a long and rich theological tradition that has produced many significant confessional statements and systematic theologies. However, I perceive that my own tendency (which is a tendency that exists more broadly in conservative Reformed traditions) is to engage in such an exhaustive theological explanation that there is a danger of ignoring the mysteries of God's ways and of not speaking rightly about God.[34] The speeches of Yahweh allow Job to "see" that his previous perception of reality was shrouded in darkness. He himself is offered a projection of the world as God sees it, one which is divinely ordered but which also contains paradox.

The history of my particular "brand" of Calvinism is peppered with various schisms and secessions, mostly resulting from theological differences. Without judging

[33] This proposition is complicated because to a certain extent Job sets the standard so high that one wonders if anyone is able to attain such a stature.
[34] I realize this sounds quite like Calvin's articulation of double justice.

the necessity of these secessions or the legitimacy of the respective theological positions, the world of the book of Job shows that unyielding loyalty to unrealistic theological constructions leads to alienation (from God and fellow humans) and contributes to the disrupted order of reality. It is true that Job's friends thought they were speaking rightly about God; yet their example teaches us to adopt a posture of humility and grace when we confront the other and to insure that our arguments are for the sake of truth and not for the sake of ignorantly propping up tradition, arrogantly establishing our own superiority or callously demoralizing the other.

Finally, the world of the book of Job does not account for the suffering of God's people but it does offer a legitimate posture of suffering through Job's example. My own understanding of the legitimacy of lamentation has been deepened over the past number of years as I have studied various Old Testament texts and especially the Psalms and Job. Of all the genres and expressions of faith in the Psalter, the psalms of lament dominate. Moreover, Job complains long and hard about the injustice of his suffering and God pronounces him right. It was not until grappling with the concept of lament that I have begun to understand the genuine suffering that some believers experience. The fact that lamentation is a legitimate (and dominant) expression of biblical faith suggests that suffering is not something to grin and bear or somehow to suppress and ignore. Rather, Job advocates an active engagement of suffering which will have the potential to sufficiently deepen one's faith.

The book of Job has both existential and pastoral implications. First, it gives believers a platform from which to boldly cry out to God. Second, it suggests that the community of believers ought to suffer with one another and not to offer simplistic

answers to those who suffer which will likely cause them to despair. The death of Lazarus and the resulting pain of Mary and Martha caused Jesus a great deal of pain (John 11:33-38). He wept, and, with sounds which words could not express, he lamented the reality of death and pain in creation. My Calvinist convictions certainly cause me to confess with Job that God is sovereign over all created reality and governs the blessings and the evil which his people experience (Job 42:10 and 11 respectively), but believers must also be prepared for suffering even in times of faithfulness. Even so, in the world of Job, active engagement with the reality of brokenness and death is affirmed.

7.5 Conclusion

It appears as though Calvin had a hard time existing with ease in the world of the book of Job. He could not permit the tension between chaos and order, between God's reliability and his unpredictability, between faith and complaint. Part of the function of the book is to disorient the reader, and as such, an interpretation which eliminates tension by, for example, speaking of distinct human and divine standards of justice will not do. According to Ricoeur,

> [Job's] questions about justice are undoubtedly left without an answer. But by repenting, though not of sin, for he is righteous, but by repenting for his supposition that existence does not make sense, Job presupposes an unsuspected meaning which cannot be transcribed by speech or *logos* a human being may have at his disposal. This meaning has no other expression than the new quality which penitence confers on suffering. Hence it is not unrelated to what Aristotle speaks of as the tragic *pathos* that purifies the spectator of fear and pity.[35]

Indeed, reading the book of Job is a disorientating experience. Nevertheless, on the one hand the world of Job inspires godliness as believers realize that God takes satisfaction in

[35] Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic," 87.

his relationship with his people. On the other hand, Job permits an active engagement with God when believers appear to be suffering for naught. Moreover, the world of Job is a place where fellowship and reconciliation is vital, and where the truth ought to be spoken in love.

The world which the book of Job projects is not always a comfortable place to exist. Yet it is a place where through the experience of intense suffering one can encounter the living God.

CONCLUSION

> *[T]hose interested in Interpreting Scripture better cannot afford to avoid the arduous questions that language, philosophy, hermeneutics and the world pose for biblical interpretation. It is essential to be keenly aware that each of these will have an effect—sometimes positive, sometimes negative—on how one interprets the biblical text.*[1]
>
> *[B]iblical interpreters have much to gain from close attention to the philosophy and theology of language, and to linguistics . . . [A] theological dimension is a vital ingredient in a contemporary understanding of language and the consequent development of a hermeneutic. In a day in which Babel has become the much vaunted symbol for wild pluralism, it is important that we recover a theological context of "Before Babel" and "After Pentecost" for our understanding of language.*[2]

This thesis has attempted to examine one individual's theory of textual hermeneutics, to indicate what adjustments take place when that theory is applied to the Bible, and to demonstrate an application of that theory to a biblical text. With his textual hermeneutics, Paul Ricoeur tried to find a place between modernism and postmodernism where readers can trust the text, where they can understand themselves and the world better through the text, and where they can derive hope and meaning for their lives in front of the text.

This study has described the four dimensions of Ricoeur's textual theory and has attempted to show how each might be used for an interpretation of the book of Job. First, the fact that a text is a discourse fixed by writing means that the meaning of the text must be understood as existing in the dialectic between what the text meant in its original context and what it means now that the discourse no longer has a speaker but an author, when it no longer has an audience but readers. Chapter four attempted to grapple with

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[1] Gregory J. Laughery, "Language at the Frontiers of Language," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 189.
[2] Bartholomew, "Before Babel," 163-164.

the book of Job as a written discourse. Job was situated within a broader wisdom discourse (Proverbs and Ecclesiastes also provide important textual evidence of this wisdom discourse). Moreover, in biblical hermeneutics, the speech which is anterior to the writings is often also based upon foundational writings. For Job, as for much of the Old Testament writings, the Torah of Moses provides the epistemological and ontological foundation for the discussion in wisdom. Nevertheless, interpreters must not reduce the meaning of Job to what it meant to the ancient Israelite sages. The meaning or sense of the text is liberated from its original context so that contemporary readers can appropriate the meaning.

Second, although the text is autonomous from the author's intention, from the earliest audience, and from the original reference, the meaning of the text is bound to the genre, structure, and style of the text. In this second stage, critical distance is maintained in order to study the text objectively. The book of Job contains many clearly defined genres, though chapter 5 questioned whether or not it is possible to define the book of Job as a whole in terms of a simple genre, especially because there is no example like Job in form or structure with which to compare it. Westermann's dramatized lament is a helpful heuristic tool for understanding Job but it is not clear that dramatized lament is a genre at all. It was suggested that understanding Job as made up of a number of genres which produce a wisdom discourse may provide a way forward. Moreover, the structure of Job was analyzed which revealed the importance of human (though also divine) integrity. Finally an examination of the style of Job showed that the book is a sophisticated piece of literature which utilizes the conventions of literary production in creative and unique ways. Chapter 5 tried to show how the study of the genre, structure, and style of Job

manifest the world of the book of Job. This is a world of paradox in the midst of order, a world where the faithful can suffer and can legitimately question God's ways in lament, a world where the sufferer encounters God and the creation in all their wonder and terror.

Third, Ricoeur maintained that an objective study of a text would reveal the world of the text. Although there is some overlap between Ricoeur's second and third dimensions of the text, Chapter 6 analyses the various sections of the book of Job in order to explicate in detail the world of the book of Job. The book projects a world whose harmony and integrity is linked to the integrity of Yahweh's servant. This integrity is challenged through various trials, including the complete destruction of his children and property, the loss of health, and the alienation of his friends and family. Although Job was in danger of reducing the whole cosmos into the darkness of his pain he maintained his integrity. Because an adequate mediator was not forthcoming (not even Elihu who thought he could stand between God and Job) Yahweh himself appears and confers the gift of sight upon Job. Job, with his integrity intact and in awe of the divine spectacle, admits the limitations of his perspective. In the end Yahweh commends Job for speaking rightly and Job lives out his days in the abundance of divine favor. Thus, although the world of the book of Job is one which, from a human perspective, seems paradoxical and contradictory it is actually ordered and maintained by God.

Fourth, Ricoeur held that only after readers distance themselves from the text in order to explain the world of the text can understanding or appropriation take place. To appropriate the text any earlier would be to project oneself upon the text and reduce interpretation to moralization. The second naiveté occurs as readers understand themselves before the text, or, to put it another way, as they enter into the world of the

text. Bringing John Calvin into discussion with Job in chapter 7 permitted a better understanding of some of the theological assumptions which girded my own interpretation of Job. In this chapter attention was given to Calvin's interpretation of Job followed by Job's interpretation of Calvin. Like most readers Calvin struggled to make sense of the book of Job, and by overemphasizing God's sovereignty he removed the tension in the book and ignored an important teaching of the book (i.e., the legitimacy of lament). Moreover, by articulating the doctrine of double justice, Calvin was in danger of presenting a sinister God who acts according to his own whim. Nevertheless, there are other places outside Calvin's treatment of Job which suggest that Calvin is much more moderate than he appears at first. The chapter ended with a section describing some of the ways in which the book of Job aids in my own self-understanding and potentiality. Some of the highlights of this section include the recognition that the book of Job inspires godliness because God takes pleasure in the faithfulness of his people, that superficial theological talk is futile and that words are powerful and must be used in love and grace, and that believers can actively engage God when they experience suffering. Although the world of the book of Job is sometimes terrifying and incomprehensible it is also one where God can be trusted and where active suffering can result in a divine encounter.

Chapter 3 evaluated Ricoeur's textual and biblical hermeneutics, showing great appreciation for Ricoeur's work in the areas of hermeneutics and the philosophy of language. Now, with the advantage of hindsight, one is prepared to evaluation his hermeneutics in light of an application of his theory to a biblical text.

The first thing to notice is that the advantage of accounting for the move from speech to writing is not altogether clear especially since writing liberates the discourse

from its original context. It is one thing to say that the original meaning is the clue to the meaning today, but how to put that into practice is something quite different. In fact, one wonders if, according to Ricoeur's theory, it is even possible to know what a text meant. This is not to say that Ricoeur was wrong to connect the discourse's "original meaning" with the text's significance for today; in fact grounding interpretation in history is vital. However, at times Ricoeur seems to make the autonomy of the text quite absolute.

Second, Ricoeur's emphasis on the structure of a text is very helpful and has produced some fruit in the interpretation. His understanding of genre, as is clear from the discussion of the genre of Job, is perhaps too ambiguous to apply successfully. A more intense discussion between biblical scholars, literary theorists, and Ricoeur specialists to discuss the importance of genre for interpretation might provide possible ways forward in this confusing area.

Third, although Ricoeur thought that an objective analysis of a discourse as a work would reveal the world of the text, one is left to wonder how objective this process actually is. Chapter 6 explicates the world of the text according to the theme of human integrity (part of the reason for doing so was the description of Job in terms of a "dramatized lament"). Other commentators might explicate the world of the text in a way which is quite unlike the one displayed in chapter 6. In fairness, perhaps this reality has to do with the confusion over genre; if Job conformed to a clear genre (e.g., a wisdom disputation or a lawsuit) perhaps the projected world would be more clearly explainable.

Finally, the text as a mediation of self-understanding is also very valuable and promising (if not difficult to do in an academic context). The process of working through Calvin's interpretation and evaluating my own understanding demonstrated just how

difficult it is to evaluate objectively one's own basic assumptions. Yet the primary aim of biblical hermeneutics is to understand oneself, the world, and God through an engagement with God's Word.

The choice to examine Paul Ricoeur's textual hermeneutics in this thesis is born out of a desire to be more conscious about the way theories of language influence the interpretation of texts. Ricoeur boldly engaged in the discipline of philosophy and hermeneutics without trying to shroud his Christian belief. He ought to inspire biblical interpreters to actively engage their own assumptions about the way in which language functions in their exegesis. It is exciting to see that many Christian theologians and biblical scholars are becoming more aware of the importance of theories of language and hermeneutics, and some have examined the work of Ricoeur to discern how his philosophy of language might aid in theological and biblical hermeneutics.

Perhaps in the midst of this bustle of activity surrounding philosophical hermeneutics and the philosophy of language the guild is due for a *biblical theology* of language. Craig Bartholomew has proposed the contours of such a biblical theology in his article "Before Babel and After Pentecost: Language, Literature and Biblical Interpretation."[3] Although such a study would begin with the cosmos being spoken into existence (Genesis 1 and John 1), the divergence of language at the Tower of Babel incident (Genesis 11) and the convergence of language at Pentecost (Acts 2) provide an appropriate frame for the study. Points of interest along the way would include the two commandments which concern the importance of speaking rightly about both God and humans. Proverbs would be vital for a theology of language, with its connection between heart and lips (4:23, 24) and the countless references to mouth, lips, and, words. Job

[3] Bartholomew, "Before Babel," 131-170.

itself is a testament to the wisdom and folly of speech and silence. Moreover, the New Testament provides instruction about language and communication.[4] Bartholomew notes, "In all of these contexts, speech is understood as a way of operating in the world for which the moral subject is responsible. Underlying language use is the direction of the 'heart.' There is a mine of material waiting to be excavated in terms of the Bible and language."[5] A biblical theology of language would provide a deepened understanding of language and perhaps help to account for the mystery of meaning.

It is hoped that this study has stimulated a greater awareness about the complexity of language and the assumptions at work in all interpretation, and has provided a meaningful contribution to a wider discussion about the relationship between philosophical hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics.

[4] Ibid., 147-149.
[5] Ibid., 149-150.

APPENDIX I: THE DISTRIBUTION OF NAMES FOR GOD IN THE BOOK OF JOB

Table 1: Distribution of Names for God in the Book of Job

	Ch.	Eloah	El	Elohim	Shaddai	Yahweh
Prologue	1			●●●●●●●		●●●●●●●●●●
	2			●●●●		●●●●●●●●
Job	3	●●				
Eliphaz	4	●●				
	5	●	●	●	●	
Job	6	●●●			●●	
	7					
Bildad	8		●●●●			
Job	9	●	●			
	10	●				
Zophar	11	●●●			●	
Job	12	●●	●			●
	13		●●●		●	
	14					
Eliphaz	15	●	●●●●		●	
Job	16	●●	●			
	17					
Bildad	18		●			
Job	19	●●●	●			
Zophar	20		●●	●		
Job	21	●●			●●	
Eliphaz	22	●●	●●●●		●●●●●	
Job	23		●		●	
	24	●			●	
Bildad	25		●			
Job	26					
	27	●●●	●●●●		●●●●	
	28			●		
	29	●●			●	
	30					
	31	●●	●●●		●●	
Elihu	32		●	●	●	
	33	●●	●●●●		●	
	34		●●●●●●	●	●●	
	35	●	●●		●	
	36	●	●●●			
	37	●●	●●●		●●	
Yahweh (with response by Job)	38		●	●		●
	39	●				
	40	●	●●		●	●●●
	41					
Epilogue	42					●●●●●●●●●●
total		**40**	**54**	**17**	**29**	**33**

Table 2: The Number of Times Each Character in Job Uses the Various Divine Names

	Eloah	El	Elohim	Shaddai	Yahweh
Narrator			6		28
Job	21	24	3	12	4
Eliphaz	6	9	1	7	
Bildad		6			
Zophar	3	2	1	1	
Elihu	6	19	1	7	
God	2	3	3		
Satan			1		
Job's Wife			1		

APPENDIX II: INNER-BIBLICAL DISCOURSE AND THE BOOK OF JOB[1]

Table 1: Job and the Noah Account (Gen. 6-9)

בני האלהים sons of Elohim (Gen 6:2, 4)	בני האלהים sons of Elohim (Job 1:6; 2:1)
נח איש צדיק תמים היה Noah was righteous and blameless (Gen 6:9)	והיה האיש ההוא תם וישר and he was blameless and upright (Job 1:1, 8, 3)
ויולד נח שלשה בנים and Noah bore three sons (Gen 6:10)	ויולדו לו שבעה בנים and there were born to him seven sons (Job 1:2)
ויעל עלת and he offered an offering (Gen 8:20)	והעלה עלות and he used to offer up burnt offerings (Job 1:5)
ויברך אלהים את נח and Elohim blessed Noah (Gen 9:1)	ויהוה ברך . . . איוב and Yahweh blessed Job (Job 42:12)

Table 2: Job and Genesis 22[2]

עוץ Uz (Gen. 22:21)	עוץ Uz (Job 1:1)
ירא אלהים he feared Elohim (Gen. 22:12)	וירא אלהים and he feared Elohim(Job 1:1)
וישכם בבקר and he arose early in the morning (Gen. 22:3)	והשכים בבקר and he arose early in the morning (Job 1:5)
והעלהו לעלה and offer him as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2)	והעלה עלות and he used to offer up burnt offerings (Job 1:5)
אל תשלח ידך do not send forth your hand (Gen. 22:12)	אל תשלח ידך do not send forth your hand (Job 1:12)
וישא את עיניו and he lifted his eyes (Gen. 22:4, 13)	וישאו את עיניהם and they lifted their eyes (Job 2:12)
מרחק from a distance (Gen. 22:4)	מרחוק from a distance (Job 2:12)

[1] This title alludes to Michael Fishbane's important essay "The Book of Job and Inner-Biblical Discourse," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind,* Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

[2] See Hoffer, "Illusion," 86.

Table 3: Allusions and Parallels in Job 3 and Genesis 1 and 2[3]

יהי אור . . . ויבדל אלהים בין האור ובין החשך Let there be light . . . and Elohim separated the light and the darkness (Gen. 1:3, 4)	היום ההוא יהי חשך Let that day be darkness (Job 3:a)
ויבדל . . . ובין המים אשר מעל לרקיע And he separated . . . between the waters which were above the firmament (Gen. 1:7)	אל ידרשהו אלוה ממעל Let Eloah not seek it from above (Job 3:4b)
יהי מארת . . . להבדיל בין . . . הלילה והיו . . ולמועדים ולימים ושנים Let there be lights . . . to separate between . . . the night and they will be . . . for seasons and days and years (Gen. 1:14)	הלילה ההוא . . . אל יחד בימי שנה במספר ירחים אל יבא Let not that night be joined to the days of the year; let it not come in the number of months (Job 3:6)
ויברא אלהים את התנינם הגדלים And Elohim created the great Taninim (Gen. 1:21)	יקבהו אררי יום העתידים ערר לויתן Those ready to rouse Leviathan (Job 3:8)
נעשה אדם Let us make man (Gen. 1:26)	למה לא מרחם אמות Why did I not die at birth (Job 3:11a)
וישבת . . . כי בו שבת And he rested . . . because on it he rested (Gen. 2:2, 3)	כי עתה שכבתי ואשקוט ישנתי אז ינוח לי Because now I lie down and I will be quiet and the rest belongs to me (Job 3:13)

Table 4: Parallels between Job's Afflictions and the Covenant Curses

שורך טבוח לעיניך ולא תאכל ממנו חמרך גזול מלפניך ולא ישוב לך צאנך נתנות לאיביך ואין לך מושיע: בניך ובנתיך נתנים לעם אחר ועיניך ראות וכלות אליהם כל היום ואין לאל ידך Your bull will be slaughtered before your eyes and you will not eat of it. Your donkey will be snatched from before you and will not return to you. Your sheep will be given to your enemies and there will be no deliverer. Your sons and daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes will look all day long and fail [to see] them, and there will be no power in your hand [to do anything about it] (Deut 28:31-32)	ויולדו לו שבעה בנים ושלוש בנות: ויהי מקנהו שבעת אלפי צאן ושלשת אלפי גמלים וחמש מאות צמד בקר וחמש מאות אתונות ועבדה רבה מאד Seven sons and three daughters were born to [Job]. His possessions were: seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred pairs of oxen, and five hundred donkeys, and a great many servants (Job 1:2-3; all of which is summarily stripped from Job in 1:13-10)

[3] Fishbane, "Job and Inner-Biblical Discourse," 154. Some of the passages included here evoke language and images from passages in the Torah even though there are not necessarily lexical connections *per se.*

ארור פרי בטנך ופרי אדמתך שגר אלפיך ועשתרות צאנך Cursed will be the fruit of your belly and the fruit of your land, the increase of your herds and the offspring of your flocks (Deut. 28:18)	
יככה יהוה בשחין רע על הברכים ועל השקים אשר לא תוכל להרפא מכף רגלך ועד קדקדך Yahweh will strike you with terrible boils, on the knees and on the legs, which you cannot be healed from, from the sole of your foot to your crown (Deut. 28:35)	ויך את איוב בשחין רע מכף רגלו עד קדקדו So [the Satan] struck Job with terrible boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown (Job 2:7)

Table 5: Other Parallels Between Job and the Torah

לא יבצר מהם כל אשר יזמו לעשות Nothing which they plan to do will be withheld from them (Gen: 11:6b)	ידעת כי כל תוכל ולא יבצר ממך מזמה I know that you are able [to do] all things and nothing will be withheld from your plan (42:2)
יצחק וימת . . . זקן ושבע ימים Then Isaac died . . . old and full of days (Gen 35:29)	וימת איוב זקן ושבע ימים Then Job died, old and full of days (Job 42:17)
וימת אברהם . . . זקן ושבע Then Abraham died . . .old and full (Gen 25:8)	
ואין מידי מציל and there is none that can rescue from my hand (Deut 32:39)	ואין מידך מציל and there is none that can rescue from your hand (Job 10:7)
וינקהו דבש מסלע ושמן מחלמיש צור He nursed him with honey from the crag, and oil from the flinty rock (Deut 32:13)	ברחץ הליכי בחמה וצור יצוק עמדי פלגי-שמן When my walk was washed in milk/butter, and the rock poured streams of oil for me (Job 29:6)
והכן לי בזה שבעה פרים ושבעה אילים Prepare for me here seven bull-calves and seven rams (Num. 23:1, 30)	קחו לכם שבעה פרים ושבעה אילים Take to yourself seven bull-calves and seven rams (Job 42:8)

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