



A brief exposition on the notions of Human Suffering, Theodicy and Theocracy in the Book of Job

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Abstract

It is suggested that in the face of malevolence, such as that faced by Job, God's omnipotence and also His benevolence can be upheld. This article thus explores the notions of human suffering, theodicy and theocracy and how they are understood in the book of Job from an Old Testament perspective. The exegesis of the Book of Job has vexed people for epochs and it grasps the depths of human despair, the anger of moral outrage, and the anguish of a felt desertion by God on the part of the protagonist. From one man's agony it reaches out to the mystery of God, beyond all words and explanations. The Scriptures including the book of Job has several distinct ways of reconciling human suffering with the justice of God. In the end, it is only God as King and Ruler, Himself who brings justice, victory and joy to the life of the suffering man. And when all is said and done, the mystery remains that God stands as King and Ruler revealed in His hiddenness, an object of terror, adoration and love. Job's story shows us the eternal rebels that human beings are, who become bewildered by apparent injustice in things in life and who claim they can be better ordered. We cannot have a prejudiced view of life and be concerned only with what befalls us and then question God based on our intrinsic limited understanding. God is paradoxical in His ways and this is indeed a part of the mystery of human existence. We win when we gain true knowledge of God and understand our place in the scheme of His creation. All pain and suffering are a mystery of divine wisdom and a truly wise person would comprehend that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding" (Job 28:28). We should not expect to understand all the whys and wherefores behind what an omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent God does or allows. The definitive answer to the problem of human suffering is that we simply need to trust that God has His motives.

Keywords: Theodicy, Theocracy, book of Job, government, rule of God, Old Testament perspective.

Introduction

In human existence one tends to ascribe meaning to events that happen on a day to day basis and as such, it is susceptible to interpretation. The question "Why do people suffer?" has been somewhat contentious for thousands of years. If we seek to analyse meaning we can refer to three diverse categories of meaning including knowing how to do something, factual knowledge and knowledge based on acquaintance. We maintain that what Bertrand Russel



termed as 'knowledge by acquaintance' (Russel, 1976), is what is relevant to our following brief study. Thus the prophet Job's acquaintance with God enabled him to correctly fathom the notion that God is not to be questioned but trusted fully. He learned that it was futile to painfully elaborate on the obvious reason for the turn of events his life took, but made positive and valid deductive arguments concerning what befell him and requested divine assistance and followed a redemptory path realising that without God he could not succeed. The same existential and philosophical issue plagues successive generations: "Why do people suffer if God is a God of love?" The search for truth and how one contemplates reality is vitally important to enjoying a life with meaning. This means that hasty generalisations and subjectivity need to be avoided if one seeks to inculcate a realistic view of life and what it offers.

"There was a man in the land of Austitis whose name was Job. That man was true, blameless, and God-fearing, and he abstained from every evil." (Job 1:1). Most have heard the phrase, "The patience of Job." This refers to all of the trials and tribulations that aggrieved Job and how he remained faithful to God although there were times that even Job was lamenting his portion in life. Theodicy is part of the Judeo-Christian traditions, given that these faiths trust in a God who is absolutely righteous. The Book of Job is a theodicy consisting of 41 chapters, where we find God's goodness contrasted with human suffering. The book referred to in the Epistle to Hebrews 12:5, and in the First Epistle to the Corinthians 3:19. The purpose of the book of Job is not to present us with a historical account as such of a man's life and the question why do people suffer (Lawson, 2005). This article focuses on the notion of theodicy and also how theocracy would be understood and applied in the book of Job from an Old Testament perspective. The book of Job struggles to resolve the question of origin, cause and effect of suffering, whether it is a punishment for sin and sometimes a warning against committing sin in the future. The point of departure for much of the Old Testament Scriptural doctrine is not just threats and bribes; but on God's moral administration of the world that requires rightness of right leading to well-being and transformation (Andersen, 1974:66-67). The main question stated for this study is as follows: how can theodicy and God's theocracy be understood, administered and applied in Job's quest for justice in his suffering in an Old Testament perspective? What is the origin, cause and effect of suffering? Why do innocent people suffer or do they even deserve suffering (Carson, et al., 1994:459-460)? Why doesn't God control, remove or overrule suffering in humanity and the entire world? The study employs a case study methodology of the book of Job as the primary paradigm for understanding theodicy and applying theocracy in context of suffering in the world.

Definition of terms

At the outset of this article it is prudent to define terms used. The notion of "theodicy" is based on the Greek words *theos* and *dikē*, which refer to "God" and "justice." Thus theodicy upholds the righteousness of the Creator even when people often experience malevolence and great suffering in their daily existence. "Righteousness implies God's goodness and justice put together. It also has in it Hebrew connotations of integrity. When someone is called righteous, it means they are a person of great integrity (Mangala, 2012).

The word "theocracy" originates from the Greek word *theocratia* meaning "the rule of God". This, in turn, derives from *theos*, meaning "god", *krateo*, meaning "to rule" (Wikipedia 14/03/2022). Thus the meaning of the word in Greek was "rule by god(s)" or human incarnation(s) of god(s). According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, the word "theocracy," (noun) means the government of a country by religious leaders, a country that is governed by religious leaders (Hornby, 2015:1567). The term was initially coined by Flavius Josephus in the first century CE to describe the characteristic government of the Jews. Josephus argued that while mankind had developed many forms of rule, most could be subsumed under the following three types: monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy. However, according to Josephus, the government of the Jews was unique.



Josephus offered the term "theocracy" to describe this polity, according to Jewish tradition ordained by Moses, in which God is sovereign and his word is law (Wikipedia 14/03/2022). Josephus' definition was widely accepted until the Enlightenment era, when the term took on negative connotations and was hardly salvaged by Hegel's abstruse commentary. The first recorded English use was in 1622 CE, with the meaning "sacerdotal government under divine inspiration" (as in Biblical Israel before the rise of kings); the meaning "priestly or religious body wielding political and civil power" is recorded from 1825 (Wikipedia 14/03/2022).

However, on the government by religious leaders, Erickson (1998:1094) argues that attempts to develop a structure of government that adheres to the authority of Scripture encounter difficulty at two points: first is the lack of didactic material for there is no prescriptive exposition of what the government of the church is to be like comparable to, there are only Scriptural principles or basic qualifications for officers (Exodus 18:13-27, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9), the second problem, in the Scriptures for example, there is no unitary pattern. On one hand there are strongly democratic elements pointing to congregational form, on another there are strongly monarchical elements particularly the apostles appointing and ordaining officers and instructing the churches (Erickson, 1998:1094).

In essence a theological approach as well as an empathetic one relating to Job and his story are taken in which the question as to why humans may suffer on a personal level is provided. We should note that in the Old Testament epoch it was believed that people suffer because in terms of the principle of retributive justice, God invariably chastises sinners and rewards those who are virtuous. (Hooks, 2006).

Surveying the book of job in Old Testament perspective

The book of Job struggles to resolve the question of origin, cause and effect of suffering, whether it is a punishment for sin and sometimes a warning against committing sin in the future. In the book of Job, Bildad, a firm believer in the doctrine of retribution, finds his theology confirmed by the deaths of Job's children, who have been great sinners (8:4). Job himself lives, so the sin for which he is being punished cannot have been severe, and he may take comfort from the fact that his life is spared. Zophar believes suffering is always a result of sin, but believing also that God is merciful, he can only suppose that Job's suffering is less than he really deserves from a just God (11:5-6). However, Elihu wants to value suffering as a channel of divine communication, a warning against future sin (Carson, et al., 1994:459-460). His self-conceit is accentuated (Job 32:11-22) and he assumes the role of a referee which Job has been requesting (Job 13:20-22). In his role he warns Job to flee from iniquity and submit to God

The story in a nutshell

Andersen (1974:15-17) holds that the book of Job tells the story of a perfect, upright man who feared God and eschewed evil but overwhelmed by troubles. His name is Job from the land of Uz. He is stripped of his wealth, his family and his health. He does not know the reason why God has done this to him. Only the reader knows that God is trying to prove to the Devil that Job's faith is genuine. Three friends come to console him in his misery, and the four engaged in a long discussion. The friends try to explain what has happened by connecting Job's suffering with his sins.

Job rejects their theory. Instead of accepting their advice to repent and so make peace with God, Job insists on his own innocence and questions the justice of God's treatment. At this point a new character, Elihu, appears and makes four speeches which he thinks will solve the problem, but this does not seem to make any difference. Eventually, the Lord Himself addresses Job. These speeches change Job's attitude, for he responds with contrite



submission (Andersen, 1974:15-19). In the end God declares Job to be in the right and restores his prosperity and happiness (Job 42).

The plan and the protagonist

According to Andersen (1974:19-23), the plan of the book of Job begins with round one episode on introduction of Job showing the man in his original happiness (1:1-5), interview with Satan (1:6-12), Satan, talking with God, maintains that Job's righteousness is due merely to the success of life. Anyone, Satan suggests, who has been blessed with good possessions will praise God. When you remove those away, Satan says to God, Job will curse you to your face. Then there are the disasters (1:13-19) and Job's reaction (1:20-22). Round two of the episode proceeds with interview with Satan (2:1-7a), the affliction (2:7b-8), and Job's reaction (2:9-13). Round three of the episode deals with dialogue on Job's opening statement (3:1-26), debate in three cycles (chapters 4-27) and Job's closing statement (chapters 29-31). Round four of the episode his friend Elihu makes four speeches (chapters 32-37) and finally God addresses the man Job twice (chapters 38-42:6).

The hero of the Book of Job lived in patriarchal times and is presented to us as a prosperous and devout landholder. His name is believed to mean "one who turns to God" or perhaps even one who is an "object of enmity". Job was a traditional figure living between 600 and 500 BCE, and the 6th century BCE is the most likely period of its writing (Kugler & Hartin, 2009). Job was renowned in Israel due to his forbearance in a number of trials and he was ultimately vindicated by being restored to prosperity. The challenge posed by the book of Job is that it exemplifies an intricate literary form that is not easy to define. It is a narrative written in prose, that incorporates thirty-nine chapters of poetry. Thematically viewed, the book of Job is essentially a literary model for unmerited suffering and the protagonist is a figure and archetype of the suffering man who hypothetically increases in wisdom through his suffering. His characterization is comparable to inter alia Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Milton's Paradise Lost (Carroll, 2018). While Job is an eponymous central character he was most likely an Israelite given the use of the term "Yahweh" for God. He is an example of a perfect servant of God and was faultless and upright and shunned evil while he feared God (Job 1:1).

Job is cited in Ezekiel 14: 14-20 as being one of three outstandingly righteous individuals who were capable of redeeming the nation. It is difficult to ascertain if he was in fact an actual entity or a legendary character based on an experience as recounted in the book. Either way, the book is carefully and systematically constructed and it begins with a prologue and close with an epilogue. It was written in the land of Uz near Edom, long before the state of Israel was created with its social, political and religious organisation. The book was thus written after the era of the great prophets who had convinced Israel that Elohim is indeed just as well as compassionate, and that He rewards servants who are obedient. The disobedient are reprovved. People are to be patient the 'patience of Job' is frequently declared in the New Testament. Ironically it is evident in the book that Job was not patient, but his folktale character is.

While the book is attributed to Moses in the Jewish tradition, it is not believed to be historical and it forms part of what is termed Wisdom Literature along with Ecclesiastes and the Book of Proverbs, and it imparts great 'pearls of wisdom'. Numerous texts from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt present us with corresponding characters to Job and this indicates he was part of a long tradition of reflection on the notion of inexplicable suffering by people (Hartley, 2008). Using both prose and poetry, the book tackles one of the great philosophical challenges found in the Holy Bible which is if Elohim (Yahweh) is ethical, why do virtuous people experience bad things? Thus the book deals with theodicy which attempts to explicate on such questions.



The prophet Ezekiel and also Jeremiah, both stressed the importance of people being responsible for their own demeanours. Ezekiel stressed that an individual would either prosper or suffer in life based on his or her personal merits (Ezekiel 18:20). Thus is one faced misfortune, it was self-inflicted due to one's iniquities. If one was prosperous, it was rewarded and one would enjoy a virtuous physical existence. Sinners needed to repent of their transgressions and ask Elohim for His mercy. The work is spiritually edifying and the writer selected his patriarchal setting carefully. It was setting in which a family was a social and communal unit and in which a family head served as the sage, priest and intercessor and where there were no temples but Elohim communicated with people audibly and in natural signs. Before calamity sets in in his life, Job is a person of integrity, and is greatly respected by his community which encompasses people from all ages and social strata. Job is commended for being erudite and influential when he says, "They listened to me, and waited, and kept silence for my counsel" (Job 29:21). Interestingly, the Eastern Orthodox Church recites from the book of Job and Exodus during Holy Week. Exodus prepares adherents for the understanding of Christ's exodus to his Father, and of his fulfilment of the entire history of salvation; Job is the sufferer and the Old Testament representation of Jesus Christ.

The problem of suffering in the book of Job

In the Old Testament perspective, the covenant of God with Israel set two ways before the people- life through obedience, or death through disloyalty. A simple correlation of these causes and their effects is expressed in the cursing and blessing recited with the covenant (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27-30. Simply put, you reap what you sow (Galatians 6:7, Psalms 34:11-22, 1 Peter 3:10). The wrongness of wrong should lead to suffering, disease and disaster. However, in reality the connection is not often obvious and life is much more complex than this simple theory. Human suffering is more than a system of rewards and punishments (Andersen, 1974:67).

Andersen (1974:64-65) argues that in the book of Job, the problem of evil in the world is not dealt with abstractly, but in terms of one man's suffering. The three friends and Elihu do their best to apply the Old Testament general laws to Job's case, eventually invalidated by God Himself (cf Deuteronomy 28:1-15: obedience and prosperity, Deuteronomy 28: 16-68: disobedience and suffering). The argument is expressed with philosophical clarity. If God is perfectly good, why does he tolerate violence, suffering, disease and death? Therefore, God must be limited in His ability to control such events, therefore God is not Almighty. If God has complete power over everything in the world, His failure to curb or stop evil must be that He sees no wrong in them, therefore God is not good (Carson, 1994:459-460). However, the book of Job holds that all characters, the three friends and Elihu as much as Job himself eventually are fully committed to the belief in one Supreme God who is unquestionably just in all His acts. God is the God of Justice. Job

Stands on his integrity demanding what he considers to be his right and basically becomes a self-repugnant penitent. Therefore, the book of Job accepts no suggestion of limitation in either the power or the goodness of God (Andersen, 1974:64-73).

The structure of the book

The Prologue

A reader is required to read the entire book before attempting to understand it fully. Only in this manner can an accurate interpretive framework for understanding the passages in the book be obtained. The prologue is situated on Earth and presents Job as a virtuous wealthy person with a family. He is stated as residing in Uz. After this we are faced with a scene in Heaven where Elohim asks "the accuser" (Satan – שָׂטָן) for his estimation of Job' as a devout



being. Satan indicts Job of being pious simply because he has been blessed abundantly by the Creator. He also argues that Job would curse God if he had no material possessions (Job 1:21). Devoutness is what Job is intended to display. God says of him, "A person who will still persist in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason" (Job 1:1b, 8b; 2:3). Job's devotion goes together with knowledge and performing admirably and he is vigorously involved in religious duties such as offering burnt offerings at daybreak. God allows the test of the Satan who doubts if "Job will fear God without the rewards of wisdom" (Perdue, & Gilpin, 1992). He also permits Satan to try Job and also warns, "Only do not stretch your hand against him!" (Job 1:12b). God thus allows Satan to take Job's prosperity away and inter-alia kills his ten children and also his servants save for one. In a sequence of horror, Job's oxen and donkeys are stolen, his sheep burn to death and his camels are also then stolen. In addition, all his servants die except for one and his house collapses on his ten children, and despite his severely distressed state, he does not curse God but still finds it within himself to recognize God. Satan makes use of tools that are usually attributed to God's castigatory power including a tempest, lightning and a disease. There is thus a reversal of the order in which people's wisdom had come to trust, but despite this, God's trust in His creature is vindicated even though Job's suffering is evident in his utterance "My flesh is clothed or covered with worms and dirt, my skin hardens then breaks out again" (Job 7:5). The antidote for suffering is his lament and after tearing his robe and shaving his head, he bows to God (Job 1:20). Job remains true in his allegiance to God and acknowledges that God gives and He also takes away.

Sande, (2008) asks the questions "How should we respond to suffering?...and "Why are the pious righteous?" Job cries out "I am a laughingstock to my friends; I who called upon God and he answered me, a just and blameless man, I am a laughingstock" (Job 12:4). Yet in all the calamity and anguish Job still realises he must praise God. He states "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). The prologue affirms that fair-minded piety is a reality and suffering is not an issue of theodicy at all because it takes its rise not in the will of God, but in the machinations of Satan (Kraeling, 1938). Yet the epilogue suggests that if only the sufferer endures all turns out for the best at the end. Suffering comes to warn the sufferer and call him or her to redemption (Ball, 1922). Nicolaides (2010) asserts that we are set apart as God's people and need to be obedient, and as the members of the nation of God are to proclaim God's truth to the world and not whine. We are a *Laos* as a 'royal priesthood' and should teach and guide the entire human race to call upon His holy name, even when we suffer.

It is evident that God allows Satan's challenge concerning Job and we read "Strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face" (Job 1:11). And so it is that disasters begin to distress Job. God thus permits Satan to trouble Job's body with boils and sits in ashes, and his wife prods him to "curse God, and die", but Job wisely retorts "Shall we receive good from God and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:9–10). Job expresses his discontent and unjustified suffering to God and for readers there is an ethical problem to be surmounted relating to why the just suffer. Yet, it is evident that limitations faced by people have an optimistic side in that they allow harmony to thrive and help people in the ultimate 'bigger-picture'.

Satan raises the idea that God may be rewarding the righteous with prosperity and thus asks if some people are righteous merely for the sake of their accumulation of wealth. Consequently, he suggests that Job's prosperity should be removed (Walton, 2008). Job's suffering is not the result of a gamble between God and Satan, but rather by Job's supposition that his righteousness would allow him to avert God's wrath. For the Israelite, to know God, was to know what He anticipated of His people in terms of demeanor as expressed in the Sinai Tôrah. At the very beginning of the Decalogue, stands God who has authority that should not be questioned: I am the Lord thy God (Nicolaides & Van der Bank, 2011). Paradoxically Job's



suffering permits him to encounter God and receive at least some greater comprehension of the universe. He wisely articulates “My lips will not speak falsehood. I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go” (Job 27:4-6). Job does not seek to curse God but rather laments his birth and he yearns for his death, but he remains alive (Job 3:21). He teaches us that we always need to offer blessings to God. Job teaches us that his faith is steady despite what has befallen him. When his wife urges him to curse God and die, but he does not comply. If Job is indeed guiltless, if he requests God to bless him, his prosperity will return (Job 8:1-22).

Job’s friends

A philosophical debate ensues that tests the long-standing wisdom of the period that if one was prosperous, this had to be due to one’s piety, and where there was suffering by contrast, this was invariably due to sin and was the punishment for it. Job’s three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, try to answer Job’s complaint that God is being biased. They realize he is in anguish and accept he must be guilty, because God is always fair. Job asks them to have pity on him and not slander him. They insist that Job is obtaining his ‘just desserts’ for a sinful life. Job however knowing he is in fact blameless, concludes that it is God who is in fact unjust (Seow, 2013). Job maintains his devoutness challenging Satan’s misgiving that his virtue is because he anticipates some or other reward (Kugler & Hartin, 2009). Elihu, another friend of Job’s, rebukes him as well as Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. He maintains that Job is not as righteous as he believes himself to be, while the three friends are putting forward poor arguments around the omni-benevolence of God. Job is erroneous in his accusation that God is unjust since God is superior to all human beings. Job says of his friends that they “are treacherous like a torrent-bed, like freshets that pass away, that run dark with ice, turbid with melting snow. In time of heat they disappear; when it is hot, they vanish from their place” (Job 6:15-17). His friends desert him to curry favour with God. They fail to see truth and respect their hypothetical God as they respect His personhood rather than the inner voice of truth.

In terms of any suffering, the friends should realise that it may be a blessing in disguise and “rescue the afflicted from their affliction” and make them further acquiescent to God’s revelation so that they may “open their ears” (Job 36:15). Job’s three friends contend that if we are to end suffering, there needs to be a repentance of sin Job also in part demonstrates that though misfortune, loss and ensuing suffering are instigated by natural and human agents, and suffering must not be interpreted as being a consequence of sin (Gutierrez, 1988). Job even prayerfully laments “I cry to you and you do not answer me; I stand, and you merely look at me” (Job 30:20). Vanhoozer et al. (2005), maintain that in the line “for in all this misfortune Job uttered no sinful word” (Job 2:10), “Historically, Job in his human weakness spoke wrongly toward God, but was still more righteous than his friends.” Yet he argues that if God is just He would not treat him so austere, and while patience in suffering is impossible, the Creator should not take his creatures so flippantly, and come against them with such might (Kugler & Hartin, 2009). Job even proposes that the wicked of the earth take advantage of the destitute and the helpless, who endure hardship, and yet God does nothing to chastise them (Job 24:1–12). Job frees himself from tolerating his friends who have personal interest motives for their utterances and actions. They are in essence innately depraved (Job 4:18-19; 15: 14-15; 25: 4-60 and exhibit spiritual lethargy and inertia (Job 5: 2; 15: 26-27; 22: 10-11).

Nonetheless, Job has an inspiring faith in God’s eventual justice and he believes there is more beyond death so that even when he dies, he believes that God will vindicate his innocence and he will ultimately see God. Job still remonstrates that he is innocent, and he lists the values he has always lived by. Job’s anger manifests and he is angry with what he considers to be a deficiency of moral order and he finds no solace or understanding from his friends (Newsom, 2009). They are of course keen to interpret what they see as theodicy and they monopolize the didactic element of the poem and their chief argument is that God does not afflict those who are righteous. They argue that Job is a sinner who is adding fuel to the fire as



it where (Job 34:37). To Job, God's affliction of him as a righteous being is grievous but gradually internalises that God is justified and this places him at a position above Satan and his personality ultimately teaches him the truth.

Job amazingly still warns us not to be sluggish in our approach "but now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed" (Job 4:5). He then requests God to respond to his situation (Sawyer, 2013) but also realises that he will never match God's wisdom and he ultimately repents. God communicates with Job from the whirlwind (Job 38:2-41:34) and this shows us the "...necessity of power as a means for countering suffering. He arrives on the scene with full force and authority to instil confidence and the desired change. What God says is of utmost importance, for from His speech one is bound to understand what God is up to. A close scrutiny of the first speech (Job 38:1-40:2) leads the reader to know the requirement for having fellowship and dialogue with God is, "a heart of wisdom and an understanding mind" (Job 38:36)" (Sande, 2008).

Job asks God, "What are human beings, that you make so much of them, that you set your mind on them, visit them every morning, test them every moment? Will you not look away from me for a while, let me alone until I swallow my spittle?" (Job 7:17-19). Repentance is needed to appease God, and not an argument promoting one's believed righteousness. God informs Eliphaz and the two other friends that they "have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has done". Consequently, they are instructed to make a burnt offering and that Job as their intermediary, "for only to him will I show favour". The result is that Job is reinstated to well-being, riches and family, and he then lives to see his children up to the fourth generation (Kugler & Hartin, 2009).

God speaks to Job

Job 19:25 indicates that Job believes only God can rectify a calamitous situation and pleads for divine intervention. God speaks to Job from a whirlwind and further divulges His immense supremacy and mysterious transcendence. He neither elucidates on Job's suffering, nor defends His justice. God also does not respond to Job's statement of his innocence and wish for an almost legal debate that Job desires. God asks him: "Where were you when I laid the earth's Foundations? Speak if you have understanding. Do you know who fixed its dimensions? Or who measured it with a line?" (Job 38:4-5). God does not continuously answer questions, and he may sometimes answer them only circuitously (Fox, 2018). Peake (1947) explains that God proposes that a self-centred sufferer should take a good look at the cosmos, where he or she will come to a more objective evaluation of the place of mankind in it. Job asserts that: "surely God is great, and we do not know him; the number of his years is unsearchable" (Job 36:26) and God challenges Job to attempt to, "Look upon the proud and humble them! Crush the wicked where they stand! Hide them in the dust together!" (Job 40:11-13). God will then praise him for his victory (Sande, 2008).

Rhetorical questions are the manner in which God counsels Job with words of knowledge and He poses a series of rhetorical questions to Job signifying that there is a well-structured and methodical cosmos (Dell, 2010). Job is then and there tested as to the extent of his lowly status, place, and limited power with respect to God and His Cosmos. It is plain that all of the order resides in only God and it is way beyond any human understanding. Job humbly asserts: "Indeed, I spoke without understanding of things beyond me, which I do not know" (Job 42:3). God uses natural imagery to advise that Job is insignificant on a Cosmic scale and his suffering is irrelevant for God.

While God does not give Job any relief or resolution for his suffering, he nevertheless grows in wisdom and understanding as to his condition. Job 42:1-6, shows us Job responding and admitting to his deficiency in wisdom and knowledge and he says: "...of things beyond me which I did not know" and he asserts, "I retract and repent in dust and ashes" (Habel, 1985).



Job has seen God, and has also been introspective and is now ready to loathe himself and repent (Job 42:6). We need to understand that at that time, the idea of righteousness was entrenched in the God of covenant-making. It was YHWH who ordered creation for collective happiness, and the righteous were all the people who served the community and more so the needy (Brueggemann, 2002).

Evaluation and analysis of theocracy and the book of Job in Old Testament perspective

In light of the discussion above, this study holds that some principles of theocracy are characterised in the book of Job in Old Testament perspective. The book of Job just like the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures takes the world seriously. In the Old Testament perspective, the whole world is God's making, God's property and it is good (Genesis 1-2, Psalm 24). The conception of the theocracy of Christ must begin with the Lord Himself and His Kingdom's authority. He is the Head of the church; He rules through gifted church officers (Clowney, 1995:202). His Sovereign authority encompasses the office, gift or *charismata* as service, the church and the state. Everything belongs to God Almighty, Creator and Sustainer of humanity and the whole universe. God, the Ruler is in control and governs in Christ over the entire cosmos (Smit, 2013: 135f).

The Kingdom of God includes all forms of authority and governance: the differences in the government of different institutions are all under the authority of Christ given to Him in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). He controls suffering and justice in "an extraordinary way" through the Word and Spirit according to Scripture (Du Plooy, 1982:107). It is only God Himself who brings Job; joy in the end (Andersen, 1974:15). And when all is done, the mystery remains in hands of the theocracy of the King and Ruler God. Job is a prodigious book in the vast range of its ideas, in its broad coverage of human experience, in the intensity of its passions, in the immensity of its concept of God, and its superb literary craftsmanship. The book of Job reaches widely over complexities of existence, seeking a place for animals as well as men in God's world (Andersen, 1974:16). It plumbs the depths of human despair, the anger of moral outrage, and the anguish of desertion by God. From one man's agony it reaches out to the mystery of God, beyond all words and explanations. Therefore, God is King and Ruler who stands revealed in His hiddenness, an object of terror, adoration and love. Job stands before him "like a man" (38:3, 40:7), trusting and satisfied (Andersen, 1974:16).

The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 were all sufferers, many of them died without deliverance. Suffering seems unpleasant at the time, but afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:11). Suffering and justice are in God's mystery. Therefore, the case of Job precipitates the test of faith in its severest form, the supremely righteous man who sustains the most extreme calamities (Carson, *et al* 1994:460). There can be no doubt that it is God, only God who is responsible for all that happens to Job and the world. Jesus Christ suffered and endured death on the cross (Philippians 2:5-10, Colossians 1:24). All meanings of suffering converge on Christ. He entered the domain of suffering to the point of death as a penalty for sin. Therefore, Scriptures including the book of Job has distinct ways of reconciling human suffering with the justice of God. The book of Job is not against the friends, but it wants to say that suffering happens to good people who do not deserve it as well as to people who deserve all that happens to them (Carson, *et al.*, 1994:460). The Lord Himself, as King and Ruler in His theocracy has embraced and absorbed underserved consequences of all evil and suffering to give a final solution to the questions of Job and all humanity. Therefore, innocent suffering is a channel of divine communication and Job the sufferer is a companion of God (Andersen, 1974:72-73). The trail from untested belief about God to a truthful commitment and total trust in God passes through what are often very painful experiences in life (Clines, 1994).



Conclusion

The book of Job takes the issue of malevolence and suffering beyond what is deemed to be logical or even didactic, it takes us to God of who reveals Himself to us in diverse ways. In the epilogue it is clear that human beings are incapable of comprehending the created universe and thus how can they presume to totally understand how God operates? Mangala (2012) tells us Job is "...a therapeutic view of suffering: God chastens those whom he loves. This view is a bit more attractive, because it offers hope. It seems to sustain the relationship between God and man. He is doing this to you because he cares about you. But it still doesn't get away from the fact that suffering is sent by God. This is the point about it, that it's deliberately sent by God." When God speaks to Job he does not elucidate on the reason for Job's suffering neither does He defend his justice. Job clearly admits he is being wrong to contest what God allows God re-establishes and increases his prosperity, representative of God's rule on retributive justice (Barton, 2008).

The Book of Job deals with a heart-rending progression from a lofty state to a besmirched one. The theodical elements in the calamity of Job deal with nature of suffering and torment. Job acknowledges God's omnipotence and says "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (Job 42: 2), and this is a step in the right direction. The importance of the Job figure lies in how he as victim learns from suffering, and advances in wisdom as a result thereof. No person should dare to presume they are righteous and test the supremacy of God. All people are sinners and only through repentance can we have any hope for salvation. Despite Job being grounded in his faith and being relatively righteous, he still suffered. We thus need to pray incessantly to God and lament during difficult periods in life so as to experience Him fully. "God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells" (Job 28: 23). Job acquiesces to God as he grows spiritually (42:4-6) and he understands that all happenings are within the ambit of God's omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience (Hartley, 1988). God requires supplications by human beings in order to avoid looming suffering. He says "my servant Job shall pray (for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly" (Job 42:8b).

Searching for God is a sure sign that one is seeking a greater understanding the His part in preserving humanity. When we are sad we also need to lament. In Job's case, God: "... responds with a challenge that throws the onus of listening back on Job" (Habel, 1985). God enunciates on the core of wisdom "And he said to man, the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). Job teaches us that life is all about our Creator and His divine plan for the world and he challenges us to admit that God has knowledge that surpasses all human understanding. The book of Job induces wonder and amazement and it guides us to try to learn more. We thus need to accept God is a mystery and trust in Him.

We should: "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with perseverance" and "Finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6 : 18; 6 : 10-11). By prayer we call on His Divine power and by His Grace we are deified and brought back to the road of perfection and salvation (Nicolaidis, 2008). People essentially need to humble themselves before His awesome might. Exegeting the textual meaning of the book makes it clear that every disorder tests human will, displaying whether it is disposed toward good or evil. Job calls on us to abandon our pride and to bow meekly before God, which is of course what most people want to avoid at all costs in today's world. The messages contained in the story of Job are there for all to see, and once people read the full book with an amenable mind, the messages become clear. St. Paul affords a response to Job's grievances: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). Irrespective of matter how much one may agonize on earth, it is nothing compared with the vision of God which is anticipated



for us in heaven. Job failed to grasp that a just being does not accomplish fulfilment through the possession of material belongings and in any event never achieves it in physical existence in any form or shape. By uniting oneself to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we can turn all adverse happenings into a source of illumination towards eternal spiritual being.

The article has also focused on how theocracy is understood and applied in the book of Job in the Old Testament perspective. The study used the case study of the book of Job as the primary paradigm for understanding and application of theocracy in the contemporary situation. The following are some of the research findings: Theocracy must begin with the Lord Himself and His Kingdom's authority. He is the Head, Ruler of the church and the world (Clowney, 1995:202). His Sovereign authority encompasses the office, gift or *charismata* as service, the church and the state. Everything belongs to God Almighty, Creator and Sustainer of humanity and the whole Universe (Clowney, 1995:202). God, the Ruler is in control and governs in Christ over the entire cosmos. Men always seek an explanation in origin, cause and effect of suffering. Job teaches us that people are unable to fathom wisdom and only YHWH the omniscient knows all. We as limited beings must have faith and trust in Him. The book of Job exemplifies a searching quintessence of the status to which the wisdom philosophy of the epoch had arrived. Thus wisdom is identified with piety and also righteousness. The purpose of suffering is seen, not in its cause, but in its results. Nicolaides (2019) informs that the suffering of Jesus had a greater purpose and the essence of God is that which is outside all human understanding and He cannot be demarcated or approached by human understanding.

We have to be patient as God Himself to see the end result, or to go on living in faith without seeing it. In due season, we shall reap, if we do not faint (Galatians 6:7-9). The book of Job tells the story of a perfect, upright man who feared God and eschewed evil but who was overwhelmed by troubles. In the end God declares Job to be righteous and restores his prosperity and happiness (Job 42). The book of Job emphasizes that Job had steadfast integrity and was sound and true in his heart and also the fact that God is the God of Justice. God has the final word. Through healing and redemption, Job is restored to well-being and reconciliation with God. When we suffer we must not see this as a sign of our fallen state or punishment by an indignant God. Suffering is a privilege and offers us an opportunity to participate in the unadulterated and deep aspects of human existence.

In the end, we see God is totally faithful to Job and restores his affluence, giving him twice as much as he had had before. At some juncture most people's lives bear a resemblance to that of Job. The didactic aspect is that one needs to stay faithful at all times to the Lord, and He will reward you. He will reward us abundantly in His time, and of course in His way which is not necessarily what we anticipate. Our life objective should be to live with the faithfulness of Job. In no situation should we curse the name of the Lord, but rather have utter confidence in His plans, as well as His recompense to those who are faithful to Him. Even in our greatest sorrows and enticements, God is with us and will always be there for us, "even to the end of age." (Matthew 28:20). May God grant us the endurance and longsuffering of the righteous Job!

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