The Book of Job and the Mission of God

An application of a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a work in biblical interpretation and Christian theology, which seeks to develop and apply a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job; that is, to offer a reading of Job in the light of what I see as the missional nature of the Bible.

Part one concerns the development of a missional approach to Job. I begin in chapter one by framing Christian mission using the concepts of *missio Dei* and holistic mission. Drawing on the emerging conversation on missional hermeneutics, I then set out an understanding of the missional nature of the Bible; that is, the Bible as a product, record and means of God's mission.

In chapter two I evaluate the use of Job in previous scholarship that has brought together the Bible and mission, identifying a number of themes and concluding that there remains significant room for a more intentional, substantial, sustained and nuanced treatment of Job in relation to mission.

In chapter three I develop a framework for such a treatment with specific reference to missional hermeneutics, concluding with several adapted lines of enquiry that I follow through in the rest of the thesis.

Part two concerns the application of this missional hermeneutic to the book of Job. In chapter four I pay particular attention to the universalising impulse evident in Job, seen especially in the non-Israelite theme in the book and in relation to the *missio Dei*. Of particular significance is my contention that in the book of Job, the very mission of God is at stake. I then compare the book with several similar Ancient Near Eastern texts to demonstrate Job's distinctly Israelite beliefs, which contribute to the Bible's articulation of Yahweh faith in contrast to competing renderings of reality.

In chapter five I develop the reading by addressing the treatment of the poor in Job. By framing this missionally, I tie Job's ethical teaching on poverty to the shaping of the Christian church's participation in the *missio Dei*.

The thesis demonstrates that a missional reading of Job is not only possible, but highly profitable, and contributes to the developing missional hermeneutics conversation in constructive ways.

To conclude the thesis, in chapter six I revisit the concept of the missional nature of the Bible, this time by focusing on the book of Job as a product of mission, in relation to the story of God's mission, and as a means of God's mission. I then set out my contribution to scholarship and conclude with some suggestions for further research.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed …….. Date ……..

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Throughout my life my parents have provided a constant example and source of support, for which I will always be grateful.

To Hannah, my wife, words cannot express how grateful I am for your love, patience and support over these years: may we enjoy many more. And to Zoe and Luke, I love you and want to thank you for enriching our lives as only two- and six-year olds can!

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Joel Samuel Davy, our stillborn son, who came into the world on 31 July 2010. Though he never knew life outside of the womb, he above all people has shaped this work.

Soli Deo gloria

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. (ed. by D.N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3rd edn (ed. by J.B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969)
BDB	*The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. (F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs; Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007) [reprinted from the 1906 edition]
BHS	*Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. 5th edn (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997)
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
COS1	*The Context of Scripture, Vol 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*. (ed. by W.W. Hallo and K.L. Younger; Leiden: Brill, 1997)
COS3	*The Context of Scripture, Vol 3: Archival Documents from the Biblical World*. (ed. by W.W. Hallo and K.L. Younger; Leiden: Brill, 2002)
DMT	*Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*. (ed. by J. Corrie; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007)
DOTWPW	*Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (ed. by T. Longman III and P. Enns; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008)
ERT	*Evangelical Review of Theology*
ESV	*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2001)
GDT	*Global Dictionary of Theology* (ed. by W.A. Dyrness and V.-M. Kärkkäinen; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008)
GOCN	*Gospel and Our Culture Network*
IBMR	*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*
IJFM	*International Journal of Frontier Missions*

IRM	*International Review of Mission*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
MS	*Mission Studies*
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 vols. (ed. by W. VanGemeren; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996)
NIV	*The Holy Bible: New International Version: Popular Cross Reference Edition* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992)
NRSV	*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Angclisized Edition with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
TB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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Part One: Approaching a missional hermeneutic for the book of Job

1 Chapter One: An Introduction to the Thesis

'I shall look at the world through tears.

Perhaps I shall see things that dry-eyed I could not see.' (Wolterstorff)[1]

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis I develop and apply a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job; that is, I offer a reading of Job in the light of the missional nature of the Bible. Such a study can be located at the intersection of three scholarly trends that have been evident in recent decades. First, the Christian church's understanding of 'mission' developed considerably through the course of the twentieth century with the concepts of *missio Dei* and holistic mission being of particular relevance for my thesis. Also during the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is the well-documented rise, or resurgence, in scholarly interest in the Wisdom Literature.[2] Finally, and most recently, the last two decades have witnessed the emergence of 'missional hermeneutics', an approach to biblical interpretation that seeks to read texts in the light of the missional nature of the Bible.

I will outline the first and third trends in more detail below. Regarding the resurgence of interest in wisdom, it is sufficient to say that my thesis contributes to this welcome and sustained re-engagement with biblical wisdom with a particular study on the book of Job and mission. As I will demonstrate, particularly in my review in chapter two of the use of Job in Bible and mission scholarship, biblical theologies of mission and related works have tended to neglect the book of Job, and the Wisdom Literature more broadly. In this regard writing on the Bible and mission seems to be lagging behind more general biblical scholarship and so I hope that my thesis will contribute to a reimagining of how an understanding of the Wisdom Literature may be informed by, and contribute to the church's missional thinking and practice.

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[1] N. Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 26.

[2] Unlike the first and third trends it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the reasons for and nature of the rise in scholarly interest in the Bible's Wisdom Literature. For more on this see, for example, J.L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 3rd edn (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), pp. xi, xiii, 1-4; L.G. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), ch. 1; R.E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 3rd edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. ix; K. Dell, *'Get Wisdom, Get Insight': An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Literature* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), pp. 3-4; R.C. Clements, *Wisdom in Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1992), p. 14; W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), pp. 36-38.

I should explain at this stage what I mean by the term 'mission'. Later in this chapter I will outline my understanding of mission as it relates to the concepts of *missio Dei* and holistic mission. Through this it will become clear that I consider 'mission' to be, primarily, an act of God to restore creation to himself. Moreover, it is an activity in which the people of God (whether in the days of the Old or New Testaments or in our own day) are invited, indeed required, to participate. This participation is, I believe, a holistic endeavour which addresses every aspect of human life in transformational ways. Therefore, while it certainly includes, for example, the traditional notion of 'saving souls', mission is not restricted to this.[3]

Throughout the thesis I use the term 'missional' simply as an adjective meaning that something pertains to the mission of God.[4] Apart from the fact that this term reflects current scholarly usage, an advantage of 'missional', as opposed to the more traditional adjective 'missionary', is that it allows me to speak, for example, of the missional relevance of aspects of Israel's life or theology without necessarily implying that they had the same mandate to 'evangelise' that is evident in the New Testament (NT) church.[5] It therefore contributes towards a more nuanced understanding of how mission features in the OT, avoiding reductionist approaches that either dismiss prematurely the existence of mission in the OT or define it in anachronistic ways.[6]

In this introductory chapter I lay the groundwork for the thesis in several ways. First, I give a rationale for choosing the book of Job. After all, what has Job got to do with mission?[7] In this section I aim to show why Job is not only legitimate as a subject of missional reflection, but compelling, urgent and necessary. I then address some important issues of context for subsequent discussions. In particular I clarify the notions of *missio Dei* and holistic mission, both of which contribute in significant ways to my understanding of mission, and therefore

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[3] I will, of course, say more on this subject throughout the thesis, but in framing it in such terms I am locating my approach clearly within the sphere of Christian theology. I should also state at the outset that I am not trying to invalidate alternative approaches to Job that do not share these prior commitments. Furthermore, I should acknowledge related discussions in the last century that have sought to understand Old Testament (OT) theology in the light of the Christian gospel; see, for example, Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, pp. 15-49.

[4] Cf. C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), p. 24: '*Missional* is simply an adjective denoting something that is related to or characterized by mission, or has the qualities, attributes or dynamics of mission.' His italics. There are more particular uses of the term, especially in some contemporary expressions of church life, but this is not how I intend its use. Cf. M.B. Kelly, 'Biblical Theology and Missional Hermeneutics: A Match Made *for* Heaven… on Earth?', in *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: Essays in Memory of J. Alan Groves*, ed. by P. Enns, D.J. Green and M.B. Kelly (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2010), pp. 61-76 (p. 68).

[5] This important distinction is helpfully articulated by Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 25.

[6] For an example of such a nuanced approach, see, for example, Okoye, who discusses 'four faces' of OT mission: universality, community-in-mission, centripetal mission, and centrifugal mission; J.C. Okoye, *Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), pp. 10-12.

[7] Anecdotally, this has often been the reaction of those who have asked about the topic of my thesis, although the tone of the response has varied from scepticism to intrigue to fascination.

how texts might be read missionally. Finally, I provide an initial orientation to missional hermeneutics, which will provide essential background to the fuller treatment in chapter three. I do this by charting the emergence of the method over the past two decades, noting particularly important publications that have shaped the discussion. In this section I also explain more fully what I mean by the missional nature of the Bible, by outlining some of the different ways in which the Bible may be considered to have missional dimensions. Throughout these background sections I continue to refer to Job as a way of drawing out initial connections, which will anticipate fuller discussions later in the thesis.

1.2 Why Job?

I am convinced that the book of Job is a rich and compelling source of material for biblical reflection on the mission of God, making an important and distinct contribution to missionally relevant questions. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that by including the book of Job more intentionally and more substantially in our biblical reflection on mission, our appreciation of and engagement with the mission of God can become more enriched as a result. I will also show how a greater sensitivity to missional questions will lead to an enriched understanding of the biblical text..

However, it seems that not all scholars connecting the Bible and mission share this optimism concerning Job. In chapter two I examine the limited ways in which the book of Job has been referred to by writers working on the relationship between the Bible and mission. On the one hand perhaps this relative lack of engagement is not all that surprising. The particularities and ambiguities of the figure of Job and the book more broadly do present questions which make associating Job with mission a potentially more complex task than some other parts of the Bible. For example, placing Job on the chronological storyline of the Bible, an important step for many writers who see the biblical story as recounting God's redemptive actions in history, is not straightforward. The book does not 'progress' the storyline of Israel and makes no explicit mention of covenant, law, monarchy or exodus. It appears to be set (although not written) in patriarchal times yet, more important than this, there is a prominent non-Israelite motif with the action being set in the mysterious land of Uz, and the characters being portrayed as non-Israelites. Put simply, how can events occurring outside Israel to non-Israelites connect to Israel's participation in God's mission? Perhaps, too, Job's anger and claims of righteousness, as well as the somewhat ambiguous portrayal of Yahweh in the Prologue and his speeches, dampen missional interest.

On the other hand, some of these ambiguities are, I would argue, precisely why the book of Job should be considered as such a compelling subject for missional reflection. Job

addresses some of the most profound dilemmas faced by humanity, concerning the universal and vexing question of unattributed suffering, and the nature of true piety. As I will argue, the book presents Job as a universalised figure who embodies and expresses the reality of unattributed suffering. He faces the vexing ambiguities of human experience and processes them before God and, in doing so, 'speaks to and for all humanity'.[8] In him we also see played out an examination of a question that is absolutely critical to the mission of God. When the accuser asks whether Job fears God for no reason חִנָּם in Job 1:9b, he is in effect putting into doubt the validity and meaning of God's mission. If the divine-human relationship is merely one of purchased loyalty is it really a genuine relationship? To what, therefore, is God restoring creation? Is the divine-human relationship 'a sham'?[9] Is the mission of God, therefore, a sham? Nowhere else in the Bible is such an acute question asked of God's purposes in the world. In the book of Job, I will argue, the very mission of God is at stake.

As with the Wisdom Literature more generally, a more 'international' perspective is evident in Job, not least through the non-Israelite motif and other universalising themes. In addition, the book of Job exhibits resonances with other explorations of suffering in the Ancient Near East (ANE), while still making a distinct, Israelite contribution to the international conversation. I will go on to show how the existence of intercultural encounters in biblical texts can be suggestive of a missional encounter between competing renderings of reality, and that such encounters are apparent and important in the book of Job.[10]

Finally, in the light of a conceptualisation of mission that encompasses issues of social justice, important missional connections can be made with Job, which includes the treatment of the poor as a significant theme.

In summary, I would articulate four principal reasons why Job is an appropriate and, indeed, compelling subject of study for a missional reading of Scripture. First, as I will demonstrate in chapter two, Bible and mission scholarship has not on the whole paid sufficient attention to Job. Many important works on the biblical theology of mission, for example, either do not engage with Job, or do so in relatively peripheral or underdeveloped ways. While there have been a small number of specific examinations of Job and mission, these are carried out with varying degrees of success, and on the whole I suggest that the time is ripe for a more

[8] M.H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Garden City: New York, 1965), p. xxxviii: 'The author of the Book of Job cannot be precisely placed temporally or geographically, but this is of no great consequence for he speaks to and for all humanity about a problem that has perplexed thinking and feeling men in all times and places.'

[9] W.P. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 52.

[10] Again, my decision to use missional language in this regard evidences my Christian reading of the text.

intentional, substantial, sustained and nuanced treatment of the book of Job in the light of the mission of God.

However, this thesis is more than an exercise in filling a perceived gap in the literature. Secondly, it seems evident that there are a number of important themes addressed in Job which connect very clearly with missional concerns, especially when mission is framed holistically and in terms of the *missio Dei*. Themes such as the universal experience of unattributed suffering, questions of social justice, and the articulation of truth about God in the midst of alternative articulations are each missional in their own way. In Pope's phrasing, the book of Job 'speaks to and for' the world, which seems to me to be a profoundly missional statement.[11] But how does the book do this and what does it say? These questions should be of the utmost interest to those thinking through and participating in the mission of God. The book of Job, therefore, has much missional potential.

Thirdly, the book of Job makes for a compelling subject of missional study because of its complexity. Many Bible and mission scholars focus their attention on how a particular text functions within the 'salvation-history' narrative of the Bible. The book of Job presents challenges to this way of approaching the Bible missionally. How can a book like Job be said to 'fit into' the grand narrative of the Bible? What are we to make of the non-Israelite motif evident in the book, with the events occurring outside of Israel to non-Israelites, Job included? What are we to make of the ambiguity of certain characters in the book and of the climax of the book in the speeches of Yahweh, for example? That the book of Job provokes endless fascination and says something compelling about human experience is evident from the voluminous literature on the book, as well as its reception in art, literature and film.[12] It is my view that Job can also make a fascinating contribution to the study of the Bible and mission. Not least, as we enter into the grief of the world through Job's experience, perhaps, to appropriate Wolterstorff's language, in looking at the world through Job's tears (and even, perhaps, through our own) we will see things about mission that dry-eyed we could not see.[13]

Finally, the book of Job makes for an important case study in the developing conversation around missional hermeneutics. Although with notable antecedents, the explicit methodology of missional hermeneutics is still relatively new. Advocates for the approach assume, it seems to me, that a missional hermeneutic may be applied to any text of the Bible.

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[11] Although he does not use mission terminology in his own discussion; Pope, *Job*, p. xxxviii.

[12] For examples of such works see, for example, D.J.A. Clines, *Job 38-42* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), pp. 1377-1464; C.L. Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 110-247. See also the many examples throughout S.E. Balentine, *Job* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006).

[13] Wolterstorff, p. 26.

While it may be more obvious how to read some texts than others, my thesis is in part a case study in reading what many would consider to be a less obvious candidate. It is, therefore, something of a test case in this emerging field of study.

It should now be clear what I consider the contribution of my thesis to be, but it is worth stating explicitly nonetheless. In setting out a missional reading of the book of Job I am contributing to scholarship by: (1) addressing the relative weakness of Bible and mission scholarship's engagement with Job by offering a more intentional, substantial, sustained and nuanced treatment of the book in the light of the mission of God; (2) bringing out more clearly the missional aspects of the book of Job, which will contribute to a furthering of knowledge concerning the book; and (3) contributing to the developing conversation around missional hermeneutics by applying it to an untried book, thereby providing, in part, a test case for this emerging method. It is also my hope that the thesis will encourage greater and deeper reflection by the church on the book of Job that will inform our thinking and practice concerning the mission of God.

I now need to explain more about this emerging method of missional hermeneutics. However, before I do this two concepts that are essential to my understanding of mission should be explored further: *missio Dei* and holistic mission.

1.3 *missio Dei* and holistic mission

Until near the midpoint of the last century the church's mission was often understood rather narrowly, being interpreted in terms such as of individual salvation, and cultural or ecclesiastical expansion.[14] Through theologians such as Barth and Hartenstein this understanding of mission began to be challenged, however, when a shift occurred from conceptualizing mission as a human activity to viewing it primarily as an activity of the triune God:

> The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.[15]

A defining moment in this seismic shift in mission thinking occurred in 1952 when the concept (though not the term) of *missio Dei* was clearly articulated at the Willingen

[14] D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 389; cf. M.W. Goheen, 'Continuing Steps Toward a Missional Hermeneutic', *Fideles*, 3 (2008), 49-99 (p. 57).

[15] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 390; cf. L. Pachuau, '*Missio Dei*', in *DMT*, pp. 232-234 (p. 233); S.B. Bevans and R.P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 290.

Conference of the International Missionary Council, with the popularization of the term being established through the publication of Vicedom's 1958 work, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.[16]

With reference to Bible and mission scholarship, and at the request of the World Council of Churches, Blauw produced a survey and assessment of biblical scholarship in the light of this new conceptualizing of the nature and mission and the church, entitled *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission*.[17] This became 'the major work for Bible and mission until the mid-1970s' with perhaps Senior and Stuhlmueller's *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* being the next significant publication on the biblical theology of mission.[18]

The concept of *missio Dei* became broadly accepted across different Christian traditions and became a key way of understanding mission in subsequent decades.[19] Perhaps its appeal lay in part in the breadth of its scope, having 'the divine mystery at its centre, … an open-endedness, leaving room for creative theological exploration of the divine purpose in the world.'[20] This certainly seems to be the case in the way it has been adopted in Bible and mission scholarship, opening up more of the Bible for missiological reflection.[21]

However, its breadth has also led to *missio Dei* being taken in different, even contradictory directions, with one school of thought focusing on God's mission as being expressed through the church, while the other prefers to see God's mission as occurring independently of, and even against the church.[22] Despite these developments it seems unnecessary to give up on the notion, as long as it is clear which view of *missio Dei* is intended. I am in agreement with Bosch who still saw the concept as useful, caveats notwithstanding:

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[16] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 390; Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 63. Cf. G.F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*, translated by G.A. Thiele and D. Hilgendorf (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965) [originally published as *Missio Dei: Einführung in eine Theologie der Mission* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958)].

[17] M.W. Goheen, 'A Critical Examination of David Bosch's Missional Reading of Luke' in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, ed. by C.G. Bartholomew, J.B. Green and A.C. Thiselton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), pp. 229-264 (p. 254). Goheen also notes that these changes coincided with the development of the biblical theology movement. Cf. J. Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962).

[18] Goheen, 'Critical Examination', p. 254. Cf. D. Senior and C. Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

[19] Bosch, and Bevans and Schroeder, for example, note its adoption in Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox circles; see Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 390-391; Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants*, ch. 9.

[20] Pachuau, '*Missio Dei*', p. 233.

[21] See below for more on this.

[22] Pachuau, '*Missio Dei*', p. 234; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 391-392; S.H. Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission: The Questions, Methods, Themes, and Prospects of Missiology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012), pp. 31-33.

> *missio Dei* has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered the author or bearer of mission. Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate… It is inconceivable that we could again revert to a narrow, ecclesiocentric view of mission.[23]

Also referred to as 'integral mission' or 'mission as transformation', holistic mission is an understanding of the mission of the church that seeks to hold together (indeed, to integrate) the need to proclaim the message of the gospel and demonstrate it as well, for example, through acts of compassion and social engagement.[24] The relationship between these two activities has been much debated but recent decades have seen a growing (although not wholesale) acceptance that they belong together as an expression of the church's mandate in the world.[25]

In an influential statement on the subject the Micah Network offered the following definition, which has been cited or adopted by related works:

> Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.[26]

Following the broadening of an understanding of mission achieved through the notion of *missio Dei*, the concept of holistic mission seems an appropriate recognition of a more

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[23] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 392-393.

[24] Although the different terms can emphasise different aspects of the concept it is sufficient for my purposes to view them as interchangeable; cf. A. Tizon, *Transformation After Lausanne: Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2008), p. 93; B. Woolnough, 'Good News for the Poor – Setting the Scene', in *Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People*, ed. by B. Woolnough and W. Ma (Regnum Books International, 2010), pp. 3-14 (pp. 4-6).

[25] It is not my intention to go over the history of the debate here. See, for example, Tizon, *Transformation*, chs. 1-4; C. Sugden, 'Mission as Transformation – Its Journey among Evangelicals since Lausanne I', in Woolnough and Ma, pp. 31-36; R. Padilla, 'Holistic Mission', in *DMT*, pp. 157-162 (pp. 157-158).

[26] Micah Network, 'The *Micah Declaration* on Integral Mission', in *Justice, Mercy and Humility: The Papers of the Micah Network International Consultation on Integral Mission and the Poor (2001)*, ed. by T. Chester (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 17-23 (p. 19). It goes on to say, 'If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together'; p. 19. The statement has been noted, for example, in Woolnough, p. 5; Padilla, p. 158; The Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (n.p.: The Lausanne Movement, 2011), p. 29.

holistic view of God's work in the world and of human experience.[27] Such a view of mission also widens the range of biblical texts that may be perceived as relating to mission, implying that the whole Bible may be relevant to some degree.

Certain biblical themes are highlighted to explain holistic mission, a crucial one being the idea of the kingdom of God.[28] Woolnough, however, focuses on the Hebrew concept of *shalom* שָׁלוֹם, which he suggests,

> is at the heart of [sic.] holistic gospel. Thus not only does it propose a way of restoring our relationship with God, but also to mend individual psyches, to bring justice and peace to the political systems between peoples, and to heal our relationship with God's created environment.[29]

This, it seems to me, is a helpful way of framing what God's mission is working to restore. Relating to well-being, health, prosperity, fulfilment, peace and a wholeness of relationships between individuals, communities and nations, the broad connotations of *shalom* שָׁלוֹם address that which is so often lacking in human experience.[30] In this light mission may be understood as God carrying out his restoring purposes in creation, a process which, from a human perspective, works towards *shalom* in all areas of life.

The book of Job tells the story of a man (as I will go on to show, an 'everyman' figure) who experiences a lack of *shalom*, and does so *in extremis*. To paraphrase the insightful work of Seitz, the book of Job embodies the results of the 'something awry' in the world to which mission is God's address.[31]

One further issue needs to be clarified concerning holistic mission as it is of considerable interest to the current thesis. Without wanting to undermine the interconnectedness of many important themes and issues, writing on integral or holistic mission makes particular and consistent reference to the issue of poverty.[32] Indeed, it was on account of a desire to have an

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[27] Indeed, it could be argued that the nation of *missio Dei* paved the way, partly at least, for holistic mission. See, for example, D. Claydon, 'Holistic Mission', in *GDT*, pp. 402-404 (p. 403).

[28] See, for example, Tizon, *Transformation*, chs. 5-6; 'Kingdom Affirmations and Commitments', in *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, ed. by V. Samuel and C. Sugden (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1999), pp. 10-25.

[29] Woolnough, 'Good News', p. 7. His categories of relationships are taken from B.L. Myers, *Walking With the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999).

[30] P.J. Nel, 'שׁלם', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 4, pp. 130-135, especially pp. 131-133.

[31] C.R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), pp. 147, 157.

[32] See, for example, Lausanne, *Cape Town Commitment*, pp. 21, 27-29, 42-44; Tizon, *Transformation*, pp. 94, 141-145; Padilla, 'Holistic Mission', pp. 159, 161; Claydon, 'Holistic Mission', pp. 402-404; C. Sugden, 'What is Good about Good News to the Poor?', in Samuel and Sugden, *Mission as Transformation*, pp. 236-260. [Originally published in *AD 2000 and Beyond*, ed. by

understanding of mission theory and practice that better represented the challenges of poverty, injustice and other social issues that the move towards holistic mission occurred.[33]

Representative of this body of literature is Sugden who summarises:

> Those proposing the theology and mission of transformation were recovering themes in the bible which had been neglected by the whole evangelical family, themselves included.
>
> These themes were the place of the poor in the proclamation and demonstration of the good news: what did good news to the poor really mean, the definition of the good news as the good news of the kingdom of God, and that the good news had to do with redeeming and reconciling the whole of the world.[34]

I highlight the issue of poverty here in anticipation of work later in the thesis. In chapter five I devote considerable attention to the function of the treatment of the poor in the book of Job. In highlighting poverty as a key concern of holistic mission I demonstrate that my choice of that particular theme has not been arbitrary but derives from the very heartbeat of my conception of mission.[35] It is also worth noting that, as part of the increasing interest in the Wisdom Literature noted above, scholars have paid greater attention to issues of wealth and poverty in these texts.[36]

V. Samuel and C. Sugden (Oxford: Regnum, 1991), pp. 56-81.]; Woolnough, 'Good News', pp. 3-14.

[33] This can be seen in the accounts of the development of holistic mission. Cf. Tizon, *Transformation*, chs. 1-4; Padilla, 'Holistic Mission', pp. 157-158.

[34] Sugden, 'Mission as Transformation', p. 32. Note: a question mark would seem appropriate at the end of the paragraph but is not present in the original. 'Mission as transformation' can be taken as synonymous with integral mission and holistic mission although distinctions are made by those working in the field. See the discussion, for example, in Woolnough, 'Good News', pp. 5-6.

[35] An example of an alternative theme would be creation care. While I do think the book of Job has a contribution to make to this important issue I would maintain that poverty occupies a more prominent place within Job and, within the parameters of this thesis, is a more appropriate issue to address. However, see chapter two where creation care is touched upon briefly in the literature review.

[36] There has been a particular interest in the topic as it occurs in the book of Proverbs. See, for example, T. Sandoval, *The Discourse of Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 2: 'Only recently, however, has intensive and extensive work having to do with matters of wealth and poverty in specifically wisdom texts begun.'; R.N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); J.D. Pleins, 'Poverty in the Social World of the Wise', *JSOT*, 37 (1987), 61-78; H.C. Washington, *Wealth and Poverty in the Instruction of Amenemope and the Hebrew Proverbs* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); R.C. Van Leeuwen, 'Wealth and Poverty: System and Contradiction in Proverbs', *Hebrew Studies*, 33 (1992), 25-36; G.H. Wittenberg, 'The Lexical Context of the Terminology for 'poor' in the Book of Proverbs', *Scriptura*, 2 (1986), 40-85. See also, J. Míguez-Bonino, 'Poverty as Curse, Blessing and Challenge', *Iliff Review*, 34.3 (1977), 3-13; G. Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, translated by M.J. O'Connell (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987); R.E. Ruíz Pesce, 'Dios del Pobre: Amor Gratuito y Sufrimiento del Inocente - Leer el Libro de Job desde San Juan de la Cruz a Gustavo Gutiérrez', *Studium Filosofía y Tealogía*, 5 (2002), 207-220, accessed at <http://www.paideiapoliteia.com.ar/docs/lrp031.htm> [accessed 20 September 2012]; A.C. Ceresko, *Psalmists and Sages: Studies in Old Testament Poetry and*

1.4 Missional hermeneutics

As I will demonstrate in this thesis the term 'missional hermeneutics' covers a variety of approaches but it can be broadly defined as an approach to biblical interpretation that seeks to read texts in the light of the missional nature of the Bible. In chapter three I provide a considerable treatment of the different ways in which the concept of missional hermeneutics has been understood, and how these may relate to a reading of the book of Job. In this initial part of the thesis, however, a brief account of the development of missional hermeneutics will be helpful. To do this I will highlight certain key publications on the subject over the last two decades and then set out what I mean by 'the missional nature of the Bible'.

1.4.1 The development of missional hermeneutics: some key works

Although there was already a substantial body of literature in existence on the relationship between the Bible and mission, it was only in the 1990's that the explicit phrasing of 'missional hermeneutics' began to be used. Although using slightly different terminology, in Hesselgrave's short 1993 article, 'A Missionary Hermeneutic: Understanding Scripture in the Light of World Mission' he declares,

> Without doubt the Bible is the basis for missions. But how about the other way around: Is missions also the basis for the Bible? If this is true then we have a new hermeneutic—"a missionary hermeneutic."[37]

As far as Hesselgrave was aware, mission as an interpretive key to the Bible had not appeared in the standard textbooks on hermeneutics up to that point.[38] The main idea in his four-page, semi-popular level paper was that the missional nature of God's purposes in the world should affect how we read the Bible which is a record or 'tract' of God's mission.[39]

Brownson seems to have been the first to use the phrase 'missional hermeneutic' in a 1994 article which was subsequently expanded into a 1998 book entitled, *Speaking the Truth in*

Religion (Bangalore: St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, 1994), ch. 11: 'The Option for the Poor in the Book of Job', pp. 180-194 [Originally published in *Indian Theological Studies*, 26 (1989), 105-121]; J. Susaimanickam, 'An Indian Problem of Evil: The Caste System: A Dalit Reading of the Book of Job', in *Indian Interpretation of the Bible: Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Dr. Joseph Pathrapankal, CMI*, ed. by A. Thottakara (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000), pp. 181-200; M. Grenzer, 'Die Armenthematik in Ijob 24', in *Das Buch Ijob: Gesamtdeutungen - Einzeltexte - Zentrale Themen*, ed. by T. Seidl and S. Ernst (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 229-278.

[37] D.J. Hesselgrave, 'A Missionary Hermeneutic: Understanding Scripture in the Light of God's Mission', *IJFM*, 10.1 (1993), 17-20 (p. 17).

[38] ibid., p. 17.

[39] ibid., p. 17.

Love: New Testament Resources for a Missional Hermeneutic.[40] For Brownson, a 'missional hermeneutic' refers to the process of interpreting the Christian faith into new cultural contexts,

> The goal [of the book] is to understand how the church can engage its cross-cultural hermeneutical task in clear and effective ways as it interprets Scripture and lives out Christian faith, in the context of its call to mission.[41]

The 'New Testament Resources' of the book's subtitle relate to Brownson's suggestion that the way NT authors interpreted their traditions for new contexts in the light of the gospel provides 'tools and perspectives that help to illuminate the church's present missiological challenge, which is essentially a hermeneutical challenge.'[42]

The next significant work was Beeby's 1999 book, *Canon and Mission*, and 2000 article, 'A Missional Approach to Renewed Interpretation', which both explored the missional nature and implications of the formation and end product of the biblical canon.[43] For Beeby, the whole Bible should be read as centring on the *missio Dei*: 'the canon read as scripture is a missionary document and that Christian mission in its completeness requires the whole canon.'[44]

Also in 1999 noted NT scholar Richard Bauckham gave a lecture for the Currents in World Christianity Project with the title, 'Mission as Hermeneutic for Scriptural Interpretation', which was expanded into a 2003 book, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*.[45] Bauckham's particular interest is in understanding the narrative movement of the whole Bible from the 'particular' to the 'universal', which he considers to be a prominent theme in the biblical story and a key way of conceptualising biblical mission.[46]

At almost 600 pages, Wright's, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* is (to date) by far the most substantial work on the nature and application of a missional

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[40] J.V. Brownson, *Speaking the Truth in Love: New Testament Resources for a Missional Hermeneutic* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998); J.V. Brownson, 'Speaking the Truth in Love', *IRM*, 83:330 (1994), 479-504. That he was the first to use the phrase is noted by G.R. Hunsberger, 'Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping a Conversation', *Missiology*, 39:3 (2011), 309-321 (pp. 316, 320 n. 6).

[41] Brownson, *Speaking*, p. 2.

[42] ibid., pp. 2-3.

[43] H.D. Beeby, *Canon and Mission* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999); H.D. Beeby, 'A Missional Approach to Renewed Interpretation', in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by C. Bartholomew, C. Greene and K. Möller (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), pp. 268-283.

[44] Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 273.

[45] R. Bauckham, 'Mission as Hermeneutic for Scriptural Interpretation', *Currents in World Christianity Position Paper*, 106 (1999); R. Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003).

[46] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, pp. 11-16.

hermeneutic.[47] Wright seeks 'to develop an approach to biblical hermeneutics that sees the mission of God (and the participation in it of God's people) as a framework within which we can read the whole Bible.'[48] The first section focuses on methodology, while subsequent chapters concentrate on themes that are found throughout the 'grand narrative' of the Bible, such as monotheism, election, covenant and ethics.[49] In each case the theme's OT roots are examined before moving on to the ways in which the theme features in the NT.[50]

For Wright, a missional hermeneutic accounts for different important aspects of the nature of the Bible, such as its very existence (it is a 'product' of mission), the metanarrative it portrays as a witness to God's mission, its cultural diversity, canon, and biblical authority.[51] He sums up his approach and presuppositions in the following way:

> In short, a missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that *the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation.*[52]

In 2007 NT scholar Michael Barram published an article in the journal, *Interpretation* with the title 'The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic'.[53] By 'missional hermeneutic' Barram means 'an approach to biblical texts that privileges the

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[47] C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006). Earlier forms of the methodological section of this work had already appeared in previous publications; see, for example, 'Truth with a Mission: Reading Scripture Missiologically', in *Fanning the Flame: Bible, Cross and Mission*, ed. by P. Gardner, C. Wright and C. Green (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 221-239; 'Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology', in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by C. Bartholomew and others (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), pp. 102-143; *Truth with a Mission: Reading the Bible Missiologically* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2005). See also C.J.H. Wright, 'Truth with a Mission: Reading All Scripture Missiologically', *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 15.2 (2011), 4-15, which replicates the material. More recently Wright has drawn on the work of those featured in the current chapter and applied a missional hermeneutic to the book of Jeremiah; see, C.J.H. Wright, '"Prophet to the Nations": Missional Reflections on the Book of Jeremiah', in *God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on his 60th Birthday*, ed. by J.A. Grant, A. Lo and G.J. Wenham (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011), pp. 112-129. Like Beeby, Wright is an OT scholar with a missionary background. Of significance for later in my thesis is Wright's suggestion in this article that the theme of 'The Missional Cost to the Messenger' may also be an appropriate line of discussion; p. 128.

[48] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 17.

[49] ibid., p. 17.

[50] ibid., pp. 17-18.

[51] ibid., pp. 36, 38-39, 48, 51.

[52] ibid., p. 51. His italics.

[53] M. Barram, 'The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic', *Interpretation*, 61 (2007), 42-58. He had previously delivered unpublished papers at Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion gatherings on the theme of missional hermeneutics in 2003, 2005 and 2006. See, for example, M. Barram, '"Located" Questions for a Missional Hermeneutic', Unpublished Paper (2006), <http://www.gocn.org/resources/articles/located-questions-missional-hermeneutic> [accessed 4 June 2009]. His doctoral thesis looked at mission and the Apostle Paul; M. Barram, *Mission and Moral Reflection in Paul* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

missiological "location" of the Christian community in the world as a hermeneutical key.'[54] For Barram, as a community 'caught up' in the mission of God each congregation of the people of God has its own missional 'social location', and it is from this location that they ask questions of the text, which must in this understanding be 'missional' questions.[55] His focus is therefore to discern how texts 'functioned missionally in their original contexts' and how the text might 'inform and equip the *contemporary* Christian community for its mission'.[56]

Also in 2007 Guder, a Princeton-based lecturer in missional and ecumenical theology, delivered a two-part lecture at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary on the subject of missional hermeneutics.[57] His purpose in this was 'to explore the emerging focus upon missional hermeneutics as a theme of growing significance in missional theology'.[58] Guder's starting point is the missional nature of the NT church, its activities and its writings.[59] As such, his emphasis is a concentration on the NT and how the Bible forms the church for its missional task of making disciples who would, in turn, make disciples.[60] The key hermeneutical question when a reader approaches the Bible is, therefore, 'How did this particular text continue the formation of witnessing communities then, and how does it do that today?'[61]

Missiologist Michael Goheen has been one of the most prolific writers on missional hermeneutics.[62] In 2008 he published a substantial article on missional hermeneutics which built on an unpublished paper given at a Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and American

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[54] Barram, 'Social Location', pp. 42-43.
[55] Barram, '"Located" Questions'.
[56] Barram, 'Social Location', p. 49. His italics.
[57] Subsequently published as D. Guder, 'Missional Hermeneutics: The Missional Authority of Scripture – Interpreting Scripture as Missional Formation', *Mission Focus: Annual Review*, 15 (2007), 106-121; D. Guder, 'Missional Hermeneutics: The Missional Vocation of the Congregation – and How Scripture Shapes that Calling', *Mission Focus: Annual Review*, 15 (2007), 125-142. See also D. Guder, 'Biblical Formation and Discipleship', in *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, ed. by L.Y. Barrett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 59-73; D. Guder, 'Missional Pastors in Maintenance Churches', *Catalyst On-line*, 31.3 (2005), http://www.catalystresources.org/missional-pastors-in-maintenance-churches/ [accessed 27 February 2013]; D.L. Guder, ed, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
[58] Guder, 'Missional Authority', p. 106.
[59] ibid., p. 107.
[60] ibid., p. 107.
[61] ibid., p. 108.
[62] Other than the titles noted here and above, see also M.W. Goheen, 'Bible and Mission: Missiology and Biblical Scholarship in Dialogue', in *Christian Mission: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Developments*, ed. by S.E. Porter and C.L. Westfall (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), pp. 208-232.

Academy of Religion (AAR) gathering in 2006.[63] This was then followed by a 2011 book, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*.[64]

Goheen's work is profoundly influenced by scholars such as C. Wright, N.T. Wright and Newbigin. The 'Continuing' article touches on a number of themes such as: mission as a central hermeneutical key; the development of missional hermeneutics; the Bible as a 'record' of mission; the 'Missional Role and Identity' of Israel; elements of continuity and discontinuity between the people of God in the Old and New Testaments; Jesus, the kingdom of God and mission; NT mission after Pentecost; and the Bible as a 'tool' of mission.[65] The book takes on these themes but goes into more depth, especially bringing out the implications for contemporary church thinking and practice.

If such a thing can be meaningfully identified, perhaps the most significant 'moment' in the development of missional hermeneutics was a paper given by Hunsberger at a 2008 meeting of SBL and AAR entitled, *Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping the Conversation*.[66] Since 2002 scholars, including a number of the above, had been meeting during the joint gatherings of SBL and AAR to discuss the Bible and mission, initially in an informal gathering sponsored by Toronto's Tyndale Seminary (2002-2004), then as part of a 'semi-formal "Additional Meeting"' of SBL/AAR sponsored by the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) (2005-2008).[67] In 2009 the meeting became a more formal part of SBL under the heading of the 'GOCN Forum on Missional Hermeneutics'.[68]

In view of the variety of different approaches taken up to that point, the purpose of Hunsberger's paper was to review the preceding meetings' attempts to articulate a missional hermeneutic and offer some categories for these. Barram's prediction that Hunsberger's presentation would become seen 'as something of a watershed moment in the course of our

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[63] Goheen, 'Continuing'; M.W. Goheen, 'Notes Toward a Framework for a Missional Hermeneutic', Unpublished Paper (2006), <http://www.gocn.org/resources/articles/notes-toward-framework-missional-hermeneutic> [accessed 4 June 2009].

[64] M.W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

[65] Goheen, 'Continuing', pp. 49-50, 56, 61, 64, 79, 82, 86, 88, 90.

[66] G.R. Hunsberger, 'Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping the Conversation', *The Gospel and Our Culture Newsletter*, eSeries, 2 (2009), <http://www.gocn.org/resources/newsletters/2009/01/gospel-and-our-culture> [accessed 4 June 2009]. Subsequently published in a slightly amended form in the previously cited article, G.R. Hunsberger, 'Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping a Conversation', *Missiology*, 39.3 (2011), 309-321. Hereafter, to avoid confusion, the unpublished article is referred to as Hunsberger, 'Proposals GOCN' and the more recent one as Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011'.

[67] Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 309.

[68] ibid., p. 309; M.J. Gorman, 'Missional Musings on Paul', Catalyst On-line, 37.2 (2011), n.p., <http://www.catalystresources.org/missional-musings-on-paul/> [accessed 22 February 2013].

ongoing conversations' already seems vindicated for two principal reasons.[69] First, although not without some weaknesses, Hunsberger's paper does give a good account of the conversation up to that point, as I will show in chapter three. Secondly, missional hermeneutics scholarship since then often refers to Hunsberger's paper and occasionally scholars even use it explicitly as a framework for their readings.[70] Indeed, the GOCN forum now uses Hunsberger's taxonomy as the basis for its call for papers:

> The Forum explores the intersections of missiology, ecclesiology, and biblical interpretation, focusing on hermeneutical issues that arise in view of the Church's missional character. In particular, presenters and participants at the Forum explore how faithful interpretation of Scripture needs to pay attention to a number of interlocking realities in the text: (1) the ways in which the biblical text renders the identity of the missio Dei, the God who is engaged in mission to the whole creation; (2) the ways in which the biblical text is shaped for the purpose of forming a people of God who are called to participate in God's mission to the creation; (3) the ways in which the biblical text evokes and challenges a missionally located community's interpretive readings and questions; (4) the ways in which the biblical text relates the received tradition to a particular context in light of the good news of the reign of God in Jesus Christ; and (5) the ways in which the biblical text discloses its fullest meaning only when read together with the culturally and socially "other."[71]

It seems, then, that the method of missional hermeneutics has been entering a new phase in its development. A diversity of approaches is still evident and, in my view, this is no bad thing as it allows for a range of different ways in which to engage with biblical texts.[72] Since the 'watershed' moment of Hunsberger's article and the consolidation of the field that this seems to have influenced, much work has been done to further the conversation, including

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[69] M. Barram, 'A Response at AAR to Hunsberger's "Proposals…" Essay', *The Gospel and Our Culture Newsletter*, eSeries, 2 (2009), n.p., <http://www.gocn.org/resources/newsletters/2009/01/gospel-and-our-culture> [accessed 4 June 2009].

[70] See, for example, D. Flemming, 'Exploring a Missional Reading of Scripture: Philippians as a Case Study', *Evangelical Quarterly*, 83.1 (2011), 3-18; P.F. Penner, *Missionale Hermeneutik: Biblische Texte Kontextuell und Relevant Lesen* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag, 2012); B.D. Russell, 'What is a Missional Hermeneutic?', *Catalyst On-line*, 36.4 (2011), n.p., <http://www.catalystresources.org/what-is-a-missional-hermeneutic/> [accessed 21 March 2013]; Wright, '"Prophet to the Nations"'; C.J.H. Wright, 'Mission and Old Testament Interpretation', in *Hearing the Old Testament: Listening for God's Address*, ed. by C.G. Bartholomew and D.J.H. Beldman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 180-203.

[71] 'The Gospel and Our Culture Forum on Missional Hermeneutics -- "The Corinthian Correspondence and Missional Praxis" Call for Papers – SBL/AAR 2013 (Baltimore, MD)' (2013), <http://www.gocn.org/news/2013/02/2013-gocn-forum-missional-hermeneutics-call-papers> [accessed 3 April 2013]. The first four categories are straight from Hunsberger. The fifth category focusing on the 'other' is still closely related, the roots of which can be discerned from both responses to his 2008 paper; cf. M. Barram, 'Response', n.p. and J.V. Brownson, 'A Response at SBL to Hunsberger's "Proposals…" Essay', *The Gospel and Our Culture Newsletter*, eSeries, 2 (2009), n.p., <http://www.gocn.org/resources/newsletters/2009/01/gospel-and-our-culture> [accessed 4 June 2009].

[72] Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 2010.

the application of the methods to different texts. In addition to a number of article-length treatments, and Goheen's 2011 volume noted above, two monographs were published in 2012 on the theme of missional hermeneutics by Redford and Penner.[73] Redford's *Missiological Hermeneutics: Biblical Interpretation for the Global Church* discerns a hermeneutic operating among biblical figures which is 'infused with both missional assumptions and spiritual vitality as they engage in the act of interpreting Scripture in their time', which he sees as a guide for contemporary mission and interpretation.[74] Redford's distinctive contribution is the importance he gives to the role of spiritual and missionary experience in the interpretive process, which he sees as shaping the hermeneutics both of biblical figures and contemporary readers, and as a corrective to what he considers to be the limitations of traditional historical-critical methods.[75]

Penner's *Missionale Hermeneutik: Biblische Texte Kontextuell und Relevant Lesen* focuses on a number of issues regarding missional hermeneutics. He understands it as useful tool in strengthening missiological reflection, building on traditional critical approaches yet also helping the church to read the text more faithfully in the light of the missional nature of the Bible.[76] He takes the book of Acts as a case study, while also considering what his approach will mean in the context of Central and Eastern Europe and in relation to liberation theology.[77]

It is too soon to assess Redford's and Penner's impact on the missional hermeneutics conversation but their contributions are a welcome widening of the scope of the discussion, especially as their contexts are outside of the SBL forum.[78]

As this brief review of the developing conversation demonstrates, missional hermeneutics has been understood in a variety of ways. While I will examine these lines of enquiry in more depth in chapter three, it would help at this stage to explain more fully what I mean by

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[73] S.B. Redford, *Missiological Hermeneutics: Biblical Interpretation for the Global Church* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012); Penner, *Missionale Hermeneutik*. Examples of article-length treatments include: Flemming, 'Philippians'; D. Flemming, 'Revelation and the *Missio Dei*: Toward a Missional Reading of the Apocalypse', *JTI*, 6.2 (2012), 161-178; Kelly; R. Wagner, '*Missio Dei*: Envisioning an Apostolic Reading of Scripture', *Missiology*, 37.1 (2009), 19-32 [see also his previous work, R. Wagner, *Heralds of Good News: Paul and Isaiah 'In Concert' in the letter to the Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 2002)]; Wright, '"Prophet to the Nations"'.

[74] Redford, p. 1.

[75] ibid., pp. 8-9, 232.

[76] Penner, *Missionale Hermeneutik*, pp. 8-20.

[77] ibid., pp. 18-20.

[78] Redford is a North American missionary based in Nairobi, Kenya while Penner is from Germany albeit based in Central and Eastern Europe. The latter also recently published an article in English; see P. Penner, 'Practising Community in the Early Church: A Missional Reading of the Summary Texts in Acts', in *Mission in Context: Explorations Inspired by J. Andrew Kirk*, ed. by J. Corrie and C. Ross (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 77-91.

my definition of missional hermeneutics as 'an approach to biblical interpretation that seeks to read texts in the light of the missional nature of the Bible', which attempts to capture a common theme throughout the conversation.

1.4.2 The missional nature of the Bible

Despite the variety of approaches, advocates of missional hermeneutics tend to hold a common assumption that the Bible has missional dimensions to it, although they may differ on the extent and range of these. Clearly this rather broad phrase implies a variety of ways in which and degrees to which these assumptions may be held. Nevertheless, at this stage it is important to clarify what I mean by the 'missional nature of the Bible', which is to say that mission is not simply one of many themes the Bible touches upon but, rather, is constitutive of the very nature of the Bible. 'Missional', it could be suggested, characterises the emergence, content, and purpose of the biblical writings. I now need to unpack this in more detail. To do this I will take each of these categories in turn, showing how they gather together various missional dimensions of the Bible. This will then provide a context from which to understand further discussion of the missional hermeneutics approach. I also use these categories in the conclusion to the thesis in order to present how my work has brought into sharper focus the missional nature of the book of Job.

1.4.2.1 The emergence of biblical texts as 'missional': the Bible as a 'product' of mission

By 'emergence' I am referring to both the very existence of the biblical writings, and also the conditions and processes by which they originated and were gathered together.

Assuming a certain theological commitment and perspective on the nature of the Bible and divine inspiration, the Bible could be described as saying something about God's mission simply by its existence.[79] The Bible can be understood as a 'product' of God's mission partly because its existence is evidence of a God who desires to be known and takes the necessary initiative to enable that to happen.[80] Although this depends on at least some confessional commitment to the divine inspiration of the Bible, it is nevertheless entirely consistent within that understanding and, in my view, provides a helpful context for understanding other aspects of the missional nature of the Bible. This also relates to the function of the Bible as a means by which God's mission is carried out, which I address below.

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[79] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 48. See also C. Taber, 'Missiology and the Bible', *Missiology*, 11.2 (1983), 229-245 (pp. 231-233); N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (London: SPCK, 2005), p. 23.

[80] Tabor, p. 232. Cf. Kelly, p. 68.

A second aspect of the missional nature of the emergence of the biblical writings concerns the origins of particular texts. The Bible is also a 'product' of mission in that many of the circumstances out of which the biblical writings emerged could be termed as 'missional':

> events or struggles or crises or conflicts in which the people of God engaged with the constantly changing and challenging task of articulating and living out their understanding of God's revelation and redemptive action in the world. Sometimes these were struggles internal to the people of God themselves; sometimes they were highly polemical struggles with competing religious claims and worldviews that surrounded them [...] The text itself is a product of mission in action.[81]

This understanding of the origins of the biblical texts seems helpful, acknowledging as it does the intercultural dynamic of the biblical writers' environments, the theme of conflict as a context for emerging texts, and the struggles within the community of the people of God, as well as from external pressures, though of course the two may overlap (for example, with the temptation to syncretism).

Marshall's description of the NT as 'the documents of mission' seems apposite here.[82] The writings of the NT were the result of the mission of Jesus and his followers, proclaiming and explaining the gospel, seeking to shape the church and address issues that may be hindering the progress of the gospel:

> In short, people who are called by God to be missionaries are carrying out their calling by the writing of Gospels, letters and related material. They are concerned to make converts and then to provide for their nurture, to bring new believers to birth and nourish them to maturity… They are at one and the same time the product of a dynamic process of evangelism and nurture, and the tools for accomplishing that process.[83]

To give some examples, the Gospels were written to explain the 'good news' of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and Luke-Acts even has a missional shape about it with 'witness to the nations' being a key them at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts.[84] In his letters the apostle Paul seeks to shape the communities of the early church for their participation in

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[81] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 49.

[82] I.H. Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2004), p. 34.

[83] ibid., pp. 35-36; Cf. the discussion on the work of Guder and Barram, below and in chapter three. Although mission has not traditionally been viewed in this central way in NT scholarship, there are number of writers both in biblical studies and missiology who have suggested that this is indeed the case. See, for example, See, for example, the survey of A. Köstenberger, 'The Place of Mission in New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Determine the Significance of Mission within the Scope of the New Testament's Message as a Whole', *Missiology*, 28.3 (1999), 350-352. See also Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 15; N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 361-362; E.J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Vol 1: Jesus and the Twelve* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), pp. 4-5.

[84] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 49.

God's mission by dealing with discussions of the Gentile mission, Greek-influenced polytheism, internal theological disputes, and so on.[85] Finally, the book of Revelation sought to shape church communities as they struggled in the face of external pressures and internal disputes.[86]

It seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that the writings of the NT reflect missional contexts. But could the same be said of the OT? The accounts in Gen. 1-11, for example, are often considered to have, in part at least, a polemical function against (especially) Babylonian origin stories and, therefore, religious beliefs.[87] The events of the exodus may be seen as a confrontation between Yahweh and Pharaoh's false claims to deity and ownership of Israel.[88] Moreover, drawing on conceptions of mission by Seitz ('Getting at the something awry') and Bauckham (as being closely associated with the movement between the particular and the universal), Blackburn has recently demonstrated that the book of Exodus can be understood to have a 'missionary heart' in that it accounts for a part of the story in which God attempts 'to make himself known among the nations' and that Israel's election had a universal goal.[89]

An important theme running through particularly the historical and prophetic books is the struggle of Israel to resist the temptations and threats of the Canaanite Baal religion.[90] While some may interpret the Baal imagery applied to Yahweh as an instance of demythologizing, texts such as 1 Kgs. 17-19 or the book of Hosea are suggestive of a clear polemic against Baalism and so it seems reasonable to discern this tendency more broadly in the OT.[91]

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[85] ibid., p. 49. Cf. Wagner, '*Missio Dei*'; Flemming, 'Philippians'; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, ch. 4.

[86] Senior and Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations*, pp. 302-305; cf. Flemming, 'Revelation'.

[87] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 50; G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), pp. xlvi-l; J.H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), pp. 27-35, Kindle edn; J.G. McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology* (T. & T. Clark: London, 2006), p. 23.

[88] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 50; P. Enns, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), pp. 196, 200, 205, 228-229, 245, 299.

[89] W.R. Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known: The Missionary Heart of the Book of Exodus* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2012), pp. 16-18. Cf. Wright, *Mission of God*, ch. 3; Seitz, *Figured Out*, pp. 147, 157; Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 11.

[90] See, for example, R.B. Chisholm, 'The Polemic Against Baalism in Israel's Early History and Literature', *BSac*, 150 (1994), 267-283; J. Day, 'Baal (Deity)' in *ABD*, Vol 1, pp. 545-549; V. Endris, 'Yahweh versus Baal: A Narrative-Critical Reading of the Gideon/Abimelech Narrative', *JSOT*, 33.2 (2008), 173-195; Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 50.

[91] Chisholm, p. 268; cf. Day, 'Baal', pp. 547-548; H.D. Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol 2, translated by L.G. Perdue (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 72; McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, pp. 158-159. Indeed, as is so clearly evidenced, for example, in the book of Hosea, the application of Baal language to Yahweh is carried out in the context of a polemic against the Baal cult so that the very borrowing of a competing rendering's language functions as a way of critiquing it; cf. Day, 'Baal', p. 549. See also A.A. Macintosh, although he speaks more of an 'appropriating to Yahwism elements of Canaanite religion which, properly understood, belong to it'; *Hosea* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), p. 219.

The shattering experience of the exile and Israel's subsequent return to the land produced biblical writings that sought to articulate Israel's identity and role as God's people in new and uncertain times and 'under the shadow of foreign empires.'[92] Isaiah's strong polemic against the idols of Babylon (Isa. 40-48) and vision concerning God's purposes for the world mediated through his servant (Isa. 49:1-7; 52:13-53:12) are two examples in that particular book.[93]

Clearly the Wisdom Literature is of particular interest in this thesis and will be dealt with in much more detail below. It will suffice, however, at this stage to note that the wisdom writers engaged with wisdom traditions of other cultures, employing both acceptance and critique.[94] This raises an important element of this dimension which is the need to recognise that the intercultural engagement by the biblical writers was not always negative. As I will demonstrate, particularly in chapter three, while the rendering of reality articulated in the Bible is ultimately being told over and against alternative renderings, the biblical writers were still at liberty to affirm (either implicitly or explicitly) elements of other belief systems that were in line with their own experience and beliefs.

The point is not that a missionary intention should be articulated in every book in the OT or NT. Rather, that the biblical writings evidence an engagement by their authors and editors with issues and circumstances that could be understood in missional terms. Clearly some elements of this argument are based on a certain way of defining Israel's 'missional' function. Viewed in this way, however, the biblical writings can be understood, among other things, as responding to missional circumstances, or as the results or 'products' of mission.

To speak about the circumstances or events that prompted the emergence of biblical writings may, in my view, refer to various stages in the development of a text. For example, it could be applicable to the circumstances that prompted its original teaching (perhaps in oral form); its being written down; its editorial shaping; and its inclusion in the canon. While the precise details of the stages of emergence of biblical writings may be unclear at times, what does seem evident is that the texts of the Bible emerged out of the context of struggle; a struggle to articulate the truth about Yahweh and his ways with the world, and the place of Israel within those purposes. This process, it seems to me, can be understood as missional.

As part of my thesis I will seek to probe the missional nature of the emergence of the book of Job. While there is much ambiguity surrounding its origins, particularly in relation to its dating and literary unity, my main focus in this regard will be to investigate the nature of the

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[92] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 50.

[93] See, for example, Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 140, 237-238; R.L. Schultz, 'Nationalism and Universalism in Isaiah', in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. by D.G. Firth and H.G.M. Williamson (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), pp. 122-144 (pp. 135-137).

[94] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 50.

intercultural encounter in the book, including how it relates to similar texts and beliefs within the international conversation on the subject of suffering. I will also reflect on the significance of there being a book of Job; that is, the significance of such a sustained, probing examination of suffering being included in the canon.

1.4.2.2 The content of the biblical texts as 'missional': the Bible as a record of mission

As well as the missional nature of the contexts and processes of the emergence of biblical writings, the content of the Bible may also be understood as missional. By this I mean that the Bible may be understood to render to the reader a complex-yet-coherent overarching narrative that describes, records, or witnesses to the mission of God.[95]

The idea of the Bible telling the story of God's mission is particularly important to advocates of missional hermeneutics, and usually centres on the concept of the *missio Dei*.[96] It is this broad definition of mission that enables Wright, for example, to state boldly that the content of the Bible revolves around mission, which becomes the foundational assumption of missional hermeneutics.[97] The *missio Dei*, therefore, is the driving force behind the biblical story, the focal point of coherence for the biblical story, and the chief purpose of the biblical story. The Bible, then, tells the story of God's actions in the world.[98]

Put very briefly, in a narrative approach the Bible tells the story of God, who creates the universe, including humanity, sees humanity rebel against his rule and seeks to set this rebellion right by calling a man, Abram, as a means of blessing to the nations. Abram's descendants become a people, Israel, who enjoy the privileges and responsibilities of covenant life under Yahweh, lived out in the midst of the nations. Yet they too are rebellious and do not live up to their high calling, ultimately being exiled to Babylon and, though they are brought back to the land, are left waiting for a deliverer from Yahweh who would free them from the powers that hold them captive.

As the story progresses to the NT we read about Jesus Christ, God's anticipated deliverer, yet the means by which he would bring deliverance unexpectedly involves sacrifice and suffering, death and resurrection. His followers form the early church and begin to proclaim

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[95] The language of rendering, describing, recording or witnessing tend to be used interchangeably to make similar points. Cf. Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 272; Goheen, 'Continuing', p. 61; Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 48; Kelly, p. 68.

[96] This broad acceptance of *missio Dei* in missional hermeneutics is correctly observed, for example, by Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 312. Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 390; Pachuau, '*Missio Dei*', p. 233; Bevans and Schroeder, p. 290.

[97] Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 29, 51.

[98] Clearly the conceptualisation of the biblical material as a narrative is indebted to twentieth century scholars such as G. Von Rad who, in Brueggemann's assessment, 'made it possible to understand Israel's faith in narrative mode.' Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, p. 33.

the good news of God's kingdom. The biblical story ends with a vision of the end of history itself in which the purposes of God are finally and fully carried out.

In chapter three I deal with important issues connected with considering the Bible as a narrative, including the nature and validity of treating the biblical canon as a narrative, and the possibility and importance of a biblical 'metanarrative' and its relationship to other metanarratives. I also bring out certain characteristics of that narrative such as the particular-universal dynamic; the nature and desirability of ambiguity; and the theme of social justice, all of which have important functions within the book of Job.

As I have already indicated, it will be of crucial importance in my thesis to examine the relationship between the book of Job and the grand narrative of the Bible. How does Job function in relation to the *missio Dei*? In particular I will suggest that the importance of Job in this regard is not primarily in how Job fits into the storyline but in how the book stands apart from, and speaks into it. I will show that the crucial issue of genuine piety, expressed most succinctly in Job 1:9b, functions as a way of holding to account the entire project of the *missio Dei*.

1.4.2.3 The purposes of biblical texts as 'missional': the Bible as the means by which mission is carried out

As well as being a product and record of mission the Bible has been understood to function, in part, as a means by which God's mission is carried out.[99] There does not seem to be a single satisfactory term that encapsulates all of the nuances of this idea. Nevertheless, words such as tool, agent or instrument are useful.

One way in which the biblical writings function as an instrument of mission is closely related to the above discussions concerning the missional contexts and processes which led to the emergence of those writings, and the function of the *missio Dei* in Scripture.[100] The biblical texts addressed the people of God in response to circumstances (internal and external) that challenged their identity and role as God's people, called to participate in the mission of God. They shaped the people of God, aligning them to the biblical story, giving order to life and worship, offering rebuke and promise, and enabling them to bring to God

[99] Wright, *Scripture*, pp. 22, 37-38, 44; Goheen, 'Continuing', p. 90.

[100] While I am well aware of the complexity of speaking about the 'purpose(s)' of a particular biblical writer or text within the canon my aim here is to make a broad point that there is an overall missional context within which these can be seen, assuming a view of the biblical canon for which I am arguing.

the entirety of their experiences.[101] Understood in the light of the *missio Dei* this process can be framed in terms of shaping God's people for God's mission.[102]

The scriptures, then, were an important means by which God shaped and equipped his people in order to achieve his purposes in and through them. This significant function of the biblical writings, present in the time of Ancient Israel and the early church, is also relevant to the contemporary church as it seeks to be shaped by and for the purposes of God in today's world: 'the Bible must continue to confront, to convert, and to transform the community for faithful witness.'[103] They place the lives and communities of the people of God, then and now, within the *missio Dei*, demonstrate their role within that overarching narrative, and shape and equip them for those purposes.[104] In this sense we might also describe a function of the Bible as being 'generative of mission' in the sense that it spurs on the people of God to realise an active participation in the mission of God.[105] This highlights an important assumption across the literature which is that the biblical writings have a compelling, contemporary relevance for the people of God today as they participate in the mission of God. A missional reading of the Bible must therefore lead to action.[106]

A further dimension of the Bible as a means of mission is the sense in which the Bible may exhibit ways in which the people of God's participation in God's mission might be carried out. Traditionally this has been seen, for example, in examining the methods and strategies of the Apostle Paul and determining how these might be normative in contemporary mission contexts.[107]

Given the contextual nature of the biblical events and writings, Bosch seems justified in cautioning against too direct or simplistic an application of 'missionary principles or models… from isolated texts or passages.'[108] Nevertheless, the Bible does contain many instances of God's mission being worked out in the particularities of the biblical writings,

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[101] Wright, *Scripture*, pp. 22, 27, 29-30; cf. Goheen, 'Continuing', p. 91.

[102] Goheen, 'Continuing', p. 91.

[103] Guder, 'Biblical Formation', p. 62. Here he also says, 'The purpose of this "Word of God written" was and is the continuing formation of the missional church… This formation happens as the biblical word works powerfully within the community.' Cf. Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 313.

[104] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 12; Barram, 'Social Location', p. 49; *idem*, '"Located" Questions', n.p.; Hunsberger, 'Proposals GOCN', n.p..

[105] Kelly, p. 71. For one attempt to show how Job might challenge missional engagement see my discussion in chapter two on W.W. Allen, 'The Missionary Message of Job: God's Universal Concern For Healing', *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 6 (2002), 18-31.

[106] Cf. Bauckham, 'Mission as Hermeneutic', p. 14.

[107] A classic study on this subject is R. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (London: Robert Scott, 1912); cf. R.L. Plummer and J.M. Terry (eds.), *Paul's Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012).

[108] D.J. Bosch, 'Reflections on Biblical Models of Mission', *Toward the Twenty-First Century in Christian Mission*, ed. by J.M. Phillips and R.T. Coote (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 175-192 (p. 188).

which can be reflected upon as the contemporary church seeks to refine its understanding and practice of mission, which will change from generation to generation, and from context to context. Examples of such biblical material could include the ways in which the apostles went about starting and nurturing new congregations in the NT or the intercultural engagement evident in the OT.[109]

In line with these missional dimensions of the purposes of the Bible I must ask, then, how the book of Job sought to shape and equip the people of God for their participation in God's mission. Such a broad theme must be more clearly defined in terms of my thesis. Within the current scope of the thesis I intend to pursue these issues by addressing, as noted above, the significance of the intercultural engagement in the book. I will also examine how the book attempted to shape the ethics of its readers, with specific reference to responding to unattributed suffering and the treatment of the poor.

This brief outline of some of the missional dimensions of the Bible illustrates the complexity of thinking of the Bible as 'missional' and goes some way to accounting for the variety of emphases and approaches evident in missional hermeneutics scholarship, as noted above. However, I would suggest that a fuller engagement with the breadth of missional dimensions of the Bible will enable a greater capacity for innovative and fruitful missional reflection on biblical texts, and especially for texts, like the book of Job, that have hitherto been neglected.

1.5 An outline of the thesis

Having set out a number of important background issues and given an explanation and rationale for this thesis I conclude this introductory chapter with an outline of the rest of the thesis.

Chapters two and three continue the first part of the thesis, 'Approaching a missional hermeneutic for the book of Job'. In chapter two I examine the extent to which and the ways in which Job has been engaged with in Bible and mission scholarship up to this point. This will show that a significant proportion of writing on the Bible and mission either omits Job

[109] As examples of the latter see I. Glaser, *The Bible and Other Faiths: What Does the Lord Require of Us?* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), pp. 59-66; B. de Ruiter, *A Single Hand Cannot Applaud: The Value of Using the Book of Proverbs in Sharing the Gospel with Muslims* (Nurnberg: VTR Publications, 2011). It is worth, too, acknowledging the significant role the Bible has played in the history of Christian mission, for example relating to the work of Bible Translation; cf. Skreslet, pp. 36-37. In this sense we might also describe the Bible's missional instrumentality in terms of how it is used as an 'artefact' of mission activity in that it is used by the Church as one of the ways of communicating the Christian gospel.

entirely or cites texts from Job in a rather peripheral way to illustrate points in much broader discussions. Secondly, when writers do pay more attention to Job their treatment is often rather brief and could not be said to be engaging in a thorough and sustained way with the book on its own terms. Of particular significance, in my view, is where this occurs in work that aims to present a biblical theology of mission; that is, to articulate an understanding of mission that represents the canon of Scripture as a whole, or at least either the OT or NT. Thirdly, while there are some scholars who attempt to engage with the book of Job in a more intentional, specific and substantial way, they still leave significant room for considering how the book of Job might be read missionally. Throughout chapter two I connect the survey with my own reading of Job, showing how I will build on the strengths I see in the literature and how I will address perceived gaps, weaknesses and underdeveloped themes.

Chapter three then builds on this survey by showing how a missional framework for reading the book of Job can be developed. I do this by focusing on the missional hermeneutics scholarship introduced in the current chapter, working through different facets of the emerging conversation in order to isolate particularly useful lines of enquiry for my own work. The five aspects of missional hermeneutics highlighted by the GOCN Forum on Missional Hermeneutics are instructive here, although I move beyond them in places, seeking to engage with them critically, while also assessing their potential and problems as I seek to relate them to the book of Job. I conclude chapter three with some clear lines of enquiry for a missional reading of Job, which I then pursue in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Chapters two and three therefore set up my missional reading of Job but in doing so they also begin that reading. These initial connections with Job then pave the way for part two of the thesis, 'Applying a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job', in which I focus two substantial chapters on the pursuit of particular lines of enquiry for a missional reading of Job. In chapter four I examine what I term the 'universalising impulse' in the book. This is done in two main ways: first, I focus on the Prologue with its prominent non-Israelite motif and the crucial, universally important question posed by the accuser, 'Is it for nothing חִנָּם that Job fears God?' (Job 1:9b). Secondly, I examine the intercultural engagement of the book as it relates to similar texts and ideas of the ANE. As such I aim to show evidence of a missional encounter between Job and alternative renderings of reality.

Chapter five then develops my missional reading of Job by examining a particular theme that, as I have shown, is a particular concern in a holistic understanding of mission: the treatment of the poor. Here I examine how poverty functions in Job, with a special treatment of three texts which each exhibit a concentration of poverty language: Job 24:1-17; 29:11-17

and 31:13-23. I also take to the text the themes of chapter four and show how the missional understanding of Job plays out through a concrete theme.

In the sixth and final chapter of the thesis I offer a summary and conclusion to the thesis in which I draw together the principal findings of my missional reading of Job. This is done, in part, by returning to the idea of the missional nature of the Bible outlined in this introductory chapter and considering, in the light of my thesis, the ways in which the book of Job may be considered 'missional'. I will also offer suggestions for further research.

2 Chapter Two: The Use of Job in Bible and Mission Scholarship

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I introduced the thesis by setting out the background to missional hermeneutics and providing a rationale for applying this emerging approach in biblical interpretation to Job. Universally relevant themes are addressed in Job such as the vexation of unattributed suffering, the nature of true piety, and the significance of injustice. Additionally, the more 'international' outlook of the book, the intercultural engagement evident within it, and the difficult questions it raises concerning the *missio Dei* all suggest that Job has much to contribute to discussions on mission.

However, I also noted that most scholars have tended not to embrace the missional significance of the book of Job. The purpose of the current chapter is to move towards my own missional reading of Job, by examining in more detail the extent to which and the ways in which relevant scholarship has engaged with the book in the light of God's mission. Such a survey enables me to consider previous thinking, highlight reccurring themes, and identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps and underdeveloped areas. It will also inform the discussion in chapter three, in which I look specifically at the lines of enquiry pursued by missional hermeneutics scholars in order to develop my own missional approach to Job.

In the first section of this chapter I give a broad consideration of the relative neglect of Job in Bible and mission scholarship, while also recognising that there are legitimate reasons why a study may not turn to that particular book.[110] Noting some prominent examples, I show that a significant proportion of BMS either does not mention Job, or does so in rather peripheral and underdeveloped ways. Of particular significance, in my view, is the book's omission or neglect among scholars who aim to convey a whole-Bible foundation for mission.

In the next section I turn to instances where Job receives more attention and identify a number of reccurring themes including, among others, Job's international outlook, Job's non-Israelite provenance, Job as an example of 'dialogue', and the significance of the accuser in the Prologue. In each case I assess the strengths and weaknesses of the use of Job for that theme, and consider how these topics may feature in my own treatment of Job, thereby illustrating both the continuity and distinctiveness of my reading of the book.

[110] Henceforth 'Bible and Mission scholarship' will be referred to as BMS.

Following this thematic survey I examine three articles that engage specifically and exclusively with the book of Job and mission.[111] Each article brings particular assumptions and questions to how Job relates to mission, thereby drawing out different themes and conclusions. In each case I study how the writer approaches the topic and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their argument, relating it to the preceding survey and my own approach.

The chapter concludes with a summary of its main findings including how it will inform my developing thesis. In particular, I note what I consider to be particularly promising themes that connect the book of Job and mission. Overall the review demonstrates that, while there is precedent for missional reflection on Job, often this has been carried out in rather limited and underdeveloped ways. The book of Job, I conclude, remains a relatively untapped resource for missional reflection. By setting the topic of my thesis in the context of such preceding work, the chapter demonstrates that my research has the potential to make a clear contribution to scholarship. This will also be the case when I turn my attention to work on missional hermeneutics in chapter three.

Before beginning the survey, however, I should clarify the criteria I use in my survey to identify and examine appropriate literature. I have taken BMS to refer to scholarly works that attempt to discuss the Bible in relation to the mission of God. The texts surveyed come from the disciplines of Biblical Studies and Missiology and, indeed, many are attempts to bridge the two fields.

However, I am not suggesting that any BMS publication failing to engage explicitly with Job is deficient by virtue of this omission, regardless of its subject, aims, scope or method. It would be reasonable, for example, for a study on mission and the Apostle Paul not to refer to Job.[112] Such an omission bears little significance in and of itself. The same could also be noted in relation to more general methodological works on the relationship between the Bible and mission, including missional hermeneutics. Such studies will tend to engage in a less sustained and varied way with specific texts as they are dealing more with overall concepts.[113]

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[111] D.C. van Zyl, 'Missiological Dimensions in the Book of Job', *IRM*, 91.360 (2002), 24-30; Allen, 'Missionary Message'; L.J. Waters, '*Missio Dei* in the Book of Job', *BSac*, 166 (2009), 19-34 [Subsequently published as '*Missio Dei* and Suffering', in *Connecting for Christ: Overcoming challenges Across Cultures: Papers on Global Outreach*, ed. by F.P.L. Tan (Singapore: Dr Florence Poh-Lian Tan, 2009), pp. 170-200].

[112] Although note, for example, that Wagner's detailed study on mission and Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans references the book of Job on a number of occasions, though these are mainly on linguistic matters or possible allusions to Job in Paul's work, none of which impact larger, missiological questions. Cf. Wagner, *Heralds*.

[113] See below for examples of such studies.

A third factor explaining why Job may be understandably side-lined concerns a work's scope. In chapter one I indicated why the book of Job may be understood as missionally relevant, yet it must be admitted that other OT texts may be considered to be more immediately 'accessible' as sources of missional reflection.[114] In practice this may mean that unless a work is particularly substantial, an author may not arrive at less obvious texts such as Job. This is particularly relevant for article-length studies.

These factors suggest that the omission of Job is not *per se* a failing on the part of an author. However, of particular significance, in my view, is the extent to which and the ways in which 'biblical theologies of mission' engage with the book of Job. To pursue this I have given special attention to articles or books that aim to present an outline, foundation or basis of Christian mission (however the author defines it) from the OT or Bible as a whole. These works seem particularly significant for my purposes because their scope allows for the possibility of including Job in their discussion. If, therefore, an author is attempting to provide a systematic presentation that is representative of the different parts of the OT or whole Bible, yet does not engage with the Wisdom Literature (and Job, more specifically) I would consider this to be a potentially significant omission. Such factors as an author's definition of mission, or a focus on the story of 'redemption' or universal worship in the Bible will bias their work towards some texts at the expense of others.

I begin the survey with works that have little or no reference to the book of Job.

2.2 The relative neglect of Job in BMS

A low level of engagement with Job can be observed in BMS throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. A selection of examples will illustrate common patterns in the literature.

An initial observation is that the choice of OT texts examined tends to focus on the Pentateuch, Psalms and Prophets, thereby sidelining books like Job. Bashford's *God's Missionary Plan for the World*, for example, concentrated on the universal claims for Yahweh seen in texts such as Genesis, Psalms and the Prophets.[115] A similar focus is shown by Carver who presented the developing teaching of God's 'universal claim and love of God

[114] As I illustrate below, texts such as Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, Isaiah or Jonah may be examples of these. This may also be related to how mission is conceived. For example, as I indicated in chapter one, my conception of mission as holistic does facilitate my approach to Job.

[115] J. Bashford, *God's Missionary Plan for the World* (London: Robert Culley, 1907), pp. 43-57.

to men'[116], and by Rowley's concentration on Moses, universal worship, Deutero-Isaiah and other prophets.[117]

The Pentateuch, Psalms and Prophets are also the focus of Bavinck's treatment of the role and future of the nations[118], Peters' examination of the 'marvellous thrust of God into the world for saving purposes' in the OT[119], and Kane's single chapter on mission in the OT in his book, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*.[120]

Kaiser detects 'a divine program to glorify [God] by bringing salvation to all on planet earth' through a range of texts, although like many he spends a significant portion of his material on Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah.[121] Genesis and Isaiah are focused on by Seitz in his paper, *Blessing for All Nations: Mission in the Hebrew Bible*, which envisages mission as '*getting at the something awry*… Mission is God's address to humanity's forfeit.'[122]

Despite claiming to have traced the idea of mission through 'every part' of the OT, Glover makes no mention of Job or the Wisdom Literature more broadly in the chapter 'The Bible and Missions: The Missionary Character of the Scriptures'.[123] Elsewhere Glover cites Job as an example of a biblical character who received an 'exalted vision of [God], with profound spiritual results', although little is made of this connection.[124]

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[116] W.O. Carver, *Missions in the Plan of the Ages: Bible Studies in Missions* (New York: Fleming H. H. Revell, 1909), p. 158. Cf. p. 164 and ch. 11. Job is mentioned once as an example that 'Through all the history of revelation God kept standing proofs that He did not limit Himself to Israel'; p. 166. In a later work Carver again traced the development of God's universal purposes through Israel's history, worship and prophecy, without dealing with wisdom texts. See W.O. Carver, *The Bible a Missionary Message: A Study of Activities and Methods* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1921).

[117] H.H. Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (London: The Carey Press, 1945). In a previous work that concentrated on the themes of universalism and particularism Rowley displayed a similar lack of attention to the Wisdom Literature, although he does note Job as an example of an OT figure who had a glimpse of the possibility of resurrection; cf. *Israel's Mission to the World* (London: SCM Press, 1939), p. 115.

[118] J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions translated by D.H. Freeman* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960), ch. 2.

[119] G.W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 83. Peters makes a passing reference to Job in a discussion on sin and suffering; p. 105.

[120] J.H. Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), ch. 1. Part One of the book, 'The Biblical Basis of Missions', contains three further chapters on biblical material focusing on 'Missions in the Gospels', 'Missions in the Acts of the Apostles', and 'Missions in the Ministry of Paul', respectively.

[121] W.C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000). Cf. *idem*, 'The Great Commission in the Old Testament', *IJFM*, 13 (1996), 3-7.

[122] C.R. Seitz, 'Blessing for All Nations: Mission in the Hebrew Bible', *Currents in World Christianity Position Paper*, 106 (1999), p. 3. His italics. The paper was later published in *idem*, *Figured Out*, ch. 11.

[123] R.H. Glover, *The Bible Basis of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1946), p. 21.

[124] ibid., p. 188.

Wright's 1961 essay on the OT and mission found no place for Job in its three 'perspectives' on the subject, which dealt with texts concerning the redemption of the world, God's actions, and OT themes that may be problematic for mission.[125]

Blauw's *The Missionary Nature of the Church* contains no references to Job or Ecclesiastes, instead focusing on a nuanced discussion concerning the relationship between universalism and mission, followed by an examination of eschatological and messianic texts, particularly in the Prophets and Psalms.[126] While Blauw does engage with Proverbs and wisdom more generally, his conclusion seems particularly apposite in the context of this survey: 'It seems to me that so far the wisdom literature has not received the attention it deserves, particularly in missionary science.'[127]

In what is, in my view, a rather limited conception of the wisdom material and of Job itself, Beals mentions the book briefly: 'Except for Job, these books were written when Israel was in her glory. David and Solomon figure heavily in their authorship. In the midst of suffering, Job rejoiced in the hope of redemption and resurrection.'[128]

Bosch's landmark *Transforming Mission* contains under four pages on mission in the OT and so his discussion is very limited, concentrating especially on Isaiah and themes such as the legitimacy of speaking of mission in the OT, Israel's God acting in history, covenant and election, the role of the nations, and eschatology.[129]

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[125] G.E. Wright, 'The Old Testament Basis for the Christian Mission', in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. by G.H. Anderson (London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 17-30.

[126] Blauw, *Missionary Nature*, chs. 1-3. On the significance of Blauw's work, especially in relation to the discussion on *missio Dei*, see chapter one of this thesis. See also Goheen, 'Continuing', p. 58; D.J. Bosch, 'Mission in Biblical Perspective' *IRM*, 74.296 (1985), 531-538 (p. 531).

[127] Blauw, *Missionary Nature*, p. 62.

[128] P.A. Beals, *A People for His Name: A Church-Based Missions Strategy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 45. He cites Job 19:25 to illustrate his point.

[129] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 16-20. Bosch's lack of attention to the OT in *Transforming Mission* is often noted; see, for example, C. Wright, 'The Old Testament and Christian Mission', *Evangel*, 14.2 (1996), 37-43 (p. 37); G. Bekele, 'The Biblical Narrative of the *Missio Dei*: Analysis of the Interpretive Framework of David Bosch's Missional Hermeneutic', *IBMR*, 35.3 (2011), 153-158 (p. 155); C. Fensham, *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead: The Future of the North American Church* (Toronto: Clements Academic, 2011), p. 36. It is fair to say that Bosch's other works did often engage with the OT, although rarely with the Wisdom Literature; cf.; D.J. Bosch, 'The Why and the How of a True Biblical Foundation for Mission', in *Zending Op Weg Naar De Toekomst*, ed. by J. Verkuyl (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1978), pp. 33-45; subsequently published as *idem*, 'Hermeneutical Principles in the Biblical Foundation for Mission', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 17.4 (1993), 437-451. See also, *idem*, 'The Scope of Mission', *IRM*, 73.289 (1984) 17-32; *idem*, 'Biblical Perspective'; *idem*, 'Towards a Hermeneutic of "Biblical Studies and Mission"', *MS*, 3.2 (1986), 65-79; *idem*, 'The Scope of the "BISAM" Project', *MS*, 6.1 (1989), 61-68; *idem*, 'Biblical Models'. On Bosch's use of the book of Job, see D. Bosch, 'The Vulnerability of Mission', *The Baptist Quarterly* 34.8 (1992), 351-363, which is dealt with below.

Samuel and Sugden's edited volume on *Mission as Transformation* contains a number of articles and documents relating to holistic or integral mission.[130] Throughout the book's 500 pages Job appears only briefly: the book as a whole is used as an example of questioning God's justice and action in history, and as facing up to the realities of a fallen world, and Job 22:5 is cited to illustrate 'loss of community' as an aspect of poverty.[131]

Köstenberger and O'Brien focus on texts that relate 'in a significant way to the proclamation of God's name and of his saving purposes in Christ to the unbelieving world.'[132] As such, in their single chapter on the OT they pay particular attention to texts and themes relating to the promises to Abraham and, as a consequence, the book contains no references to Job.[133]

Okoye's conception of the four aspects or 'faces' of mission in the OT leads him to consider a range of texts: Yahweh's universality (focusing on Gen. 1, 12 and Ps. 8); Israel as a community-in-mission (Exod. 19; Amos and Jonah); centripetal mission (Ps. 96; Isa. 2); and centrifugal mission (further texts from Isaiah and Zechariah).[134] As such Okoye does not refer to Job or Ecclesiastes, although he does mention the book of Proverbs in relation to a broader point about the Wisdom Literature, which he sees as 'international and universal' in that they omit key Israelite themes such as covenant, election and the law, placing 'Israel and the nations on the same footing with respect to the experience of God and the practice of true religion.'[135]

Another trend is for Job to be mentioned, but by way of illustrating general points in the discussion. Storr, for example, referenced Job 10:21, 22 and 31:33 when addressing the concepts of 'sheol' and the fall of humanity, respectively.[136]

McDaniel's study of the term שׁלח, send, and its relation to mission cites Job several times but these references have little or no actual significance to mission.[137]

Neufeld mentions the book of Job several times and in different contexts but never with great depth; for example, citing Job 18:21 and 14:21 when discussing the meaning of the

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[130] Samuel and Sugden.
[131] ibid., pp. 169, 463, 336.
[132] A.J. Köstenberger and P.T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), pp. 21-22.
[133] ibid., p. 22.
[134] Okoye, pp. 11-12.
[135] ibid., p. 4.
[136] V.F. Storr, *The Missionary Genius of the Bible* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), pp. 38, 53, respectively. He found no further role for the book in his chapters on the OT, which addressed 'The Conception of God', 'The Doctrine of Man', 'The Idea of Redemption', 'Messianic Prophecy', and 'The Book of Jonah'; chs. 2-6
[137] F. McDaniel, 'Mission in the Old Testament', in *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, ed. by W.J. Larkin, Jr. and J.F. Williams (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), pp. 11-20. See pp. 13 (Job 1:11-12; 2:5), 18-19 (Job 5:10; 12:15; 14:20; 38:35 and 39:5).

term ידע in a section on the knowledge of Yahweh.[138] Neufeld also refers to Job when discussing the role of miraculous signs in mission, suggesting that the book clearly shows that believers in the OT could not be guaranteed to avoid suffering.[139] Finally, he cites Job 38:2-4 to illustrate a point about the orientation of the final judgment when it will be the Creator who speaks to the one created, and not vice versa.[140]

In his study on *The Temple and the Church's Mission* Beale refers to Job several times although these are all illustrative and minor points, often occurring in footnotes.[141] As such they are immaterial for the present study.

While my focus has been on biblical theologies of mission it is also worth noting the lack of engagement in relevant essay collections. For example, although differing in their aims and coverage, only one peripheral reference to Job can be found in several recent titles.[142]

Given the context of this thesis it is also worth highlighting the general lack of engagement with Job in the material usually associated with the developing conversation on missional hermeneutics.[143] However, this is perhaps not surprising, given the approach is still relatively

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[138] A. Neufeld, *Die Alttestamentichen Grundlagen der Missionstheologie*, 2nd edn (Nürnberg / Bonn: Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft / Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008), pp. 48-49.

[139] ibid., p. 67.

[140] ibid., p. 86.

[141] G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004). Pages 36-37 reference Job 1:6; 26:8-9; 7:9; 37:11, 15; 1:1 (possibly in error) and 1:16; p. 124 cites Job 21:28 and p. 333 notes Job 38:6.

[142] P. Gardner, C. Wright and C. Green, eds, *Fanning the Flame: Bible, Cross & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); C. Green, ed, *Guarding the Gospel: Bible, Cross & Mission: Meeting the Challenge in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); M. Parsons, ed, *Text and Task: Scripture and Mission* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2006); R.G. Grams and others, eds, *Bible and Mission: A Conversation Between Biblical Studies and Missiology* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag, 2008); S.E. Porter and C.L. Westfall, eds, *Christian Mission: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Developments* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010). Porter and Westfall's volume contains a very peripheral linguistic reference to Job (36:1 LXX) when dealing with God's provision for the disciples in a study on the Mark and Matthew; cf. M.P. Knowles, 'Mark, Matthew, and Mission: Faith, Failure, and the Fidelity of Jesus' in Porter and Westfall, pp. 63-92 (p. 86).

[143] For example, in Hesselgrave; Brownson, *Speaking*; Brownson, 'Speaking'; G. LeMarquand, 'From Creation to New Creation: The Mission of God in the Biblical Story', in *Waging Reconciliation: God's Mission in a Time of Globalization and Crisis*, ed. by I.T. Douglas (New York: Church Publishing, 2002), pp. 9-34; Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*; J.C. Miller, 'Missional Hermeneutics: An Experiment in Implementation and Reflection', Unpublished Paper (2005); C.H. Yuckman, 'An Ulterior Gospel: The Mission of Critical Hermeneutics and the Critical Hermeneutics of Mission', Unpublished Paper (2005); Guder, 'Missional Pastors'; *idem*, 'Biblical Formation'; *idem*, 'Missional Authority'; *idem*, 'Missional Vocation' [see also the two brief responses to Guder in the same issue: M. Schertz, 'Response', *Mission Focus: Annual Review*, 15 (2007), 122-124; N. Amstutz, 'Response and Waterford Story', *Mission Focus: Annual Review*, 15 (2007), 142-146]; Barram, '"Located" Questions'; *idem*, 'Social Location'; Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011' [see also the responses to Hunsberger's original presentation: Barram, 'Response'; Brownson, 'Response'; R. Wagner, '*Missio Dei*'; Kelly; P. Cerny, 'The Relationship between Theology and Missiology: The

new and has tended until recently to focus on methodological issues and more typical texts.[144]

Concerning the representative works surveyed up to this point, it is clear that much BMS does not engage with the book of Job significantly.[145] While scholars may differ over the extent to which they explore OT texts, and their approaches for doing so, certain texts such as Genesis, Exodus, the Psalms and the Prophets (notably Isaiah) receive considerably more attention than other books. While the importance of these texts makes such a trend understandable, the effect of such a concentration is that less obvious texts often fall by the wayside or are treated rather sporadically.

Although I note, above, certain factors for the omission or underdeveloped treatment of Job in BMS, it remains my contention that there is something significant and concerning in this

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Missional Hermeneutics', *European Journal of Theology*, 19.2 (2010), 104-109; Penner, *Missionale Hermeneutik*; Redford.

[144] As such this pattern reflects the similar tendency to neglect Job in other works concentrating on the methodology or nature of the relationship between the Bible and mission. See, for example, C. Lacy, 'Biblical Missiology and Mission', *Duke Divinity School Review*, 41.2 (1976), 73-84; W. Brueggemann, 'The Bible and Mission: Some Interdisciplinary Implications for Teaching', *Missiology*, 10.4 (1982), 397-412; M. Spindler, 'Bible and Mission', *Missiology*, 10.3 (1982), 347-349; Taber; M.R. Spindler, 'Visa for Witness: A New Focus on the Theology of Mission and Ecumenism', *MS*, 3.1 (1986), 51-60; G. Parrinder, 'The Bible and Mission', in *Using the Bible Today: Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture*, ed. by D. Cohn-Sherbok (London: Bellew Publishing, 1991), pp. 162-169; C. van Engen, 'The Relation of Bible and Mission in Mission Theology', in *The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millenium*, ed. by C. van Engen, D.S. Gilland and P. Pierson (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), pp. 27-36; M. Spindler, 'The Biblical Grounding and Orientation of Mission', in *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction: Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity*, ed. by A. Camps and others (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 123-142; A. de Groot, 'One Bible and Many Interpretive Contexts: Hermeneutics in Missiology', in Camps and others, pp. 144-156; M. Franks, 'Election, Pluralism, and the Missiology of Scripture in a Postmodern Age', *Missiology*, 26.3 (1998), 329-343.

[145] For further examples of scholarship exhibiting similar tendencies see A. McLean, *Where the Book Speaks; or, Mission studies in the Bible* (London: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1907); J. Richter, *Evangelische Missionskunder* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1920); R. Glover, 'The Bible and Missions: Part 1', *BSac*, 93.369 (1936), 101-109; *idem*, 'The Bible and Missions: Part 2', *BSac*, 93.370 (1936), 193-200; A.H. Lewis, 'Jehovah's International Love', *JETS*, 15.2 (1972), 87-92; R.R. de Ridder, 'The Old Testament Roots of Mission', in *Exploring Church Growth*, ed. by W.R. Shenk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 171-180; P. Mayer, 'Vom Reichtum der Missiologie im Alten Testament' *Evangelikale Missiologie*, 4.3 (1988), 34-40; C.H.H. Scobie, 'Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology', *TB*, 43.2 (1992), 283-305; K. Gnanakan, *Kingdom Concerns: A Biblical Theology of Mission Today* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993); P. Noble, 'Israel Among the Nations', *Horizons in Biblical Theology: An International Dialogue*, 15.1 (1993), 56-82; R. Showalter, 'All the Clans, All the Peoples', *IJFM*, 13.1 (1996), 11-13; T. Schirrmacher, 'Biblical Foundations for Missions: Seven Clear Lessons', *IJFM*, 13.1 (1996), 33-39; R.W. Hedlund, 'Mission Paradigms in the Old Testament', *Indian Journal of Theology*, 39.1 (1997), 24-34; G. Woltersdorf, 'Das Alte Testament in der Mission', *Evangelikale Missiologie*, 18.2 (2002), 82-89; E.J. Schnabel, 'Israel, the People of God, and the Nations', *JETS*, 45.1 (2002), 35-57; A.S. Moreau, G.R. Corwin and G.B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2004); J. Moskala, 'The Mission of God's People in the Old Testament', *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 19.1 (2008), 40–60.

overall trend, especially where an author is aiming to set out a case for showing how mission is a characteristic or theme of the whole Bible. If a framework for understanding biblical mission does not or (possibly) cannot accommodate texts such as the Wisdom Literature in a meaningful way, such an approach would seem to be undermined and open to the questioning of its rigour and adaptability.

However, despite the trend noted above, there remain a significant number of studies that do engage to a greater degree with the book. Such discussions tend to revolve around a number of particular themes, which provide a structure for the next section.

2.3 Themes in the use of Job in BMS

In this section I isolate the key themes with which BMS concerns itself when dealing with Job, including: Job's international outlook; Job as a non-Israelite; the relationship between Job and the ANE; Job as illustrative of suffering and weakness as the context of mission; Job and social justice; correcting false teaching; the accuser (הַשָּׂטָן) in Job; Job as a 'tool' of mission; Job and the rest of the biblical narrative; Job and creation; and Job as an example of dialogue. In each case I summarise and evaluate the ways in which scholars engage with the theme. I also show how my thesis relates to these discussions, thereby illustrating both the continuity and distinctiveness of my treatment of Job.

2.3.1 Job's international outlook

A common observation in BMS and more general scholarship is the lack of references in Job, and the Wisdom Literature more generally, to particular Israelite features such as the law, the temple, covenant, the exodus and so on.[146] In BMS this is often taken to be an indication of a more international outlook. Senior and Stuhlmueller, for example, mention Job alongside Jonah and Ruth as possible 'scattered attempts' to offer prophetic, 'more universal outreach' critique in the post-exilic period.[147] While this may be one particular way

[146] For this observation in more general Biblical scholarship see, for example, Dell, p. 2; Clements, pp. 20-26.

[147] Thereby assuming a later dating for the book; Senior and Stuhlmueller, p. 40. A similar point is made by A. Feuillet, 'Un sommet religieux de l'Ancien Testemant. L'oracle d'Esaïe xix. 16-25 sur la conversion de l'Egypt', in *Mélanges J. Lebreton, Recherches de Sciences Religieuses*, 39.2-4 (1951), 65-87; cited in R. Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*, translated by J.P. Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 48. The only other reference to Job in Senior and Stuhlmueller is to Job 16:14 as part of a discussion of God as divine warrior; p. 53.

of understanding the book of Job it is not developed sufficiently by Senior and Stuhlmueller to provide a strong reading of Job.[148]

In a similar vein, Horton's 1908 study of mission as 'the bearing and trend of [the Bible]' viewed the Wisdom Literature as 'remarkable' in its detachment from Israel's history and Law.[149] For Horton this frees the texts from 'national bias' making them suitable for all humanity, and allowing them to subvert orthodox assumptions about sin and suffering.[150] He also considered whether Job has something to say as a symbol of Israel in exile, giving a word of hope that Israel's suffering (in line with the Prophets) would be a means of 'service to the world.'[151]

Horton's points are valid to an extent. While the omission in Job of certain Israelite institutions and terms does suggest a form of distancing from OT thinking connected more overtly with Israel's story, this does not necessarily mean that Job therefore is not a thoroughly Israelite book. I see no contradiction between Job (and the Wisdom Literature more generally) having 'a meaning and a message for all the world', while also retaining its distinctively Israelite perspective.[152] Indeed, I will argue that it is precisely this distinctive characteristic that is Job's most meaningful contribution to the world. The book of Job certainly does have a universal theme and interest, yet it engages with them in particularly Israelite ways. This is seen both in the universally relevant themes explored in the book, and also in the ways in which the book engages with how other ANE belief systems explored them.[153]

In *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible* Legrand ties Job very closely to the universalism he detects throughout the Bible.[154] For Legrand, the meaning of the book of Job reflects a 'frequent theme' to be found in the Bible: 'The Universality of God's love, in the face of the universality of human misery, abides. Nothing else.'[155] Despite all he experiences and the failure of all human attempts to comfort him, 'Job has met God. "My eye has seen you" (Job 42:5), he says, and that is enough.'

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[148] This lack of engagement with the Wisdom Literature is a curious feature of their book, especially given their relatively broad understanding of the concept of mission and their interest in the appreciation of and engagement with other cultures; cf. Senior and Stuhlmueller, p. 3.

[149] R.F. Horton, *The Bible A Missionary Book*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1908), pp. 28, 161.

[150] ibid., pp. 161-162.

[151] ibid., p. 162.

[152] ibid., p. 157.

[153] Also, while some understand Job to be representative of exiled Israel this is by no means universally accepted. See the discussion in chapter three.

[154] L. Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible*, translated by R.R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990). Cf. his other noted work, *The Bible on Culture* (Marknoll: Orbis Books, 2000).

[155] Legrand, *Unity and Plurality*, p. 25.

Widbin also notes the universal involvement of God with humanity, likening the Wisdom Literature to that of the early part of Genesis, concluding: 'God is involved in the lives of all people simply because they *are* people.' [156]

Building on his prior discussion on mission, creation and humanity in God's image, Wright sees the Wisdom Literature as 'a broad tradition of faith and ethics built on a worldview that employs the wide-angle lens of precisely this whole-creation and whole-humanity perspective.'[157] Wright sees the Wisdom writings of the OT as part of an international body of literature produced by the class of wisdom writers who could be found throughout the ANE even centuries before the books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes were written.[158] The Israelite writers were clearly aware of this in relation to individuals (see, for example, the indirectly positive assessment of the wisdom of non-Israelite individuals in 1 Kgs. 4:30-31) and nations as a whole.[159]

Wright also points to associations between ANE and OT wisdom texts, which evidence 'a lot of contact between Israel's wisdom thinkers and writers and those of surrounding nations', thus making Israel's Wisdom Literature 'undoubtedly the most overtly international of all the materials in the Bible.'[160] Indeed, it seems strange that so few writers on Bible and mission make this connection, or develop it in substantial ways. There is a sense in which the international nature of Israel's wisdom texts would suggest that it could be one of the first groupings of texts to be considered, not the last. As already suggested, perhaps it is the (in many ways very helpful) focus of many scholars on the salvation-historical narrative that steers them away from the Wisdom Literature.

For Wright it is not just the perspective of the wisdom writers that is international but the content of their writings in the sense that they engage with many issues that are also found in the Wisdom Literature of the wider ANE, such as living and relating well, power and politics, the moral order, divine justice and suffering, and life's 'absurdities'.[161]

A missional approach to Job will, therefore, seek to draw out the significance of the book's treatment of these issues and consider them in relation to the mission of God. In my thesis I attempt to do this both in my examination of the theme of poverty in chapter five but, more

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[156] R.B. Widbin, 'Salvation for People Outside Israel's Covenant?', in *Through No Fault of their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, ed. by W.V. Crockett and J.G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), pp. 73-83 (p. 74). His italics.

[157] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 441.

[158] ibid., p. 442.

[159] Albeit viewed in both positive and negative lights (Babylon: Isa. 44:25; 47:10; Jer. 50:35; 51:57; Dan. 2:12-13; Edom: Jer. 49:7; Obad. 8; Tyre: Ezek. 28; Zech. 9:2; Assyria: Isa. 10:13; and Persia: Est. 1:13; 6:13); Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 442.

[160] ibid., p. 443.

[161] ibid., pp. 443, 445. Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, pp. 80, 121.

fundamentally, in my discussion of the universalising impulse in the book of Job in chapter four.

2.3.2 Job as a non-Israelite

One particularly striking feature of the book of Job is the way in which it intensifies the international tenor or outlook of the Wisdom Literature, discussed above, by having a non-Israelite as its central human character and setting the events of the book outside of Israel (Job 1:1).[162]

Rétif and Lamarche's study of the theme of universalism throughout the Bible offers some, albeit limited, reflection on the figure of Job and the book that bears his name.[163] They describe as 'both strange and interesting' Ezekiel's choice of the non-Israelites Noah, Dan'el and Job as examples of righteous men in Ezek. 14:14.[164] The book of Job itself,

> marks a reaction against the claims of human wisdom. A man who lives on the borders of Arabia and Edom, who does not belong to the race of Israel, is nevertheless engaged in a dramatic argument with God. It is such a gentile whom God puts to the test and who bows down in worship of him without wanting to find a human explanation of the problem of suffering.[165]

For Legrand, Job is 'a saintly pagan… Job's problem is a universal problem, and the divine response, as well, has universal validity. Here indeed is a decentralized universalism, in the sapiential tradition.'[166] This is illustrative of a number of scholars who discuss the non-Israelite status of Job, although they claim different types and degrees of significance from this. Horton, for example, suggests that the author's choice of a non-Israelite 'to portray a character of lofty excellence and faultless piety' is an example of an international outlook.[167] Similarly, Montgomery cites Job as an example of the less nationalistic attitudes of some within Israel, being written by a 'great thinker [who] was going to the Land of Uz to find an example of a true servant of Jehovah in the person of Job'.[168] However, it is unclear whether

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[162] While I have separated this theme from the broader one of the international tenor of the Wisdom Literature there is clearly overlap between them.

[163] A. Rétif and P. Lamarche, *The Salvation of the Gentiles and the Prophets* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966).

[164] ibid., p. 64.

[165] ibid., p. 96.

[166] Legrand, *Unity and Plurality*, p. 25.

[167] Horton, p. 159.

[168] H.B. Montgomery, *The Bible and Missions* (West Medford: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1920), p. 27. This entry on Job is part of a section entitle, 'Ruth and Job in the missionary purpose'; p. 27 and is referred to in volume's index as 'Job, missionary purpose in'; p. 237.

she means this journey to be metaphorical or, more intriguingly, whether she envisages an Israelite sage as bringing back the story from the land of Uz.[169]

Job is seen as an example of a godly non-Israelite who worships and pleases God without explaining how he knows God.[170] Verkuyl notes this theme and considers the accounts of non-Israelites such as Melchizedek, Job and Ruth as a means of considering 'the vast expanse of people outside the nation of Israel and hear the faint strains of the missionary call to all people already sounding forth.'[171]

Beeby sees great missiological significance in the non-Israelite identity of Job.[172] He notes the 'missionary potential' given by the international links shared between the Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes and the surrounding cultures of Israel.[173] However, it is Job that Beeby highlights as being the book in which 'the missionary motive is explicitly seen.'[174] He justifies this by suggesting that the non-Israelite setting allows the writer to address 'the missionary problem of how a non-Israelite is to stand before Israel's God.'[175] Elsewhere Beeby cites Job as an example of OT 'missionary literature' stating that 'in it a theophany produces repentance and restoration to a non-Israelite.'[176] Unfortanately Beeby does not provide adequately developed support for these bold claims.

Hedlund's biblical theology of mission notes a Genesis connection when discussing Job.[177] Given its patriarchal setting, he sees the book as supplementing the universality of early parts of Genesis, dealing in a non-Israelite setting with concerns other than the covenant.[178] Indeed, he sees Job as 'a meaningful indication of Yahweh's gracious intervention and intention. Job represents the universality of God's concern.'[179]

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[169] I suspect it is the former.

[170] R. Schultz, '"Und sie verkünden meine Herrlichkeit unter den Nationen" Mission im Alten Testament unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Jesaja', in *Werdet meine Zeugen! Weltmission im Horizont von Theologie und Geschichte*, ed. by H. Kasdorf (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1996), pp. 33-53 (p. 41); cf. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission 1*, p. 58 (citing Job 1:8); Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 39; C.J.H. Wright, *Salvation Belongs to Our God: Celebrating the Bible's Central Story* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), p. 173; C. Wright, *Thinking Clearly about the Uniqueness of Jesus* (Crowborough: Monarch, 1997), p. 45; Widbin, pp. 80-83.

[171] J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, translated by D. Cooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 95; cf. J. Verkuyl, 'The Biblical Notion of Kingdom: Test of Validity for Theology of Religion', in Van Engen, Gilliland and Pierson, pp. 71-95 (p. 76).

[172] D. Beeby, *Mission and Missions* (London: Christian Education Movement, 1979).

[173] ibid., p. 32.

[174] ibid., p. 32.

[175] ibid., p. 32. His only other reference to Job in this volume is a reference to its mythical language in Job 7:12 and ch. 41; p. 38.

[176] Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, p. 89.

[177] R.H. Hedlund, *The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991).

[178] ibid., p. 26.

[179] ibid., p. 26.

In a discussion on God's choice of Abraham, Hedlund emphasises this as 'an act of pure grace'; after all, there were other (perhaps more righteous) candidates like Melchizedek and Job.[180] He also notes the acceptance of God of people outside Israel, citing Job as a particularly impressive example as he has an entire book devoted to his story.[181] His book reveals God's righteousness and justice, witnesses to a knowledge of God in the ancient world, seems based on a universal covenant, and shows that God brought salvation 'within paganism'.[182]

The greatest concentration of Hedlund's material on Job is as part of a chapter on 'Light-shedding Wisdom'.[183] He highlights the book of Job as being, 'of particular missionary interest' due to its representation of a non-Israelite tradition, thereby reflecting, 'God's universal covenant.'[184] Job is therefore, 'a representative of the nations… [who] has the knowledge of the true God' which is evidenced in his awareness of God as 'Creator and Sustainer and as the source of wisdom'.[185]

Hedlund sees Job as offering a confession of faith in God as 'the Almighty, the Redeemer' (Job 14:14, 16-17; 19:25-26) and becoming personally aware,

> of God's grace and mercy in the forgiveness of sins and catch a glimpse of belief in the resurrection that is rare in the Old Testament. The missionary significance of Job is that he, a representative of the Gentile world, was a recipient not only of God's general revelation but also of redemption. Job was a representative of those who seek and find for he had come to hope in the living God.[186]

As is evident, the nature and significance of Job's non-Israelite provenance is presented in a variety of ways, including it being a challenge to nationalistic attitudes (for example, Montgomery); an example of a Gentile being saved (Widbin); and an example of a missionary movement from God to an outsider (Beeby).

More compelling, in my view, is the idea that Job's non-Israelite provenance is a means by which to universalise the book. That said, I would understand the nature of Job's provenance as being a complex portrait in that it is not as simple as depicting him 'just' as a Gentile. In chapter four I set the discussion of Job's provenance within the broader context of the non-Israelite motif, seen particularly in the book's Prologue. In so doing I bring out the nuances

[180] ibid., p. 37.
[181] ibid., p. 66.
[182] ibid., p. 26. He draws upon the work of R. de Ridder and C. Kraft for the last two points.
[183] Hedlund, *Mission of the Church*, pp. 134-140.
[184] ibid., p. 134.
[185] ibid., pp. 134-135. He cites Job 9:4, 8-10 on this latter point.
[186] ibid., p. 135.

of the discussion in more depth, and show how it fulfils an important function in the missional relevance of the book.

2.3.3 The relationship between Job and the ANE

Although dealing with the Wisdom Literature and OT more generally, Goheen describes the engagement between the biblical story (which articulates the Israelite rendering of reality) and alternative stories as 'missional encounter with culture which both embraces the treasures and opposes the idolatry of all cultures'.[187] The same point is made in more detail by Wright: Israelite wisdom writers, he notes, felt at liberty to incorporate the work of non-Israelites into their own, seen most explicitly in the inclusion in the book of Proverbs of sayings by Agur (Prov. 30) and King Lemuel (Prov. 31), as well as the implicit use of the Wisdom of Amenemope in Prov. 22:17-24:22.[188]

Wright adds an important caveat at this point which is that these borrowings from non-Israelite sources are not carried out uncritically. Israel's distinctive faith (especially its understanding of Yahweh's uniqueness, and Israel's covenant relationship with him) shaped this process of contextualisation in two different ways.[189] First, certain aspects common in ANE sources such as mentions of gods and goddesses, or the validity of magic or divination are absent in the biblical texts.[190] Secondly, the biblical Wisdom writers offer a critique of some of the tenets of non-Israelite wisdom themes. As an example Wright suggests that the personification of Wisdom and Folly in Prov. 1-9 represents Yahweh, 'the source of all true wisdom', and other albeit seductive 'gods'.[191] Further, the Israelite writers sought to critique the consequences of a non-Israelite polytheism, such as potential cynicism about morality and a general fatalism about life.[192]

This caveat is an important element in Wright's thinking. While other scholars, such as Beeby and Goheen, mention this phenomenon using language such as 'cultural borrowing', 'transformed borrowing', 'embrace' and 'engagement' they do not explain in any depth how this relationship functions.[193] Wright's discussion suggests some of the nuanced ways in which it occurs, yet even here his argument is relatively limited to a few remarks, and

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[187] Goheen, 'Notes', p. 5; cf. *idem*, 'Continuing', pp. 92-93. Goheen also understands wisdom to be helping to shape Israel's daily life 'in conformity to God's creational order'; 'Continuing Steps', p. 92.
[188] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 442. Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 121.
[189] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 444.
[190] ibid., p. 444. Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, pp. 122, 248 fn 7; Crenshaw, *OT Wisdom*, p. 6.
[191] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 444.
[192] ibid., p. 444. In particular he connects this with Ecclesiastes.
[193] Cf. Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, p. 87.

mainly focused on the book of Proverbs. This dynamic of openness and critique in the Wisdom Literature has not, I would suggest, been adequately explored in BMS.

Wright's choice of the Proverbs and Amenemope example is a useful one in that it is one of the clearest examples of a possible direct relationship between ANE wisdom texts and the Bible.[194] However, his treatment is brief and requires considerable development in order to make the case more thoroughly. Moreover, he focuses his point on direct borrowing, which lends itself well to that well-known case in Proverbs, yet not enough is said about the possibility of less direct interaction between texts. Perhaps because of this focus Wright does not deal in great depth with Job, which relates to ANE texts in important but less direct ways. It would seem appropriate, then, that my treatment of Job should address the extent to which, and the ways in which, Job exhibits a 'missionary encounter' with ANE texts and ideas. However, it is important to note that it is not necessary to demonstrate a direct relationship between specific texts in order to prove such an engagement exists. As I will show later in the thesis, the relationship between Job and other ANE texts is not a direct one but it certainly does seem to show elements of affirmation and critique with the belief systems of Israel's neighbouring cultures.

For Wright, Israelite wisdom's motto, 'the fear of YHWH is the beginning of knowledge/wisdom' (Prov. 1:7a) is foundational in that 'the beginning' refers to 'a first principle that governs everything else'.[195] This means that, although the Wisdom Literature does not make explicit references to Israel's 'salvation history' or covenant, these concepts are 'embodied in the name of YHWH himself, that underlies all the reflection, teaching and wrestling that goes on in these pages.'[196]

As the review noted above, the 'fear of Yahweh' theme is one that is mentioned by several BMS writers. By definition the use of the name Yahweh is distinct to Israel and, as such, relates to discussions of the intercultural engagement of the biblical authors, and also provides one of the ways of linking the Wisdom Literature with the rest of the biblical narrative, despite the lack of covenantal language. It is worth noting, however, that in Job the fear of God is expressed using alternative divine names to יהוה, such as אֱלֹהִים (1:1, 8; 2:3) שַׁדַּי (6:14), and אֲדֹנָי (28:28). A potential line of enquiry, then, would be to address the

[194] Though the degree of directness in the relationship between these texts is not without its doubters; cf., for example, K.A. Kitchen, 'Proverbs 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background', in *DOTWPW*, pp. 552-566 (pp. 562-566).
[195] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 444.
[196] ibid., pp. 444-445.

concept of the fear of God in the book of Job and how it might relate to the mission of God, which could include a discussion on the choice of divine names by the author.[197]

Because it affirms many aspects of thought in the wisdom writings of 'noncovenant nations', Wright views Israel's Wisdom Literature as,

> an important counterbalance to the more familiar rejection of the gods and religious practices of other nations that we find in the law and the prophets. Wisdom is remarkably open and affirming.[198]

What accounts for this openness as distinct from other parts of the OT canon? Wright suggests this is due in part to 'the strong creational assumption that Israel made about the whole earth and all humanity. The Wisdom of the Creator is to be found in all the earth, and all human beings are made in his image.'[199] Indeed, 'Israel had no monopoly on all things wise and good and true.'[200]

Wright also sees in this welcoming of foreign wisdom a subtle dimension of the strand of eschatological thought that anticipates the nations bringing tribute and worship to Yahweh, although this is perhaps a little speculative.[201] Nevertheless, I would draw on Wright's main point of 'welcoming' to suggest that part of my examination of the relationship between the book of Job and other ANE texts and ideas should look to what it affirmed, either implicitly or explicitly, both in content and form. This will be examined in more depth in chapter four. There is, then, significant heuristic value in understanding the existence and process of agreement, as well as its content.[202]

However, Wright offers a balancing argument that Israel's openness to the wisdom of other cultures was tempered by its use of 'the religious and moral disinfectant provided by

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[197] Cf. M.V. Van Pelt and W.C. Kaiser, '**ירא**', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 2, pp. 527-533 (p. 531).

[198] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 445.

[199] ibid., p. 445. Cf. J. Matthey, 'Serving God's Mission Together in Christ's Way: Reflections on the Way to Edinburgh 2010', *IRM*, 99.1 (2010), 21-38 (pp. 33-34). See below for more on the creation theme.

[200] ibid., p. 446. He goes on immediately to apply this idea to contemporary contexts, noting the heuristic value of adopting this positive attitude: 'Neither, of course, have Christians. Nothing is to be gained from denying, and much missional benefit accrues from affirming, those aspects of any human cultural tradition that are compatible with biblical truth and moral standards.' There is, then, a challenge to the Christian missionary as well: are *we* prepared to be open and to learn?

[201] ibid., p. 446. He cites Isa. 60-66 and Rev. 21:24-27 as examples: 'Just as the *wealth of nations* will ultimately be brought to the temple and offered to YHWH in worship…, so *the wisdom of the nations* can be brought into the house of the wisdom of Israel, purged of its polytheism, and made to serve the honor and glory of YHWH alone.' p. 446. His italics.

[202] On the idea of acceptance and critique and its relation to contemporary practice, albeit from a slightly different angle, see also Rétif and Lamarche, p. 95. Their suggestion that acceptance was a mark of earlier wisdom and transformation characterised later wisdom seems limiting. As I argue in chapter four particularly I would understand both to be happening concurrently. See also Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, pp. 120-122.

Yahwistic monotheism.'[203] This meant Israel's sages felt at liberty to ignore or change elements of the 'borrowed' wisdom writings in order to fit them within their distinctive theological framework.[204] This relates to Israel's unique gift of the *torah*, which was Israel's means of discerning what was and was not appropriate, and as such was their unique gift of wisdom to the world.[205] Wright suggests that this exercise of discernment was and is for the people of God an ongoing 'missiological task': 'If Israel sought to do this through the revelation contained in the Torah, how much more is it incumbent on us to make use of the whole Bible in this mission task of cultural discernment and critique?'[206]

This seems to me to be a very important point and will feature significantly in my treatment of Job. Despite looking for elements of affirmation or commonality, it will be the distinctive features of Job that will demonstrate most clearly how the book contributes to an articulation of a Yahweh-shaped rendering of reality in contrast to alternative renderings. It is this aspect of the dual dynamic of affirmation and critique that allows the process to be understood as missional. Therefore, when examining Job in the light of similar ANE texts I will need to establish the extent to which, and the ways in which, the book of Job presents a distinctively Israelite approach to the issues in the book.[207] Given the lack of a direct literary relationship between Job and similar ANE texts, my purpose will be to examine how Job engaged with ANE beliefs which may be exhibited in certain texts. This is most fully carried out in chapter four.

2.3.4 Job as illustrative of suffering and weakness as the context of mission

Bosch brings in the book of Job to a discussion on unattributed suffering, one response to which is that of 'acceptance and faith, as in Job.' [208] Bosch later likens the weakness and seeming failure exhibited at Jesus' crucifixion, with its denial of human success and triumph, to the probing question of the accuser in Job 1:9-10, which is based on an assumption that religious devotion is motivated by reward.[209]

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[203] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 446; cf. 'Truth with a Mission SBJT', p. 6. The rather strong term, 'disinfectant' is problematic. While I agree with Wright's assessment of the process of Israel's discriminating adaptation of others' wisdom, I would prefer to use a less loaded metaphor such as a filter.

[204] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 446.

[205] ibid., pp. 446-447, citing F. Eakin, 'Wisdom, Creation and Covenant', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 4 (1977), 226-239 (p. 237).

[206] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 447.

[207] Furthermore, in the light of these distinctives, to what extent and in what ways might the book of Job be understood as a 'gift' to the world? Cf. Glaser who notes how Solomon's encounter with the Queen of Sheba could be seen as exhibiting God's blessing both for Israel and the nations; *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 119.

[208] Bosch, 'Vulnerability', p. 353.

[209] ibid., p. 355.

This critique of false religion has profound missional implications, contributing to a true rendering of reality which is articulated over and against other renderings. I have already set out something of the missional relevance of the question posed by the accuser and will develop it in much greater depth in chapters three and four. I should note, however, that while Bosch is right to highlight 'acceptance and faith' as one response to suffering, there is room for other responses.[210]

Suffering as the context of mission is also a theme touched on by Burnett, who relates the supremacy of God to the realities of living in a suffering world, and concludes that:

> The most important thing to understand in the midst of suffering is that God knows our plight and is all powerful. What he allows is ultimately for our good. When God restores Job's fortunes, this demonstrates not only God's power, but also His justice and His love. God blesses not just with material things, but with intangible things such as love, joy and peace.[211]

Burnett's points focus on developing religious principles from the plot of Job. To some extent they seem to use Job illustratively rather than dealing in a substantial way with the ambiguities of the book on its own terms.[212] A more nuanced, if brief, treatment is offered by Glaser: 'The missionary is called to minister to the traumatized, but our shared humanity means that she is also in danger of trauma, and the missionary calling increases the danger.'[213] The church, she suggests, should recognise that traumatic events are the norm in human experience, yet can ultimately become, 'the place of mission'.[214] It is in an encounter with God that such experiences can be both transformed and used to equip the church for mission.[215] These themes of vulnerability and encounter with God will be returned to as part of my reading of Job.

Also touching on general or unattributed suffering, Goheen (drawing on Goppelt) describes the suffering of the NT church as reflecting a 'Daniel' model of suffering (that is, persecution), rather than a 'Job' model, which articulates 'the pain that comes from living in a fallen world'.[216] This seems like a missed opportunity. While it is true that persecution or external pressure were often the immediate contexts of the emergence of biblical writings, I

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[210] I deal with this in more detail in my discussion of Allen's article, below.

[211] D. Burnett, *The Healing of the Nations: The Biblical Basis of the Mission of God*, 2nd edn (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), p. 96.

[212] He also notes, 'Not only must the people of God recognise that mission will be carried out within a suffering world, but also appreciate that mission itself will involve suffering.' ibid. p. 92.

[213] I. Glaser, *Trauma, Migration and Mission: Biblical Reflections from a Traumatized Hebrew* (Oxford: Church Mission Society, 2008), p. 4.

[214] ibid., pp. 14-15, 15.

[215] ibid., pp. 14, 22.

[216] Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, p. 187. Cf. L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament, Vol 2: The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ*, translated by J. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 174.

would argue that the Job model (to use the concept) is always relevant. While I do not think either Goheen or Goppelt would deny this, in practice attributed suffering such as persecution seems to be the usual way of reflecting on suffering and mission.[217] While this is understandable I would argue that more attention should be given to missional reflection on unattributed suffering. As indicated in chapter one, this thesis is an attempt to do just that, with chapters four and five seeking to engage specifically with how the universalising impulse and the poverty theme may inform missional reflection on unattributed suffering and mission.

In a whole-Bible outline of the 'good news' of the Gospel, Wright includes a section discussing the Wisdom Literature's contribution.[218] For Wright, Job contains good news because it declares, '*that God can be known and trusted, against all that points in the opposite direction*'.[219] Furthermore Job exhibits good news in the way that it confronts, 'some of the desperate contradictions of life in this fallen world… [while continuing] to affirm the goodness and sovereignty of the one true living God and to hope in him.'[220] Its very existence demonstrates,

> how seriously God himself takes these issues that trouble us so deeply, and thereby enables us not only to rejoice in the hope that the gospel provides, but to continue to wrestle with these things on the foundation of that faith and hope.[221]

Given the particular angle Wright uses to approach these texts he highlights a degree of connection between Job and mission, yet there is much scope for development. His main point seems to be focused on the heuristic value of the inclusion of books like Job and Ecclesiastes in the biblical canon. Seen within the context of Christian theology, Job asks questions that resonated deeply and painfully with human experience, while also offering hope, seen ultimately in the work of Jesus Christ.[222] In my view this combination of allowing pain to 'breathe' while seeing it in the context of hope and the mission of God is important, and I will address this further in chapters four and five.

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[217] For a recent example of this tendency, see W.D. Taylor, A. van der Meer and R. Reimer, eds, *Sorrow and Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2012).

[218] C. Wright, '"According to the Scriptures" The Whole Gospel in Biblical Revelation', *ERT*, 33.1 (2009), 4-18. The issue comprises papers to come out of the Lausanne Theology Working Group, which met in the years prior to the Lausanne network's 2010 Cape Town congress in order to reflect theologically and missiologically on issues related to that gathering. Cf. C. Wright, 'Editorial: 'The Whole Gospel': Lausanne Reflects on its Own Vision', *ERT*, 33.1 (2009), 3.

[219] Wright, 'Whole Gospel', p. 15. His italics.

[220] ibid., p. 15.

[221] ibid., p. 15. He makes similar points concerning Ecclesiastes as well.

[222] He is, of course, making certain positive assumptions about the portrayal of God in Job and how it relates to the NT.

As part of Wright's more substantial treatment of the Wisdom Literature in *The Mission of God*, he considers the honesty with which these books address the ambiguities of life. For Wright, the most striking contrast between the Wisdom Literature and the rest of the Hebrew canon is the way in which the former expresses doubts about 'the universal applicability' of some of the main affirmations offered by the latter, as illustrated by texts like Job 24:1-12 and Ecc. 8:14-9:4.[223] Indeed, it is as if Israel's sages held up orthodox beliefs, 'and then throw out the challenge: "How can this belief be squared with the real world we live in? Life often simply doesn't follow these rules."'[224] Moreover, Wright suggests that,

> It is part of the strength and convincing power of the biblical case that it contains *within itself* precisely this degree of internal debate and wrestling with the core affirmations of a worldview that was explicitly founded on God's revelation and redemption.[225]

Wright considers this dynamic of the biblical material to have profoundly missional implications. Following Brueggemann he describes Israel's self-understanding,

> that it held its own faith *in trust for the world*. Israel's very existence was for the sake of the nations. Israel's God was God of all the earth. Whatever was true for Israel was true for all. Whatever Israel struggled with would be a problem for all.[226]

For Wright, the uncomfortable questioning of the Wisdom Literature must be taken seriously as 'part of our missional responsibility' for the world's sake.[227] Such attentiveness, he suggests helps to avoid 'the folly and lies of the so-called prosperity gospel, on the one hand, and the problem-denying triumphalism of the worst kinds of arrogant fundamentalism of the other.'[228]

If Israel's faith is being held 'in trust for the world', are there ways in which the Wisdom Literature exhibits this in differing or deeper ways than other parts of the canon? Wright concludes his reflections on the Wisdom Literature with the following statement:

> For the sake of the world, then, we must take this tone of voice in the Wisdom Literature seriously, with its awkward questions, its probing observations, its acceptance of the limitations of our finitude. It is part of our missional responsibility to do so…
>
> The fact is that the world poses some very hard questions for those who, in line with the whole Bible testimony, believe in one, good, personal, sovereign God. Wisdom

[223] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 450.
[224] ibid., p. 451. He is correct to point out that 'language of complaint, protest and baffled questioning' also features, for example, in the Psalms; p. 451.
[225] ibid., p. 451. His italics.
[226] ibid., p. 451. His italics. Cf. Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, p. 324.
[227] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 451.
[228] ibid., p. 452.

> provides a licence to think, to wrestle, to struggle, to protest and to argue. All it asks is that we do so with the undergirding faith and humble commitment encapsulated in its own core testimony that "the fear of the LORD–that is wisdom, / and to shun evil is understanding" (Job 28:28).[229]

This perspective of Wright's seems very important for a potential missional reading of a text like Job. He takes as positive and constructive the inherent tensions between Job and other parts of the canon and casts them in a missional light. Rather than ignoring or explaining away the deep questioning of elements of Israelite faith in Job, Wright frames this in the context of Israel's role in the world. This seems to be a more satisfactory way of approaching the ambiguities of Job. Not only does Wright's approach refrain from shying away from the book's difficulties; it actually champions them as a vital missional endeavour.

In my view this is a promising area of exploration as it opens up the potential for Job to contribute to missional reflection in a distinctive way, accounting for the ambiguities and hard questions of the book and relating them to God's purposes in the world. In particular, this theme connects closely with elements of the universalising impulse in the book explored in chapter four, and examined in relation to poverty in chapter five.

2.3.5 Job and social justice

The Lausanne Movement's Manila Manifesto cites Job 24:1-12 to illustrate the importance of 'The Gospel and Social Responsibility'.[230] The recent *Cape Town Commitment* (a successor document to the Lausanne Covenant and Manila Manifesto) has several references to Job, illustrating their commitment to working on behalf of the world's poor, suffering and immigrants (Job 29:7-17; 31:13-23; 29:16).[231]

In a recent article Jesurathnam reflects on holistic concerns by seeking to apply a discussion of the theme of social justice in the Wisdom Literature to contemporary mission activities 'with, from and also for' Dalit communities in India.[232] His understanding of mission, as identified in the context of this discussion, focuses less on 'conversion' and more on the restoration of the downtrodden and marginalised to wholeness, dignity, and

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[229] ibid., p. 452.

[230] The Lausanne Movement, *The Manila Manifesto*, (n.p.: The Lausanne Movement, 1989), <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/manila-manifesto.html> [accessed 16 July 2013].

[231] Lausanne, *Cape Town Commitment*, pp. 21, 27-29, 42-44. There is also a brief reference to Job 33:4 when discussing the movement's belief in the work of the Holy Spirit.

[232] K. Jesurathnam, 'A Dalit Interpretation of Wisdom Literature with Special Reference to the Underprivileged Groups in the Hebrew Society: A Mission Perspective', *Asia Journal of Theology*, 25.2 (2011), 334-357 (p. 347).

empowerment.[233] This chimes closely with holistic concerns although Jesurathnam does not address in detail how he understands these aspects to relate to, for example, confessions of faith.

Jesurathnam's treatment of Job focuses on the book's use of three terms for the poor (אֶבְיוֹן, דַּל and עָנִי) and, like the Lausanne documents, draws upon passages such as Job 24:1-17 and chs. 29-31 to bring out Job's teaching on the poor and marginalised.[234] Job is 'the representative of the oppressed and the powerless [who] laments bitterly for his pathetic condition'; God is 'directly involved in executing his justice as the creator of the earth on behalf of the poor and the powerless in the society'; 'the underprivileged and marginalized of his society… are the victims of economic and political injustice', systems against which Job fought to advocate on behalf of the poor, the ignored, and the helpless.[235]

In a rather cryptic conclusion to the Joban material, Jesurathnam states that Job argues both that Yahweh is in control of creation yet (quoting Gottwald), 'Job is also of the view that "God does not have evil and suffering totally under control, and thus God also suffers."'[236]

Relating his material to mission, Jesurathnam notes how the Wisdom Literature teaches God's people to work towards helping the oppressed and marginalised to retrieve their God-ordained identity, dignity and value that is the mark of all people, regardless of 'class or caste'; that 'God has special concern for these marginalized communities and the Church should take this Mission of God seriously in word and deed'; and that the challenge to the mechanical application of the doctrine of retribution, seen especially in Job, should be articulated against systems and beliefs that continue to disempower and oppress groups such as Dalit communities.[237] In sum,

> Mission to the marginalized and the underprivileged communities was at the heart of the biblical wisdom writers, and the same is at the core of Dalit theological discourse too. The Hebrew sages present the underprivileged of their society as active subjects of God's emancipative action, not simply the passive objects…
>
> Hebrew sages not only recorded their reflections but wanted their learning communities to practice God's mission to the most vulnerable and those in the margins of the society.[238]

[233] ibid., pp. 347-348.
[234] ibid., pp. 342-344.
[235] ibid., pp. 342, 343.
[236] ibid., p. 344. Quoting N.K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 578.
[237] Jesurathnam, pp. 347-355.
[238] ibid., pp. 353-355.

Although the Lausanne documents only have the scope to mention Job briefly, they do (along with Jesurathnam's reflections) illustrate something of the potential of the book of Job to connect with themes of poverty and justice. As I indicated in chapter one, my holistic understanding of mission allows me (indeed, requires me) to probe such issues and see them as missionally relevant. In chapter five, therefore, I will do this by engaging in a substantial discussion on the theme of the treatment of the poor in Job. Unlike Jesurathnam I do not tie this to a particular context. Nevertheless, I show how the book of Job has a unique contribution to make in the OT's treatment of the issue of poverty. As such, this also demonstrates a further aspect of Job's unique contribution to a biblical understanding of mission.

2.3.6 Correcting false teaching

A further aspect of the interaction with Job in BMS is how the book aims to correct false teaching. Glasser *et al* view the book of Job as challenging conventional wisdom's assumption that those suffering deserved what they were experiencing, a view espoused by Job's friends.[239] Even Elihu's claim that there was 'disciplinary value' in Job's suffering (Job 33:14-30) is 'brushed aside' by God's speeches which champion the mystery of Yahweh's wisdom and actions.[240]

Arguing against contemporary 'prosperity' teaching, Wright cites the book of Job as an example of when loss and suffering are not explained by disobedience.[241]

The extent to which this process is missional is worth considering. As will be shown below, van Zyl, for example, understands this corrective aim as being part of a critique-of-culture dynamic of mission. This may also be understood in relation to the discussion concerning the missional purposes of the biblical writings articulated in the previous chapter. By contributing to an articulation of a rendering of reality shaped by faith in Yahweh, biblical texts will, deliberately or implicitly, function as correctives to renderings of reality that are shaped by other beliefs. This contending for truth about Yahweh may be an internal process, challenging false assumptions (in this case) concerning the application of the retribution principle within the community of Israel. As such it may be understood as missional (as I have framed it) by shaping the people of Israel for their participation in God's purposes.

[239] A. Glasser and others, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003), p. 159.

[240] ibid., pp. 159-160. They then go on to suggest that, in comparison with the Joban author, the writer of Ecclesiastes 'appears almost an atheist. He saw the human enterprise as largely characterized by pain and vanity'; p. 160. See also the discussion concerning van Zyl's article, below.

[241] Wright, *Salvation*, p. 80. For a similar point see also, *idem*, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), p. 239.

However, it may also be an outward facing process that seeks to correct the beliefs of Israel's neighbours.[242]

In the book of Job both aspects seem to be at work. In chapter three I address the question of how the book of Job seeks to correct faulty assumptions concerning the relationship between suffering and piety. I then tackle the intercultural engagement and critique in more detail in chapter four.

2.3.7 The accuser (הַשָּׂטָן) in Job

At several points the use of Job in BMS focuses on הַשָּׂטָן, the accuser figure of the book's Prologue. Although to varying degrees of nuance, in most cases the assumption is made that הַשָּׂטָן equates, in some way, to the personal being, 'Satan'. Filbeck, for example, cites Job 1:6-12 as an example of Yahweh's uniqueness: 'It is he alone who allows and restrains Satan'.[243] Likewise, הַשָּׂטָן is a connecting point to Job for Glasser *et al*[244], Perriman[245], Piper[246], and Burnett[247], by illustrating the reality of the unseen supernatural in the world. Considering the phenomenon of 'The Evil One' in Job, Burnett deduces from the Prologue that, first, 'the evil intruder is a person, and secondly, that person is limited in his influence, by the constraints of God himself.'[248] Citing the accuser, a more ambiguous position is implied by Wright who, in the context of a chapter on idolatry, notes that 'Israel was also aware… of agencies within that exalted company that *questioned* God', although he does not expand on this carefully chosen language.[249]

It is not my intention here to detail the lengthy discussion on the precise identity of this figure or the divine assembly more broadly. My view is that הַשָּׂטָן is an ambiguous figure

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[242] Clearly, these internal and external elements are very closely related.

[243] Note the lack of definite article and capitalisation here and with others. For example, D. Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles, Too: The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 1994), p. 72.

[244] Glasser and others, p. 330.

[245] A. Perriman, *Re: Mission: Biblical Mission for a Post-biblical Church* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2007), p. 58.

[246] J. Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd edn (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), p. 84 fn 8: 'Demons cannot even speak without the permission of Jesus… How much less may they do anything more harmful without permission, as Job 1:12, 21; 2:6-7, 10 makes plain. Nevertheless Satan does persecute the church.'

[247] Burnett, *Healing*, pp. 96-97, 199. Cf. also Bremer who references Job briefly in two separate discussions on death and Satan; H. Bremer, 'Israel and the Nations', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 32 (1958), 59-69 (pp. 61, 68). Cf. also Glaser who notes similar themes; *Bible and Other Faiths*, pp. 139, 141, 249 fn 5.

[248] Burnett, *Healing*, p. 96.

[249] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 144. His italics. This chapter also cites Job 31:26-28 as confirming that even for the non-Israelite, idolatry is unacceptable, however enticing it may be; pp. 143, 166-167.

who has the particular responsibility among the angelic beings of bringing to light human failings.[250] To personify this figure as 'Satan' or 'evil' seems to misread the characterisation and function of הַשָּׂטָן, thereby making too simple a connection between הַשָּׂטָן and issues of the presence of evil and spiritual warfare in the world.[251] Importantly for my thesis, such an approach to הַשָּׂטָן also distracts the scholarly discussion away from his true missional relevance.

My reading of Job will not, therefore, address the identity of הַשָּׂטָן in any great depth. In my view the key issue of missional importance concerning this figure is the question he asks in 1:9b: הֲחִנָּם יָרֵא אִיּוֹב אֱלֹהִים 'Is it for nothing that Job fears God?' As I indicated in chapter one I consider this questioning of the possibility of a genuine relationship between God and humanity to be of the utmost importance to the *missio Dei*. As such, this will be the focus of my treatment of הַשָּׂטָן. Beyond this it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions concerning this rather enigmatic character, but I intend to show that a more cautious approach to his identity will be more helpful in refocusing to a more useful discussion of the missional relevance of him, and the book in which he plays a role.

2.3.8 Job as a 'tool' of mission

Several writers discuss what might be termed the 'instrumentality' of Job in mission, which relates to an understanding of the Bible as one of the means by which mission is carried out, as outlined in chapter one.[252]

Discussing the Wisdom Literature in general, Wright, for example, suggests that because Israel's Wisdom writers dealt with the universal concerns of the Wisdom Literature throughout the ANE (namely, the meaning of life and how to negotiate it successfully), these texts might be used profitably in missionary activity.[253] Insights into a culture can be gained by paying attention to its wisdom sayings and,

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[250] Cf. D.J.A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), pp. 19-23; M. Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning* (Jerusalem: The Magness Press, 1983), pp. 31-46; Balentine, pp. 48-53; J.H. Walton, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), pp. 63-67, Kindle edn.

[251] My intention here is not to deny the presence of evil in the world; rather I am cautious in applying to this particular biblical text more than is appropriate.

[252] Although this does not necessarily mean that the authors sampled here subscribe to missional hermeneutics.

[253] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 445. Cf. Glasser and others, who make a similar point.

> some missiologists and crosscultural practitioners suggest that the Wisdom Literature provides one of the best bridges for biblical faith to establish meaningful contact and engagement with widely different human cultures around the world.[254]

The book of Proverbs is the best-known example of using wisdom texts in mission in this way.[255] Wright, however, does not address the role Job may play in this.

In a more specific way than Wright or Glasser *et al.*, Lapham suggests ways in which certain biblical texts might be relevant to missionary activity amongst particular groups. The Wisdom Literature, he suggests, might be especially helpful in working with humanists as it seems to present itself as 'the Wisdom of the Wise', without much recourse to inspiration.[256]

He suggests that the Wisdom teachers know the limits of wisdom, and that they keep the suffering of the righteous in the foreground.[257] This introduces his discussion on the book of Job. Job has a 'greatness of soul' as illustrated in numerous places (1:1, 8; 2:3; 10; 9:32ff.; 13:3; 23:3-12; 19:25-27).[258] It contends with the oversimplified belief in action and consequence, punishment and reward, which 'belittle' both God and religion.[259]

Rather, when interacting with those of other faiths, a fruitful course of action might be, 'to encourage them to think about and discuss what we call "painful mysteries of Providence," the many happenings in the world that are not on the lines of poetic justice.'[260] He also thinks that 'religious progressiveness' on a national level could be attained through Ecclesiastes or Job-like experiences that bring 'enlightenment' through pain.[261]

Russell's short introduction to a missional hermeneutic gives some mention of Job in the context of a wider coverage on the Wisdom Literature, which he thinks relates to the biblical story by reflecting on life and creation, engaging in universal questions yet in distinctive ways:

> Israel's unique contribution to the lore of the ancients is profoundly missional: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7). The implication is

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[254] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 445; C.J.H. Wright, 'Old Testament Theology of Mission', in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. by A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), pp. 706-709 (p. 708). Cf. Glasser and others, p. 161.

[255] Although doing so is not without its complexities, as well as important possibilities. See, for example, C. Rountree, 'You Should Dance on One Foot: The Saramaccans and Wisdom Literature', *Missiology*, 22.4 (1994), 471-480; de Ruiter.

[256] H.A. Lapham, *The Bible as Missionary Handbook* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1925), p. 93.

[257] ibid., pp. 100-101.

[258] ibid., p. 102.

[259] ibid., p. 102.

[260] ibid., pp. 103-104.

[261] ibid., pp. 104-105.

> this: *careful attention to the human condition may prepare persons for the truth about God* (cf. Eccl 12:12-14).[262]

Hedlund goes on to suggest that the universalism of the Wisdom Literature made it useful in the 'missionary application' of later Judaism, claiming that sections from Proverbs and Job may have been 'used as missionary tracts', a practice that could also be adopted today.[263]

Certain assumptions are evident in this angle on Job. While the 'openness' of Job is acknowledged, these scholars seem to frame this in the light of a traditional, 'conversionist' model of mission which ultimately seeks the acceptance of the proclaimed Gospel message. In each case the book of Job is envisaged as a means through which greater engagement can occur, leading to a more helpful reception of the Gospel message.[264] As such it may have a preparatory function as part of a process of evangelism. The assumption is, therefore, that Job is not enough in itself to bring about 'conversion', which is a necessary result of this form of mission.[265] Although without much support, Hedland's suggestion about how Job may have been used is suggestive. As I explain further in chapter four, it seems reasonable that the book of Job had the potential to engage non-Israelites with recognisable issues while still contributing to an articulation of faith in Yahweh. Thus, in itself it embodies a testimony of Yahweh faith which had the potential to be used in commending Israel's faith.

The approach taken in the literature concerning the contemporary instrumentality of Job seems reasonable as a description of one of the ways the book of Job may provide a means by which mission is carried out. It is not within the scope of my thesis to examine the use of Job in contemporary praxis, although I do refer to it at points. For example, in my examination of Job's intercultural engagement in the context of the ANE I make some suggestions concerning how this may be seen in the context of contemporary mission.

It is also worth considering the limitations of this approach. Is the real missional value of Job only in its capacity to move people to a more receptive hearing of the Gospel? As well as contributing to the process of proclamation and conversion it would seem worthwhile to look at how Job may be instrumental in carrying out other elements of holistic mission. I will return to this in more detail in chapter five when dealing with the issue of poverty.

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[262] B.D. Russell, 'What is a Missional Hermeneutic?', *Catalyst On-line*, 36.4 (2011), np. <http://www.catalystresources.org/what-is-a-missional-hermeneutic> [accessed 21 March 2013]. His italics.

[263] Hedlund, *Mission of the Church*, p. 140; cf. pp. 144-145. However, he is not able to provide much support for these intriguing statements.

[264] A similar point is made and developed by C. Wright; see below for a discussion on this.

[265] Sharing similar assumptions, C. Wright, for example, speaks of the Wisdom Literature as a 'bridge' that 'does not in itself contain the saving message of the whole biblical gospel'; *Mission of God*, p. 447. See the discussion on Wright below.

2.3.9 Job and the rest of the biblical narrative

Long-established discussions concerning the complex relationship between a book like Job and the rest of the OT are also reflected in BMS. As I noted in chapter one, and will develop in more detail in chapter three, there is a strong theme in BMS of the missional nature of the 'grand narrative' of the Bible. It is of significant interest, therefore, to understand how this theme may have been perceived as connecting to Job. The complexity of this question is well illustrated, for example, by Glasser *et al.* in their *Announcing the Kingdom* which includes a section entitled, 'Wisdom Literature and God's Kingdom Mission'.[266] Here, they describe Job (and Ecclesiastes) as akin to 'antiwisdom' in that they,

> encourage faith when bad things happen to good people… there are times when revision and addition are necessary. While it is then that such changes become invaluable to us, making them is always traumatic.[267]

Glasser *et al.* point to the importance of the fear of the Lord (citing Job 28:28) as a distinguishing feature of Israel's wisdom, and for Israel's claim that 'Wisdom is derived from God and should be attributed to God alone (Job 12:13; Prov. 3:19-20; 8:22-31; Isa. 31:2; etc)', which was especially important given the generally universal tenor of the wisdom material.[268]

In my view Glasser *et al.* reflect the difficulties of many others who attempt to connect Job (and wisdom more broadly) with the mission of God. This is exemplified in a statement in the concluding section on their discussion of the Wisdom Literature:

> We grant that the wisdom literature does not directly concern itself with the ongoing redemptive purposes of God, even though some might argue that Job intimated otherwise when he said: "The fear of the Lord–that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding" (28:28).[269]

When starting from a framework that privileges the 'storyline' of the Bible, it is not always straightforward to slot in books that do not 'progress' this story on a temporal plane. This illustrates one aspect of the complexity of the biblical canon and seems to be an important reason why books like Job are often ignored or neglected in BMS. Concerning this variety and complexity Beeby argues for an approach to the Bible that detects 'a unified missional whole', seen in its consistent 'witness to the mystery of God Almighty and the mysterious

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[266] Glasser and others, pp. 157-161.
[267] ibid., p. 158.
[268] ibid., p. 158.
[269] ibid., p. 161. Perhaps because of its organising principle of 'The Kingdom of God' the treatment of Wisdom in this work is fairly brief.

missio Dei', while also acknowledging the differing perspectives offered, for example by the Wisdom Literature and the prophets.[270]

Similarly, noting the diversity and richness of the biblical canon, Bauckham mentions Job as 'confronting a perplexity at the heart of biblical faith but virtually without reference to the Old Testament story of God and his people', and Ecclesiastes as 'almost postmodern in its inability to make sense of the story'.[271] Yet, he suggests, this should not mean that these books are marginalised or assimilated too simplistically into the rest of the biblical story, concluding: 'Actually in their problematic and marginal character they too may be resources for a missionary church.'[272] Frustratingly Bauckham does not elaborate on this final point, although I would understand this to mean that the Bible's inclusion of difficult and marginal texts reflects and speaks into the ambiguities of human experience in the world.[273]

Also addressing the relationship between the Wisdom Literature and the overall biblical story Wright notes the limitations of the Wisdom Literature in that it does not account for the whole, redemptive message of the Bible.[274] He detects a 'self-critiquing' strand of thought within the Wisdom Literature 'that questions its own adequacy to solve the problems it addresses'; hence setting Job and Ecclesiastes alongside the book of Proverbs.[275] Job and Ecclesiastes deal especially with the ambiguities and troubling aspects of life in the world since humanity's rebellion in Gen. 3.[276] For Wright, the Wisdom Literature cannot on its own answer the questions of 'satanic malice, suffering, frustration, meaningless toil, unpredictable consequences, uncertain futures, the twistedness of life and the final mockery of death', but it can act as a signpost to where 'the answer' might lie: in the fear of Yahweh himself, who is the one known to Israel in 'their historical experience of election, redemption and covenant.'[277] Wright's points are clearly based on his assumptions about the canonical nature of the Bible and should also be understood with reference to his Christian reading of Scripture. I address these in more detail in chapter three when considering the validity and potential of canon and narrative in a missional reading of the Bible.

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[270] Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 279. His italics. Moreover, 'Within wisdom Job does not agree with Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes is out of tune with almost everybody'; p. 279.
[271] Bauckham, 'Mission as Hermeneutic', p. 13.
[272] ibid., p. 13.
[273] See below on suffering as the context of mission. I also address questions concerning the complexity and legitimacy of conceiving of the Bible as a canonical unity in chapter three.
[274] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 447. See also Wright, 'OT Theology', p. 708
[275] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 447. Though the contrast between Proverbs' 'naivety' and Job and Ecclesiastes' critique can be overplayed. See, for example, van Leeuwen, 'Wealth and Poverty'.
[276] ibid., p. 447.
[277] ibid., p. 447.

A further aspect of the relationship between the Wisdom Literature and the more explicitly 'redemptive' narrative of the Bible can be seen, for Wright, in the connection made between Solomon and the extent of the Davidic covenant:

> the historical narrative binds Wisdom into that tradition through its association with Solomon. Any wisdom that is associated with Solomon must be connected with the Solomonic tradition that God should bless the nations in their interaction with Israel.[278]

Similarly, Schultz sees in the Wisdom Literature a degree of movement out to the nations through its associations with Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs. 5:9-14) and, given its universal nature and themes and encouragement to embrace the fear of Yahweh, suggests that these books may have been written with a 'limited missionary intention'.[279] While attractive it is difficult to assess Schultz's suggestion, or the significance of the Solomon link to Job more broadly. Unlike Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the book of Job is not normally associated with Solomon.[280] It seems then that the Solomon question is less relevant to Job but the attempts of Wright and others to relate Job (and the Wisdom Literature more broadly) to the overarching biblical story in terms of a salvation-historical narrative are important.[281] Clearly this will be something I will engage with as part of my missional reading of Job. My main focus in this regard is to ask a different type of question concerning the relationship between Job and the biblical narrative. Rather than seeking simply to place the book within the chronological storyline of the Bible, I seek instead to examine how the book of Job functions in relation to it by speaking into it. This will be developed considerably in chapters three and four.

2.3.10 Job and creation

Glasser *et al.* suggest that the book of Job illustrates the importance 'of the doctrine of Creation' in that 'Job never had an adequate conception of God until confronted by the marvels of God's creative work and his providential care over all he had made (38:1-4; 42:5-6).'[282] The degree to which Job's understanding of God at the end of the book is 'adequate'

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[278] ibid., p. 448.

[279] My translation. Schultz, 'Mission im AT', p. 44.

[280] For a further discussion on the use of Solomon to connect the Wisdom Literature to the story of Israel, see chapter three.

[281] Again, Wright's commitment to a particular canonical, Christian, 'conversionist' reading is evident here.

[282] Glasser and others, p. 34. They also cite Job to give examples of 'servants' of God in the OT (1:8), though this does not seem to be missionally relevant; p. 205. Also on the subject of creation theology, S. Chapman and L. Warner cite Job 26:10-12; S.B. Chapman and L.C. Warner,

is debatable. It could be argued that while Job's overwhelming encounter with God was sufficient for him to know his place and live accordingly, much of his circumstances and his understanding of God remained a mystery. Perhaps too it was the encounter itself with God that was sufficient, rather than the details of the speeches. I will address the function of Yahweh's speeches and Job's responses in more detail in chapter four.

In *Let the Nations be Glad*, Piper cites Job when discussing the wonder of creation and the majesty (Job 26:14) and sovereignty (Job 42:1) of God.[283] Burnett makes a similar point, following a general precis of the contents of Job, with a mention of Job 38 in relation to God's pleasure in Creation, and that, due to God being 'Creator and sustainer of the universe, his power is supreme over all things.'[284]

Peskett and Ramachandra also reference Job (38-41 and 12:10) in relation to discussions on creation.[285] Notably, they pick up on themes of God's delight in creation and the way that creation reflects God's glory. The latter forms part of a discussion on 'Mission as earth-keeping', which examines the church's responsibility to care for creation.[286]

For Hedlund the theme of creation in Job is missiologically significant in that 'God himself describes his creation as a universal witness to the presence and power of God (Job 38-41)' and that 'there is also a witness in human wisdom and conscience… [that] point to the wisdom of God.'[287]

Wright's discussion on the creation theme in the Wisdom Literature focuses on its ethical implications.[288] He contrasts the 'motivational appeal' found in Wisdom writings, which is broadly based on Israel's beliefs about the creation (illustrated by, among other texts, Job 31:13-15), and that of the Law and the Prophets, which tend to refer to the 'redemptive

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'Rethinking Evangelism and the Old Testament: Jonah and the Imitation of God', *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, 2.1 (2008), 43-69 (p. 55).

[283] Piper, pp. 19, 65.

[284] Burnett, *Healing*, pp. 95-96.

[285] H. Peskett and V. Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission: The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), pp. 34 and 48, respectively. In addition they cite Job 28 as possible background to Col. 1:15-20, and Job 28:14 when discussing 'the deep'; cf. pp. 19 (on Colossians), 108 and 246 (on 'the deep').

[286] ibid., pp. 48-52. Cf., for example, the *Lausanne Occasional Paper on Holistic Mission* which makes two brief references to Job 38-42 in the context of its section on the care for creation; E.H. Campbell, ed, *Lausanne Occasional Paper on Holistic Mission* (n.p.: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2004), <http://www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP33_IG4.pdf> [accessed 1 March 2012]. As I note, below, the care of creation is one important aspect of holistic mission that I could have pursued in my missional reading of Job. However, I chose instead to concentrate on the issue of the treatment of the poor.

[287] Hedlund, *Mission of the Church*, p. 135.

[288] Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 448-450.

history' of Israel.[289] For Wright, this distinct, though complementary stress of the Wisdom Literature is missiologically significant in that it emphasises that, regardless of a person's ethnic, social or religious distinctives, 'we share a common humanity and (whether they acknowledge the fact or not) a common Creator God.'[290] Indeed, this commonality should therefore provide fruitful starting points for the communication of 'the biblical story of redemption.'[291]

Wright connects this sense of universality to the area of ethics as well in that all people are made in the image of God and live in God's creation, and so at some level biblical ethical values will resonate with them.[292] Although the issue of ethics is complex and nuanced, Wright's point does seem plausible, although how it worked or works out in practice is another matter. This discussion relates closely with the theme of Job and social justice which is discussed above.

Elsewhere, Wright draws on illustrative texts from Job when arguing for the sanctity (but not divinity) of creation (Job 31:26-28); that everything (including creation) belongs to God (Job 4:11; and to support his statement that, 'Part of the meaning of the goodness of creation in the Bible is that it testifies to the God who made it, reflecting something of his good character' (Job 12:7-9).[293]

Given the prominence of the theme in Job, and the Wisdom Literature more broadly, it is natural that BMS would mention the book when discussing creation. Often a connection is made between Yahweh's speeches and his attributes, or affections towards creation. As such these observations seem reasonable up to a point, but they tend not to probe the complex contexts of such references. For example, while the Yahweh speeches do illustrate the power of God, this is often taken in isolation without a discussion of the ambiguities of the tone of the speeches.

A helpful angle explored, for example, by Hedlund and Wright is that of the universal implications of the creation theme in Job. This will be something I will return to in my approach to Job when discussing the universalising impulse of the book and the treatment of the poor in Job. I will also discuss these themes in relation to a more nuanced treatment of the Yahweh speeches than has been offered by BMS.

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[289] ibid., p. 449. He offers the example of Israel's concern for the poor: Exod. 23:9; Lev. 19:33-36; 25:39-43; Deut. 15:12-15; 24:14-22 appeal to Israel's experience of redemption by Yahweh who calls them to imitate his compassion in their dealings with the poor; whereas Prov. 14:31; 17:5; 19:17; 22:2; 29:7, 13; Job. 31:13-15 emphasise the common humanity of all people based on the one God who made us all (see p. 449).

[290] ibid., p. 450. Cf. p. 423 where he makes a similar point on Job 31:15.

[291] ibid., p. 450.

[292] ibid., p. 450.

[293] ibid., pp. 402, 397, 398, respectively.

2.3.11 Job as an example of dialogue

Both the content and form of Job make the book an example that is sometimes drawn upon when scholars discuss the biblical grounding for religious dialogue. As part of a discussion on dialogue in contemporary mission Stott, for example, uses Job as one of several examples from the Bible of God entering into 'dialogue' with humanity, citing God's words in Job 38:3 and 40:7.[294]

Beeby also draws on Job when discussing contemporary religious dialogue.[295] He considers reflection on dialogue to have been inadequate in how it has appealed to biblical studies.[296] Having reiterated his commitment to the whole canon of Scripture as the source for understanding what may be termed 'biblical', Beeby suggests that, outside the book of Job, the Bible evidences little knowledge of dialogue between or within faiths.[297] Frustratingly he does not expand on this assertion about Job.

On a different aspect of 'dialogue', Thampu draws on Job to commend the importance of dialogue as a model for relating to God. 'The Book of Job', he contends, 'is as much on theology, as it is of theology… What helps, in the end, is that the voice of God is heard.'[298]

While the book of Job is indeed a particularly sustained example from within the Bible of alternating speech concerning religious beliefs, the extent to which it could or should be a model of contemporary interreligious dialogue is not clear. I would argue that while the dialogue is effective in airing the different views, it cannot be seen as a discussion that builds to mutual understanding in a constructive way. Rather, the parties are silenced by the authoritative word of Yahweh.[299]

Perhaps Job is better understood as a tool rather than a model of interreligious dialogue; that is, a text that can be discussed, for example, by adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, whose sacred texts all include the character of Job. One such example is the practice of Scriptural Reasoning, whereby adherents to (usually) Judaism, Christianity and Islam read

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[294] J.R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 2nd edn (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), location 726-727, Kindle edn.

[295] Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, ch. 4.

[296] ibid., p. 58.

[297] ibid., p. 61.

[298] V. Thampu, *Rediscovering Mission: Towards a Non-Western Missiological Paradigm* (New Delhi: TRACI, 1995), p. 128. Cf. Gutiérrez. See chapter four of the thesis for a more developed discussion on the significance of Yahweh's speeches in the book.

[299] The tone of the debate is also at odds with that envisaged by contemporary adherents to dialogue. See Matthey, 'Serving God's Mission', who connects the openness of the broader Wisdom Literature to the idea of dialogue; especially pp. 33-34.

together from their sacred texts for mutual appreciation and understanding.[300] However, this may be carried out without any missional intention.[301]

In chapter four I develop the idea of the book of Job as joining an international conversation on the theme of unattributed suffering. In this sense it could be described as entering into dialogue with other beliefs. As already indicated, perhaps Job was even used in this way in its original context, although there is no way of knowing.

So far the survey has shown that the book of Job has been engaged with to a certain extent and in various ways by BMS and has identified a number of themes around which the discussion of Job and mission has revolved. In the following, final section of the review I focus on three articles that deserve special attention.

2.4 Three specific treatments of Job and Mission

Since 2002 three articles have been published that attempt to engage specifically and exclusively with the book of Job in the light of God's mission. As will become evident, a number of key themes within these articles touch upon, and develop points made elsewhere in the literature. However, each work has a contribution to make to the developing discussion on the book of Job and the mission of God and, as such they provide valuable reference points throughout my thesis. In particular, my engagement with them culminates in a specific treatment in my concluding chapter, where I outline how my work both builds on and critiques these scholars' discussions.

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[300] Cf., for example, the issue of *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, focused on the theme of 'The Wisdom of Job'; 4.1 (2004), edited by Susannah Ticciati, <http://jsr.lib.virginia.edu/vol-4-no-1-july-2004-the-wisdom-of-job> [accessed 15 June 2013].

[301] In the 'Frequently Asked Questions' section of the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme website, for example, the question is asked, 'Can members of Scriptural Reasoning try to convert each other?', to which the answer is:

'Members of Scriptural Reasoning groups will probably disagree about conversion. Some may think that it is very important to hope, pray and work for the conversion of others to their faith; others will think that such an approach is inappropriate. Everyone in the group needs to behave, however, in such a way that **all** participants will feel safe from any pressure to accept another tradition, or any attack on their own tradition. So all participants need to agree that the Scriptural Reasoning group itself is not a context in which the main aim is to convince other participants of the truth or authority of one set of scriptures.' <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/content/frequently-asked-questions-about-scriptural-reasoning> [accessed 15 June 2013]. Emphasis original.

2.4.1 D. van Zyl's 'Missiological Dimensions in the Book of Job' (2002)[302]

Writing out of a South African context and following the work of Newbigin and the Gospel and Our Culture Movement, van Zyl frames his missiological approach to Job by adopting an understanding of 'mission' as critiquing culture:

> [It is] in questioning and challenging aspects of one's own culture… that I wish to suggest that the book of Job may have profound missiological dimensions to it, and has a contribution to make to missiological thinking.[303]

He notes that in certain African congregations the instance of Job's neighbours and friends bringing him gifts in the book's Epilogue has become a model for contemporary care for those in or recovering from difficulty, and sees in this the assumption by those readers at least that the book does have 'missionary dimensions.'[304]

As well as exploring the question of suffering van Zyl asserts that Job 'should be read as a critique of the prevailing views of standard wisdom of its time.'[305] As such, van Zyl's approach connects with aspects of mission highlighted in the preceding discussion when dealing with issues such as a missional encounter with culture and critiquing bad religion.[306] Opting for a post-exilic dating, he sees the book's attack on retribution as a condemnation of the ways in which the powerful at that time were legitimising their positions in society by appealing to the theology of the Deuteronomist and the sages of Israel and elsewhere.[307]

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[302] Van Zyl's article contributes to a 2002 issue of the *International Review of Mission* journal on the theme of 'Bible and Mission', which is the fruit of the Biblical Studies and Mission working group of the International Association of Mission Studies. The issue concentrates on three areas of the Bible: the OT wisdom tradition, the Gospel of Matthew, and Paul's letter to the Colossians. The wisdom-related articles address the books of Ecclesiastes, Job, Song of Songs, and Jonah; J.M. Prior, '"When all the Singing has Stopped": Ecclesiastes: A Modest Mission in Unpredictable Times', *IRM*, 91.360 (2002), 7-23; van Zyl; S.J. Bennett, 'Love Over Gold: The Song of Songs for Aotearoa-New Zealand', *IRM*, 91.360 (2002), 31-40; K.A. Steenbrink, 'Jonah: From a Prophetic Mission in Reverse to Inter-religious Dialogue', *IRM*, 91.360 (2002), 41-51. In his editorial, Matthey suggests that 'In the world situation we face… [these texts] appear to be particularly relevant for a renewed reflection on mission' in that they can help the Church address the challenges of postmodernity, issues of 'inculturation' and religious plurality, and 'advocacy and the never ending struggle for justice in an unjust world.' J. Matthey, 'Editorial', *IRM*, 91.360 (2002), 3-6 (p. 3). He concludes his summary of the articles on wisdom with the striking claim, 'They are not easy reading, but probably are the most fascinating Bible texts for dealing with mission in our contemporary world context.' Matthey, 'Editorial', p. 4

[303] Van Zyl, p. 26. Cf. L. Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 67-69; Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, pp. 3-6.

[304] Van Zyl, p. 26. Cf. the discussion above and in chapters one and three on the Bible as a resource for models of missional activity.

[305] ibid., p. 27.

[306] Cf. also the discussion in chapter three on a missional purpose of Job being to correct bad theology in relation to retributive suffering.

[307] ibid., p. 27.

Van Zyl notes that Job does not exactly abandon the notion of causality but that 'he draws other conclusions'; that is, the world should run in the prescribed way but 'God does not respond to this wisdom paradigm'.[308] He views Job's relationship with God as complex, in that he both accuses and seeks God, suggesting the existence of 'an alternative to the one-dimensional relationship with God, which the book aims to unmask.'[309] Similarly, he detects an alternative to conventional wisdom in the fact that Job spoke *to* God rather than simply *about* God.[310]

Van Zyl then draws out some missiological implications of Job for its own context and for contemporary, Western society. Concerning the former, he understands the book of Job to be addressing the retribution model of sin and suffering which, in effect, 'legitimized the position of the prosperous and powerful, and "demonized" the sick, the have-not's, the working class.'[311] Such a critique, therefore, 'brings hope to the poor and suffering that they may understand more of God than the wise do... It critiques theology which has become ideology.'[312]

Concerning mission in contemporary, Western contexts (which he relates to concerns of the 'Gospel and Our Culture' network) van Zyl considers Job to have an important contribution. In the West, he suggests, Christians accept the culture because they assume (after centuries of Christianity) that it is in some sense acceptable and 'Christian'. But the socio-political and economic systems mean 'good news (gospel) to those who are advantaged by it. In fact these are those in positions of power, mostly economic power.'[313] For van Zyl, Job models an approach to tackling issues of poverty and injustice that are achieved only when the church,

> becomes part of the other side, comes to experience something of the suffering of those who are disadvantaged by the systems and ideologies of society, that its eyes are opened and it can become a voice for the voiceless. It needs to experience how the system, in the name of God, dehumanizes and even demonizes people, people who have real pain, physical and mental.'[314]

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[308] ibid., pp. 27, 28.
[309] ibid., p. 28.
[310] ibid., p. 28. His italics. Cf. the work of Gutiérrez here, upon which I draw later in the thesis, especially in chapters four and five.
[311] Van Zyl, p. 28.
[312] ibid., p. 28. To illustrate the faulty notion that suffering necessarily provides proof of sin he appeals to arguments made by Job's comforters in Job 8; 11:13f; 22:21f., which reflect orthodox views yet are ultimately seen to be insufficient because they leave no room for any other explanation. Even Job operates within the orthodox paradigm, although he exposes the friends' false understanding by questioning God's lack of consistency within it (for example, Job 10). Ultimately, it is Yahweh's speeches that critique the presumption of the mechanistic view of reward and punishment. Cf. pp. 27-28.
[313] ibid., p. 29.
[314] ibid., p. 29.

It is the Church's missional responsibility to challenge unjust systems, especially the 'prosperity syndrome' that

> leaves suffering people feeling left behind, useless and God-forsaken. The system may even create guilt pathology with those suffering, as those friends of Job tried to do. It leaves no room for the possibility of the meaningfulness of suffering. The physically disabled, AIDS sufferers, displaced people, refugees, orphans, minorities, and victims of the "system" need the church not only to minister to their needs, but to address the macro systems and ideologies which create and sustain these systems.[315]

Van Zyl also considers the book of Job as exemplifying a way of doing 'Mission in bold humility'.[316] The church, he contends, should carry out its witness from a place of weakness, which would demonstrate the true power of the gospel. [317] In this, van Zyl suggests the book of Job could be seen as paradigmatic because it subverts wisely and ingeniously: it does not attempt to 'uproot systems' but, rather, 'bears witness to alternatives, liberating people, and liberating God from being taken captive, enslaved by human systems!'[318]

He concludes with a warning for the Western church about the subtleties and dangers of complicity with unfair systems:

> the missionary challenge for churches who are *living within* the system is urgent and long overdue. They have to bring a message from within, like Job who, in a subversive manner, challenged the system in its own terms.[319]

Van Zyl's treatment of Job touches upon several themes highlighted in the previous section. His framing of mission as critiquing culture relates to issues of correcting false teaching both within Israel and in relation to ANE beliefs. He is keenly aware of the ambiguities and injustices of human experience and the necessity for mission to be carried out in the context of weakness. The discussion of 'the system' involves bold claims that he does not have room to unpack in detail. They are based on a particular understanding of economic and political structures, for which I have sympathy, although it is not easy to compare ANE contexts with contemporary ones. Nevertheless, the question of complicity remains important. In chapter five I address the question of complicity in Job more specifically, when dealing with the question of the treatment of the poor in the book.

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[315] ibid., p. 29.

[316] ibid., p. 29. 'Bold humility' is a phrase attributed to Bosch; cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 489; W. Saayman and K. Kritzinger, eds, *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996).

[317] Van Zyl, p. 29.

[318] ibid., p. 29. Thus, 'The epilogue of the book suggests that the system in itself may not be only bad. What is bad is that it is used to crush down people, especially suffering people, and to legitimize the positions of the powerful'; p. 29.

[319] ibid., p. 30. His italics.

Overall van Zyl's treatment of Job and mission is an effective one. Framing mission as cultural critique provides helpful room for him to explore the missiological significance of Job both in the context of Ancient Israel and also in contemporary contexts, although at times he moves very quickly from one to the next. His particular angle also means that he neglects other aspects of mission that the theme of cultural critique does not emphasise, such as the function of the text in relation to the biblical story.

My own approach to a missional reading of Job will connect with van Zyl's material at several points. Of particular note is his emphasis on the relationship between the didactic aims of Job and issues of poverty and social justice, seen especially in how it challenges 'the system'. Although one must be careful in how issues in OT times are contextualised for the contemporary world, it is nevertheless an important connection that van Zyl makes between mission, poverty and marginalisation. This will be a major theme addressed in my treatment of poverty in Job, although I will seek to base my discussion on a broader foundation of detailed exegetical work, which is lacking in the article.

Like van Zyl I will address the way in which the book of Job articulates a critique of false teaching. However, I will set this in a broader context than van Zyl's primary interest of social justice. In particular chapter four will examine the nature of Job's affirmation and critique in relation to ANE beliefs.

2.4.2 W. Allen's 'The Missionary Message of Job: God's Universal Concern For Healing' (2002)

Written in a Caribbean context, Allen's article aims to articulate certain missiological elements of the book of Job and apply them as a motivation for missionary activity. He separates the teaching of Job to set up his main argument, suggesting that, while the book has important and powerful things to say concerning pain and suffering, 'Job also provides a message to those who are not suffering, who are not in pain. This is the missionary message of Job.' [320] In my view this approach sets up a rather unhelpful and false dichotomy within the book. In so doing Allen seems to move away from some crucial issues of the book, such as the vexing question of unattributed suffering and social justice, in order to concentrate on selected themes. He then expands on the content of the message, depicting it as 'the same message as that of the entire Bible: God wants to heal the nations of the disease of sin'.[321]

For Allen, Job's 'unique contribution' to this whole-Bible phenomenon is that the book 'presents the cry of the human heart at the time of the Patriarchs for more knowledge of

[320] Allen, 'Missionary Message', p. 18.
[321] ibid., p. 18.

God, for a better revelation of God.'[322] This is especially important for Allen as Job becomes representative of humanity's ignorance of God to which God responds in Gen. 12, by calling Abraham 'so that he and his descendants would become the means by which humanity would be able to know exactly what God demands of humanity. This is the missionary message of Job.'[323] Allen then ties this calling to the contemporary church: 'It is vital… because this message calls the church… to be God's means of healing a diseased and suffering world.'[324]

By way of 'preamble' he then surveys issues such as authorship and dating, concluding that Job was a real person living around the same period as Abraham and Melchizedek (around 2000 BC).[325] This view of Job's historicity drives Allen's understanding of the book's missional relevance, which concentrates on its placement in the redemptive storyline, prior to the call of Abraham.

Discussing the sacrificial system in patriarchal times, and the use of Shaddai or El Shaddai as a name for God in Job, Allen depicts Job as someone who knows something of, and attempts to please the powerful, just, righteous, holy and supreme God, but was still alienated from him.[326] Job recognized humanity's sinfulness and that he was living as best he could, but ultimately the book, 'presents Job's anguished cry to God "I am doing the best I can and he still destroys me! What more does God want from me?!"'[327]

Allen then describes what he sees as Job's two-fold complaint to God. First, focusing on ch. 31, Job claims that he is righteous, as confirmed by God's endorsement in 1:8, but, 'Job did not understand God's nature, ways or purposes. He needed, and wanted, a better revelation of God'.[328] Secondly, Job desperately desired to encounter God to present his case but could not find him (Job 23:1-9; cf. 9:1-20; 13:20-24). Job, therefore, 'represents humanity's cry to know its creator' and it was in the context of such ignorance that Allen, speculating rather broadly, considers 'The Enemy' to have provided alternative ways of understanding, leading to the development of other religious systems.[329]

God's response to this anguished cry was the call of Abraham, which ensured 'that the knowledge of God for which humanity longed would be available to all nations.'[330] Allen

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[322] ibid., p. 18.
[323] ibid., p. 19.
[324] ibid., p. 19.
[325] ibid., pp. 19-22. His justification for such definitive conclusions is, in my view, not sufficiently robust.
[326] ibid., pp. 23-24.
[327] ibid., p. 24.
[328] ibid., p. 25.
[329] ibid., p. 26. He does not elaborate on this figure.
[330] ibid., p. 26.

then ties the call of Abraham to the ultimate revelation of God, Jesus Christ, through whom all people may come to know

> exactly what God is like… [and] can know that there is one God and one umpire between this holy God and sinful human men and women… There is no reason to wonder, "Why is this happening to me? What does God want of me?".[331]

This representative function of Job leads Allen to connect the book to a call and motivation to contemporary mission activity: 'There are billions in the world today like Job. They want to hear a true word from God, but they do not know where to find it.'[332] Just as God sent Abraham and, ultimately, Jesus to address that ignorance, now he sends the contemporary church.[333]

In line with BMS Allen addresses the question of the book of Job's placement within the biblical storyline, and touches on the function of Job's provenance although he focuses on when Job lived rather than where. However I am not convinced that his approach represents the book of Job well. While he takes the patriarchal setting of the book seriously, Allen does not account, for example, for the dialogues or Yahweh's speeches. His particular emphasis on the significance of the book's location within the biblical storyline is problematic. He seems to have a canonical understanding of the storyline yet treats it in such a way as to restrict the missional function of Job to a rather specific line of thought. While I would understand Job as having a representative function, in chapters four and five I argue for a much more nuanced understanding of this paradigmatic role.

For Allen, the book of Job describes the plight of ignorant humanity to which God responds and to which we must also respond. But Job's questions remain. Job was not, in my view, trying to work out what more he could have done. As I will demonstrate in chapter four, this notion is more closely paralleled in certain ANE texts than in the biblical book. Rather, Job was trying to say that God was not being true to his side of the bargain (for example, ch. 24). Although the book recognises the limitations of human understanding and knowledge, this seems to be affirmed as a healthy stance of humanity that leads to a right attitude towards Yahweh.[334]

I am also not convinced that separating the issue of suffering from the missionary message of Job is a good approach, as I consider the two to be closely related. A consequence of this choice, in my view, is that Allen does not account sufficiently for the importance of the theme of suffering. The genuine, honest reflections of Job on this theme seem ignored by

[331] ibid., p. 26.
[332] ibid., p. 29.
[333] ibid., p. 29.
[334] Job 28; 42:2-6.

Allen, who suggests that, following the NT, 'There is no reason to wonder, "Why is this happening to me? What does God want of me?"' [335] This seems overly dismissive of the complexities still inherent in a life of faith in a world of suffering. I would want to maintain that the enduring power of the book of Job demonstrates that much mystery still remains, yet the church has a role to play in the midst of this ambiguity by speaking 'to and for all humanity'.[336] Allen's approach and conclusions would seem to undermine this possibility.

I would not want to dismiss Allen's treatment of Job entirely. For example, he does seek to link the setting and events of the book to the overarching biblical story. While I may view his attempt as flawed it is nevertheless a challenge to consider how I might do this in a more profitable way. I develop this in chapters three and four. He also sees Job as a source of missional motivation, which reflects the notion of biblical texts as generative of mission, as outlined in chapter one and developed in chapter three. Again, while I may not accept the basis of his application (Job as a symbol of ignorance), it is challenging nevertheless to consider how the book may stir the church to participate more fully in the mission of God. In chapter five, for example, I show how a missional reading of the theme of the treatment of the poor in Job should lead the church to a greater engagement with issues of poverty in contemporary mission.

Ultimately, however, Allen's missional reflections on Job lack a sufficient degree of rigour and, in my view, are too limited and limiting.

2.4.3 L. Waters' '*Missio Dei* in the Book of Job' (2009)

Waters' approach is to read Job in the light of the *missio Dei*, understanding the book as 'part of the progressive revelation of God's purpose and mission, so that the book is, in a sense, missional and evangelistic.'[337] Specifically, Waters defines the missionary purpose of the book as showing that 'a believer's suffering should be viewed, as seen in Job's experience, as a witness not only to God's sovereignty but also as a witness to His goodness, justice, grace, and love to the nonbelieving world.'[338] The book, therefore, provides a model for how a believer's suffering may function in relation to the *missio Dei*.

His aim for the article is to concentrate on the *missio Dei*, 'in relation to the ancient story of Job and his experience of undeserved suffering and the false application of the theological doctrine of retribution.'[339] For Waters, Job is an early example of 'God on mission, involved

[335] ibid., p. 26.
[336] Pope, p. xxxviii.
[337] Waters, 'Job', p. 19.
[338] ibid., p. 19.
[339] ibid., p. 19.

in humankind's existence and eternal destiny, and actively making Himself known for redemptive purposes'.[340] Similarly,

> Job's struggle with suffering and a false theology contrary to grace, Elihu's corrective measures guiding Job into God's presence, and God's remarkable and unusual speeches are all a part of the *missio Dei* in communicating His loving concern for humanity.'[341]

As such, Waters' approach is not to focus on how Job fits into the chronological storyline of the Bible, as discussed by some in BMS, but rather how faithful people's experiences of unattributed suffering, as seen in Job, may be an example of, and serve to advance the *missio Dei*.[342]

Waters believes Job was a historical person, albeit a prepatriarchal, heroic figure.[343] In line with a number of BMS writers he discusses Job's provenance, although acknowledging the ambiguity surrounding Job's cultural or ethnic background, concluding that:

> The missiological importance of this is that God was "on mission" through an individual whose life would impact people around him, as well as generations of readers after his death. Job "serves ideally as a setting for the *universal spirit* and character of the message conveyed by the book of Job."[344]

Waters is right to treat Job's provenance with care but his conclusions seem underdeveloped and rather general. A missional reading of Job requires, in my view, a more sustained examination of the function of the non-Israelite motif in the book. My discussion in chapter four gives it more missional 'bite' than that noted by Waters.

In line with BMS, Waters addresses the question of the accuser, seeing as crucial the exchange in 1:8-10.[345] In asking whether the accuser had considered his servant Job,

> God took the initiative for the purpose of advancing His redemptive purpose. In a missiological sense God used Job's experience to reveal Himself to Job's world... *Missio Dei* in Job therefore began with suffering and God's initiative'[346]

The accuser's response in 1:9-10 evokes important issues because it questions the nature of the relationship between God and his worshippers, suggesting 'a *quid pro quo* system of

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[340] ibid., p. 20.
[341] ibid., p. 20.
[342] ibid., p. 21.
[343] ibid., pp. 21-22.
[344] ibid., p. 22, quoting C.W. Carter, 'The Book of Job', in *Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, vol 2, ed. by C.W. Carter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 1-176 (p. 14). Waters' italics.
[345] Waters uses the name 'Satan' when discussing the accuser.
[346] Waters, 'Job', p. 23. His italics.

theology' akin to other ANE beliefs, rather than 'Job's personal intimate relationship with God based on love, trust, and faith in Him (1:8-10; 2:3; cf. 1:21-22; 2:10).'[347]

For Waters the breadth and severity of Job's suffering plays an important function in God's 'conflict' with the accuser.[348] Job demonstrates 'the proper response to suffering' in Job 1:21-22 and 2:10 which 'would then lead to triumph over the enemy's accusations and would help reach the world with God's message of grace.'[349] Job's response in 2:10 is particularly important for Waters as it 'reveals a clear understanding of God's grace and the importance of handling suffering in light of that grace.'[350] Job is, therefore, a demonstration that,

> In a believer's suffering God communicates His purpose to others through conversation, pain management, and attitude. Even though Job did not epitomize or demonstrate this witness consistently, he never let go of his belief that all things come from God and that ultimately it was to God alone that he could turn.[351]

Waters is right to give attention to the crucial question of the accuser in Job 1:9b, which is also a key text I identify in my own reading. However, in my view his treatment of the Prologue does not account sufficiently for the ambiguities of the text. For example, although Yahweh initiates the conversation concerning Job, and therefore appears to invite the accuser's challenge, to apply the language of 'redemption' at this stage seems inappropriate.[352]

Waters' understanding of the accuser is crucial to his reading of the book. Although he acknowledges some of the subtleties of the accuser's identity and role in a footnote, Waters seems to identify the accuser with the Devil and sets up the story as a conflict between him and God. By framing it in this way Waters' approach dictates his conclusions about 'the proper response to suffering', in which a faithful believer must now 'triumph' over the lies of the evil one by responding in acceptance and trust.

Waters makes a strong case for the missional significance of a submissive response to suffering that exhibits trust in God, regardless of circumstances. While I would agree that trusting submission is one element of the missional potential of the book's teaching, I have serious misgivings about his description of Job's submission in the Prologue as being 'the

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[347] ibid., p. 23. His italics. Waters' language should be noted here. He seems to describe Job's relationship with God in modern Christian terms ('personal intimate relationship', 'love, trust, and faith in Him', 'grace', and so on). This gives his discussion, in my view, an anachronistic feel. For example, more could have been made of other elements of OT Wisdom spirituality, such as the fear of God.

[348] ibid., p. 25. See my discussion in chapter four where I note how the breadth and extent of Job's suffering helps to universalise the book.

[349] ibid., p. 25.

[350] ibid., 'Job', p. 25.

[351] ibid., p. 25.

[352] ibid., p. 23. Cf. Pope, pp. 11-12; Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 24-25.

proper response to suffering'. [353] This seems too simplistic a view of the nature of Job and also what the book might be teaching about how a suffering believer 'should' respond to their circumstances.[354] Waters' statement that 'Job did not epitomize or demonstrate this witness consistently' is illuminating.[355] Because of his view of the 'correct' response to suffering there seems to be little room in Waters' analysis for the possibility that Job's struggling and protest throughout most of the book was legitimate and may function missionally.

In my view the complaints of Job are more than just an aberration in the book. As such, a missional reading must give them due attention and ask whether the protests of Job can be a catalyst for mission, as well as his submission. In chapters four and five I examine this theme in more depth, both in relation to the universalising impulse of the book, and concerning the treatment of the poor.

A second line of enquiry for Waters is the book of Job's argument relating to the doctrine of retribution, a belief found throughout the ANE.[356] The book asserts that God is free to 'correct the assumptions usually associated with the traditional view of the doctrine of retribution, and… to act in contradiction to these assumptions and still be just'.[357] This, for Waters, relates to the *missio Dei* by showing that 'the Bible looks forward "in hope and seeks explanations, not so much in origins as in goals. . . . *The purpose of suffering is seen, not in its cause, but in its result.*"'[358] The way in which Job corrects a faulty understanding of retribution is missiologically significant because 'Part of the mission of God is to correct this false thinking regarding Himself and His actions.'[359]

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[353] Waters, 'Job', p. 25.
[354] Cf., for example, Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.
[355] Waters, 'Job', p. 25.
[356] ibid., pp. 25ff. The section is entitled, '*Missio Dei* and the False Theology of the Ancient Near East'. His italics.
[357] ibid., p. 26.
[358] ibid., p. 27; Quoting F.I. Anderson, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), p. 68. Waters' italics.
[359] Waters, 'Job', p. 28. Waters adds the caveat that he is not saying that 'the true doctrine of retribution is not in operation throughout the history of Israel. But after the loss of everything and Job's expressions of faith (chaps. 1-2) and his exasperation (chap. 3), lengthy dialogues with the three friends presented the *distorted* application of retribution theology, namely, that all Job's suffering was caused by sin. This, in fact, is *not* retribution theology, but an assumption theology based on human speculation. Job's undeserved suffering caused his faith in retribution, or more precisely, his confidence in the fixed system of compensation, to waver.' ibid., p. 28.

For Waters, the theme of suffering must be accounted for in an understanding of *missio Dei*, which is evident in the way God used his people's suffering for his purposes throughout the biblical story and in the contemporary world.[360]

In line with some other BMS writers and citing the above article by van Zyl, Waters then contends that this biblical teaching of suffering as a context or means of mission 'flies in the face of the prosperity message of the three friends, which has been perpetrated throughout history.'[361] For Job,

> Traditional or assumption theology was on trial. Some of the most profound questions of life were not being answered by this theology, and Job was courageously challenging the failure of this theology in his effort to solve these issues.[362]

Waters sees the speeches of Elihu in a positive light, preparing the way for those of Yahweh. Citing Job 37:11-13, for example, he understands God to be saying (through Elihu) that divine blessing is based on grace, and that it is the business of God alone whether he chooses to use rain as a form of discipline or just to water the planet.[363] Both Elihu and God state that having a hope for 'blessing through works' is 'misplaced' and 'has no place in the divine economy'.[364] Looking to the Epilogue Waters then sees the effect of Job's experience functioning 'as a catalyst for this message throughout the region and beyond.'[365]

Waters summarises the purpose of the writer of Job as being two-fold: to correct a false doctrine about God, 'and to enable God to use His servant's experience to impact the world with His message of grace.'[366] On the latter, he considers the book of Job to be,

> both missional and evangelistic. People are not to approach God on the basis of works or an assumed concept that obligates Him to follow human wisdom. Instead God wants to relate to His people based solely on grace, a lesson finally learned by Job (40:4; 42:5-6)[367]

On the application of *missio Dei* and suffering to contemporary believers, Waters claims that suffering is 'the opportunity to witness to the unbelieving world and to influence others for Christ, but [the believer] also has the opportunity to demonstrate faith in God in spite of the

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[360] ibid., pp. 29-30. He cites as examples figures such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, most of the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles.
[361] ibid., p. 30.
[362] ibid., p. 31.
[363] ibid., p. 31.
[364] ibid., p. 31.
[365] ibid., p. 31.
[366] ibid., p. 32.
[367] ibid., p. 33.

suffering.'[368] Thus, 'A proper relationship with God, based on grace through faith, is all that matters in life.'[369]

Waters' missional reflections on Job are, in my view, of mixed success. Framing mission in terms of the *missio Dei* is helpful in that it sets up well his discussion on how the book functions within the biblical canon. Like van Zyl and some others noted above, Waters rightly brings out the theme of correcting false teaching that is so evident in Job.

Although noting the ambiguity of Job's provenance, I think Waters could have explored this aspect of the book more. He is right to highlight the accuser's question in Job 1:9b as crucial but perhaps the language of 'Job's personal intimate relationship with God based on love, trust, and faith in Him' is over-reading the depiction of that relationship. [370]

Waters' particular take on what constitutes a 'proper response' to suffering carries through to his application section. While it would seem true that a genuinely faith-filled response to unattributed suffering can function powerfully as part of the *missio Dei*, Water's conclusions seem weakened by not considering the missional power of complaint. This seems to me to undermine his reading of Job and could be problematic in how the people of God process pain and grief in the context of a watching world. The missional function of complaint will therefore be an important element in my reading of Job, as I demonstrate especially in chapters four and five.

2.5 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to evaluate the extent to which and the ways in which BMS has engaged with Job in order to give a context for my own missional reading of Job and to highlight promising lines of discussion that I can develop as part of my approach.

As I have demonstrated, the majority of BMS does not engage in significant depth with Job, with many works either failing to mention the book, or doing so in relatively peripheral and underdeveloped ways. While I sought to explain why this inattention to Job might be understandable, given the subject, scope and approach of many of the publications, I concluded that for certain studies this tendency is both significant and concerning. For example, where a study aims at presenting an understanding of mission from across the OT or Bible as a whole, to neglect the book of Job or the Wisdom Literature more generally may suggest that the adopted framework is insufficient.

[368] ibid., p. 34.
[369] ibid., p. 35.
[370] ibid., p. 23.

Following this discussion on the relative neglect of Job I then isolated a number of themes around which BMS did engage with the book of Job: Job's international outlook; Job as a non-Israelite; the relationship between Job and the ANE; Job as illustrative of suffering and weakness as the context of mission; Job and social justice; correcting false teaching; the accuser (הַשָּׂטָן) in Job; Job as a 'tool' of mission; Job and the rest of the biblical narrative; Job and creation; and Job as an example of dialogue.

Finally, I turned my attention to three specific treatments of the book of Job and mission. To a certain extent these articles reflected the interests of BMS identified in the preceding discussion. However, they also each pursued their own particular concerns and developed the conversation in different ways. My assessment in this section was that each work added certain valuable elements to the conversation on Job and mission but that they did so with mixed scope and success.

It seems clear that, despite engaging with Job in a variety of ways, the literature examined in this chapter allows considerable room for further missional consideration of the book. My thesis builds on what has gone before by developing certain themes in a more intentional, substantial, sustained and nuanced manner.

For example, I give considerable attention to the international or universal outlook of Job, seen especially through the non-Israelite setting of the book. In chapter four I deal with issues such as the absence of explicit Israelite elements such as the temple, the *torah*, or the exodus, and the universal relevance of the book's themes. Following an in-depth examination of the non-Israelite setting of the book I explore the missional significance of Job's non-Israelite provenance. I read this not primarily as a statement about the status of non-Israelites in relation to God, but more as a means of universalising the book's message. However, by highlighting the universalising impulse in Job, I show that this was not achieved at the expense of a unique presentation of Israelite faith. Indeed, where I engage with the relationship between Job and similar ANE texts, I develop the characterisation of Job's universalism by showing that it is founded on a belief in the uniqueness of Yahweh, and therefore the inadequacy of other explorations of the problem of unatributed suffering. Nevertheless, this encounter with ANE ideas should be understood in terms of both affirmation and critique.

As such this relates also to the discussion in BMS on the way in which Job corrects false teaching, particularly the misapplication of a belief in retribution, either within Israel, in the ANE more broadly, or even in contemporary contexts. Closely connected to this theme is the way in which the issues of poverty and social justice are engaged with in Job. In line with my holistic understanding of mission, I focus chapter five on an extended study of the

treatment of the poor in Job. Here I show how poverty functions within the book and how Job has a unique contribution to make to this important missional issue.

As has been clear in the current chapter, the question of how Job relates to the 'story of redemption' is one that has not been easily resolved in BMS. I address this by examining issues of canon and story in relation to competing renderings of reality. Instead of asking how Job fits into and progresses the *missio Dei* I conclude that a more useful and distinctive question for Job is to ask how the book stands apart from and speaks into the *missio Dei*. The focus of this argument is the question posed by the accuser in Job 1:9b: הַחִנָּם יָרֵא אִיּוֹב אֱלֹהִים 'Is it for nothing that Job fears God?' Therefore, while much BMS discussing the accuser focuses on his identity and God's power over him, I take the accuser theme in a different direction by seeing his question as being of primary importance. If his accusation is true, the whole project of the *missio Dei* is thrown into question. In Job, therefore, the very mission of God is at stake. In contrast with the majority of BMS, by framing Job in this way I locate the book more centrally into discussions on mission.

The BMS theme of Job as illustrative of suffering and weakness as the context of mission also features in my thesis. In chapter four I show how the universalising impulse in Job relates to the ambiguities of human experience and how this may be understood missionally. In chapter five this is addressed with specific reference to the issue of poverty.

Although important for mission, the themes of creation care, interfaith dialogue, and Job as an instrument of contemporary mission activity do not feature significantly in the thesis, largely for reasons of scope. Nevertheless, these are highlighted as examples of possible future research in my concluding chapter.

This chapter has shown that my thesis stands in a tradition of missional reflection on Job. However, it has also demonstrated that this tradition seems rather marginal to most BMS and remains significantly underdeveloped. As such it seems clear that my thesis has the potential to make what I hope will be a significant contribution to BMS, and move the conversation forward in helpful ways. In so doing it will also provide an innovative way of approaching the biblical text of Job.

But how can such an approach be framed? The next step in my thesis is to build on the material in this chapter by developing a framework for approaching the book of Job using a missional hermeneutic. In the following chapter I will set out an understanding of missional hermeneutics, and show how its diverse lines of enquiry can enable me to build on the work noted in this chapter, and provide rich possibilities for a missional reading of Job.

3 Chapter Three: Developing a Missional Approach to the Book of Job

3.1 Introduction

It is clear from the preceding chapter that the book of Job has not received sustained or, in my view, adequate attention from BMS. The majority of scholars have either ignored Job or used it in rather peripheral or underdeveloped ways, and although the literature does include a variety of attempts to relate the book of Job to mission, in general these are limited in scope and mixed in their success. However, while chapter two highlighted a number of potential themes that might be addressed in a missional reading of Job, it did not address the method or framework for doing so. The present chapter addresses this by setting my reading of Job in the context of the approach to biblical interpretation known as missional hermeneutics, the development of which I traced in the introduction to this thesis.

Still relatively early in its development, writing on missional hermeneutics has not yet produced an explicit and substantial treatment of Job and it is this gap which my missional reading of Job seeks to address. One prominent feature of the missional hermeneutics conversation is the variety of ways in which it has been conceptualised and implemented. Seen positively this affords the interpreter a striking array of choices concerning how to read the biblical text missionally. More negatively, the sheer variety of options presents a challenge: which one or ones should be employed and which should be side-lined or left unused? By what criteria should these decisions be made? Are particular lines of enquiry more suitable for some texts than others?[371]

In the present chapter I examine the principal ways in which missional hermeneutics has been understood in order to move towards my own treatment of Job. I do this by examining the main lines of enquiry proposed by advocates of missional hermeneutics. In each case I assess its validity and applicability to Job, and discuss the extent to which and the ways in which my own reading of Job will engage with it. Such an approach thereby acts as an initial foray into my missional reading of Job.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to implement each line of enquiry in a sustained way, and so in the final part of the chapter I draw together the discussion and set out my own lines of enquiry, which I apply to Job in the rest of the thesis. I conclude that, while there are a number of different and important questions that could be asked of the book, my focus will be on the relationship between the particular and the universal, the book's missional

[371] Cf. Barram, 'Response', n.p.

encounter with culture, and the theme of the treatment of the poor in Job. I will also show in the later part of my thesis how the *missio Dei* brings together these different elements.

3.2 Lines of enquiry for a missional hermeneutic

In the introduction to this thesis I explained that missional hermeneutics is an approach to biblical interpretation that seeks to read texts in the light of the missional nature of the Bible. I then outlined some of the missional dimensions of the Bible, with some initial comments as to how these function in relation to the book of Job. One outcome of that review was to demonstrate something of the breadth and complexity of thinking of the Bible as missional, which goes some way to accounting for the variety of emphases and approaches evident in missional hermeneutics scholarship, while also showing its potential for beneficial missional reflection on biblical texts.

With this in mind I now turn to an outline of some of the main lines of enquiry pursued by missional hermeneutics scholars. This is structured using the framework given by the SBL/AAR Gospel and Our Culture Forum on Missional Hermeneutics, which proposes that those engaged in missional readings of biblical texts will:

> pay attention to a number of interlocking realities in the text: (1) the ways in which the biblical text renders the identity of the missio Dei, the God who is engaged in mission to the whole creation; (2) the ways in which the biblical text is shaped for the purpose of forming a people of God who are called to participate in God's mission to the creation; (3) the ways in which the biblical text evokes and challenges a missionally located community's interpretive readings and questions; (4) the ways in which the biblical text relates the received tradition to a particular context in light of the good news of the reign of God in Jesus Christ; and (5) the ways in which the biblical text discloses its fullest meaning only when read together with the culturally and socially "other."[372]

As will become clear, although this categorisation is useful up to a point, I do find it somewhat uneven in places. The approaches themselves provide useful material for consideration but some are rather limited when it comes to my particular approach to Job. The first two lines involve a disproportionately greater range of issues, and this is reflected in my treatment of them below.

[372] GOCN, n.p. The first four categories are straight from Hunsberger. The fifth category focusing on the 'other' is still closely related, the roots of which can be discerned from both responses to his 2008 paper; cf. Barram, 'Response'; Brownson, 'Response'. The headings I employ below reflect Hunsberger's phrasing.

3.2.1 The missional direction of the story

> 'The *framework* for biblical interpretation is the story it tells of the mission of God and the formation of a community sent to participate in it.'[373]
>
> 'the ways in which the biblical text renders the identity of the missio Dei, the God who is engaged in mission to the whole creation'[374]

The line of enquiry that has received the most attention from scholars is the notion that the Bible as a whole renders a coherent narrative that describes the mission of God. Indeed, this may even be considered as foundational for all other approaches.[375]

3.2.1.1 The Bible as a whole: canon, story, and the story

A missional hermeneutic is based, in part, on the assumption that the Bible *as a whole* is relevant to mission, and not just a few isolated texts. Bauckham, for example, sees this as essential:

> What sort of hermeneutic will enable us to enter into the Bible's own missionary direction from the particular to the universal? It must be, in the first place, a canonical hermeneutic, that is, a way of reading the Bible as a whole.[376]

This commitment to approaching the whole of the Bible as a resource and context for missional reflection is contrary to the so-called 'text-assembly' approach which seems to have characterised a significant amount of writing on the Bible and mission in the past.[377] An advantage of this approach is that it has the potential to give greater biblical weight to missional discussions, helping to guard against the biases that may arise through inappropriate selectivity of particular texts or images for mission.[378] It also opens up the way for reflecting on less obvious texts, which may yield different insights.[379] On the other hand,

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[373] Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 310. His italics.
[374] GOCN, n.p.
[375] An observation made by Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 312.
[376] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, pp. 11-12. Similarly, Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 17, whose book aims 'to develop an approach to biblical hermeneutics that sees the mission of God (and the participation in it of God's people) as a framework within which we can read the whole Bible… [with mission being] a major key that unlocks the whole grand narrative of the canon of Scripture.'
[377] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 36; Bosch, 'Hermeneutical Principles', pp. 439-440.
[378] Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, p. 6.
[379] My thesis is, of course, a case in point.

an attempt to see texts within the context of the whole Bible will at times be challenging, given the tensions evident within the canon.[380]

The notion of the Bible as canon brings to the fore the processes by which the texts in their final form and position came into being. On the whole I consider this an aspect of canon that has not been explored in great detail thus far in missional hermeneutics scholarship, with the notable exception of Beeby, for whom it plays an important role and relates closely to the discussion on the missional origins of texts noted in chapter one. The canon, Beeby suggests, was formed in crisis and met a missional need. The *torah*, for example, was collated in the exile when Israel were asking of themselves fundamental questions concerning their identity, role, worship and hope.[381] What the process of canonisation offered was both stability by telling the primal story, and flexibility through a measure of ambiguity, which made it possible for Israel to adapt its Scriptures to new challenges and contexts.[382]

Beeby then throws open the question:

> Is it possible in any sense to say that the canon exists for mission and that the *missio Dei*, the *missio Christi* and the *missio ecclesiae* are in great part the explanation for the existence of the canon? Dare we advance a step further as we query whether Christian mission can effectively exist without the canon and also whether we can effectively understand the canon unless we are constantly aware of its missionary roots, its growth in mission and its missionary imperative? Is mission hidden beneath the non-missionary language of the canonizing process?[383]

I will return to the theme of canon in more depth when addressing the question of the missional encounter with cultures evident in the biblical story. In particular I will draw on the work of Sanders, who speaks about the process by which texts emerged and were used and re-used enabling the reader to detect,

> the struggle of Israel and the early churches to respond by monotheizing over against the several forms of polytheism in the five culture eras through and out of which the Bible was formed and shaped.[384]

Another central tenet of this line of enquiry is that the Bible functions as a narrative. The understanding here is that in its canonical wholeness the Bible tells a story, which will

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[380] Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, p. 4.
[381] Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 272.
[382] ibid., p. 273. This latter aspect is seen, for Beeby, most radically in the appropriation of the Hebrew texts by the writers of the NT.
[383] ibid., p. 274.
[384] J. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 36. The five culture eras he refers to are the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman eras.

require 'a narrative hermeneutic'.[385] Such a hermeneutic will account for the overarching narrative that encompasses many smaller stories and non-narrative genres, while still 'constituting in its overall direction a metanarrative, a narrative about the whole of reality that elucidates the meaning of the whole of reality.'[386]

Bauckham's helpful statement touches on several important points. First, an approach to reading and interpreting the Bible must account for the narrative nature of much of its material. The OT, for example, is dominated by the narrative of the people of Israel and their dealings with Yahweh and it is through this story that we learn about who God is.[387]

One strength of this approach is its acknowledgment of the complexities inherent in understanding the Bible as an overarching story, which relates closely to the above discussion on canon. That this single story encompasses many other stories is an important point which guards against naive assumptions about the nature of the biblical story. Thus, the story the Bible renders is not a simplistic, 'tightly woven story with no loose ends'.[388] Rather, this 'sprawling collection of narratives' includes stories told more than once and from differing perspectives (for example, Kings, Chronicles, the Gospels), 'the profusion and sheer untidiness' of the numerous smaller stories within larger narratives, and many other features of ambiguity and incompleteness.[389] In sum, 'the biblical story refuses to be summed up in a finally adequate interpretation that would never need to be revised or replaced.'[390]

The question of non-narrative material and texts that do not fit neatly into the chronological storyline of the Bible come into play here as well. This also relates to well-established discussions concerning the ways in which writings such as the Wisdom Literature relate to other material within the canon.

Here it helps to consider 'story' as a broader concept than purely narrative writing. The OT story includes much non-narrative material, which is either already located within a narrative context (for example, the legal materials within the Moses story), or other texts which may be connected in some way with the overall narrative framework of the OT.[391] In terms of the Wisdom Literature it seems helpful (albeit up to a point) to use the Solomon association as a

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[385] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 12.
[386] ibid., p. 12.
[387] J. Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology, Vol 1: Israel's Gospel* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2003), p. 30.
[388] M.W. Goheen, 'The Urgency of Reading the Bible as One Story', *Theology Today*, 64 (2008), 469-483 (p. 473).
[389] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 92. Cf. Goldingay, *OT Theology 1*, pp. 35-41.
[390] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 93.
[391] J. Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1999), p. 356; Goheen, 'Urgency', pp. 372-473.

means of locating it within that narrative.[392] However, this is less helpful for the book of Job which, unlike Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, tends not to be associated with Solomon. Locating Job in the chronological storyline of the OT is far from straightforward. Should the story of Job be placed before or around the time of Abraham, according to its archaic setting (as Allen does), or should we try to locate it at the point when it was written, or at least put together? If the latter, when should this be, in light of the lack of consensus about the book's dating?[393]

In my view these complicating aspects to the biblical narrative do not negate attempts to work towards an account of the storyline of the Bible.[394] Although there are caveats to bear in mind, I would see them as indications of something profoundly important inherent in the canon. I mean by this that the ambiguities and tensions within the canon are indicative of the potential of the biblical narrative to speak for and speak into the complexities of human experience, with all the ambiguities and vexing questions that life entails.[395] The book of Job, I will argue, is an excellent example of this.

'Narrative' is not just a description of a principal genre within the Bible. The Bible may be understood as rendering a 'big story', an overall narrative which ultimately constitutes a metanarrative that purports to explain the nature of reality. A powerful aspect of the biblical narrative is, therefore, that it creates a world and invites us to locate ourselves within it, thereby shaping our identities.[396]

The biblical story is therefore not just presented as *a* story, but as *the* story, which functions as a means of transformation for its readers. The effect of this claim is profound as it is through the overarching narrative that we are able to discern the worldview of the one telling the story:

> in reading these texts we are invited to embrace a metanarrative, a grand narrative. And on this overarching story is based a worldview that, like all worldviews and metanarratives, claims to explain the way things are, how they have come to be so, and what they ultimately will be…. [It is] a *rendering of reality*–an account of the universe we inhabit and of the new creation we are destined for. We live in a storied universe.[397]

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[392] As do, for example, Barr, p. 356, and Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 448. They both note the importance of 'association' so are not making any claims about Solomonic authorship. Cf. the discussion on Solomon in BMS in chapter two.

[393] See below for a discussion of the book's setting and date of composition.

[394] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 93.

[395] Cf. Goldingay, *OT Theology 1*, p. 41; Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 275.

[396] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 12.

[397] Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 55, 56. His italics. The notion of a 'big story' has, so far, been seen as essential to work on missional hermeneutics; cf. Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 312. I take as synomymns various terms used by scholars, often interchangeably, including 'big story', 'metanarrative', 'grand narrative', 'macronarrative', overarching narrative, and so on.

However, is not the very idea of a metanarrative arrogant, or even dangerous? In the current climate, it should be acknowledged that there exists a suspicion that a narrative that claims to tell *the* story of reality is suppressive and oppressive.[398] In response it can be argued that the biblical narrative is fundamentally different to modern, post-Enlightenment metanarratives that are built on the idea of progress and 'human mastery'.[399] God's purposes will be achieved but there remains considerable ambiguity as to the precise nature of this fulfilment.[400] The biblical metanarrative, as articulated in the text itself, is rarely depicted as the dominant worldview of its time.[401] Moreover, I would argue that the biblical story finds its focal point at a moment of ultimate weakness and suffering, at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.[402] Indeed, suffering and weakness as the context and means of its progression is an important feature of the whole narrative.[403]

The theme of diversity is also a crucial one in answering objections to the legitimacy of a grand narrative. As noted already, the biblical canon is not uniform but includes within it a mix of genres, multi-perspectival accounts, stories within stories, and ambiguity: 'the particular has its own integrity that should not be suppressed for the sake of a too readily comprehensible universal.'[404]

Indeed, it could be argued that the biblical metanarrative seeks to celebrate cultural diversity, rather than eradicate it. In Col. 3:11, for example, Paul's denial of there being Greek, Jew, barbarian or Sythian refers to 'cultural privilege, not cultural diversity.'[405] But in a much broader sense it is the very nature of the Christian gospel, as depicted in the biblical narrative, to embrace cultural diversity; indeed, to be at home in it.[406]

Therefore, that the Bible presents a coherent narrative which makes universal claims does not need to equate to uniformity and suppression: 'it is also a story that affirms humanity in

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[398] A view articulated and argued against by Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 89.

[399] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, pp. 90-91; C.G. Bartholomew and M.W. Goheen, 'Story and Biblical Theology', in Bartholomew and others, pp. 144-171 (p. 166).

[400] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 92.

[401] ibid., p. 103.

[402] Bartholomew and Goheen, 'Story', p. 167.

[403] See, for example, Bosch, *Vulnerability*; *idem*, 'Hermeneutical Principles', pp. 444-445, 450. See also Bauckham's important discussion on 'To all by way of the least', which I address below; *Bible and Mission*, pp. 49-54. See also McConville, p. 29: 'Yahwism never takes the form of the domination of the weak by the strong. On the contrary, it is advocated in political weakness, and in the face of such power.' Cf. the discussion of the theme in relation BMS and Job in chapter two.

[404] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 93. Cf. Senior and Stuhlmueller, p. 344.

[405] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 110. Cf. Brownson, 'Response'.

[406] See, for example, Senior and Stuhlmueller, p. 344; L.O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 97-98; A. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996, ch. 1 'The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture'; Brownson, *Speaking*, ch. 2 'A Hermeneutic of Diversity'.

all its particular cultural variety. This is the universal story that gives a place in the sun to all the little stories.'[407]

However, despite the important dynamic of diversity and weakness evident in the biblical story, this should not undermine the radical claims that the biblical story makes in relation to other renderings of reality. I will return to the notion of the biblical story as an alternative or competing rendering of reality below. Before I do this, however, I need to explore why this grand narrative might be understood as missional.

3.2.1.2 The mission of God as concept for framing the content of the biblical narrative's rendering of reality

As I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, advocates of a missional hermeneutic tend to accept an understanding of mission and of the Bible that is framed by the *missio Dei*. Beeby illustrates this tendency well, his central argument being, 'that the Bible read as scripture centres on the *missio Dei*. It is the record of the word and works of the loving, revealing God who created in love and redeems in love.'[408]

Such a starting point means that the whole of the biblical narrative comes into view. Understood through the lens of the *missio Dei*, God's purposes, speech and actions and his relationship to humanity and the whole of creation can all be read as rendering an account of the mission of God. It is from this initial perspective that so many of the writers on missional hermeneutics begin.

The *missio Dei*, therefore, may be understood as the driving force behind the biblical story, the focal point of coherence for the biblical story, and the chief purpose of the biblical story, as the discussion on the missional dimensions of the Bible in chapter one illustrates.

Two important motifs running throughout the biblical story are the concepts of the universal and the particular. Indeed, the complex relationship between these is a long-established subject of discussion in BMS, as well as in more general works on the Bible.[409] Alluding to the call of Abram in Gen. 12:1-3, Wright frames the discussion helpfully by describing a

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[407] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 47. Cf. C. Rowland, 'In This Place: the Center and the Margins in Theology', in *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*, ed. by F.F. Segovia and M.A. Tolbert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), pp. 169-82. It is worth noting that I am not arguing that the biblical narrative has never been used oppressively. Rather with Bartholomew and Goheen I would say that such an abuse of the Bible should be seen as a betrayal of the biblical story; cf. Bartholomew and Goheen, 'Story', p. 167.

[408] Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 272.

[409] See, for example, discussions in Wright, *Mission of God*, ch. 7; Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, pp. 11ff.; Legrand, *Unity and Plurality*, ch. 3; Martin-Achard, *Light to the Nations*, ch. 3; Rétif and Lamarche; Schultz, 'Universalism'.

'tension between the universality of the goal *(all nations)* and the particularity of the means *(through you)*', both of which he considers as 'crucial in unlocking the Bible's grand narrative.'[410]

In my view this is a significant aspect of a biblical understanding of mission. As such, it would be helpful to examine in more depth this relationship between the particular and the universal and how it functions within the biblical story and in relation to the book of Job. A particularly useful approach is proposed by Bauckham, who sets the story within the context of the language of the movement from the particular to the universal.[411] This, I believe, provides a helpful way in to discussions on Job, because the biblical canon enables the Bible to speak into the specificity of human experience in relationship with God, while setting this in the context of God's universal purposes. As we read the 'stories about people facing the challenges, potentials, questions, achievements, ambiguities, puzzles, disappointments, demands and failures that are intrinsic to life with God', we find ourselves invited,

> to reflect on the equivalent specificities of [our] own lives in light of the stories' implicit convictions about who God is and what human life is. Such reflection needs the help of narrative with its concreteness and specificity.[412]

Yet the story does not remain in its specificity. Bauckham sees the Bible as 'a kind of project aimed at the kingdom of God, that is, towards the achievement of God's purposes for good in the whole of God's creation.'[413] A Christian community or individual reading the Bible is always on an outward journey from the particular (as defined by the Bible or their own situation) to the universal, which 'is to be found not apart from but within other particulars. This is mission.'[414]

The particular-universal movement is also a reflection of God himself as revealed in the Bible: he 'is the God of the people Israel and the one human, Jesus Christ, and is also the Creator and Lord of all things.'[415] The identity of the biblical God is a *narrative* identity, as is the identity of his people: 'God identifies himself as the God of Abraham, Israel and Jesus *in order to be* the God of all people and the Lord of all things.'[416]

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[410] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 222. His italics.
[411] Bauckham's approach is already proving influential as a means of framing the nature of mission in the Bible. See, for example, Blackburn, pp. 17-18, and S. McDonald, *Re-Imaging Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 94-99, 151. Incidentally, both works also draw on Seitz's thinking on mission and the OT; cf. *Figured Out*, pp. 145-157.
[412] Goldingay, *OT Theology 1*, pp. 36-37, 37.
[413] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 11.
[414] ibid., p. 11.
[415] ibid., p. 12.
[416] ibid., p. 13. His italics.

Bauckham then portrays this particular-universal direction of the Bible in three ways (temporal, spatial and social) and considers their implications for mission. The *temporal* dynamic begins at creation and moves forward into 'the eschatological future'.[417] In this context, 'mission is movement into the new future of God.'[418] This movement is seen definitively in the person and work of Jesus: 'Mission is the movement that takes place between Jesus' own sending by his Father, and the future coming of Jesus in the kingdom of his Father.'[419]

The *spatial* movement of the biblical story concerns geography, 'from one place to every place, from the centre to the periphery, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth… *mission is movement towards ever-new horizons*.'[420]

Finally, the theme of social movement in the Bible accounts for the *numerical* movement,

> from the one to the many, from Abraham to the nations, from Jesus to every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth. Socially, then, *mission is a movement that is always being joined by others, the movement, therefore, of an ever-new people*.[421]

It is worth pausing to reflect upon how these relate to the book of Job. I have already noted the difficulty in placing Job on the chronological storyline of the Bible. The early setting of the book may place the events around the time of Abraham, but little can be concluded from this. Perhaps, given the non-Israelite motif in Job, the notions of the spatial and social movements of the biblical story are more promising. Yet even here the book of Job seems to separate itself from the main storyline of the Bible. There has not been a movement, as such, from Israel to Uz. We are never told how Job came to know Israel's God; indeed it may be anachronistic to ask this question. It seems to me that the author of Job is not concerned with connecting his story to Israel's storyline. Or, rather, the author seems more concerned to create 'a sense of narrative distance'.[422] I will say more about this in chapter four, which highlights the significance of the dynamic of the particular and the universal in Job, which I discuss in terms of the universalising impulse of the book.

Having set out something of his approach, Bauckham illustrates how an awareness of the particular-universal movement might inform a reading of the biblical story. He concentrates on four 'strands' in the grand story. The first three revolve around a 'singular' choice of God

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[417] ibid., p. 13.
[418] ibid., p. 13.
[419] ibid., p. 13.
[420] ibid., p. 14. His italics.
[421] ibid., p. 15. His italics.
[422] C.A. Newsom, 'Job', in *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 4, The First Book of Maccabees, the Second Book of Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms*, pp. 317-637 (p. 345).

which embody 'thematic trajectories': Abraham (the trajectory of blessing), Israel (God reveals himself to the world) and David (God's rule).[423] The fourth strand characterises all that has come before it and marks the church's mission as well; it is 'the movement to all by way of the least.'[424]

Having shown how each of the first three strands' trajectories can be discerned throughout the biblical metanarrative, Bauckham maintains that,

> God's purpose in each of these singular choices was universal: that the blessing of Abraham might overflow to all the families of the earth, that God's self-revelation to Israel might make God known to all the nations, that from Zion his rule might extend to the ends of the earth.[425]

Although Bauckham does not consider these strands in themselves to constitute 'mission', he does think that they,

> make the church's mission intelligible as a necessary and coherent part of the whole biblical metanarrative… They establish the purpose of God for the world that, again, the church is called to serve in mission to the world.[426]

He therefore contends that 'mission' is very rare in the OT, but that the OT still has a vital contribution to make to a biblical understanding of mission.[427]

The universal purposes of God in his election of, and dealings with Israel is, in my view, of great importance for a missional reading, reflecting as it does Israel's participation in the *missio Dei*. While, as I have suggested, the relationship between the book of Job and the biblical storyline is not straightforward, the universal context of God's purposes does at least shed some light. In this sense we might ask, in what ways does the book of Job function in the service of God's universal purposes? Even if it does not fit naturally into Israel's storyline, it is still part of Israel's Scriptures, functioning as we have seen to shape their participation in God's mission. This is a theme to which I return below when discussing the missional purpose of the biblical writings, but also, more fully, in chapters four and five.

A further characteristic of the biblical story that Bauckham highlights well concerns God's tendency to use the weak and powerless to achieve his purposes.[428] This is seen ultimately in

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[423] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 27.
[424] ibid., p. 49.
[425] ibid., p. 46.
[426] ibid., p. 47.
[427] ibid., p. 47. Bauckham also insists that these themes should be read Christologically, in that Jesus of Nazareth takes on the particularity of each of these strands and embodies in himself their focal point across the Testaments; see p. 48.
[428] ibid., pp. 9-54. He cites Deut. 7:7; 1 Sam. 2:3-8; 1 Sam. 16:6-13; and 1 Cor. 1:26b-29 as examples.

the crucifixion and exultation of Christ, as depicted in Phil. 2:6-11, and so it becomes incumbent on those engaged in mission to heed this call to identify with 'the least':

> The gospel does not come to each person only in terms of some abstracted generality of human nature, but in the realities and differences of their social and economic situations. It engages with the injustices of the world on its way to the kingdom of God. This means that as well as the outward movement of the church's mission in geographical extension and numerical increase, there must also be this (in the Bible's imagery) downward movement of solidarity with the people at the bottom of the social scale of importance and wealth. It is to these - the poorest, those with no power or influence, the wretched, the neglected - to whom God has given priority in the kingdom, not only for their own sake, but also for all the rest of us who can enter the kingdom only alongside *them*.[429]

Bauckham does not involve himself in technical discussions concerning the validity of holistic mission, but this acknowledgment of the importance of the poverty theme, particularly as it is integrated into his broader framework, seems significant. This interest in poverty and social justice is reflected in BMS to varying degrees, as outlined in my previous chapter.[430] In addition to Bauckham, for example, Wright and Barram have addressed the significance of poverty as part of their missional hermeneutic approaches. Among other factors, Wright's prominent role in the Lausanne Movement, and prior writing on the Bible and ethics, make it unsurprising that he considers poverty to be a matter of great concern in a missional reading of the Bible.[431] He devotes two chapters of his *The Mission of God* to material on the themes of redemption and restoration, and sees these texts as being closely related to a holistic view of mission and, as such, particularly relevant to issues of poverty and justice.[432] As with other chapters in his book, Wright then describes how these concerns play out in the unfolding narrative of the Bible. For Wright, then, poverty (alongside other

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[429] ibid., pp. 53-54. His italics.

[430] So, for example, Peskett and Ramachandra, ch. 9; Burnett, *Healing*, chs. 6-7; Bosch, 'Hermeneutical Principles', pp. 442-443, 447-448.

[431] Wright is currently a Director of Langham Partnership International, an organisation that grew out of the ministry of the late John Stott, a noted advocate of bringing proclamation of the gospel and addressing social concerns together. Significantly, given the above discussion, Wright was also the Chair of the Lausanne Theology Working Group for six years and oversaw the collaborative writing of *The Cape Town Commitment*. Cf. http://www.langhampartnership.org/about-us/lpi-leadership/chris-wright/biography/ [accessed 17 August 2012]. Examples of his writing on ethics include C.J.H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) [a revision of his 1977 doctoral thesis]; *idem*, *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983); *idem*, *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995); *idem*, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004) [a revised, integrated version of *Living as the People of God* and *Walking in the Ways of the Lord*].

[432] Wright, *Mission of God*; see ch. 8, 'God's Model of Redemption: The Exodus' and ch. 9, 'God's Model of Restoration: The Jubilee'. For other references to 'poor' or 'poverty' cf. pp. 43-44, 216, 230, 245, 359, 398, 413, 418, 431, 426-437, 449, 451, 481, 505, 524, 549, 553.

social, economic and political concerns) is a most appropriate (indeed, necessary) topic of interest for a missional reading.

Like Wright, Barram's approach to poverty issues reflects his commitment to a holistic understanding of mission.[433] In part he sees a function of missional hermeneutics as asking difficult questions of the contemporary church that try to articulate how that group of believers works out its participation in the *missio Dei* in their particular community. He lists a number of examples of the kind of questions he means, some of which are related specifically to issues of poverty and justice, as he would conceive them for his own context:

> In what ways does this text proclaim good news to the poor and release to the captives, and how might our own social locations make it difficult to hear that news as good?
>
> Does our reading of the text reflect a tendency to bifurcate evangelism and justice?
>
> Does our reading of this text acknowledge and confess our complicity and culpability in personal as well as structural sin?
>
> In what ways does the text challenge us to rethink our often-cozy relationships with power and privilege?
>
> How does this text expose and challenge our societal and economic tendencies to assign human beings and the rest of creation merely functional, as opposed to inherent, value?
>
> Does the text help clarify the call of gospel discipleship in a world of conspicuous consumption, devastating famine, rampant disease, incessant war, and vast economic inequities?[434]

In chapter one I noted the importance of the themes of poverty and social justice for a holistic understanding of mission. My framing of a missional hermeneutic in terms of mission, therefore, builds on these assumptions and relates closely with elements of scholars such as Bauckham, Wright and Barram. Despite different nuances, each sees important connections between the missional nature of the Bible and issues of poverty, power and justice. They therefore give precedent for poverty to be a topic of interest in a missional reading of biblical texts.[435]

As a way into the question of social justice in the book of Job I have chosen the motif of the treatment of the poor, which I address in considerable depth in chapter five. Clearly this particular angle does not cover all aspects of social justice or broader issues important to

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[433] Barram, '"Located" Questions', n.p.: 'The appropriate treatment of the poor and marginalized—widows, orphans, and aliens—is a relatively infrequent topic in American [i.e., Barram's context] Christian discussions, despite the fact that the Bible addresses the issue directly, emphatically, and repeatedly.'

[434] ibid., n.p.

[435] The relative neglect of this theme in other missional hermeneutics writers should not be overplayed. Rather, they seem to have their foci elsewhere. Nevertheless, cf., for example, Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, p. 56; Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, p. 93.

holistic mission such as care for creation. Nevertheless, I will show that the treatment of the poor is worthy of specific attention, and functions in important ways not only in missional discussions, but also in the book of Job itself. Not least, in the book of Job we observe an individual making the downward descent to marginalization, which intensifies his association and commitment to the poor.

Having outlined certain characteristics of the biblical story that will impact a missional reading, I now need to return to more particular questions concerning how the rendering of reality articulated by the biblical writings encounters alternative renderings. The overarching, missional narrative of the Bible presents a metanarrative, a biblical 'worldview' that is set in contrast with alternative renderings of reality. Within the biblical story there are many examples of direct and indirect 'encounters' between these renderings. This idea now needs to be teased out in more detail.

3.2.1.3 The 'missionary encounter' of biblical texts: the biblical story as an alternative rendering of reality

Either implicitly or explicitly, in the texts of the OT Israel's worldview, or its 'rendering of reality' is assumed, described and promoted.[436] The task of articulating the biblical rendering

[436] By 'worldview' I mean a culture's body of beliefs it shares concerning how they understand reality and their place within it. It will have elements that are consciously articulated, but often it is simply assumed. Indeed, a worldview is not just a set of suppositions readily acknowledged by a culture (though it will involve these); at its basic level a worldview is the means through which a society perceives reality. Wright describes worldviews as embracing 'all deep-level human perceptions of reality' in that they relate to 'the presuppositional, pre-cognitive stage of a culture or society'; N.T. Wright, *NT and the People of God*, pp. 123, 122. A worldview not only articulates belief but also directs behaviour in that they set a context and, often, a faith commitment in which individuals and communities live out their lives; M. Goheen and C. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (London: SPCK, 2008), p. 23. Cf. B.J. Walsh and J.R. Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), pp. 31-33.

A worldview will have certain characteristics. Wright outlines a helpful, interconnected framework suggesting that a worldview provides (1) 'the *stories* through which human beings view reality'; (2) 'basic *questions* that determine human existence: who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is the solution?'; ibid., p. 123. His italics. Wright himself is drawing on questions formulated by Walsh and Middleton, although they framed them in the singular; see their *Transforming*, p. 35. These stories and answers find expression 'in [(3)] cultural *symbols*, such as festivals and buildings; Wright, *NT and the People of God*, p. 124. His italics. Finally, a worldview will be evidenced through the culture's (4) 'praxis, a way-of-being-in-the-world'; ibid., p. 124. Further studies in worldview include J.R. Middleton and B.J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London: SPCK, 1995); J. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue*, 5th edn (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009); *ibid*, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004); and D.K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). The latter two titles provide particularly helpful overviews.

Wright's schema seems clear in setting out a basic shape of a culture's worldview but the sheer diversity of cultures may lead it to be relevant for some more than others. What it does illustrate is that a culture's rendering of reality is a complex matter that affects not only the

of reality was not simply an intellectual exercise. Its purpose was to reinforce and pass on faith in Yahweh. It was there to persuade. As I have already established, the writing and collating of these texts were not conducted in a cultural, political, historical or social vacuum. More often than not it seems that the authors and editors of the biblical material set about their tasks in the midst of, and in response to challenges to their rendering of reality and threats within and to their community. In this sense the rendering of reality put across by the biblical writers was both rhetorical and polemical. It both countered threatening alternative worldviews, but also assumed that it was (to borrow the language of Newbigin) to be 'public truth' that described reality not just for Israel but for the whole of creation.[437] It was therefore common for the Yahweh-rendering to encounter other renderings of reality assumed, described and promoted by other cultures.

In chapter one I identified this tendency when discussing the missional dimensions of the biblical writings; specifically when noting the Bible as a 'product' of mission. Though not employing the language of 'mission', this struggle to articulate a Yahweh-shaped rendering of reality has been usefully framed by Sanders, who describes Israel and the early church as producing and shaping writings using a process of 'monotheizing over against… polytheism'.[438] Sanders characterises the Bible as 'a monotheizing literature' and it is this monotheizing characteristic that gives the Bible 'its principal and hermeneutic shape' and, I would add, its missional edge.[439]

Sanders' canonical approach aims to detect two categories of 'precursor' material in particular texts: the home-grown 'community traditions' and the borrowed 'international wisdom traditions'.[440] The interpreter then tries to understand 'the hermeneutics by which those identified traditions function in the passage, how they were adapted, represented, and resignified.'[441] Sanders considers it as a positive thing that the Bible appropriates idioms and wisdom from other cultures, and suggests that this leads to a 'newly perceived underlying hermeneutic' that understands 'God as Creator of all peoples, as well as Redeemer in Israel and in Christ. Those are the two basic hermeneutic axioms operating in the Bible.'[442] These points relate closely to the discussion on the particular-universal theme in the Bible, noted above. Indeed, considering the more affirmative, 'open' meeting points of such encounters, this may also contribute to a defence of the notion of a biblical metanarrative, and may prove

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beliefs of a culture but also their behaviour. Of course, it is the texts of the OT which are the primary source of information for understanding this worldview.

[437] L. Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (London: SPCK, 1991).
[438] Sanders, *Canon and Community*, p. 36.
[439] ibid., p. 43.
[440] ibid., p. 47.
[441] ibid., p. 47.
[442] ibid., p. 48.

to be especially important if such texts are drawn on to reflect upon contemporary missional praxis. Sanders also helpfully observes that the biblical writers tended to be operating in the context of weakness and threat, under the shadow of more dominant powers.[443] Like Bauckham, Sanders speaks of God's consistent use of the marginalised throughout the Bible, which, as I have shown, may also commend the notion of a biblical metanarrative.[444]

By 'wisdom' Sanders means 'that which passes over national borders and reaches deep into the common human experience'.[445] Although it 'pervades the Bible', wisdom is 'parallel' to the particular stories of Israel and Christ (the Gospel).[446] So wisdom in this sense is not restricted to the Wisdom Literature, but may be found in laws, narratives, and other types of literature in the Bible.[447] The key point of interest for Sanders, however, lies not in the existence of this cross-border usage, but in how the biblical writers adapted the material and what this would have signified to their readers.[448]

Although Sanders does not use 'mission' language, this meeting of cultures he describes as evident throughout the Bible is, it seems to me, profoundly missional since intercultural engagement is such a core characteristic of mission.[449] A missional reading of a biblical text will, I would suggest, seek to draw out the nature and significance of such encounters, examining issues including the degree of encounter, the ways in which it functions, and even ways in which such an encounter may inform contemporary encounters in mission. Sanders' suggestion of a process of adaption may be useful here.[450] Although they would not necessarily have articulated such a process and would not even have gone through each step each time, the biblical writers tended to adapt non-Israelite material by removing references to other deities, asserting the presence and action of one God, naming that God, 'Yahweh', and setting it within an Israelite context.[451]

As I have established there was clearly a process occurring in the Bible which sought to articulate a rendering of reality based around the identity and character of Yahweh. But what

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[443] ibid., pp. 54-55. He notes how this was often the experience of individuals as well as the nation as a whole. Interestingly for my purposes he notes the character of Job in this connection: 'Themes such as the Suffering Servant in Isaiah or a man called Job, clobbered four times over, fit well into the story of Israel's struggle to monotheize in the middle of deprivation and suffering'; p. 55.

[444] ibid., p. 54. Cf. Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, pp. 49-54.

[445] Sanders, *Canon and Community*, p. 48.

[446] ibid., p. 48. Although parallel, he notes that they often 'mingle'.

[447] ibid., p. 48.

[448] ibid., pp. 48-49.

[449] Although he takes it in a different direction, this close relationship between missional encounters and cross-cultural encounters is noted by Brownson, 'Response', n.p.

[450] Sanders, *Canon and Community*, p. 56.

[451] ibid., pp. 56-57. He describes this process as 'depolytheizing, monotheizing, Yahwizing, and Israelitising'; p. 57. Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 121.

is the essence of this articulation? If the Bible is indeed a monotheizing literature, what is the substance of its monotheism and, more particularly, what does it mean in the context of Job?

It has been well-established that the Enlightenment word 'monotheism' as a term describing a belief in only one God, is problematic and anachronistic when applied to the ANE.[452] A more appropriate definition of OT monotheism is to understand it as being closely associated with Yahweh's uniqueness in himself rather as an assertion of the existence, or otherwise, of other gods:

> an understanding of the uniqueness of YHWH that puts him in a class of his own, a wholly different class from any other heavenly or supernatural beings, even if these are called 'gods'. I call this YHWH's transcendent uniqueness.[453]

When Deuteronomy, for example, talks about Yahweh's uniqueness, it is understood as emerging from his incomparable power and authority (see, for example, 4:35, 39; 7:9; 10:14, 17; 32:39), which should be understood in relation to Israel and to other gods.[454] To this I would add that Israel's conception of Yahweh's one-ness was not merely a contest of 'whose God is best?' but a form of cultural and political critique against the deities and derived exercising of power by other, more dominant peoples.[455]

The notion of 'transcendent uniqueness' is exemplified in the ideas that Yahweh alone created all things (so everything else is created by him) and that Yahweh alone is sovereign over all things (and so everything else is subservient to him).[456] To monotheize is, then, to assert Yahweh's unique nature and status in contrast with any other beings.[457]

By conceptualising OT monotheism in this way, Bauckham is able to read biblical texts that use non-Israelite religious imagery as still working within the monotheizing paradigm. It seems to me that he opens up the discussion in profoundly missional ways, in that his approach reflects the constant task of 'asserting and characterizing the transcendent uniqueness of YHWH.'[458]

Building on this notion of monotheism as Yahweh's transcendent uniqueness, Wright then applies it to biblical concepts of mission.[459] Citing texts such as Deut. 10:14; 2 Kgs. 19:15;

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[452] McConville, p. 19; Bauckham, 'Biblical Theology and the Problems of Monotheism', in Bartholomew and others, pp. 187-232 (p. 189); Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 72.
[453] Bauckham, 'Monotheism', p. 210.
[454] ibid., pp. 192-195.
[455] McConville, pp. 20-29.
[456] Bauckham, 'Monotheism', p. 211.
[457] ibid., p. 211. Bauckham is consciously using Sanders' term at this point.
[458] ibid., p. 215. In Beeby's language this is an example of his third category of 'missionary friction'; see below.
[459] See, in particular, chs. 3-5.

Jer. 32:27; Isa. 54:5; Gen. 18:25 and Ps. 47:7, Wright suggests that in the OT we see a picture of Yahweh who,

> made all, owns all, rules all… The uniqueness and universality of YHWH are foundational axioms of Old Testament faith, worship and mission, which in turn are foundational to New Testament Christian faith, worship and mission.[460]

This, I think, is a helpful way of connecting the monotheism of the OT with the mission of God, because it associates the uniqueness of Yahweh with his universality. Wright highlights the exodus and the return from exile as two key events that enabled Israel to 'know' Yahweh. Exod. 6:6-8 functions, for Wright, as 'God's mission statement' concerning the exodus narrative, in that it outlines his desire to liberate them from Egyptian bondage; to enter into a relationship with them; and to bring them to the promised land.[461] These events, according to Exod. 6:7 will cause Israel to know Yahweh as God, a sentiment expressed in retrospect in Deut. 4:32-35.[462] Through the exodus, Israel came to know certain key characteristics of Yahweh (drawn mainly from Exod. 15 and Deut. 4): that he is incomparable in his power (Exod. 12:12; 15:11); that his rule counters claims to kingship by other beings and is one of benevolence (Exod. 15:18; Deut. 10:14-19; Ps. 72); and that his uniqueness is true, not just in Israel but in the whole world (2 Sam. 7:22; Ps. 86:8, 10; Isa. 46:9; 1 Kgs. 8:23, 60).[463]

Concerning the return from exile, Yahweh's universality and uniqueness are confirmed in that he is shown to be sovereign over history by directing both the fortunes of Israel and, significantly, of other nations as well (for example, Isa. 41:2-4, 25; 44:28-45:6).[464] Secondly, Yahweh's word is authoritative, as had been seen at creation (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6, 9), but was now seen in the exilic language of, for example, Isa. 40-55 with its declarations of salvation from Babylonian captivity.[465] Thirdly, through the return from exile Yahweh protects his name from being profaned among the nations (Ezek. 36:22-23; Isa. 43:25), and ensures that his name is universally known (Isa. 45:5-6).[466] Fourthly, it is affirmed that Yahweh is sovereign over all of creation (Jer. 10:10-12; cf. Ps. 33; Isa. 40:21-26; 45:11-13).[467] Finally,

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[460] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 71.
[461] ibid., p. 76.
[462] ibid., p. 76.
[463] ibid., pp. 76-83.
[464] ibid., pp. 84-85. Wright cites an article by S. Sherwin that compares these claims with the claims of other deities in the ANE and concludes that the OT's assertions that their God can direct the fortunes of other nations are unique to Israel. See S. Sherwin, '"I Am Against You": Yahweh's Judgement on the Nations and its Ancient Near Eastern Context', *TB*, 54.2 (2003), 149-60.
[465] Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 85-87.
[466] ibid., pp. 88-89.
[467] ibid., pp. 89-90.

the return from exile confirms that Yahweh entrusts to Israel the task of witnessing to his uniqueness and universality in the presence of the nations (Isa. 43:9-12).[468]

The notion of Yahweh's uniqueness and universality is, in my view, a helpful contribution to framing the substance of Israel's witness to God (that is, its rendering of reality), which it sought to articulate in response to alternative renderings. However, such a process, as we have seen, was not one characterised exclusively by negative comparison. In Sanders' model we detect both positivity and negativity towards other cultures, which is indicative of the dynamic of the meeting points between the biblical rendering of reality and those of other cultures. While the overall effect of these encounters was to assert the Yahweh-shaped rendering of reality over and against alternative renderings, within that broad opposition there could be included elements of both affirmation and critique. This, it seems to me, is an important element to recognise in missional readings: to what extent and in what ways does the text engage with alternative renderings of reality, both in affirmation and critique?

How are we to talk about such encounters? My preference is to use more neutral (if a little bland) terms such as 'encounter' or 'meeting'. The language with which these issues are discussed is instructive and brings out something of the nuanced nature of the issue and the degree of openness that is perceived. Scholars discuss the nature of intercultural encounter in the Bible or in contemporary contexts using a range of vocabulary reflecting themes such as competition, resistance, subversion, clash, polemic, missionary friction, embrace and opposition, borrowing, and missionary encounter.

All of these terms seem appropriate at least some of the time. Beeby, for example, sets out three types of 'missionary friction' in the Bible, which he thinks plays an important part in 'missionary interpretation': first, Scripture can be seen as emerging from cross-cultural encounters; for example, the polemical nature of the creation accounts or the use of the term, *logos* in John's Gospel.[469] Beeby understood such 'transformed borrowing' as 'a form of cultural encounter which was a form of mission.'[470] Secondly, having influenced the formation of the Bible, these cross-cultural encounters resulted in friction within the biblical community that were sometimes addressed using the language of the other cultures (see, for example, Hos. 2:21-23).[471] Finally, there is a friction, 'wherever the words, images and presuppositions of scripture meet the words, images and presuppositions of the world's

[468] ibid., pp. 90-91.
[469] Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 280.
[470] ibid., p. 280. Wright also writes about a critical 'borrowing' which adapts ANE texts and ideas but does so through a filter of Israel's distinctive beliefs. Cf. Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 443-447.
[471] Beeby, 'Missional Approach', p. 281.

cultures', although we should perhaps be cautious about assuming an agenda every time these coincidences occur.[472]

For Goheen, grasping the biblical story as a coherent, overarching narrative 'will enable us to resist our idolatrous cultural story'.[473] Elsewhere, drawing on the work of missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, Goheen speaks in more explicitly missional terms, which is particularly striking in the context of my thesis: 'The mission of God's people involves a missional encounter with culture which both embraces the treasures and opposes the idolatry of all cultures.'[474] Such an encounter represents 'a clash of stories' and the offering of 'an alternative and an invitation' into the story defined by Yahweh faith.[475] It involves a process of 'affirmation and critique of other cultural stories', the former of which being exemplified by 'embrace of the cultural insights of the nations… in the wisdom literature.'[476]

A missional reading of the book of Job will explore the extent, variety and function of intercultural encounter in the text. It will seek to establish the ways in which the biblical book encounters the beliefs and even specific texts of other cultures, and will ask what Job does with those. What does the writer of Job affirm? What is distinctive about the biblical book and the Yahweh-shaped rendering of reality it promotes? How does it assert the uniqueness and universality of Yahweh? To use the phrasing of Newbigin and Goheen, to what extent and in what ways does the book of Job exhibit a 'missional encounter' with ideas of other cultures, and indeed, within Israel as well. As an additional question in this regard we may also ask, how does the book of Job model missional encounter for the contemporary church?

In order to draw out this missional encounter, in chapter four I address the question of the relationship between the book of Job, and the literature and ideas of other cultures in the ANE. I show that the book operated with a stance that was both open and critical in relation to other renderings of reality.

In a positive sense the author of Job could be said to be using certain literary conventions and motifs that would have been familiar to others, building on and, by implication, affirming certain aspects of ideas or approaches already circulating in the ANE. This process, however, would have been discriminative:

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[472] ibid., p. 281; cf. Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, pp. 87-88 for further examples of such transformed borrowing.

[473] Goheen, 'Urgency', p. 478. Drawing on the work of N.T. Wright and Bauckham he also uses the ideas of 'subversion' and 'resistance' to opposing metanarratives; cf. Wright, *NT and the People of God*, p. 132; Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 97.

[474] Goheen, 'Notes', n.p.

[475] ibid., n.p.

[476] Goheen, 'Notes', n.p. Cf. Goheen, 'Urgency', p. 478.

> this common oriental heritage was subjected to a far-reaching process of "creative assimilation." The Hebrew genius adopted those elements in the surrounding culture which it found valuable, modified what was potentially useful, and rejected what it recognized as fundamentally alien. Hence, the similarities are often illuminating with regard the details, but it is the differences that go deeper and are more significant.[477]

More negatively, this process also suggests an element of polemic on the part of the author of Job when engaging with ideas in the ANE, which may be discerned by looking at the distinctives of his work.[478] Focusing particularly on the portrayal of Yahweh, although Job complains of a certain degree of divine inscrutability, he is still aware of what is required of him to live an ethical life, upon which his righteousness is based (for example, Job 29, 31).[479] In contrast sufferers in the ANE texts are never fully aware of what is required of them, and they tend to conclude that the will of the gods is ultimately unknowable.[480]

Yahweh is portrayed in fundamentally different terms than the gods of the ANE. Of great importance in the biblical work is the justice of God and this is thoroughly probed by Job; indeed his commitment to God being just fuels his vexation and argument (24:1).[481] However, in the ANE texts the issue of the justice or ethics of the gods is not a significant theme, which would seem to be because there never seems to be a point at which the human cannot be assumed to be at fault. Human beings are sinful by design and cannot know all that is required of them.[482]

It seems, therefore, that Job is asking fundamentally different questions about the nature of suffering and what it questions about the moral governance of God.[483] And his quest for

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[477] R. Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 55. A very similar point is made by Wright when considering the missional nature of the Wisdom Literature, although he does not deal with the book of Job in a sustained way in this regard; *Mission of God*, pp. 50, 442-448.

[478] The question of intentionality is important here. Do the distinctives of Job signify a deliberate attempt at polemic against ANE texts?

[479] Y. Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection: The Book of Job in Context* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 259.

[480] ibid., p. 259: 'In 'I will Praise' and 'Theodicy', the poet's complaint is not addressed to an ethical evil ; rather, his ill fortune is brought about because he does not know the code by which to decipher God's acts and bring about changes.' Cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 35; D.P. Bricker, 'Innocent Suffering in Mesopotamia', *TB*, 51.2 (2000), 193-214 (p. 202).

[481] Walton, *Job*, p. 36.

[482] Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 214; cf. Gordis, *God and Man*, pp. 61-62. Similarly, C.A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 77: [according to Mesopotamian thought] 'Suffering is caused by the anger of a god provoked by a human. Though a person may be good, the nature of the human condition ensures that one will inevitably offend against deity'.

[483] Cf. Hoffman, pp. 260-261: 'As the subject of justice is outside the ken of these Mesopotamian works, they are certainly unable to present the problem of theodicy. They are thus lacking in the note of ethical pathos which accompanies Job's words. In 'I Will Praise' and 'Theodicy', suffering does not contradict any faith principle, but is simply a confusing and frightening

answers is fuelled by his understanding of who God is, particularly in relation to God's commitment to justice and righteousness.

Israel's monotheistic worldview is clearly an important factor in its distinctive portrayal of these issues. Yahweh is not just one personal god to whom Job turns as his representative who might intercede on his behalf amongst the pantheon of other deities.[484] Neither is Job's situation purely personal to him and his relationship with his particular personal God.[485] Although the circumstances of his suffering are specific to him, Job's commitment to God's uniqueness in the world necessarily moves his questions from the particular to the universal.[486]

As I will demonstrate in greater depth in chapter four, one particularly stark element of Job in relation to other treatments of unattributed suffering is the encounter with Yahweh experienced by Job, the sufferer.[487] In this encounter Yahweh comes to Job and asserts his freedom to govern the world in a way that he sees fit. Perhaps in this regard the inclusion of a sustained speech direct from God in the book of Job (in contrast to ANE texts) is also significant.[488]

The portrayal of Yahweh in the book, though ambiguous, depicts him as standing alone as the God who creates, who is the source of true wisdom, and who is the arbiter and director

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state, and certainly not one creating any difficulty requiring solution in the philosophical realm…

In the absence of any ethical or philosophical overtone to the astonishment of the sufferer, and in the light of the statement that in any event we cannot understand the acts of the gods… that one wait patiently until the wheel turns again, makes good sense. Not so in the book of Job, as the turning of the wheel in no way resolves the serious problems that have been raised…

Thus, only in the book of Job is there a confrontation among central and powerful ideas presented by God and humanity, and only in it, and not in the Mesopotamian works, are the necessary conditions created for true tragedy. The rebellious nature of the book of Job, which is entirely different from the tone of elegiac submission in 'I Will Praise' and 'Theodicy', follows from this.' Cf. Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 62: 'The burning conviction that man's suffering in the world is an affront to the goodness of God was possible only to a Hebrew. For him alone, the essential nature of God resided in His ethical character.' Cf. Bricker who suggests that 'innocent' suffering is virtually unheard of in Mesopotamia, and there is no such thing as 'theodicy' in the Egyptian literature; 'Mesopotamia', p. 214; D.P. Bricker, 'Innocent Suffering in Egypt', *TB*, 52.1 (2001), 83-100 (p. 100).

[484] Hoffman, p. 261, with reference to 'Man and His God'. Hartley also sees Israel's monotheism accounting for an absence of fate or demons being seen as responsible for human suffering; J.E. Hartley, 'Job 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background', in *DOTWPW*, pp. 346-361 (p. 360); cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 36; Wright, *The Mission of God*, chs. 3-5.

[485] Hoffman, pp. 261-262: 'In 'I Will Praise' the understanding of god is also personal, and hence lacking in the sense of universal ethical injustice manifested in the case of the suffering righteous.'

[486] ibid., p. 262: citing Job 13:7, 16-17 Hoffman suggests that these texts 'express the quintessence of the conflict involving both a theological and a personal side. These cannot be separated: in expressing the dual nature of Job's faith in God, he is both personal and universal-ethical.'

[487] Cf. Newsom, *Contest*, p. 238; Newsom, 'Job', p. 334.

[488] A.F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 153. Cf. D. Perlstein, *God's Others: Non-Israelites' Encounters With God in the Hebrew Bible*, (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2010), location 6041-44, Kindle edn.

of earthly matters. While the ways in which he governs the world are not within humanity's grasp to fully understand, Yahweh's authority and control cannot be missed.

Through the book of Job we see the articulation of Israel's monotheized and monotheizing worldview, that sought to preserve the faith and identity of the people of God in contrast to idolatrous and false ideas. For the writer of Job, it was not enough to join the conversation; he had to present the truest word. What seems particularly striking here is that the book of Job contains a strong polemic for Yahweh at the very moment when Israel is asking the most difficult questions of their God. Perhaps questions of the dissonance between the Wisdom Literature and other parts of the OT are not quite so stark when set against this ANE context.

It is part of the missional mandate of the Church to articulate the true rendering of reality in the midst of alternative renderings. One aspect of this task can be evidenced in how the people of God encounter alternative views on suffering. In this sense perhaps the book of Job could also be seen as a model for cultural engagement, which could be applied (along with others) in the sphere of missional activities.

By way of conclusion to this section on the missional direction of the biblical story, Wright offers a helpful summary of the implications of this line of inquiry for a missional reading, which also highlights what I consider to be a specific problem with the approach in relation to a text like Job:

> This is the great overarching framework of the biblical narrative, which renders to us the mission of God… a missional hermeneutic will work hard to read any text in the Old Testament canon within this overarching narrative framework, discerning its place within that framework, assessing how the shape of the grand narrative is reflected in the text in question, and conversely, how the particular text contributes to and moves forward the grand narrative itself.[489]

This, it seems to me, is a very useful way of understanding the implications of 'the missional direction of the story', especially in drawing out the two ways of seeing the relationship between a text and the grand narrative of the Bible. However, it also illustrates a difficulty with this line of enquiry. Wright's choice of words, 'a missional hermeneutic will work hard…' is illuminating. Some texts will require harder work than others in order to fit them into the narrative framework of the Bible.

Clearly this line of enquiry is immensely important in the developing conversation of missional hermeneutics. But how can Job be placed meaningfully within the narrative rendering of God's mission? How can we assess 'how the shape of the grand narrative is

[489] Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation', p. 184.

reflected in [Job], and conversely, how [Job] contributes to and moves forward the grand narrative itself'?

Job does not progress the chronological storyline of the *missio Dei,* but there are other ways to relate to it. Is it, for example, a narrative 'pause'?[490] Even if, as has been noted, we could associate the book with a particular point in the chronological story, what would this tell us?

Of particular significance is the idea that a text must fit *within* the narrative. I would understand Job as relating importantly with the grand narrative but in a way that stands apart from, and speaks into that narrative. A crucial function of Job is embodied in the Prologue in which the question is asked, 'Is it for nothing חִנָּם that Job fears God?' (Job 1:9b). It seems to me that the accuser's question about the possibility of genuine piety is a question about the possibility of a genuine relationship between God and humanity. This is of critical importance to the *missio Dei*. Is it a sham? Is the whole project of the mission of God flawed from the start? Is the reconciliation that God is working towards in the *missio Dei* an illusion? This is a question that, at some point in the *missio Dei*, has to be asked. And it falls to the book of Job to ask it. In the book of Job, therefore, *the very mission of God is at stake*.

My critique of this line of enquiry is based on how it has been explored thus far. Far from negating it, my discussion seeks to bring out further ways in which it can be explored in relation to texts that do not simply fit into the biblical storyline. As this chapter has demonstrated, I also consider this line of enquiry to be too broad to be taken on its own. Because of the number and type of issues that it covers it seems unhelpful to package them together under one heading, especially in comparison with some of the other lines of enquiry articulated by the forum. In particular I would want to see as a separate line of enquiry the question of how biblical texts encounter the belief systems, grand narratives or worldviews of other cultures. This is a theme that occurs across the discussion on missional hermeneutics, but I believe it should have a more privileged place in the conversation, perhaps as a separately articulated line of enquiry.

The issue of intercultural encounter is particularly acute when considering the book of Job and, in my view, affords some very important and promising questions. The Wisdom Literature as a whole opens up the question of international engagement helpfully.[491]

Of particular note is the non-Israelite motif in the book of Job. In addition to the non-Israelite location of Uz, Job and his comforters all appear to be non-Israelites. In chapter four I discuss the missional significance of this phenomenon.

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[490] G. Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p. 62; cf. Bartholomew and Goheen, 'Story', p. 160.

[491] See the discussion in relation to this in chapter two.

It is also a common task in Job scholarship to examine the relationship between the biblical book and similar works from the ANE. While, as I will argue, there does not seem to be evidence of a direct literary relationship between Job and these texts, there does seem to be an engagement with the ideas and questions considered in other belief systems. In Job we see evidence of affirmation and critique and the 'transformed borrowing' of ideas, if not of specific texts. This, also, will be addressed in the following chapter.

3.2.2 The missional purpose of the writings

> 'The *aim* of biblical interpretation is to fulfill the equipping purpose of the biblical writings.'[492]
>
> 'the ways in which the biblical text is shaped for the purpose of forming a people of God who are called to participate in God's mission to the creation'[493]

This line of enquiry is most closely associated with missiologist Darrell Guder, whose writing on missional hermeneutics emphasises the formative function of the Bible as it seeks to shape the church, which, from its inception has always been missional by nature. As such it ties closely with the concept of the Bible as a means by which mission is carried out, as well as the missional contexts of the biblical writings.

Guder has an emphasis on the NT and defines missional hermeneutics as 'a way of interpreting Scripture that starts from the assumption that the NT communities were all founded in order to continue the apostolic witness that brought them into being.'[494]

For Guder, there is great heuristic value in reading the Bible in this way, recognising that,

> The New Testament writings were addressed to communities already in mission; the purpose of the canonical Scriptures was (and is) to enable them to continue that mission. The Scriptures are thus the warrant for the church's mission by engaging their situations, their challenges, and their struggles.[495]

The evangelization of the early church, therefore, 'inexorably moved into catechesis'.[496] New communities of believers were taught how to be faithful witnesses in their context,

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[492] Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 313. His italics.
[493] GOCN, n.p.
[494] Guder, 'Missional Pastors', n.p.
[495] Guder, *Missional Church*, p. 223.
[496] Guder, 'Missional Authority', p. 107. Cf. Guder, 'Biblical Formation', pp. 61, 62.

meaning that each one understood itself to be, 'at its core and in a comprehensive sense missional.'[497]

For Guder, this is a foundational assumption in the discussion of missional hermeneutics, as it applies to the material of the NT, whose task 'was to deal with the problems and the conflicts, the challenges and the doubts as they emerged in particular contexts, so that these communities could be faithful to their calling.'[498]

The key hermeneutical question when a reader approaches the Bible with this perspective is therefore, 'How did this particular text continue the formation of witnessing communities then, and how does it do that today?'[499] Guder sees this hermeneutical task as combining, 'interpretative translation with missional connectedness'[500] in that,

> the Gospel is constantly being interpreted into and for a particular context… [yet] it is the same Gospel, the continuation of the same story, the same good news that connects every community to each other.[501]

In sum, the biblical writings have 'a continuing, converting, formative role in the church's life.'[502]

Guder contributes to what is in my view a convincing case for the shaping and equipping function of the NT writings. However a significant weakness in his approach (especially for my purposes) is that it pays little attention to the OT.[503] In what sense could OT texts be understood to be shaping and equipping God's people for their participation in God's mission?

Clearly, in order to relate this line of enquiry to OT contexts, we must move away from the language of discipleship or apostolic witness and strategies. However, it does not seem out of place to appropriate Guder's approach in order to speak of the OT writings, which, as I have shown, certainly sought to engage 'their situations, their challenges, and their struggles'.[504] Thus, Israel's writings had a formative and equipping function, illustrated, for example, by the encounters with alternative renderings of reality noted above or by more internal concerns, articulated helpfully by Goheen:

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[497] Guder, 'Missional Authority', p. 107. Cf. Guder, 'Biblical Formation', pp. 61, 62.
[498] Guder, 'Missional Authority', p. 108. He also sees this as the function of the Gospels, which were written to shape the discipleship of believers; see p. 108.
[499] ibid., p. 108.
[500] ibid., p. 108.
[501] ibid., pp. 108-109.
[502] Guder, 'Biblical Formation', p. 59.
[503] As noted, for example, by Schertz, p. 122; Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 313; Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation', p. 185.
[504] Guder, *Missional Church*, p. 223.

> It is precisely in order that Israel might fulfill her missional calling and be a light to the nations, that the law ordered its national, liturgical, and moral life; that wisdom helped to shape daily conduct in conformity to God's creational order; that the prophets threatened and warned Israel in their disobedience and promised blessing in obedience; that the psalms brought all of Israel's life into God's presence in worship and prayer; that the historical books continued to tell the story of Israel at different points reminding Israel of and calling them to their missional place in the story.[505]

Of particular importance in this formative conception of the biblical writings is the relationship between ethics and mission. The people of God were to exhibit and thereby witness to the character and values of Yahweh in the midst of the nations.[506]

This conception of the missional relevance of Israel's ethical conduct opens up important avenues for missional readings. In the case of the book of Job, it will be important to understand in what ways the book may be attempting to shape the thought and conduct of its readers. Clearly this is a sizeable area of study and so, as I have already indicated, I will investigate the ethical relevance of Job by examining two particular areas of conduct. The first is what the book teaches about how the people of God, as individuals and communities, can process the vexing issue of unattributed suffering in their own experience or the experience of others. The second theme is an examination of how the motif of the treatment of the poor functions in Job. As I will argue, both themes enable the people of God, in their relationship with God, to speak to God in all honesty, for themselves and on behalf of the world.

To borrow Guder's language and applying it to my thesis, the line of enquiry promoted in this section asks the question, 'How did [the book of Job] continue the formation of witnessing communities then, and how does it do that today?'[507] That is, how did (and how does) the book of Job intend to shape and equip its audience for their participation as the people of God in the mission of God? I would understand this to involve an examination of the ways in which the book sought to articulate, as discussed above, a correct, Yahweh-shaped rendering of reality in relation to its particular themes, and in contrast to alternative renderings. I would also understand it to involve an examination of the ways in which the book sought to shape the ethical behaviour of the people of God. Although my focus will be on the original audiences, some space should be allowed for how the text may shape and

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[505] Goheen, 'Continuing', p. 92; Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation', pp. 185-186. Cf. Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', pp. 313-314 who notes, quite rightly, the importance of attending to the particularities of the shaping intentions of individual books throughout the canon, albeit within the overall purpose of Scripture as formative.

[506] For example, Gen. 18:16-19; Deut. 4:5-8; Deut. 10:12-22; Wright, *Mission of God*, especially ch. 11; Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation', pp. 185-186.

[507] Guder, 'Missional Authority', p. 108.

equip the contemporary church as it engages in God's mission today. As part of the latter question, we may also probe the extent to which and the ways in which the book of Job may provide models for mission practice.

How much do we need to know about the original audience of the book in order to understand its teaching? Discerning the original audience of Job is a complex task. Dating the book is notoriously difficult and it is beyond my scope to go into the debate in any great depth. Ezek. 14:14, 20 contain the only OT references to Job outside of the book itself. In those sixth century texts Job appears alongside the non- or pre-Israelite Noah and Dan'el, an Ugaritic hero of antiquity, which seems to show that Job was a known, ancient exemplar of righteousness, and was not a reference to the book of Job itself.[508]

It is generally agreed that the book of Job has a patriarchal setting, which is suggested by a number of details in the story, such as the way Job's wealth is quantified in animals and servants[509] or his longevity (42:17).[510] It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that Job was a known figure in the ancient world, presumably as some kind of righteous sufferer, and that the biblical book's archaised setting evokes the prior traditions associated with him.[511] However, this does not address the composition of the biblical book.

Views regarding the dating of the book itself vary considerably, although most modern scholars would place it somewhere between the tenth and second centuries.[512] A particularly important marker is whether the book can be seen as a response to the Babylonian exile, so that Job symbolises, in some way, the misfortunes of Israel as a whole.[513] However, the book need not be understood in this way; indeed this understanding is rather problematic given the insistence on Job's innocence (contra the people of Israel) and the lack of explicit

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[508] There are not thought to be any connections between Job (אִיּוֹב) and Jobab (יוֹבָב) in Gen. 10:29 or Yob (יוֹב) in 46:13; cf. S.R. Driver and G.B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. xxix. On the question of the three figures in Ezekiel 14 see Pope, p. 6. Block defends the Dan'el here being the biblical Daniel, but more often scholars prefer connecting him with the righteous King Dan'el, father of the hero of the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat; D.I. Block, *Ezekiel 1-20* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 446-459; cf. M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 257-258; I.M. Duguid, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), pp. 193-194; I.M. Rowe, 'Scribes, Sages, and Seers in Ugarit', in *Scribes, Sages, and Seers: The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World*, ed. by L.G. Perdue (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), pp. 96-108 (pp. 97-98); A. Lo, *Job 28 As Rhetoric: An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22-31* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 59.

[509] T. Longman III, *Job*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), location 1592, Kindle edn; J.E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 21.

[510] Pope, p. xxxi.

[511] I argue in chapter four that this archaising has a universalising function. See that discussion for further archaising details.

[512] Cf. Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. lvii; N.C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 40; J.H. Eaton, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), p. 65; Newsom, 'Job', p. 325.

[513] J.G. Janzen, *Job* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1985), p. 5.

connections made to the nation of Israel in the book.[514] As I will demonstrate in chapter four, Job is part of a long-established tradition in the ANE of wrestling with the question of suffering and so it is entirely plausible that Israel did not require the trauma of exile as a catalyst for the book. However, neither does this negate an exilic or post-exilic dating.

Even the apparent links between Job and books such as Isaiah and Jeremiah do not point conclusively to an exilic dating, as the nature and priority of the relationship between these texts is disagreed over.[515] However, even if Job were (post-)exilic, the book is composed in such a way as to offer few clues concerning its author's era or circumstances.[516]

Nevertheless, despite the ambiguity surrounding its composition, it is still possible to infer some useful points about the circumstances which prompted the emergence of the book of Job, and those whom the book was seeking to shape. To this extent, I would argue that this potential missional dimension, as it relates to Job at least, is not a dead end.

First, as I will demonstrate more fully in chapter four, I would understand the stripping of certain elements of specificity to be functioning in a positive way as it serves in Job to universalise the book.[517] And this universalising impulse is, I will argue, part of the book's missional function. Ordinarily, as discussed above, the book's historical context is an important aid to understanding how the text is a product of God's mission. However, in the case of Job, it is in the very concealment of certain details that its missional potential is most fully realised. Rather than diminishing the potential for missional reflection, the ambiguities take us in a new and more profound direction.

Secondly, we do not necessarily need to know the book's precise historical details in order to have a reasonable appreciation of what it is trying to teach and, therefore, some of the issues to which the author sought to respond. Lo, for example, sets her discussion of the audience of the book of Job by appealing, helpfully in my view, to the notion of the 'implied reader'; that is, 'the one who responds to the expectations of its implied author.'[518] The book's rhetorical audience, for Lo, are those readers who will respond to and manifest the

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[514] J.H. Walton, 'Job 1: Book of', in *DOTPWPW*, pp. 333-346 (pp. 343-344).

[515] Lo, p. 60. Cf., for example, Hartley, *Job*, pp. 15, 19 who thinks Job was written first; Cf. Gordis, *Book of Man*, p. 216; W. Kynes, 'Job and Isaiah 40-55: Intertextualities in Dialogue', in *Reading Job Intertextually*, ed. by K. Dell and W. Kynes (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 94-105, who consider Isaiah to have priority.

[516] Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. lvii; Lo, p. 61.

[517] Cf. Habel, p. 42; Lo, p. 61.

[518] Lo, p. 62. Lo builds on the notion of the implied author as conceived by W.C. Booth in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 138: 'The author creates, in short, and image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement.'; cited in Lo, pp. 61-62.

change envisaged by the author.[519] This has relevance for discerning the missional purpose of Job because, by isolating the main issues being addressed in the book, we are able to portray, albeit tentatively, the circumstances to which the book was responding. I do not mean by this that I will try to build up a picture of a particular socio-historical situation. Rather, we may be able to infer certain false beliefs the author of Job was attempting to correct, and therefore something of the circumstances to which the book was reacting. While we may not be able to be as specific about the compositional context of Job as we can be for some other texts, this does not mean *a priori* that there is nothing to be said.

Given the concentration of the book on different, often inadequate views on the relationship between suffering and God's governance in the world, this would seem to indicate that the author's intended audience either held or encountered some or all of these perspectives, which he was attempting to correct.[520] Such a corrective confronted the audience with an alternative articulation of truth about God in a world marked by suffering. It sought to bring a change in its audience concerning what they believed about suffering and God's governance, and to equip them to confront it in other alternative renderings.

The book's equipping purpose is also seen in that it is not simply about how the people of God might understand suffering and God's governance, but how they may seek to live in the light of their own suffering.[521] It is, after all, a book of wisdom. Waters' work on the missional potential of a faithful, suffering believer is instructive here.[522] However, his concentration on Job's submissiveness in the Prologue as, 'the proper response to suffering' is problematic in that it does not sufficiently account for Job's engagement with the issues in the rest of the book.[523]

Also concerning the shaping purposes of the book, in chapter five I examine in depth the theme of the treatment of the poor in Job. As I will argue, implicit in this theme is an attempt to shape its audience's relationship with the plight of the poor in the light of God's governance of the world.

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[519] Lo, p. 82. As well as Booth, Lo also draws on the work of M.A. Powell, 'Narrative Criticism', in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. by J.B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 239-255, and L.F. Bitzer, 'The Rhetorical Situation', in *Rhetoric: A Tradition in Transition. In Honor of Donald C. Bryant*, ed. by W.R. Fisher (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974), pp. 247-260.

[520] Lo, p. 69.

[521] Cf. Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. lxii.

[522] Waters, 'Job'. See chapter two for a more detailed treatment of the article.

[523] ibid., p. 25.

3.2.3 The missional 'locatedness' of the reading community

> 'The *approach* required for a faithful reading of the Bible is from the missional location of the Christian community.'[524]
>
> 'the ways in which the biblical text evokes and challenges a missionally located community's interpretive readings and questions'.[525]

The writer most associated with this line of enquiry is NT scholar Michael Barram, who published a 2007 article in the journal, *Interpretation* on 'The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic'.[526]

Barram grounds his approach in a recognition of the *missio Dei* concept of mission which frames the church as 'missional' and also 'the Bible itself as missional… inasmuch as it is understood to function as the word of a missional God to a community defined by the divine mission.'[527] Much like myself, Barram also assumes a holistic understanding of mission in which he sees 'issues of socio-cultural, political, economic, and environmental justice as essentially inseparable from the church's evangelistic outreach to unbelievers.'[528] Finally, and more particularly, Barram notes the issue of 'located readings', meaning that all readers come to the text from within a particular social location, an insight especially associated with postmodernism.[529]

Unlike many of his fellow missional hermeneutics scholars, Barram concentrates on the readers of the text rather than the text itself. By 'missional hermeneutic' he means, 'an approach to biblical texts that privileges the missiological "location" of the Christian community in the world as a hermeneutical key.'[530] For Barram, as a community 'caught up in the missio Dei', each congregation of the people of God has its own missional 'social location', and it is from this location that they ask questions of the text, which must in this understanding be 'missional' questions.[531] Therefore, each reading will be different because they are each carried out in particular contexts, and each reading is missional because they are each carried out by the people of God, who are participating in God's mission.

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[524] Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 314. His italics.
[525] GOCN, n.p.
[526] Barram, 'Social Location'. See the brief outline of Barram's contribution to the missional hermeneutics conversation in ch. 1 of this thesis.
[527] ibid., p. 43.
[528] ibid., p. 44.
[529] ibid., p. 44.
[530] ibid., pp. 42-43.
[531] Barram, '"Located" Questions', n.p.

This framing of social location as being at the heart of the interpretive process leads Barram to conclude that his understanding of a missional reading is, 'merely an honest acknowledgment of our primary interpretive location as we seek to read the Bible more faithfully today.'[532]

In a précis and development of Barram's work, Wright correctly notes the similarities between elements of Barram's points and the hermeneutics of liberation theology, tying closely together themes of context, theology and mission practice.[533] Reading from a context of poverty, for example, will produce questions of the text that will differ from those reading in the midst of relative wealth:

> Contexts count. And theology must be done in the process of missional engagement with each context, seeking to be both faithful to the text and the doctrinal tradition it embodies, and relevant to the context and the committed praxis for which it calls.[534]

Wright is keen to tease out some of the more text-centred implications of Barram's work and, while acknowledging that contemporary reading communities are in missional contexts, associates the discussion with the ideas noted above about the missional contexts of the original hearers of those texts: 'What can we know about those original contexts, and how can we discern the missional drive and energy that the texts injected into them?'[535]

Barram himself does this by offering a brief case study based on his published doctoral thesis, *Mission and Moral Reflection in Paul*, in which he, 'began with a basic missiological question: What was the apostle Paul's understanding of his vocation, and what implications might that understanding have for interpreting his letters as a whole?'.[536] Here, then, Barram is applying the idea of locatedness to ancient contexts as well as contemporary ones.

Clearly there is a significant degree of overlap between certain questions Barram asks and other lines of enquiry already discussed. However, the driving distinctive of his work, which led to Hunsberger devoting a separate treatment of it, is the focus on the 'location' of the contemporary reader. It seems preferable to me to maintain this distinctive otherwise Barram's work may be simply subsumed under other, existing lines.

To this extent Barram's approach will be of limited use to my particular thesis. Although I recognize the place of reader-centred issues it is beyond the scope of my thesis, as I have

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[532] Barram, 'Social Location', p. 58.
[533] Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation', pp. 186-187. See also, Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', pp. 314-315.
[534] Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation', p. 187.
[535] ibid., p. 187.
[536] Barram, 'Social Location', p. 54.

framed it, to deal with them.[537] While scope is the main reason for this restriction it is worth noting that the difficulty in making definitive judgments about the precise location of the original hearers or readers of the book of Job would add to the difficulty of applying this approach to the book, even if it were broadened in the way that Wright suggests.

However, I will still draw on Barram's work at appropriate points, as I seek to integrate his insights with other lines of enquiry that I do adopt. His recognition of *missio Dei* and the holistic nature of mission is particularly relevant to this. To take it in a different direction, it is also worth considering whether Barram's notion of locatedness might be developed to consider the particularities of Job's locatedness, whether as a non-Israelite or as one who is suffering grievously, both of which prompt important questions which will be explored in my reading of the book.[538] This would be a helpful development of Barram's locatedness concept as it refocuses attention onto the characters within the text, and not only on socio-historical questions concerning the text's audience, whether original or contemporary.[539]

3.2.4 The missional engagement with cultures

> 'The gospel functions as the interpretive *matrix* within which the received biblical tradition is brought into critical conversation with a particular human context.'[540]
>
> 'the ways in which the biblical text relates the received tradition to a particular context in light of the good news of the reign of God in Jesus Christ'[541]

The principal advocate of this line of enquiry is NT scholar James Brownson who outlined his approach most fully in a 1998 book, *Speaking the Truth in Love: New Testament Resources for a Missional Hermeneutic*.[542] In common with a number of others in the field Brownson understands mission in terms of the *missio Dei*, yet his principal focus is on how

[537] However my commitment to diversity in context and interpretation is reflected, I hope, in the breadth of my engagement with scholarship from a variety of backgrounds. For example, in my chapter on poverty in Job I have sought to engage with scholars from Latin America, Africa and Asia, as well as those from my own Western setting.

[538] One could say, for example, that Job's 'experiential locatedness' profoundly influences the kinds of questions he asks.

[539] And not necessarily historical events or characters; in that sense it could be developed as part of a more literary reading.

[540] Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', p. 316.

[541] GOCN, n.p.

[542] Brownson, *Speaking*. See ch. 1 of the thesis for an outline of Brownson's contribution to missional hermeneutics.

the Bible can help those involved in the missional praxis of contextualising the Christian faith in a culturally diverse world.[543] The 'missional hermeneutic' he refers to, therefore, is not primarily a hermeneutic of biblical texts alone but a hermeneutic of the 'missiological challenge' of interpreting the Christian faith into new cultural contexts, for which 'study of the New Testament can provide tools and perspectives'.[544]

As with Guder, Marshall, Barram and others, Brownson's hermeneutic is based on the assumption that the writers of the NT were writing as part of a missional phenomenon in that they were 'engaged in and celebrating [the] missionary enterprise in the early church.'[545]

However, even here Brownson highlights the intercultural nature of the early church's mission, which he finds helpful for contemporary mission because this missional character of the NT 'places the question of the expression of Christianity in diverse cultures at the top of the interpretive agenda.'[546]

In common with others, Brownson attends to the question of particularity and universality in the biblical writings, but he also ties this to the diversity of expressions of Christian faith and readings of the text by different communities.[547] In light of the contextual nature of interpretation, Brownson seeks a missional hermeneutic which will be true both to the 'world of the text' and the diverse worlds represented by the readers: 'When this takes place, the contours and characteristics of both unity and the diversity of human life are more clearly disclosed.'[548]

This theme of 'common humanity and cultural plurality' in human life is important to Brownson, who sees it in similar ways to, for example, Bauckham's view of the dynamic between particularity and universality.[549] The NT, he suggests, embodies a shift towards a more culturally diverse community of God's worshipping people, which is significant in how it reflects the very nature of God:

> All of humanity is called to glorify God, not by suppressing diversity and particularity, but by sanctifying it. The universal bond of humanity appears not so much in its set of common responses to its creator and sustainer, but rather by humanity's diverse responses to the particular vision of God disclosed in the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[550]

For Brownson, a foundational assumption of a missional hermeneutic is:

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[543] ibid., p. 1.
[544] ibid., p. 2.
[545] ibid., p. 14.
[546] ibid., p. 14-15.
[547] ibid., pp. 8-11.
[548] ibid., p. 18.
[549] ibid., p. 18. He cites Gen. 12:1-3 and Isa. 2:2-4 as examples of this 'dialectic'.
[550] ibid., pp. 21-22.

> that the mode in which God is present among the faithful is irreducibly *multicultural*… Although each culture is called to repentance, its specific contours are not obliterated... Yet at the same time, a missional hermeneutic includes the awareness that the reality of God is not exhausted by any particular culture's way of naming and worshiping God.[551]

This God is a God who both,

> enters deeply into the everyday particularity of each cultural setting, each society, each family, each meal, each social interaction… [and also] invites us to widen our vision to a vast human community of which we are a small part.[552]

Although he makes much of the diversity inherent in the interpretive process, Brownson also notes the parallel element of 'coherence' in the readers (they are reading the same texts and they share a common humanity) and in the Scriptures.[553] Coherence in the NT as a whole is seen in the nature of the gospel. Building on this idea, Brownson then constructs a hermeneutic framework around the relationships between 'gospel', 'tradition', and 'context', which he sees at work in the NT documents, and which he offers as a framework for missional engagement.[554] 'Gospel' refers to 'the proclamation of God's soteriological purpose and claim on this world, a purpose and claim extended paradigmatically through the crucified and risen Christ.'[555] 'Context' is here understood as the particular historical circumstances in which and into which the authors wrote their Gospel or letter. Finally, 'tradition' refers to the authors' awareness and use of the Hebrew Scriptures (or the LXX) and other Christian traditions such as hymns or stories about Jesus.[556]

In using this dynamic between context, tradition and gospel, Brownson offers a hermeneutic for missional engagement in the contemporary world. In the midst of cultural plurality and differing traditions, the people of God must maintain a sense of the coherence of the gospel.[557] We should work to discern which tenets of our belief and practice are driven by context and tradition, and which are the essential aspects of the gospel narrative.[558]

Hunsberger offers a helpful, concise summary of Brownson's model which, he suggests, highlights the nature of the 'missional moment' at which the themes of Gospel, context and tradition intersect: 'What happens in the New Testament… is paradigmatic for the daily

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[551] ibid., pp. 22-23. His italics.
[552] ibid., p. 26.
[553] ibid., pp. 28-29.
[554] See ibid., pp. 36-45.
[555] ibid., pp. 30-31, 51.
[556] ibid., pp. 37-38.
[557] ibid., p. 79.
[558] ibid., pp. 79-80.

engagement of the gospel with our own culture or cultures today. This encounter is the stuff of the church's calling and mission.'[559]

Brownson's lack of engagement with the OT seems, in my view, to limit his approach. Hunsberger, for example, notes that engaging prior traditions with the current moment is a dynamic evident in the OT period, although he does not elaborate on this point.[560] Wright, however, draws out in a little more detail the implications of Brownson's work in terms of the OT.[561] OT authors often sought to address 'new situations on the basis of received traditions – namely the great historic pillars of Israel's faith: election, redemption, and covenant'.[562] Examples of this practice would include prophetic use of Israel's history to motivate current and future obedience of the people, or Deuteronomy's anticipation of the challenges of life in the land and call 'to remain loyal to their one covenant Lord, in order to be a model to the watching nations and ultimately… to be the means of the nations coming to praise Yahweh the God of Israel.'[563] To this we might add further examples such as the way in which Chronicles or later parts of Isaiah re-present the history and theology of Israel in the light of post-exilic concerns.

Particularly of note for this thesis is Wright's use of the Wisdom Literature's cultural engagement as a further example, particularly the way in which it adapted non-Israelite wisdom traditions, albeit through the filter of faith in Yahweh.[564]

This seems to me to belong to a different category. Brownson's point is that the biblical writers engaged in their missional responsibilities by drawing upon their own traditions and Scriptures, and contextualised them for new situations in the light of the gospel. While I do contend, above, that the Wisdom Literature's engagement with other cultures is profoundly significant for a missional hermeneutic, this seems to be markedly different to the kind of process Brownson articulates, even if we allow room for contextualising his discussion to include the OT. The appropriation of the wisdom of other cultures seems to me to be in another category and it seems unnecessary to try to make Brownson's approach fit like this.

Brownson's line of enquiry notes the importance of the *missio Dei*, the need to account for particularity in texts and interpretation, and the potential for texts to provide paradigms or models for contemporary missional engagement. However, beyond these factors Brownson's approach is of limited usefulness for my purposes, as it lends itself much more readily to the

[559] Hunsberger, 'Proposals 2011', pp. 316-317; p. 317.
[560] ibid., p. 317.
[561] Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation', p. 191.
[562] ibid., p. 191.
[563] ibid., p. 191.
[564] ibid., p. 191. Cf. J.E. Goldingay and C.J.H. Wright, '"Yahweh Our God Yahweh One" The Old Testament and Religious Pluralism', in *One God, One Lord in a World of Religious Pluralism*, ed. by A.D. Clarke and B.W. Winter (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1991), pp. 34-52 (p. 35).

interpretation of NT writings and maintains a focus on the reader, which I am not intending to pursue. Perhaps the phrasing of the stream, 'The Missional Engagement with Cultures' is problematic. Although I will pursue, in considerable depth, the nature of intercultural encounter in Job, this will be rather different to the kind of approach for which Brownson advocates.

3.2.5 Engagement with the 'other'

> 'the ways in which the biblical text discloses its fullest meaning only when read together with the culturally and socially "other."'[565]

This line of enquiry was not included in Hunsberger's taxonomy and is less developed than the others. It was suggested by both respondents to his original paper and is now an accepted part of the forum's outline of a missional hermeneutic.[566] I should note, however, that published works on missional hermeneutics have, thus far, been slow to include this additional element.[567]

Building on his work on the missional context of the reading community Barram, for example, questioned whether advocates for missional hermeneutics (including himself) had paid sufficient attention to 'the perspective of the other confronted by mission'; that is,

> How does the encounter with the other challenge the power and privilege so often presupposed in the community's understanding of its "sentness"-- and indeed, of its appropriation of the gospel?[568]

In Brownson's response to Hunsberger he begins

> with the simple observation that missional encounters between people are, almost by definition, *cross-cultural* encounters. To the extent that this is true, then it follows that a missional hermeneutic is one that sees this cross-cultural encounter as the central context out of which interpretation takes place.[569]

Clearly, this line of enquiry, as envisaged by Barram and Brownson, focuses on the reception of the biblical text, much like Barram's earlier work. Brownson, too, can be seen

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[565] GOCN, n.p.
[566] See Barram, 'Response'; Brownson, 'Response'; GOCN, n.p.
[567] See for example, Flemming, 'Philippians', and Wright, 'Mission and OT Interpretation' who concentrate on Hunsberger's four streams. But perhaps it is still early days.
[568] Barram, 'Response', n.p.
[569] Brownson, 'Response', n.p. His italics.

to be building on his previous work. For him the 'notion of otherness' is vital for a missional approach to the Bible because it acknowledges the nature of reading the text in cross-cultural contexts; thus, 'a missional hermeneutic envisions a three-way conversation between the reader, an "other" who hears the text differently, and the text itself.'[570] For Brownson, who is committed to the notion of the *missio Dei* as a way of framing the biblical story, accounting for the 'other' helps to steer a hermeneutical course between 'a totalizing narrative that suppresses difference' on the one hand and 'a pastiche that simply satisfies for the moment' on the other.[571]

Indeed, for Brownson, 'otherness' is at the very heart of missional hermeneutics which, he suggests, should engage diversity in such a way as to enable the 'post-modern world to hear an even deeper song, which draws all of us, with our divergent voices, into the music of the spheres, into the Body of Christ.'[572]

As noted above I have made a conscious decision in my thesis to focus on text-centred issues rather than engaging with reader-centred matters. This final line of enquiry, as it is framed, is therefore of limited use within the scope of my thesis. However, Browson does open up the topic in one particularly helpful and relevant way, by suggesting that this approach could include focusing on 'the significance of cross-cultural encounters within the biblical text'.[573]

Although my own approach is focused on the text itself, it seems to me that Barram and Brownson are right to highlight the theme of 'the other', even if they do take it in a more reader-centred direction. In my case, I would frame the question of 'the other' by suggesting that, if mission involves the crossing of cultural boundaries, it is important to account for the ways in which the text engages with those outside of the people of God. Although focused on matters relating to the community of believers, the Bible often engages with (in the OT) non-Israelites and (in the NT) those not part of the early church.[574] It seems to me that this is a fundamentally missional question that can be usefully addressed in some detail in any missional reading of the Bible.

I also consider this to be a way in which the Wisdom Literature, with its particularly international awareness, could have some valuable insights into the Bible's engagement with other cultures. For a given text, then, we may ask whether a cross-cultural encounter is included and what function it might have in its context.

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[570] ibid., n.p.
[571] ibid., n.p. Cf. my defence of the notion of metanarrative, above.
[572] ibid., n.p.
[573] ibid., n.p.
[574] See, for example, G. O'Collins, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Perlstein.

An interest in the 'other' opens up some important points of reflection in the case of Job, particularly in light of the book's prominent non-Israelite motif. The principal characters, I will argue, are all non-Israelite and the Joban drama is located in an 'other' place, the land of Uz. To a greater degree than any other biblical writing, there is a sense in which the book of Job is entirely 'other', constituting the most sustained cross-cultural encounter between text and original audience in the Bible. This is in part what is unique about Job; it is not that there are accounts of cross-cultural encounters within the book; rather, the whole book is a cross-cultural encounter. Indeed, this seems to me to highlight the rich potential of examining the function and significance of the 'other' motif in the book of Job, and the extent to which this may be understood missionally.

Exploring this question will also complement the examination of the missional encounter between the book of Job, and the rendering of reality offered by other cultures. Clearly there is overlap between these two lines of enquiry, yet I would still want to maintain a distinction between them. Whereas the 'missional encounter of the text' focuses on the ways in which the book engages other beliefs, this 'other' line of enquiry is more focused on the people within the text and the roles they play. Perhaps this can be articulated as the missional encounters *of* the text and missional encounters *in* the text.

In chapter four of this thesis I tackle Job's engagement with the 'other', both in terms of its relationship with ANE ideas, and with regards to the function of the non-Israelite motif.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the emerging method of missional hermeneutics offers a number of potentially fruitful ways of addressing the relative neglect of Job in BMS. The survey of the lines of enquiry pursued by advocates of missional hermeneutics was framed using the taxonomy suggested by Hunsberger and adopted by the GOCN forum. While this categorisation of approaches has some limitations, it does provide a useful way of framing the discussion.

In this concluding section I give a brief outline of the way forward for my own missional reading of Job. As the discussion in this chapter has demonstrated, some lines of enquiry have more potential than others. Although I see merit in the approaches of Barram (locatedness) and Brownson (Gospel as interpretive matrix), in practice I will tend to adopt elements of their work that overlap with other lines of enquiry. In particular, I will not be

concentrating on more reader-centred questions and so their overall approaches will not be taken forward in large degree.[575]

Both Barram and Brownson were instrumental in the final category of the role of the 'other' in missional interpretation. As I indicate above, where I do adopt elements of this approach it is mainly those aspects that connect with other approaches, and through a development beyond what I believe they intended. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge a degree of debt to their approach, even if I am not taking it forward in its entirety.

Having dealt with those approaches that I will adopt selectively, I should explain how I will integrate the first two lines of enquiry (the missional nature of the biblical story and the missional purposes of the text) into my missional reading of Job.

Despite the complications of considering the book of Job as part of the unfolding narrative of the Bible I still consider this approach to be extremely important. However, I see in Job a challenge to how this has often been applied in missional readings, and will look to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the book and the biblical story and, therefore, the *missio Dei*. Our interest in Job should not simply be to ask how the book fits into and progresses the biblical story. Rather I will demonstrate in chapter four how Job stands apart from, and speaks into that grand narrative. As part of this discussion I have articulated the importance of understanding the function of the particular and the universal in the biblical text, as well as the way a holistic understanding of mission sensitises the reader to issues of poverty and justice.

The question of how Job contributes to an articulation of a Yahweh-shaped rendering of reality will also be examined. This will be carried out by looking at the book's missional encounter with alternative renderings evident in the ANE, meeting them in both affirmation and critique.

The discussion of the missional purpose of the book of Job will be highlighted in several discussions. As indicated, I have isolated the treatment of the poor in Job as an appropriate theme of examination because of its importance in a holistic understanding of mission, but also its significance within Job itself. This coincidence of interests provides fertile ground for discussion.

So far in the thesis I have established the relative neglect of the book of Job in BMS, which provided a context for the current chapter's examination of the method of missional hermeneutics. Throughout this material I have related the discussion to how the book of Job

[575] This comment relates, in particular, to Barram's work.

can be read missionally and, in so doing, I have already begun my missional reading of the book. However, the thesis now needs to move on to a more substantial and sustained missional reading of Job. As such, part one of the thesis, 'Approaching a missional hermeneutic for the book of Job' now gives way to part two, 'Applying a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job'.

In the next chapter I build on the already developing discussion and look specifically at the universalising impulse in Job. This will involve an analysis of the engagement of the book with ANE beliefs in order to show the monotheizing process at work in the book. In addition the chapter will look at other ways in which the book sets itself up as articulating something of universal import. I do this particularly by examining the non-Israelite motif in the book, concerning both its setting and characters, and other universalising elements, especially in the Prologue.

In chapter five I then pursue the study of a particular topic that I have shown to have significant missional import: the treatment of the poor. This theme, also of importance in the book of Job, demonstrates some of the ways in which the book may be understood to be shaping the people of God, as they engage with God in the world and on behalf of the world.

Part Two: Applying a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job

4 Chapter Four: The Universalising Impulse in the Book of Job

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter and the next is to apply to the book of Job certain elements of the lines of enquiry pursued in missional hermeneutics. In the next chapter I focus on one particular issue which is of significant interest to a holistic conception of mission and to the book of Job as well: the treatment of the poor. In the current chapter, however, I address a number of key missional themes highlighted by the lines of enquiry established in chapter three.

I have previously established that the biblical story of God's mission encompassed universal concerns and purposes. It is fitting, then, that a missional reading will seek to discern how a biblical text will reflect, exhibit and even achieve these universal concerns, or embody this particular-universal movement, albeit within the context of the election of Israel. The book of Job is of special note in this regard because it is not immediately obvious how it fits into the narrative of the biblical story and, perhaps most intriguingly, it appears to be set outside of Israel. Connected to the universal scope of the mission of God, then, I examine the extent and significance of the non-Israelite theme in Job. I address this particularly in a treatment of the book's Prologue, and conclude that the theme has the effect of universalising the characters, setting, and aims of the book. Supporting this, I look at what I consider to be further universalising features of the Prologue, including its archaic setting and literary artistry. Crucially, the question posed by the accuser in 1:9b is also considered, and connects to a reflection on the relationship between the book of Job and the *missio Dei*. As I read it, the question, 'is it for nothing חִנָּם that Job fears God?' is not only vital to the whole book, it is also an important way of understanding how the book of Job relates to the biblical story of God's mission. Of particular note is the way in which the author of Job employs the particularities of the book's setting to universalise themes, thereby allowing the book of Job to speak 'to and for all humanity', which I would argue is an essential element of our participation in the mission of God.[576]

By employing the term, 'universalising impulse' I mean, therefore, that within Job there is a dynamic at play that suggests the book presents itself as addressing universally relevant questions in a peculiarly universalised way, while also maintaining a distinctively Israelite approach. Indeed, it is ultimately this distinctive perspective that means that Job has something universally significant to say.

[576] Pope, p. xxxviii.

Having established that Job sets itself up in universally significant terms, I then examine the distinctive message of the book. In order to keep this focused, I concentrate on the ways in which the book could be considered to be having a 'missional encounter' with surrounding cultures. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, this line of enquiry seeks to discern how a biblical text may contribute to an articulation of Yahweh faith over and against alternative belief systems. While this will involve a process of both affirmation and critique, the end result is a contrasting of Yahweh faith with what is ultimately understood as the false religion of Israel's neighbouring cultures. In this chapter I will look at the relationship between Job and the ideas of the ANE as represented by certain texts that are considered to have resonances with the biblical book. Although no direct literary relationship can be established it is possible, nevertheless, to understand Job as encountering alternative beliefs, particularly of Babylonian religion, and doing so in both affirmation and critique. I conclude that, while Job drew upon and joined the long-established 'international' conversation wrestling with the theme of unattributed 'innocent' suffering, it does so with a particularly Israelite understanding and exploration of the issues. Ultimately I understand the biblical book to be offering a polemic, at least implicitly, on behalf of faith in Yahweh. Of particular importance, in my view, is the function of the Yahweh speeches in Job 38-41, which are a prominent distinctive of the biblical work. Not only are they crucial to an understanding of Job, they also demonstrate the contrastive nature of the work in relation to alternative attempts in the ANE. The speeches also return the chapter to the universalising theme with which it began, demonstrating the universally significant nature of the book.

To conclude the chapter I outline a series of missional implications which arise out of the preceding material. In particular I highlight: Job as a universalised figure struggling with a universal problem; Job in relation to the missional narrative of the biblical story; Job as missional encounter; the missional potential and missional cost of character formation; and Job as exhibiting a missional responsibility to articulate the pain of the world.

4.2 The extent and significance of the non-Israelite theme in the book of Job

אִישׁ הָיָה בְאֶרֶץ־עוּץ אִיּוֹב שְׁמוֹ ... וַיְהִי הָאִישׁ הַהוּא גָּדוֹל מִכָּל־בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם׃

> There was a man from the land of Uz, Job was his name… and he was the greatest man of all the sons of the East. (Job 1:1a, 3c)

Who was this man, whose story the book of Job tells? In the opening words of the Prologue the reader is told several things. First, we are given a place and a name. Later on, amidst the glowing portrait of his piety and wealth we find that he was a man (indeed, *the* man) of the East. In these few words the reader is given a glimpse of the broad horizons of the book, and it is my contention that these horizons are missionally significant.

A study of the non-Israelite motif allows for a closer examination of certain particularities of the biblical text while also drawing this into the broader context whereby the author seeks to use the specifics of Job's situation to present a universalising context for his work. Initially I focus on Job 1-2, which contains the majority of relevant information concerning the non-Israelite theme. The Prologue also sets a trajectory for the entire book and contains within it vital orienting information for the characters, plot and themes of the book as a whole.[577]

I begin by establishing, as far as can be achieved, some of the cultural particularities of the book's setting and characters. The discussion is then developed considerably when I address the significance of this non-Israelite setting. Here I tease out the nuances and ambiguities of the motif and review different explanations put forward for the existence of the theme. I conclude that it has a vital universalising function within the book, which serves the author's literary and theological purposes and, I argue, has important missional implications. To further support this understanding of the non-Israelite motif I then point to further examples of the universalising impulse within the Prologue, including its temporal (that is, archaic) setting and certain literary features. I then attend to the crucial question of the accuser in 1:9b, 'Is it for nothing חִנָּם that Job fears God?', which is of particular importance within the book and in relation to the biblical story of God's mission.

4.2.1 Establishing the non-Israelite motif

In this section I determine the location of Uz and, closely related to this, identify the provenance of each of Job's comforters (including Elihu), all of which leads me to conclude that the story has a strong Edomite connection. I then examine the provenance of Job himself and conclude that he is also presented as a non-Israelite, and quite possibly an Edomite.

[577] This is in no way meant to imply that a universalising impulse is present only in the Prologue. It can be seen, for example, in the ways in which the characters in the Dialogue vacillate between the specifics of Job's circumstances and generally held assumptions about how the world operates. Later in this chapter I return to the language of universalising when dealing with the Yahweh speeches. In the following chapter I examine the function of poverty in the book, thereby changing my focus to the Dialogue section. Here, too, we see Job and his friends drawing on universal points to account for the existence of poverty.

4.2.1.1 Where was Uz?

In the OT the term עוּץ Uz refers both to people and a place. Three people are named עוּץ, all of whom are found in Genesis: the firstborn of Aram, Shem's son (Gen. 10:23; cf. 1 Chron. 1:17); the firstborn of Milcah and Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. 22:21); and a son of Dishon and grandson of Seir the Horite, who were inhabitants of the land of Edom (Gen. 36:28; cf. 1 Chron. 1:42).[578]

Although the location of Uz is ambiguous enough to preclude certainty, the majority view among scholars is that the land of Uz has associations with Edom.[579] The only references to 'the land of Uz' outside of Job are both in poetic texts.[580] Lam. 4:21 שִׂישִׂי וְשִׂמְחִי בַּת־אֱדוֹם יוֹשַׁבְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ עוּץ (Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who live in the land of Uz) associates Uz with Edom, although the precise connotations of the parallelism are contested.[581] Jer. 25:20 mentions כָּל־מַלְכֵי אֶרֶץ הָעוּץ (all the kings of the land of Uz) as recipients of Yahweh's wrath, which will also be experienced by leaders of Judah, the kings of Egypt, the Philistines, and a number of others, notably including Edom (vv. 15-26). It should be noted, however, that the authenticity of inclusion of Uz is contested.[582]

The Sabeans (שְׂבָא) of Job 1:15 are possibly of North Arabian provenance, located next to the land of Edom.[583] The term also occurs in Job 6:19, in parallel with תֵּמָא, which was also

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[578] Cf. N.J. Opperwall-Galluch and W.S. LaSor, 'Uz', in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol 4, 2nd edn, ed. by G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 959.

[579] The most common alternative view is to locate Uz further North, in Syria, due to connections with Aram. Hartley cites Gen. 10:23 and 22:20-21 in this regard and thinks 'east' in Job 1:3 could refer to the land to the east of the Jordan river; *Job*, p. 66. He also cites certain Jewish and Arabic traditions. Cf. Anderson, p. 77. However, as Day rightly points out, the term, 'east' is too ambiguous to pinpoint a specific location; J. Day, 'How Could Job Be an Edomite?', in *The Book of Job*, ed. by W.A.M. Beuken (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), pp. 392-399 (p. 392); cf. Habel, p. 87; Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 14-15. See below for a more developed treatment of 1:3.

[580] M. Weiss, *The Story of Job's Beginning* (Jerusalem: The Magness Press, 1983), p. 21.

[581] W.S. LaSor, 'Uz', in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol 4, 2nd edn, ed. by G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 959; R.L. Alden, *Job* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1993), pp. 46-47; Balentine, p. 44. Driver and Gray, p. xxviii, go as far as to say that, if genuine, Lam. 4:31 'decisively connects [Uz] with Edom'.

[582] For example, it is not included in the LXX and seems inappropriate placed where it is, so could well be a later gloss. Day, p. 392; E.A. Knauf, 'Uz', in *ABD*, Vol 6, pp. 770-771 (p. 770); Weiss, pp. 22-23; W. McKane, *Jeremiah I-XXV* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), pp. 637-8, 641.

[583] Pope, p. 13; Day, p. 393.

located adjacent to Edom.[584] Pope notes close association between Tema, Sheba, and Dedan, which suggests a geographical proximity (cf. Isa. 21:13; Gen. 10:7; 25:3).[585]

A further set of evidence for an Edomite association is provided by the provenance of Job's comforters. In each case the individual is given a name and a place of origin. Although not part of the Prologue it seems logical to include a brief treatment of Elihu's provenance here as well.

4.2.1.2 The provenance of Job's comforters

Job 2:11

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת רֵעֵי אִיּוֹב אֵת כָּל־הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת הַבָּאָה עָלָיו וַיָּבֹאוּ אִישׁ מִמְּקֹמוֹ אֱלִיפַז הַתֵּימָנִי וּבִלְדַּד הַשּׁוּחִי וְצוֹפַר הַנַּעֲמָתִי …

When Job's three friends heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, each one came from his place: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite…

4.2.1.2.1 Eliphaz the Temanite אֱלִיפַז הַתֵּימָנִי

The first and apparently most senior of the friends is Eliphaz the Temanite.[586] The name Eliphaz is not unique to Job. In Gen. 36:1-15 Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites (vv. 1, 8-9), is said to have fathered an Eliphaz (vv. 4, 10), who in turn fathered Teman (vv. 11, 15).

Teman is a well-attested and significant Edomite place name and is even used in a representative way for the whole of that territory.[587] A further connection between the book of Job and the Edom theme of Gen. 36 is the reference to Uz in Gen. 36:28, suggesting perhaps that the chapter was a source used by the author of Job.[588]

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[584] Day, p. 393.

[585] Pope, p. 13. Clines maintains that Sheba in 6:19 refers to southwestern Arabia, although he does locate Tema in northern Arabia and emphasises the two places being 'famous trading centers'; *Job 1-20*, p. 179.

[586] Eliphaz is the first of the friends to speak (4:1) and is singled out by Yahweh in 42:7 as representative of the three comforters; Longman, *Job*, location 12385-12386.

[587] Cf. Ezek. 25:13; Amos 1:12. Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 57; Day, p. 393; Pope, p. 24.

[588] Day, p. 393.

4.2.1.2.2 Bildad the Shuhite בִּלְדַּד הַשּׁוּחִי

The name Bildad is unique to the book of Job. Although it is difficult to establish any etymological connections between Bildad and other names in the OT, there are partial similarities to other non-Israelite names, which may give it the capacity to trigger the audience's imagination in a certain direction. Of particular note is the suggestion by Clines that the sound associations of Bildad may have reminded Job's audience of characters like Moabite king Balak and his hired prophet Balaam, בִּלְעָם[589](Num. 22-24); Bela, בֶּלַע, king of Edom (Gen 36:32; 1 Chr 1:43); Bilhan, בִּלְהָן, a descendant of Esau (Gen. 36:27; 1 Chron. 1:42); Bilhah, בִּלְהָה, a non-Israelite concubine of Jacob (Gen. 29:29); and Bedad, בֶּדַד, the father of Edom's king Hadad (Gen. 36:35; 1 Chron. 1:46).[590]

Although the significance of sound association is difficult to establish, it should be noted that this idea is returned to below in connection with other terms, notably Job's name and the significance of the use of the name 'Uz'.

Bildad's supposed home territory, Shuah, is also unique to Job as a place name, although there may be an intended connection with Shuah, שׁוּחַ, a son of Abraham and Keturah, and uncle of Sheba and Dedan, who were noted above in relation to Teman.[591] An Edomite association is, therefore, a possibility although it is perhaps not a strong one.

4.2.1.2.3 Zophar the Naamathite צוֹפַר הַנַּעֲמָתִי

Like Bildad, the name Zophar is unique to Job. Sharing the same consonants as Zophar, Zippor, צִפּוֹר, was the father of Balak, King of Moab (Num. 22:2).[592] A similarly named person is found in Esau's genealogy in Gen. 36:11 (Zepho, צְפוֹ) and 1 Chron. 1:36 (Zepiy, צְפוֹ). He was a son of Eliphaz and brother of Teman and one of the rulers of Edom. In both

[589] Rather than as a matter of course for all names in this discussion, I provide Hebrew spelling where it helps to demonstrate similarity.

[590] Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 58-59; cf. Gordis, *God and Man*, pp. 66, 324 fn 14; Driver and Gray, p. xxvix. Clines also mentions two prophets in Num. 11:26 called Eldad and Medad but these seem less relevant; *Job 1-20*, p. 59.

[591] Gen. 25:1-6; 1 Chron 1:32; Isa. 21:13; Gen. 10:7; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 57; Pope, *Job*, p. 24; Day, p. 393.

[592] Pope, p. 24, suggests (albeit tentatively) that, following a *qawtal* pattern, Zophar is a diminutive form of Zippor; cf. Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 66; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 59.

verses the Septuagint alters his name to Sophar, σωφαρ, the same name as the Joban Zophar, although the significance of this is difficult to establish.[593]

The place name Naamah is of uncertain origin. As a personal name it is used of a female descendant of Cain (Gen. 4:22) and an Ammonite wife of Solomon, who was also the mother of Reheboam (1 Kgs. 14:21).[594] In 1 Chron. 4:15 mention is made of a Naam who is said to be a descendant of Judah. This Naam was the uncle of a Kenaz, which may suggest an Edomite connection, although this may be a leap too far in the imagination of Job's audience.[595]

4.2.1.2.4 Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram

אֱלִיהוּא בֶן־בַּרַכְאֵל הַבּוּזִי מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת רָם

Unlike Job and his three friends, Elihu receives an extended introduction focussing on his familial pedigree. The name is shared by several biblical characters including an ancestor of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1); one of the chiefs of Manasseh who deserted David on his way to Ziklag (1 Chron. 12:21 [ET 20]); a Korahite temple gatekeeper (1 Chron. 26:7); and one of David's brothers (1 Chron. 27:18).[596]

Although the personal name Barachel is not found anywhere else in the OT several other names come from the same verb root, ברך, 'bless' including Berechiah, Barchi, Beracah, Baruch and Jeberechiah.[597]

Buz is attested several times in the OT, both as the name of a person and a place. In Gen. 22:21 Buz is named as a brother of Uz and nephew of Abraham. As a location Buz is found in Jer. 25:23 in connection with Dedan and Tema. Although they seem distinct from Edom in this passage, later on in Jer. 49:7-8 Dedan and Tema are found within an oracle concerning Edom. It would seem, therefore, that Buz was associated with Edom.[598]

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[593] Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 66; Pope, p. 24; Driver and Gray, p. xxxix; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 59. Day, p. 394, fn 10, considers the possible significance of the LXX rendering of Gen. 36:11 but rightly cannot draw firm conclusions: 'Did the author of Job, like the LXX read *ṣpr* (Zophar) instead of *ṣpw* (Zepho) here? If so, the case for seeing Zophar as an Edomite would be a good one, but we cannot be sure of this.' His italics.

[594] R. Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: JTS Press, 1978), p. 23.

[595] Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 58.

[596] Hartley, *Job*, p. 482.

[597] D.J.A. Clines, *Job 21-37* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), p. 713.

[598] ibid., p. 713; Hartley, *Job*, p. 482. Referring to Jer. 25:23, Day states: 'This again suggests a southern geographical location for the scenario of the book. That this latter is to be preferred is

Ram was the name of an ancestor of David (Ruth 4:19; 1 Chron. 2:9-10), although there may not be a direct connection here with Elihu's ancestry.[599] This Ram also had a nephew of the same name (1 Chron. 2:25, 27).

It seems that in the light of connections noted above, and especially those with the name Buz, Elihu may be conceived as having Edomite associations. As such it may be feasible to consider him as a non-Israelite like Job's other comforters.[600]

4.2.1.3 Job's provenance

While acknowledging an element of caution, there does seem to be sufficient evidence to make a strong connection between the land of Uz and Edom, based particularly on the names and provenance of Job's comforters and how they relate to genealogies in the book of Genesis.[601]

I will now examine whether Job himself was a non-Israelite and, more specifically, whether he was an Edomite. Part of this treatment will discuss a further, potentially complicating issue: given the historically troubled relationship between Israel and Edom, particularly in light of the exile, is it reasonable to suppose that the author of Job would want to link his story and characters with Edom?

I then address the question towards which the whole discussion has been moving inexorably: Why has the author of Job sought to employ a non-Israelite, even Edomite setting for his work? It is in answering this question that I demonstrate the presence of a universalising impulse within Job, which I understand to be a crucial element in a missional reading of the book.

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supported by the fact that Tiglath-Pileser III's annals refer to a place called Bāzu in the environs of Arabia, Massa, Tema and the Sabeans, i.e. the very location for Buz suggested by Jer. 25,23.'; p. 394. Clines also notes (albeit dismissively) the curious textual similarity between the phrases "the Buzite, of the family of…" (32:2) and "the contempt of families" (31:34). Perhaps there is a purpose to this but, other than to associate the two chapters, it is not clear what it might be; *Job 21-37*, p. 683.

[599] A helpful caveat made by Habel, p. 448.

[600] G.H. Wilson, *Job* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2007), p. 361; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 713. Contra Longman, who thinks that the Israelite associations of Ram and Buz probably suggest that Elihu was an Israelite; *Job*, location 10047-10049. While it is true that Elihu has more Israelite associations than the other comforters (and Job himself) this is, in part, due to his relatively extended introduction. I still think that there is enough of an Edomite association to draw my conclusion, albeit more tentatively than, for example, Eliphaz.

[601] See below for a related discussion on the archaic setting of the book.

Job was his name אִיּוֹב שְׁמוֹ (1:1b)

Given that the land of Uz has close associations with Edom, does this imply that Job himself was Edomite? As with the comforters, Job's provenance will be probed by looking at his name, but I will also consider the phrase, בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם (the sons of the East) in 1:3c.

אִיּוֹב (along with its older forms) appears to have been well-known in the ANE as a Semitic name.[602] Indeed, for the readers it may 'have had a foreign and archaic ring to it.'[603] Unlike Eliphaz, for example, whose name had clear associations with Edom, no certain connections can be made with אִיּוֹב.[604]

Apart from the book of Job itself, the name Job appears only in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 alongside the non- or pre-Israelite Noah and Dan'el, an Ugaritic hero of antiquity.[605] In this prophetic oracle, the three well-known figures are evoked as supreme models of righteousness; not even their presence in Jerusalem would save the city from God's coming judgment. Job, it seems, was a familiar character in the broader milieu of the ANE to whom such archetypal appeals could be made.[606]

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[602] Pope, p. 6; W.F. Albright, 'Northwest-Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C.', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 74 (1954), 223-233 (p. 226); Gordis, *Job*, p. 10. Clines cites a range of examples of close variants of *Ayab*, such as in 18th century Alalakh, 16th century Mari, 14th century Amarna and 13th century Ugarit; *Job 1-20*, p. 11. So, states Clines, 'The name Job is not attested elsewhere in Hebrew. But it is known from several extrabiblical sources as a Semitic name'; *Job 1-20*, p. 10. Thus, he concludes: 'There can be little doubt, in the light of the forms attested, that the name originally meant "where is my father?" though it is hard to see precisely how the Hebrew form … has been derived. The name probably signifies "where is my (divine) father?" and is an appeal to a deity for help'; *Job 1-20*, p. 11. For the broader context and meaning of theophoric personal names see J.S. Burnett, 'The Question of Divine Absence in Israelite and West Semitic Religion', *CBQ*, 67.2 (2005), 215-235.

[603] Newsom, 'Job', p. 344.

[604] Although note, for example, Longman, who assumes, because of the Edomite setting of the book, that Job's name is likely to have been Edomite originally, though now rendered in Hebrew for the audience's sense of familiarity; T. Longman III, 'Job 4: Person', in *DOTWPW*, pp. 371-374 (p. 372).

[605] There are not thought to be any connections between Job and Jobab, יוֹבָב, in Gen. 10:29 or Yob, יוֹב, in Gen. 46:13; cf. Driver and Gray, p. xxix. On the question of the three figures in Ezekiel 14 see Pope, p. 6. Block defends the Dan'el here being the biblical Daniel, but more often scholars prefer connecting him with the righteous King Dan'el, father of the hero of the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat; pp. 446-459; cf. Greenberg, pp. 257-258; Duguid, pp. 193-194; Rowe, pp. 97-98.

[606] Pope, p. 6; N. Habel, p. 85; see also P.M. Joyce, '"Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it…" (Ezekiel 14:14): The Case of Job and Ezekiel', in Dell and Keynes, pp. 118-128.

The meaning of Job's name does not provide much in the way of evidence concerning his geographical and, therefore, cultural provenance. אִיּוֹב has been variously thought to mean, 'enemy'[607], 'hated/persecuted one'[608], 'penitent one'[609] or even, 'where is my/the father?'[610].

The degree to which significance can be assigned to Job's name is difficult to establish. Weiss, for example, considers the true import of the phrase אִיּוֹב שְׁמוֹ to be not etymological but in the unusual order of the words (that is, the act of his naming) indicating that the Job of

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[607] In Job 13:24 and 33:10 Job claims that Yahweh counts him as an 'enemy', a Hebrew term very similar to Job's name (אוֹיֵב and אִיּוֹב). Tur-Sinai, for example, claims that the LXX supports the idea that Job means enemy: 'A new Hebrew word – used as a proper name – has been discovered in the Septuagint at the end of the Book. Here Job (איוב, understood as one treated as an enemy אויב), is called, after God has shown mercy to him, *Ennon, i.e.* חַנּוֹן, the one that found favour (with God).' N.H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary*, 2nd edn (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1967), p. xvii. While this argument offers an attractive literary feature of the LXX, the verse is absent in the Hebrew. Also, most scholars addressing the issue of 13:24 and 33:10 see it more as a play on words rather than being of etymological significance; see, for example, Hartley, *Job*, p. 227. Of particular note is Reyburn who, having addressed the play on words in 13:24, actually considers the crucial factor to be the difference between the two terms, not their similarity: 'The idea in the author's mind may have been to say "Why do you consider me your *'oyeb*? I am your *'eyob*."' W.D. Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), p. 262. His italics.

[608] Related to 'enemy', but supported with greater evidence, is the suggestion that Job's name is related to the verb אָיַב, to hate or treat as an enemy. Gordis, for example, suggests that Job's name is a passive participial noun of this verb, which has undergone a Hebrew folk etymology of a former Semitic name; *Job*, p. 10. Contra *BDB*, Gordis claims this passive use is amply substantiated in the OT, citing such examples as יָלוּד, "born" (Exod. 1:22; 2 Sam. 5:14; 12:14) and שָׁכוֹר, "drunken" (1 Sam. 25:36); *Job*, p. 10.

The evidence for this view seems suggestive, if not conclusive, and allows for the possibility that Job's name may, at least in former times, have evoked the idea of being persecuted or hated.

[609] Some scholars note that Job's name may have had connections with an Arabic root, *'wb* (turn or repent), suggesting a meaning akin to 'penitent one'; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 66; Pope, p. 5. Hartley's treatment of this option highlights an important issue in the debate. He rejects 'penitent one' on literary grounds, suggesting that: 'If this were its meaning, the name would intimate the outcome of the drama, but this stands in stark contrast to Job's stern conviction that he does not need to repent'; Hartley, *Job*, p. 66.

One might question whether this is wholly accurate. It is true that, for the majority of the book, Job battles against calls for him to repent for the sins his companions assume he has committed. Yet at the end of the book penitence certainly seems to characterise Job's response to Yahweh's speech (42:1-6). Thus, to tie Job's name to the concept of penitence could be construed as an ironic way of highlighting the tension between Job's denial of the need to repent for non-existent sin, with the ultimate necessity to repent of his presumptuous attitude towards God. Hartley's dismissal on literary grounds is, therefore, questionable.

Nevertheless, Clines casts doubt on the significance of the relationship between the name Job and the theme of penitence, noting that in the same Sura in the Qur'an (38) Job, David and Solomon all share the epithet derived from *'wb*; *Job 1-20*, p. 11. It is not clear why Clines' argument should be conclusive; surely it would be possible for a word to both mean something in itself and also function as part of a play on words? In any case, it seems best to hold this connection lightly, given the limited nature of the evidence.

[610] A number of scholars note the work of Albright who, in a 1954 article, claimed that Job's name, in its original form *'Ayya-'abu(m)* (meaning 'Where is (my) father?) can be found in an Egyptian record of Palestinian chiefs; see Albright, 'Northwest-Semitic Names', p. 226.

the story is a particular, known Job.[611] Weiss seems overly dismissive of the idea of literary exploitation of the name. Similarly, other scholars consider it an unnecessary or unwise line of enquiry because the author of the biblical book would have inherited the name Job for his character because of the prior tale of Job.[612]

When dealing with the significance of the name, Uz (see below), Weiss helpfully points to the term's 'associative capacity', drawing together its 'aural effect, and the etymology based on it.'[613] It seems reasonable that the same could be said of Job's name, even if it was inherited by the author of Job, with the biblical author exploiting the rich potentiality of Job's name for his literary and theological purposes.[614] The idea, in my view, cannot be dismissed as readily as some suppose. Indeed, it may be in the various options that a note of artistry can be detected. In this regard, Balentine's conclusions seem appropriate and also anticipate my view of the function of the universalising theme, which I shall develop below:

> One might reasonably conjecture, however, that ancient readers would have readily discerned multiple connections, both literal and symbolic, between this archaic name and this story. Job is the legendary paragon of righteousness whose life is marked by both invocation ("Where is God?") and accusation ("You treat me like an enemy"). His stance before God is that of the innocent sufferer whose petition for help is representative of the unjustly persecuted across the ages.[615]

One final point relating to Job's name is the absence of any genealogical background, in contrast to the general custom of patriarchal times.[616] The wording of Job's introduction is more ambiguous that that of his comforters, and Elihu especially (2:11; 32:2). This rather unusual phenomenon may contribute towards the author's intention to present Job as a representative figure of humanity, an issue that will be dealt with more fully below.[617]

וַיְהִי הָאִישׁ הַהוּא גָּדוֹל מִכָּל־בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם׃ and he was the greatest man of all the sons of the East (1:3c)

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[611] That is, 'this specific, famous, righteous Job' of the prior stories; Weiss, pp. 20-21. Cf. Habel, pp. 85-86; Wilson, p. 16.

[612] Hartley, *Job*, p. 66; Habel, p. 86; cf. Pope, pp. 5-6.

[613] Weiss, p. 23.

[614] Similarly, it does not seem unreasonable that those shaping earlier forms of the story may have done so as well.

[615] Balentine, p. 46. Cf. Janzen, p. 34.

[616] For example, Abraham in Gen. 11:26-28; Hartley, *Job*, p. 66.

[617] See below. Cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 66; D.J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), p. 28; J. Reitman, *Unlocking Wisdom: Forming Agents of God in the House of Mourning*, (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2008), location 1000-1003, Kindle edn. Cf. Dhorme who thinks the author did not feel a genealogy was necessary because Job was a non-Israelite; É. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, translated by H. Knight (London: Thomas Nelson, 1967), p. xv.

In the above discussion on the location of Uz I referred briefly to 1:3c in which Job is said to be 'the greatest of all the sons of the East.' The phrase בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם is ambiguous enough that any specific referents cannot be identified without a clear sense of context. For example, it can refer to Mesopotamian people as a whole (1 Kgs. 5:10, ET 4:30), but also nomadic desert tribes east of the Jordan river.[618] Similarly, it could be applied to Arameans (Gen. 29:1), southerly areas (including Edom, Isa. 11:14), and even Midian (Judg 6:3).[619] Thus, 'No more specific location than east of Israel can be established from the term'.[620] Despite the flexibility of the term, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the phrase relates to non-Israelites.

Does the phrase וַיְהִי הָאִישׁ הַהוּא גָּדוֹל מִכָּל־בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם necessarily imply that Job was one of the sons of the East, or are the sons of the East distinct from Job, functioning rather as a point of comparison and not identity? In 1 Kgs. 5:10 (ET 4:30) Solomon's wisdom is described as greater than the wisdom of the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt (וַתֵּרֶב חָכְמַת שְׁלֹמֹה מֵחָכְמַת כָּל־בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם וּמִכֹּל חָכְמַת מִצְרָיִם) and this is used by Clines as a note of caution that the verse in Job 'does not necessarily imply' that Job is one of the sons of the East.[621] However, the points of comparison are different in Job. Strictly, it is Solomon's wisdom that is compared with the wisdom of Easterners and Egyptians, whereas in Job it is the man himself that is being compared with the sons of the East.[622] More importantly, however, the context of Job's non-Israelite setting in Uz contrasts vividly with that of Solomon. It therefore seems evident that, although Clines' caution may be valid on linguistic grounds, the context strongly suggests that interpreting Job here as belonging to the sons of the East is by far the most natural reading of the verse.[623]

While it is true that the book of Job does not say explicitly that Job either was or was not an Israelite, the most natural reading of the weight of evidence would suggest that he is

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[618] C. Rogers, 'קֶדֶם', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 3, pp. 871-873 (p. 873). As examples he cites the use of this phrase in Gen. 29:1; Judg. 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10; 1 Kgs. 5:10 [ET 4:30]; Job 1:3; Isa. 11:14; Jer. 49:28; Ezek. 25:4, 10.

[619] Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 14-15. Cf. Day, p. 392; Wilson, p. 21; Driver and Gray, *Job*, p. xxvii; S. Mitchell, *The Book of Job*, Revised edn (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), p. xxxi.

[620] Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 15.

[621] ibid., p. 15. Though he still maintains that assuming Job to be one of them 'is a natural interpretation', which is implied in his own translation of 1:3c: 'That man was the greatest of all the people of the East'; pp. 15, 2.

[622] Though, of course, these are closely related; it is Job's wealth and implied wisdom that make him great. Cf. ibid., p. 14. Longman sees the verse focusing on Job's wealth; *Job*, location 1597-1598. Contra Weiss, who prefers a focus on Job's wisdom; pp. 26-27.

[623] Mitchell, for example, sees this as a certainty; p. xxxi; cf. Wilson, p. 21; Driver and Gray, p. xxvii. This assumption is also borne out in the majority of translations, most of which render the phrase as or close to, 'the greatest of all the…' or 'the greatest among the…'; that is, he was one of them; cf. ESV, NRSV, NIV, as well as the commentary translations of Good, Pope, Habel, Longman, Clines, Gordis.

portrayed as a non-Israelite.[624] Though perhaps one could argue that Job is an Israelite who happens to live outside of the borders of Israel this seems to me to be unnecessarily strained.[625]

Furthermore, given the probable Edomite context of the setting of the book it would therefore seem reasonable to suppose that Job was himself an Edomite. However, is it similarly reasonable to suppose, in the light of historical tensions between Israel and Edom, that this Israelite writer made his hero an Edomite? In an article-length treatment of this question, Day defends an Edomite Job against objections that, assuming a later dating for the book, Hebrew authors would not have countenanced an Edomite Job, given the traditionally negative view of Edom, especially following the exile (for example, Ps. 137:7; Lam 4:21f.; Obad.; Jer. 49:7-22; Isa. 34:5-17; p.396).[626] In my view he makes a good case, offering four main arguments that an Edomite association is feasible. First, the more 'internationally minded' wisdom writers responsible for Job, 'may not have had "hang ups" about Edomites… Job was a foreigner, for Wisdom was characteristically universalistic.'[627]

Edom was known for its wisdom (Obad. 8 and Jer. 49:7) and,

> Israel's wise men were doubtless partly indebted to Edomite Wisdom (cf. the Wisdom of nearby Massa, taken up in Proverbs 30 and 31), so it should not be surprising that the Israelite wise men were tolerant towards the Edomites.[628]

Secondly, because the root narrative of the book was a previously-known story, it may be that Job's Edomite identity was already fixed and was 'part and parcel of this tradition'[629] Thirdly, Job is depicted as worshipping Yahweh, which may have been more acceptable. Indeed, this may even be seen as 'yet another instance of Israel's Yahwization of an originally non-Yahwistic figure'[630] Finally, Day suggests that the ancient setting of the book in the 'more amicable' distant past may have been acceptable, even if the book was shaped in a context more generally hostile to Edom.[631]

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[624] Cf. Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 10, 15.
[625] ibid., p. 10. Clines' point is not that Job was an Israelite; merely that the possibility cannot be discounted.
[626] Day. In particular he highlights Lam. 4:21 which references Uz when chastising Edom for its role in the destruction of Jerusalem; p. 396. Cf. Pope, p. xxxiv.
[627] Day, p. 397.
[628] ibid., pp. 397-398.
[629] ibid., p. 398. See my discussion of the different explanations for a non-Israelite setting, below, for more on this issue.
[630] ibid., p. 398. This point is particularly notable given themes present in my thesis such as the monotheizing or Yahwizing process of certain biblical writers, and also the theme (discussed below) of Job as a non-Israelite who has aligned himself with the worship of Yahweh.
[631] ibid., pp. 398-399.

Though not without a degree of speculation, on the whole Day's points seem plausible and confirm that an Edomite setting, and even an Edomite provenance for Job himself, is reasonable. However, there remains an element of ambiguity in the discussion. We simply do not know conclusively where Job is from. Presumably the author could have been more explicit but he was not. Although I will expand on the Edom theme a little more below, I will also move the discussion further by addressing this element of ambiguity in Job's provenance, concluding that this is an important function of the book.

4.2.2 The significance of the non-Israelite motif in the book of Job

Having established the existence of a non-Israelite theme in relation to the setting and characters in Job, it is now important to understand its significance. To address this I begin with a brief survey of explanations given by scholars, including: the non-Israelite setting was inherited from the 'original' story; it allows the author to explore difficult themes more easily; it promotes the theme of wisdom; it promotes an openness to God working in and through non-Israelites; and it universalises the book. It is the last view that I consider to be the most compelling in that it demonstrates how the non-Israelite theme and, more specifically, Job's non-Israelite provenance plays a crucial role in universalising Job into an 'everyman' figure. That is, although he suffers in a unique and specific manner, he is portrayed as doing so in a way that represents humanity and the vexing and universal problem of unattributed suffering.

To give further support to this interpretation, I also examine a selection of other elements of the Prologue that appear to promote this universalising theme, including the archaic setting, certain literary features of the narrative, and the crucial question asked by the accuser in 1:9b: 'Is it for nothing חִנָּם that Job fears God?'.

4.2.2.1 A review of scholarly opinion on the non-Israelite motif in Job

When discussing the non-Israelite setting of Job scholars assign varying degrees of significance to the theme and give a range of possible reasons why the author of Job may have employed it. In this brief survey of the literature I isolate the main reasons given and conclude with a view I consider to be the most persuasive. Although I have separated them for clarity, no explanation should be understood as entirely independent of others. While I will demonstrate that the universalising theme is the principal reason for the non-Israelite setting, a work of the sophistication of Job would certainly allow for other, overlapping purposes. It is also worth noting that there may be a distinction between what the author

intended and the effect his choices have had on his audiences.[632] This does not, however, undermine my conclusions.

4.2.2.1.1 The 'original' story the author inherited/incorporated had a non-Israelite setting that he retained

Although there are variations on this line of thought it could be that the author incorporated, utilised and developed a previously known folk tale about a righteous sufferer named Job. The assumption is that this story he chose to employ would already have had a non-Israelite setting, which he did not change.

Assuming this to be the case, the crucial question would be, given his predominantly Hebrew audience, why did the author decide to retain the non-Israelite setting? It seems to me there are two main possible explanations: either he wanted to change the setting but did not feel he could, or he could have changed it but preferred not to.[633]

It is generally accepted that, prior to the writing of the book of Job, there existed a traditional folk tale of a righteous sufferer named Job, which would have been a precursor to what is now the frame narrative of the biblical book.[634] It would seem reasonable to suppose that this original story was set outside of Israel and, given the associations with Edom evident in Job, perhaps an Edomite setting is the most likely candidate.[635]

One possibility is, therefore, that the setting of the original story (whether Edom or elsewhere) was so well-known that the author of the biblical book did not feel able to change it, for fear of distracting or jarring his audience to such a degree as to undermine the impact of his work.[636]

While there may be some validity in this argument it is, of course, impossible to know the extent to which it accurately reflects the situation facing the biblical author. It also seems

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[632] A caveat noted by Clines when addressing the question of Job's provenance: 'We do not know that the storyteller had such a conscious intention, but such is the effect he has created.' *Job 1-20*, p. 10.

[633] Obviously there is the third option that he did not want to *and also* did not think he could in any case. However this is addressed implicitly in the discussion on the first two options above.

[634] The mention of Job in Ezek. 14:14 would suggest this; Day, p. 398; cf. A. Pinker, 'The Core Story in the Prologue–Epilogue of the Book of Job', *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, 6 (2006), 1-27 (p. 1) <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/jhs/article/view/5697/4750> [accessed 24 January 2013]; Newsom, 'Job', pp. 321-322; Pope, pp. xxi-xxviii; though Newsom and Pope disagree as to what this means for the unity of the biblical work. Scholars also disagree as to the amount of the original story that is retained in the biblical version (mainly the Prologue and Epilogue).

[635] Day, p. 398; although this does not necessarily mean that the story originated in Edom; cf. E.M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job with a Translation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 3-4.

[636] As noted above, Day makes this point with specific reference to Job being an Edomite; p. 398.

problematic to assume that if the author could have changed the setting he would inevitably have chosen to do so.[637] In my view, a more appropriate assumption would be that, although the author may have felt some degree of constraint, he had more positive and strategic reasons for retaining the non-Israelite setting.[638] To this end, whether he could have changed the setting or not becomes a moot point. Possible, more constructive reasons will now be explored.[639]

4.2.2.1.2 The non-Israelite setting more easily facilitates an exploration of the book's difficult themes

It could be that casting Job as a non-Israelite was a literary device used to ease the tension readers may presumably have experienced when encountering the extremities of his words later in the book. In doing so the author may have afforded himself the freedom of having his main character say whatever needed to be said and, thereby, making his harsh words and extreme positions more palatable because they were on the lips of a Gentile.[640]

However, this would seem to undermine a crucial tenet of the book of Job which is that, whatever his provenance, Job is declared righteous from the outset and that his protests need to be understood in this context.[641] Although his words may have caused a degree of discomfort, is this not the point? The book of Job shocks the reader because it articulates loudly and without compromise what its readers only tend to whisper.[642] Nevertheless, perhaps the author found the non-Israelite setting useful as a starting point for his readers. As I say below, the non-Israelite theme (especially in relation to the provenance of Job

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[637] Although see the discussion above concerning the negative associations of Edom.

[638] In a similar line of enquiry as that proposed in my previous study on the 'missionary encounter' between similar ANE texts and Job, it would be instructive to observe how the author of the biblical book adopted and adapted the unknown traditional tale to reflect his own beliefs.

[639] Where the language of 'choosing' the non-Israelite or (more specifically) or Edomite setting is used in the following discussion, this should be understood within the context of the preceding argument. 'Choosing' may be understood as 'choosing to retain', not necessarily 'inventing'.

[640] Hoffman, for example, sees this as the context for the frequent use of foreign and unusual details in the book which create 'a feeling of distance and strangeness which accompanies the reader throughout the length of the book'; p. 203 (see more on this in the discussion on literary features of the Prologue, below); Cf. Pinker, p. 5.

[641] Cf. Weiss, p. 22, fn.5. Cf. Brenner who sees the non-Israelite theme as one of a number of destabilising elements in the Prologue, questioning the credibility of the sublime portrayal of Job; A. Brenner, 'Job the Pious? The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book', *JSOT*, 43 (1989), 37-52 (p. 40).

[642] See the discussion, below, on Job's encounter with ANE ideas for more on this idea. I am developing here a phrase by C. Duquoc, 'Demonism and the Unexpectedness of God', *Concilium*, 169 (1983), 81-87 (p. 83): 'The author of the Book of Job knows what people think, what people say in whispers–and not just in Israel.' Duquoc's article, however, focuses mainly on Israelite issues.

himself) is at points a type of mask or disguise that allows the author to think daringly and creatively in Israelite ways, and in some way to universalise the characters of his work.[643]

If casting Job as a Gentile was, in part at least, to accommodate the audience's sense of what was acceptable for an Israelite, it should be noted that the book is able to achieve what it does *precisely because of* the non-Israelite setting. Job needed to go to such extremes to have an effect. As Habel so strikingly puts it,

> the author introduces us to a monumental figure who has the capacity and courage that provoke God to emerge from his hidden transcendence and to confront a mortal personally in a whirlwind.[644]

4.2.2.1.3 The non-Israelite setting promotes the wisdom motif

Why did the author use the term Uz, rather than the location's 'official' name, Edom? Why did he place the events in a 'land' rather than narrow it down to a particular city or rural setting? Weiss detects in these choices a deliberate strategy to serve the author's purposes.[645] His starting point for understanding the author's intentions is to examine 'the associative capacity of the name Uz', discerned particularly in the 'aural effect, and the etymology based on it.'[646]

Weiss suggests that the main sound association of עוּץ is with עֵצָה 'council' or 'wisdom', which is highly suggestive given the connections between Edom, Teman and wisdom (Jer. 49:7; Obad. 8), the link between 'the East' (Job 1:3) and wisdom (1 Kgs. 5:10, ET 4:30), and that 'the conceptual starting point of the story (and of the entire book) is the world of Wisdom literature.'[647] All these associations help to fulfil the author's aim, which is to show that Job 'lived in the world of Wisdom.'[648] If this were the case it is notable that this would seem to represent a degree of affirmation regarding non-Israelite wisdom as well.[649]

Weiss's points fit well within the wisdom context of Job and I see no reason why the author may not have been artistic in this way by exploiting the 'associated capacity' of the term, עוּץ. However, I would see Weiss's theory as complementing the reasons why the author

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[643] Perlstein, location 5062-5069.
[644] Habel, p. 42.
[645] Weiss, p. 23; cf. pp. 16-24 for a broader discussion on Job 1:1a.
[646] ibid., p. 23.
[647] ibid., pp. 23, 24; Crenshaw, *OT Wisdom*, p. 100. Cf. Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 59 who notes the implied renown of Edomite wisdom though admits that very little is known about its content.
[648] Weiss, pp. 24; cf. R. Alter who makes a similar point; *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), p. 11.
[649] Wilson, *Job*, p. 17; cf. Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 442-443.

chose this particular location rather than being the driving force behind it. In this sense, Weiss does his views a disservice by stopping where he does.

4.2.2.1.4 The non-Israelite setting promotes an openness to God working in and through non-Israelites

Could it be that the author of Job opted for a non-Israelite setting in order to challenge his audience about the possibility of God working in and through people beyond the borders of Israel? Is the author of Job trying 'to teach that perfect fear of heaven is not solely the possession of the Jews'?[650]

That Job was a non-Israelite who nevertheless had a belief in and relationship with God is a common observation in BMS, as demonstrated in chapter two of this thesis. Job is described as 'a saintly pagan'[651], 'a true servant of Jehovah'[652], and an example of a godly non-Israelite who worships and pleases God without explaining how he knows God.[653] Rétif and Lamarche's reflection on universalism and Job seems apposite here:

> A man who lives on the borders of Arabia and Edom, who does not belong to the race of Israel, is nevertheless engaged in a dramatic argument with God. It is such a gentile whom God puts to the test and who bows down in worship of him without wanting to find a human explanation of the problem of suffering.[654]

Furthermore, concerning the relationship between the non-Israelite setting, the Yahweh speeches and the 'missionary potential' of Job, Beeby states, for example, that,

> The writer seems to be grappling with the missionary problem of how a non-Israelite is to stand before Israel's God. His conclusion is that it must be in conjunction with what is common to all men, namely nature, rather than in conjunction with Israel's history which the outsider might wrongly see as only of interest to Israel.[655]

Beeby's point relates to a particular discussion concerning Job's provenance; namely, whether Job can be considered to be a 'righteous pagan' and what this might be teaching the

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[650] Weiss, p. 22, fn 5; although Weiss concludes this is not the specific reason why Job is cast as a non-Israelite. Cf. Rétif and Lamarche, pp. 64, 96; Horton, p. 159; Montgomery, p. 27.
[651] Legrand, *Unity and Plurality*, p. 25.
[652] Montgomery, p. 27.
[653] Schultz, 'Mission im AT', p. 41; cf. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission 1*, p. 58 (citing Job 1:8); Wright, *Salvation*, p. 173; Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 39; Wright, *Thinking Clearly*, p. 45; Widbin, pp. 80-83.
[654] Rétif and Lamarche, p. 96. Cf. Horton, p. 159; Montgomery, p. 27.
[655] Beeby, *Mission and Missions*, pp. 32-33. This is the basis for Beeby's claim that 'the missionary motive is explicitly seen' in the book of Job; p. 32.

people of God, or more particularly for some, what this might imply about the salvation of 'outsiders' or the 'unevangelised'.[656] Elsewhere Beeby cites Job as an example of OT 'missionary literature' stating that 'in it a theophany produces repentance and restoration to a non-Israelite.'[657] Unfortunately he does not develop this line of argument in a sufficient manner.

As I demonstrated in chapter two, this discussion is one issue that emerges out of the relatively limited engagement with Job in BMS. Verkuyl, for example, includes Job alongside Melchizedek, Ruth and the Ninevites in the book of Jonah as examples in the OT of non-Israelites who,

> by a word-and-deed witness were won over to trust and serve the living God who had shown them mercy… [and whose stories] are windows, as it were, through which we may look out on the vast expanse of people outside the nation of Israel and hear the faint strains of the missionary call to all people already sounding forth.[658]

Elsewhere he describes the faith of Melchizedek, Job, Balaam and others as examples of the work of the Holy Spirit and the light of Christ 'far beyond the borders of Israel.'[659]

For Widbin such figures could be described as 'God-fearers' (Job, Melchizedek, Jethro, and Abimelech in Gen. 20) or 'venerable, righteous Gentiles' (Noah, Dan'el and Job in Ezek. 14:14).[660] Furthermore, Hedlund understands Job to be 'a representative of the nations… [who] has the knowledge of the true God' which is evidenced in his awareness of God as 'Creator and Sustainer and as the source of wisdom'.[661] Hedlund sees Job as offering a confession of faith in God as 'the Almighty, the Redeemer' (Job 14:14, 16-17; 19:25-26) and becoming personally aware,

> of God's grace and mercy in the forgiveness of sins and catch a glimpse of belief in the resurrection that is rare in the Old Testament. The missionary significance of Job is that he, a representative of the Gentile world, was a recipient not only of God's general revelation but also of redemption. Job was a representative of those who seek and find for he had come to hope in the living God.[662]

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[656] Although the question of what faith the friends' share is not addressed which seems strange as Job and his friends seem to assume they believe in the same God even though Job is radically reconsidering his faith. There is a fascinating history of interpretation on the question of Job's provenance although it is beyond the scope of my present argument to explore this here. For useful surveys see, for example, R. Allen, 'Job 3: History of Interpretation', in *DOTWPW*, pp. 361-371; Balentine, p. 45.

[657] Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, p. 89.

[658] Verkuyl, *Missiology*, p. 95.

[659] Verkuyl, 'Kingdom', p. 76.

[660] Widbin, pp. 80-83.

[661] Hedlund, *Mission of the Church*, pp. 134-135. He cites Job 9:4, 8-10 on this latter point.

[662] ibid., p. 135.

Understandably in this light, Job is sometimes included in broader studies on the possibility of the salvation of those outside the people of God. Writing on this theme, Pinnock refers to Job as a 'pagan believer' (p. 160) and includes Job in lists of 'godly pagans' (p. 40), 'pagan saints' (p. 94) that feature in the Bible.[663] For Pinnock, the existence of such believers outside of Israel demonstrates that salvation is not the preserve of the 'formal covenant communities' and contributes to his inclusivist stance on the question of salvation.[664] Tiessen also asserts that figures such as Job, Abel, Melchizedek, Naaman, Rahab, Ruth were 'saved' although he prefers not to use the term, 'holy pagans' as most had some kind of special revelation from God.[665] For him the cases of Job and Melchizedek are particularly intriguing as there is no indication of such a revelation and, more generally, there is no indication of how their relationships with God arose.[666]

Although (among others) O'Collins considers figures such as Melchizedek, the widow of Zarephath, the Ninevites, Naaman and Ruth, he reserves a special designation for Job, naming him 'the holy "outsider" *par excellence*'.[667] Such a superlative is based on his observation that,

> The OT contains no other story like this: the long story of a blameless non-Israelite… [which] drives home two lessons: the just person is not necessarily an Israelite nor even visibly related to Israel; the revelation of God can be mediated through creation and is not limited to particular historical events.[668]

Similarly, Perlstein reserves a special status for Job in comparison with Melchizedek, Jethro and Ruth, whom he selects as other examples of 'righteous' non-Israelites.[669] Whereas 'Melchizedek… and Jethro play only brief, supporting roles in the Bible', Job 'is a star!' who even 'far outdistances Ruth', whose book has only four chapters compared with Job's

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[663] C.H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). Pinnock refers to Job on pp. 22, 40, 75, 92, 93, 94, 95, 99, 105, 106, 111, 158, 160, 161, 162, 166, 170, 171-2, 177, 179. He understands the term 'pagan' in a more positive sense than the word sometimes suggests; cf. p. 93.

[664] Pinnock, p. 162. Cf. Hedlund, *Mission of the Church*, p. 81. It is not my intention to pursue the discussion of inclusivity and exclusivity here, merely to note how Job has been used in relevant literature. For a critique of Pinnock's views see D. Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelised: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).

[665] T.L. Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p. 170.

[666] ibid., p. 149. He offers a helpful caveat on his discussion on Job, arising from a (presumably) personal conversation: 'As Daniel Reid commented to me, even if "Job is a literary dialogue, a piece of wisdom literature, with little or no basis in historical figures and events," we can observe "that Scripture (and Israel) is comfortable with the understanding that such revelation could be given to a non-Israelite."'; p. 170.

[667] O'Collins, pp. 54, 66-67. His italics.

[668] ibid., pp. 55, 66.

[669] Perlstein, location 5044-5057. Cf. Hedlund, *Mission of the Church*, p. 37.

42.[670] Moreover, Job's book has the 'very unusual distinction' of making 'no mention of Israel, Israelites or Jews.'[671]

There is a certain degree of logic in pointing to Job as an example of someone from outside of the covenant community who has aligned themselves with the living God. His story does provide a fascinating case study in this regard, especially in light of the exemplary description of his piety in 1:1-5 which, presumably, would put many within the covenant community to shame. However, so much is left unsaid about the background to Job's faith that it is difficult to draw conclusions concerning its significance without a considerable degree of speculation. There is, therefore, an inherent danger in the use of Job as a support to differing arguments in the debate. Would it be significant for the purposes of the discussion if, for example, the Job of the biblical book were understood not as a historical figure but as a literary creation? While I would not want to dismiss entirely the attempts made to draw Job into these discussions I would also not want to reduce him to this. In my view simply placing Job in the category of a 'righteous Gentile' fails to recognise the complexity with which he is portrayed and considerably underplays the missional significance of both him as a character but also the book as a whole. As such, this particular line of thought seems to reflect the effects of the author's use of the non-Israelite theme rather than his reasons for employing it.

Although calling Job a 'saintly pagan', Legrand takes this idea in a more fruitful direction. Reviewing the function of the wisdom literature in the context of universalism Legrand exploits Job's non-Israelite provenance to make him into a universalising figure: 'Job's problem is a universal problem, and the divine response, as well, has universal validity. Here indeed is a decentralized universalism, in the sapiential tradition.'[672]

Job, then, is more than just a righteous Gentile. He is more, even, than the best of righteous Gentiles. In my view, Job should be considered in an altogether different category because his particularity as a non-Israelite exhibiting faith in Yahweh serves a universalising purpose that makes him representative of humanity.[673] The same idea cannot be applied to any of the other figures mentioned.

It is to this universalising theme that I now turn.

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[670] Perlstein, location 5048-5050. Though he notes that length is 'a reasonable, if not totally accurate measure of importance'; location 5053-5054. Cf. Hedlund, *Mission of the Church*, p. 66.
[671] Perlstein, location 5055-5057.
[672] Legrand, *Unity and Plurality*, p. 25.
[673] Cf. Hedlund who understands Job to be 'a representative of the nations'.

4.2.2.1.5 The non-Israelite setting universalises the book

The most commonly held and, in my view, persuasive reason given for Job's non-Israelite setting is that it functions as a device to universalise the book. The point has already been made that the Wisdom Literature has a more 'international' tone than other parts of the OT.[674] Setting the book of Job outside of Israel is in keeping with this tendency and associating it with Uz, as was shown above, includes at least some associations with international wisdom.[675]

Setting the story outside of Israel's borders removed the necessity of dealing, explicitly at least, with such matters as covenant, election, and Israel's history.[676] The author of Job was thus able to transcend certain peculiarly Israelite concerns that may have distracted the audience from the core human dilemma at play in the book.[677] Additionally, perhaps, as Beeby has noted above, if the book had exhibited more overtly Israelite trappings it may not have appealed to a wider, international audience. While it is difficult to assess this as a principal aim of the author, it does not seem unreasonable that this would have been an effect of the setting.

The setting of the book, therefore, enabled the author to probe the divine-human relationship aside from, or at a level deeper even than covenant.[678]

As is demonstrated by the survey of ANE material later in this chapter, neither suffering nor reflecting on suffering was unique to Israel. In writing the book of Job the author was, in his own Israelite way, making a contribution to humanity's wrestling with this most universal of experiences. Setting the action outside of Israel would therefore seem to be an entirely appropriate way of internationalising his work as it took its place among other attempts to probe the universal and vexing questions it addressed.[679]

The literature discussing Job 1:1 often contains lengthy treatments of the precise location of Uz, but this question seems much less important than what Uz represents. Granted, the choice of Uz (and, by extension, Edom) may have afforded the author of Job some helpful associations. There is the known association between Edom and wisdom, and the sound

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[674] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 443; Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 346.
[675] Wilson, p. 17; Weiss, pp. 23-24.
[676] Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 213; Janzen, p. 5; R.W.L. Moberly, 'Solomon and Job: Divine Wisdom in Human Life', in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, ed. by S.C. Barton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), pp. 3-17 (p. 10).
[677] Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 10, 59. Ticciati, for example, builds on the work of Barth and speaks of Uz 'as a sort of contextless context, being taken as a license to extract Job from his historical context and consider him solely in relation to God.' S. Ticciati, *Job and the Disruption of Identity: Reading Beyond Barth* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), p. 19.
[678] Janzen, pp. 11-12, 21. Contra Ticciati, who understands Job to be examining the nature of covenant without dispensing with a commitment to covenant; *Job*, p. 61.
[679] Cf. Hoffman, p. 203; Wilson, pp. 17-18.

capacity of Uz (noted by Weiss, above) is suggestive of wisdom as well. Edom also seems an appropriate choice because it retains the 'not Israel' status while also still being somewhere an Israelite could relate to as it was 'just next-door'.[680] Therefore the proximity of Edom enabled the author to highlight certain connections with Israel which made it familiar enough to 'draw in' its audience.[681]

However to focus on the specific location of Uz is, ultimately, a distraction from the main significance of the author's choice of a non-Israelite context. The primary importance in this setting is not tied to its specificity, Edomite or otherwise. In essence, the significance of this choice is literary and theological rather than geographical.[682] The crucial factor in choosing Uz is that it is not Israel, which signals to the audience that the book has a horizon beyond their own borders.[683]

The effect of the non-Israelite setting is to create 'a sense of narrative distance' which is emphasised by the ambiguities of the text.[684] This theme of ambiguity has been interpreted in a variety of ways by scholars. Brenner, for example, sees the non-Israelite motif as offering a signal that the piety of Job in the Prologue should be treated with suspicion, whereas the lack of historical detail points Penchansky to the author's desire to undermine more mainstream voices at the time of composition.[685] Such is the nature of ambiguity that the gaps can be filled in a variety of ways.

This 'not Israel' motif functions as part of a broader strategy of the author, who exploits both what is known (that it is not Israel) and what is left unknown or ambiguous. *Contra* Brenner and Penchansky I would understand this as a means of universalising his book in order to create in Job a representative or paradigmatic figure.[686] Job embodies in himself and his circumstances the 'movement from the particular to the universal'.[687] Despite the very particularities of his situation, Job becomes a personification of the human dilemma when faced with suffering: 'Job is no longer man; he is humanity!'[688]

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[680] Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 59.
[681] Perlstein, location 5165-5166.
[682] Balentine, p. 40.
[683] Moberly, 'Solomon and Job', p. 10; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 10.
[684] Newsom, 'Job', p. 345; cf. Janzen, p. 5; Brenner, p. 40.
[685] Brenner, p. 40; D. Penchansky, *The Betrayal of God: Ideological Conflict in Job* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), pp. 32-33.
[686] A.H. Konkel, 'Job', in *Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, by A.H. Konkel and T. Longman III (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2006), pp. 1-249 (pp. 30-31): 'His life circumstances are left deliberately vague so that they can represent any person at any point in time; people of any era in any location can identify with Job and learn the lessons that wisdom has for them.'
[687] Borrowing Bauckham's phrase; *Bible and Mission*, p. 13.
[688] A. de Lamartine, cited in Balentine, p. 5; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 67; Estes, p. 28; Balentine, p. 46; Moberly, 'Solomon and Job', p. 10. Indeed, resonances between Job's location 'in the East' and Gen. 2:8 may further suggest themes of representation, creation, and divine design; a connection noted by Balentine, p. 44. However, while Habel also alludes to Gen. 2:8 he thinks

Job's representative function is made all the more evident because his identity and provenance cannot be tied down definitively. As Long puts it so poignantly:

> In his story of anguished suffering and troubled faith, symbolically Job is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, ancient nor modern. Job is from the land of Uz, a place where no one can find on a map but a place where nearly everyone has spent some time. Job is every person, transcending particularity of time and place.[689]

The present language of 'representative' and 'paradigm' requires clarification. It is my view that the author presents Job in a universalised and universalising manner in order to create in him a representative of suffering humanity, but also a paradigm for how a person of faith could engage with the vexing and universal experiences of suffering. Although the two ideas are closely linked, they seem to me to evoke certain passive and active nuances respectively. Addressing the question of Job's provenance, Pope states,

> The author of the Book of Job cannot be precisely placed temporally or geographically, but this is of no great consequence for he speaks to and for all humanity about a problem that has perplexed thinking and feeling men in all times and places.'[690]

However, I would want to tweak the wording to say that the ambiguity is of *great* consequence *precisely because* it enables Job to speak 'to and for all humanity' in a clearer and more compelling way.

Yet at the same time I would want to argue that as well as his everyman status, Job does represent something particularly Israelite. Despite his provenance, Job is depicted as a worshiper of Yahweh and the book, we may assume, had Israelites as its primary audience. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter the Israelite nature of the book of Job can be seen especially in the light of other ANE texts on innocent suffering. There is an assumption of Israelite monotheism that drives the book of Job, and its turning point occurs in an encounter with Yahweh himself.

The relationship between particularity and universality in Job is, therefore, a subtle one that works in both directions. The particularity of Job's provenance and circumstances function to universalise the book. Yet at the same time the book deals with its universal theme in a particularised way, thereby driving the reader struggling with universally relevant questions

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the emphasis of this possible 'early double entendre' should rest on the implication that Job was, 'the greatest of the men of primordial antiquity'; *Job*, p. 39.

689 T.G. Long, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), p. 94. Cf. Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 10; cf. Reitman, location 1000-1003.

690 Pope, p. xxxviii.

and concerns to the very particular God of Israel.[691] I will develop this discussion later in the chapter, especially when engaging with the missional encounter of Job with ANE beliefs.

4.3 Other universalising elements of the Prologue

To demonstrate further the presence of a universalising impulse in the book of Job it would be helpful to show how the author achieves this in ways other than the use of the non-Israelite motif. This could be achieved in a number of different ways but I have chosen to focus on certain features of the Prologue that give the book of Job a more universalised trajectory. In particular I will address the archaic setting of the book, the Prologue's literary artistry, and the crucial question voiced by the accuser in 1:9b.

4.3.1 The archaic setting

Although they differ over the extent to which and ways in which the author has developed it for his purposes, scholars generally agree that the Prologue-Epilogue of Job is based on an earlier, traditional story.[692] While the application of precise terminology such as 'folk tale' or 'legend' receives a degree of attention, many point to the sophisticated and didactic nature of the narrative.[693] My own view is that the prose frame functions as a didactic story that features archaising elements that may well have been, in part at least, inherited from a known, traditional story or stories about a righteous sufferer named Job. Where I talk about genre, my focus will be on the ways in which this promotes the universalising theme that I am addressing.

It is widely held that the book of Job has a patriarchal setting, which is suggested by a number of details in the story. Job's wealth, for example, is quantified in animals and servants.[694] Presumably in the absence of priest or sanctuary Job, as the head of his household, is responsible for the religious activities of his family, including sacrifices.[695] The Prologue uses the terms, שְׁבָא (Sabeans, 1:15) and כַּשְׂדִּים (Chaldeans, 1:17), depicting them

[691] Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 122.
[692] Cf. Gordis, *God and Man*, pp. 65-75;
[693] Newsom, 'Job', p. 343; idem, *Contest*, pp. 38-41; Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 6-7; Clines, 'False Naivety in the Prologue to Job' in D.J.A. Clines, *On the Way to Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998: Vol 2* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 735-744 (originally published in *Hebrew Annual Review*, 9 (1985), 127-136); Habel, pp. 39-40; Wilson, p. 6; A. Cooper, 'Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job', *JSOT*, 15.46 (1990), 67-79; Brenner; Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*, p. 98.
[694] Longman, *Job*, location 1592; Hartley, *Job*, p. 21. Although note that some or many of these details could be explained by the non-Israelite setting; cf. Walton, 'Job 1', p. 344; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. lvii.
[695] Longman, *Job*, location 1616-1617; Walton, *Job*, p. 23; Hartley, *Job*, p. 21.

as nomadic, as yet unsettled peoples.[696] Looking ahead to the Epilogue, the term, קְשִׂיטָה in 42:11 is considered to be an archaic term for currency that is only found in early texts.[697] Additionally, Job's longevity (42:17) may point to an ancient time.[698]

Overall the prose story appears to have an 'ancient epic' feel to it, exhibiting poetic details even though it is broadly prose.[699] Examples of this include assonance and alliteration (for instance, בְּאֶרֶץ־עוּץ in 1:1; הַשָּׂטָן הַשָּׂטָן in 1:8 and 2:3, and וַיָּקָם... וַיִּקְרַע in 1:20); parallelism (1:10; 1:22); poetic phrasing (1:21; the use of תִּפְלָה in 1:22 and לְבַלְּעוֹ in 2:3); symmetrical structuring (1:6-12 and 2:1-7; 1:1, 8 and 2:3; 1:14-19); symbolic numbers (sevens, threes and, by combination, tens in 1:2-3; 2:11, 13); mention of the divine council; and the theme of the daughters in the Epilogue.[700]

We see, therefore, that Job's character and story are placed in the context of an ancient, 'heroic' setting.[701] Functioning very closely with the non-Israelite theme, this archaic motif creates a temporal distance that contributes to the narrative distancing noted above. In so doing it removes the requirement to deal with issues specific to Israel's covenant history, which enables the author to 'pose the problems raised in the book in general human terms', and to allow his audience, 'to experience vicariously the primal nature of God', which in turn will inform them about how they perceive their covenant relationship with God.[702] This setting may also function to facilitate a theme of ignorance or limited knowledge on the part of Job, as if the narrative were transporting the audience to a time (and place) 'when mortals were first struggling to know God.'[703]

While the book appears to place itself within a particular era, that of the patriarchs, this still allows for a certain degree of ambiguity. Just as it is unnecessary to place Uz on a map, it is also unnecessary to date the setting of the story any more specifically than to say that it occurred before the time of the covenant. Given that the action of the book is already taking

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[696] Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 32; Walton, *Job*, p. 32; Hartley, *Job*, p. 21;

[697] Cf. Gen. 33:19; Josh. 24:32; Walton, *Job*, p. 32; Clines, *Job 38-42*, p. 1236; Hartley, *Job*, p. 21; Dhorme, p. xxi.

[698] Pope, p. xxxi; Hartley, *Job*, p. 22; Dhorme, p. xxi; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 24.

[699] N. Sarna, 'Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job', *JBL*, 76 (1957), 13-25 (p. 15).

[700] Sarna, pp. 14-24; Hartley, *Job*, p. 22; Hoffman, pp. 47-48. Sarna's main aim is to show that 'all this detailed and consistent patriarchal setting must be regarded as genuine and as belonging to the original saga… the considerable amount of epic substratum indicates that our present narrative framework is directly derived from an ancient Epic of Job'; p. 25. Cf. Newsom, *Contest*, p. 53.

[701] As with the non-Israelite motif, whether the author of the biblical book designed his work this way or retained, and therefore exploited, an inherited tradition is of secondary importance to this particular discussion.

[702] Janzen, p. 5; Habel, p. 40. Cf. Janzen, p. 21; S. Ticciati, 'Does Job Fear God for Naught?', *Modern Theology*, 21.3 (2005), 353-366 (p. 355).

[703] Habel, p. 30; Cf. my treatment in chapter two of Allen, for whom this theme plays a central role in his reflections on mission and the book of Job; 'Missionary Message', pp. 18-31.

place outside of Israel, it could be argued that this archaised setting is unnecessary. In my view, however, the overall impression of the archaic setting adds a further (albeit minor) layer of distance to the story, deepening the impression that the book of Job is not 'here and now' but 'there and then' or, more precisely, 'anywhere and anytime', with Job being 'anyone'; that is, 'representative of all who suffer.'[704]

4.3.2 Literary artistry

While certain details of the text noted above may be seen simply as archaic (or archaising) features of the Prologue, these phenomena may also be placed within a broader discussion of the way in which the author of Job has constructed his work.[705]

In recent years much work has been done to draw out the sophisticated literary features and theological significance of the Prologue.[706] Hoffman, for example, focuses his attention on the tension in the frame narrative between 'mimetic' and 'anti-mimetic' elements within the story; that is, elements that represent or cohere with reality and those that undermine a sense of recognition.[707] Concentrating particularly on 1:1-2:7 and 42:12-17 he understands the author to be creating an 'anti-mimetic mood' using 'numerous schematic and symmetrical elements', many of which I have noted in the above section, such as symbolic numbers, repetition and chiasm.[708] He also sees an anti-mimetic tendency evidenced by the hyperbolic description of Job's righteousness and the inclusion of the satan (who 'seduces' God) and the 'tableau of the sons of God'.[709]

Notably he understands the Uz setting as combining elements of mimesis and anti-mimesis, which reflects the complex nature of the Prologue.[710] Given the deep mimesis displayed in the Dialogues it was crucial to give the book some degree of historical rootedness; hence the

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[704] Hartley, *Job*, p. 67.
[705] Cf., for example, Habel, p. 81.
[706] See C.A. Newsom, 'Re-considering Job', *Currents in Biblical Research*, 5.2 (2007), 155-182 (p. 159). It is not my intention in this section to provide a thorough survey of the rich and nuanced interpretations offered by the numerous scholars who have looked at the Prologue. Rather, I am highlighting a selection of prescient points that contribute to my universalising theme.
[707] Hoffman, pp. 267-276. He sees 1:1-2:7 and 42:12-17 as being anti-mimetic. The other parts of the frame story 'begin to assume mimetic coloration; the schematic elements disappear, being replaced by descriptions of realia and of expected psychological reactions'; p. 274.
[708] He includes in his list: '(i) typological numbers; (ii) repetitions of the number seven; (iii) linguistic formulae repeated in explicitly anti-mimetic circumstances (1.15, 16, 19, as well as 1.7-11; 2.2-6); (iv) the chiastic relationship between the portrayals of happiness and the portrayals of disaster; (v) the equal result of all disasters (only one remains to tell the tale); (vi) the exact doubling of Job's wealth (42:12); (vii) the number of years he lived after the disaster – one hundred and forty years.' ibid., p. 271.
[709] ibid., pp. 272, 273.
[710] ibid., pp. 271-272.

(albeit loosely) known place of Uz.[711] Yet, building on Weiss's argument on the wisdom motif, Uz can also be understood symbolically to portray Job as an archetype of wise piety.[712]

Hoffman sees these elements functioning as a device by which 'the author deliberately wrote a story that seemingly declares of itself "I am not true", "I am not an imitation of any reality"', the purpose of which is to afford himself 'maximum freedom' to pursue the themes of his book: 'when the righteous man, his happiness and his suffering are 'absolute', one may examine the subject in a 'purer' way'.[713]

It could be argued that even the phrasing of 1:1a contributes towards this 'unreal' tone of the book. The narrative opens with the unusual phrase אִישׁ הָיָה which has parallels only in Nathan's parable in 2 Sam. 12:1 and Joash's tale in 2 Kgs. 14:9.[714] On this (admittedly slight) evidence it could be that the phrasing indicates that the audience should expect some kind of fictional story rather than a historical account.[715] Another explanation is that the use of אִישׁ here emphasises the humanity and vulnerability of Job, although this is perhaps overly speculative.[716] However it may be meant more as an indication that the story is not part of the continuing narrative of the history of Israel.[717] In this case the opening may not prove historicity one way or the other but still contributes to the narrative distancing of the Prologue.

In an influential essay entitled, 'False Naivety in the Prologue to Job', Clines demonstrates, correctly in my view, that certain seemingly simplistic features in the Prologue actually evidence a sophisticated literary hand.[718] The author, he suggests, gives the text 'the appearance of artlessness to convey a subtle message.'[719] The language is naive (especially in comparison with the Dialogue), containing very few colloquialisms or metaphors (with 1:10; 2:4 as exceptions).[720] The style is naive, using very few adjectives (for example, תָּם and יָשָׁר in 1:1, 8; 2:3; גְּדוֹלָה in 1:19 and רָע in 2:7) and employing repetition as its most

[711] ibid., p. 272.
[712] ibid., pp. 271-272.
[713] ibid., pp. 271, 273. Cf. Newsom, for example, who sees these elements as forming 'a permeating trope' which depicts Uz as 'a world of coherency and wholeness'; *Contest*, p. 53.
[714] The similar use in Est. 2:5 and 1 Sam. 25:2 seem to mark a change in focus and so do not seem analogous; cf. Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 9. He notes the more usual way of introducing historical narrative as וַיְהִי which is found in books such as Joshua, Judges and 1 Samuel.
[715] So, Gordis, *Job*, p. 10; H.H. Rowley, ed, *Job* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1970), p. 28; Newsom, *Contest*, p. 41. Cf. Hartley who describes it as opening the narrative 'in epic style' though does not elaborate further; *Job*, p. 65.
[716] An explanation offered by Alden, p. 46.
[717] Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 9-10. Cf. Pope, p. 3.
[718] Clines, 'False Naivety'.
[719] ibid., p. 735.
[720] ibid., p. 735.

prominent device (as noted above).[721] Further, Clines points to certain simplistic details to demonstrate the supposed naivety of the plot:

> Job must be the *greatest* of the sons of the East, *none like him* on earth, *blameless* and upright; he must lose *all* his possessions in *one* day, he must be afflicted *from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head*. His downfall must result from a *divine* conspiracy against him, of which he must have not the slightest suspicion. And to his fate he must respond with inscrutable oriental submissiveness.[722]

Finally, the structure seems particularly naive, being divided into five scenes which alternate between earth and heaven, including a 'fourfold messenger scene' plus several two-member dialogues, all of which point to 'the utmost simplicity of construction.'[723]

However, for Clines, the naivety of the narrative is 'false' because the Prologue is actually, 'a well wrought narrative that plunges directly into issues of substance that reach as deep as the fraught dialogues themselves.'[724]

It is not my intention here to work through the details of Clines' treatment of the elements of the Prologue noted above.[725] Instead, because of the way it demonstrates the movement from Job's particularity to universal concerns, I will focus on his concluding comments about the implications of the Prologue's sophisticated handling of the question of Job's suffering.

While Job may wrestle with the reasons behind his suffering throughout the book, the reader is in no doubt whatsoever. In one sense there is no mystery at all in Job's experiences. In Job's particular case he is suffering because, as is explicitly stated in the Prologue, it has been decreed in heaven:

> Read naively, the prologue must mean that no question about the meaning of Job's suffering remains… [and therefore] Job's suffering is irrelevant to human suffering in general, for there is a distinct and known reason for it… What then does the prologue offer for the problem of human suffering? Naively read, what it is doing is to proffer the reason for Job's suffering: more subtly read, what it is doing is to offer no reason for any suffering at all–except Job's.[726]

Thus, read in a simplistic fashion, the Prologue can only tell us why *Job* suffered. Yet this cannot be what the author intends. However, if the Prologue, and indeed the whole of the

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[721] ibid., p. 735.
[722] ibid., p. 735. His italics.
[723] ibid., p. 735.
[724] ibid., p. 735.
[725] On 1:13-19, for example, he shows how the repetition heightens the sense of atmosphere and doom, while keeping the focus on Job and his reaction to the calamities. The patterning of the five scenes invites comment when it is deviated from in 2:7 with one of the actors (the accuser in this case) moving from one realm to another. The seemingly simplistic dialogue also betrays a tense and subtly conceived set up for the important themes in the book. ibid., pp. 736-740.
[726] ibid., p. 743.

book, are 'read with an ounce of subtlety', it become clear that the book probes the broader question of human suffering and not just the specific question of Job's.[727]

At points in the rest of the book Job himself made this move from his own particularities to universal questions (3:20; 7:1; 14:1; 24:1-17) and the reader is invited to do the same.[728] In Clines' view, the Prologue appears to teach, in light of the Dialogue, that there is a divine reason behind human suffering, even if it is not the same as the particular divine reason in Job's case, which is merely an exemplar.[729] Moreover, although Job's suffering is gratuitous (חִנָּם) in one sense (2:3), from the divine perspective it is necessary, meaning that Job's response in suffering could actually be said to be benefiting God.[730] Perhaps, suggests Clines, Job is paradigmatic in this sense as well:

> Why else should God authorize the persecution of Job if not because it is only Job who can solve the question that has been raised in heaven? In a word, Job suffers for God's sake. May not the prologue, read as the framework for the dialogue, be saying the same thing about innocent suffering in general? If innocent suffering is for God's sake, to grant him some undivulged benefit, to win him some unguessed at boon, then does not undeserved suffering acquire a fresh and startlingly positive valuation – for the sufferer in his particularity and for humankind at large?[731]

Both Hoffman and Clines note the motif of hyperbole in the Prologue in relation to Job's characterisation and circumstances. It seems to me this is also an important contribution to the universalising of Job's character and book. In 1:1 the narrator describes Job as תָּם (blameless) and יָשָׁר (upright), וְירֵא אֱלֹהִים (fearing God) and וְסָר מֵרָע (turning from evil). This loading of commendable attributes, which are repeated by Yahweh in 1:8 and 2:3, makes Job into 'a paragon of devotion and integrity' or an idealised wisdom figure.[732] Indeed, no other figure in the OT (Israelite or otherwise) receives such accolades of integrity, illustrating Yahweh's view that there really is no-one on earth like Job (1:8; 2:3).[733]

To this idealised figure is added an idealised life-circumstance of wealth and familial harmony, illustrated by symbolic amounts of possessions and offspring, and an example of

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[727] ibid., p. 743.
[728] ibid., p. 743.
[729] ibid., pp. 743-744.
[730] ibid., p. 744.
[731] ibid., p. 744. Thus, the book of Job 'lays undeserved suffering on God's majestic shoulders. No attempt to explain either enigma is made; the story seems content to affirm disinterested righteousness and to acknowledge vexing instances that lack a positive correlation between sin and punishment.' Crenshaw, *OT Wisdom*, p. 103. Cf. P. Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), pp. 62, 65-68.
[732] Walton, *Job*, p. 58; Weiss, p. 25; Habel, p. 86.
[733] Balentine, pp. 46-47. Cf. R.W.L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 84; Hoffman, p. 272.

Job's scrupulous attention to religious practice.[734] Job's initial character and circumstances are expressed most of all by hyperbole, which is then matched by descriptions of the breadth and depth of losses and grief he endures. Job is a man of extremes, and so, functions as a paradigm for everyone in between, providing the most effective 'control' experiment for probing the nature of true piety.[735] Furthermore, it is not just the existence and origins of his suffering that make him representative. It could also be argued that the depth and breadth of his pain is so all-encompassing that, to some degree, he embodies a totality of human suffering and, so, makes him a paradigm in this way as well.[736]

Reviewing certain aspects of the literary artistry of the Prologue appears to demonstrate further evidence of a universalising impulse within the book of Job. Using different motifs and techniques, the author clearly seems to be setting up Job as a representative or paradigmatic figure. One further example of this impulse will be addressed; namely, the way in which the initial question of the accuser in 1:9b functions to universalise the significance of both Job the individual and the book as a whole. As I will show, understanding this crucial text becomes a significant way of discerning the missional function of the book of Job.

4.3.3 The crucial question: is it for nothing חִנָּם that Job fears God? (1:9b)

I have chosen to highlight this particular text due to its prominence in scholarly discussions on Job, but also because it is, in my view, a significant example of the universalising impulse within the book of Job. As I argue throughout the thesis, I view the question as a key to understanding the complex relationship between Job and the *missio Dei*. By illustrating the role of Job within this broader question of the *missio Dei* this also enables me to consider the book in relation to the theme of what I have termed 'the missional potential and cost of character formation', which I highlight in the concluding section of this chapter.

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[734] Attempts to show that 1:5 evidences a suspiciously 'over-pious' tendency in Job are, in my view, over-reading the idealised nature of the descriptions. For examples of these reading see, for example, E. van Wolde, *Mr and Mrs Job* (London: SCM Press, 1997), pp. 13-14; Brenner, p. 44.

[735] Cf. Moberly, *Bible*, p. 87.

[736] This helpful insight is suggested by Hartley: 'Beyond the sheer severity of his physical suffering, two factors explain why Job's suffering could be representative of all human suffering. First, there is the principle that the severity of his suffering increases inversely in relationship to one's success. Since Job was the most exalted person of ancient times by reason of his standing in the community (29:7-10, 21-25) and his wealth (1:2-3), his downfall was the most dramatic possible in the human sphere. Second, Job endured terrible suffering on all levels of human experiences: the physical, the spiritual, the social, and the emotional.' J.E. Hartley, 'Job: Theology of', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 5, pp. 780-796 (p. 782).

Following the introductory scene on earth, which orients the reader to the character and original circumstances of Job, the narrative of the Prologue shifts to heaven in a supposed meeting of the divine council in 1:6-12. Among the sons of God, בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, is a figure called the accuser, הַשָּׂטָן, whose role it seems is to scour the earth, checking on the integrity of human beings.[737]

In a manner which seems to invite a counter claim, Yahweh asks the accuser if he has considered his servant Job, whom he assesses to be unique on the earth, confirming the combination of righteous traits the narrator has already highlighted (v. 8; cf. v.1). Thus Job is set up as the greatest of the sons of the East by the narrator, and someone beyond compare in all the world, according to God himself. Here is an archetypal, pious human being.

The accuser does not doubt that Job appears to be pious.[738] Rather, he casts doubt on the genuineness of his piety and, so, on the nature of piety itself:

הֲחִנָּם יָרֵא אִיּוֹב אֱלֹהִים 'Is it for nothing that Job fears God?'

This question has, rightly in my view, been recognised by many as the critical point in the book of Job. Ticciati, for example, sees it as 'pivotal' not only for the opening narrative but also as a means of setting the agenda for the entire book.[739] Similarly, others have described it as 'the critical issue around which the whole story revolves'[740], and as propelling[741] or functioning as a 'key' to the whole work.[742] As such the accuser's question acts as a necessary catalyst and context for the unfolding events and speeches in the book. Once uttered it cannot be taken back and must be seen through to resolution: 'there is no turning back either for God or for Job'.[743]

חִנָּם is a nuanced term that can mean doing something for no payment or price (Gen. 29:15; Exod. 21:2; Isa. 52:3); purposelessness or vanity (Prov. 1:17; Mal. 1:10); or doing something '*gratuitously, without cause, undeservedly*, esp. of groundless hostility or attack' (1 Sam.

[737] It is not my intension here to detail the lengthy discussion on the precise identity of this figure or the assembly more broadly. My view is that הַשָּׂטָן is an ambiguous figure who has the particular responsibility among the angelic beings of bringing to light human failings. Cf. Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. 19-23; Weiss, pp. 31-46; Balentine, pp. 48-53; Walton, *Job*, pp. 63-67.
[738] Gutiérrez, p. 4; H.R. Jones, *Job* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2007), p. 53.
[739] S. Ticciati, 'for Naught?', p. 353.
[740] Moberly, *Bible*, p. 85.
[741] Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, p. 387.
[742] Gutiérrez, p. 4.
[743] Ticciati, *Job*, p. 50.

19:5; 2 Kgs. 2:31; Ps. 35:7; Prov. 1:11; Lam. 3:52).'[744] In addition to its use in 1:9, חִנָּם occurs three other times in the book of Job. In 2:3 Yahweh accuses the accuser of inciting him to destroy Job for no reason, חִנָּם; in 9:17 Job complains that God multiplies his wounds for no reason, חִנָּם; and in 22:6 Eliphaz accuses Job of exacting pledges from his brothers for nothing, חִנָּם. In 1:9 it seems to be both the first and third nuances that are at play in the accuser's question. Does Job fear God for no reward? Surely, considers the accuser, Job has every reason to serve God.

The significance of the question, particularly in relation to its universalising or paradigmatic impulse, can be examined by highlighting two key aspects. First, it is clear that while it is casting doubt on the nature of Job's piety, the question is really probing the nature of all human piety. If Job is Yahweh's exemplar of integrity then he is also the accuser's potential exemplar of doubt. The basis of the accuser's suspicion concerning Job's piety is his doubt about piety full stop.[745] Is Job's character and piety, indeed any human character or expression of piety, 'nothing more than a sham?'[746]

Secondly, the question casts doubt on the integrity of God as well as that of Job and, by extension, humanity because 'Job's character is necessarily intertwined with Yahweh's character.'[747] It looks to the accuser as if God is, in effect, buying Job's loyalty in exchange for protection and prosperity.[748] Is the very relationship between God and humanity a sham too? Obedience, it seems, is not enough on its own; what is required is genuine relationship.[749]

It may be argued that the real target of the accuser's question is God himself. If human beings can only be bribed into line, does this imply that God is not 'intrinsically worshipful'?[750] Perhaps God is not in himself enough to elicit 'the free adoration and love of humankind'[751], or is not capable of creating a being that would recognise his qualities sufficiently to choose worship.[752]

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[744] BDB, p. 336 (their italics). Cf. Dhorme, p. 7; Wilson, p. 23; Rowley, *Job*, p. 32; T.E. Fretheim, 'חנן', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 2, pp. 203-206 (pp. 203-204).

[745] Van Selms, for example, makes this point in the reverse: 'In the opinion of the Adversary, Job's piety, *and therefore all human piety*, is a refined form of egoism'; A. van Selms, *Job: A Practical Commentary*, translated by J. Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 24. My emphasis. That the accuser has all humanity, or general human nature in view is evident also in his declaration in 2:4.

[746] Brown, *Character*, p. 52.

[747] ibid., p. 52; Lo, p. 40; Ticciati, *Job*, p. 74.

[748] Jones, p. 53.

[749] Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, p. 387.

[750] A phrase used by both Balentine, p. 74; and Janzen, p. 38.

[751] Balentine, p. 74

[752] Janzen, p. 38.

Clearly, then, much is at stake. The very integrity of God himself is under question, as is the integrity of the way God relates to humanity. Therefore, it is precisely because these are such fundamental questions that they needed to be asked and answered.[753]

For whose benefit is the question being asked? I do not think satisfying the accuser is, in itself, sufficient reason to pursue the question, given his subordinate status and his disappearance from view after the Prologue. Could it be, as some suppose, that it is Yahweh who 'needs' to know the answer, as if to address some kind of divine doubt?[754] While it may be the case that Yahweh as a literary character within the book 'needs' proof, something else seems to be at play. Perhaps because the issue is one of integrity, this issue cannot just be discussed. In order to deal with the accuser's suspicion, Job's integrity must be demonstrated, 'out there in public view'.[755]

Ultimately, it is the audience of the book of Job that needs to consider the question and be formed both by its asking and by its answer. It is therefore part of the formative purpose of the book of Job, in which 'God lets us be real and show ourselves, show the world, and show God.'[756]

What we have seen is that the question posed by the accuser is a further instrument of universality, employed by the author to transform Job's particularity into a representative or paradigmatic figure. Job becomes the test case in an examination of an absolutely fundamental issue, as developed in several aspects. If God's confidence in Job is vindicated, this allows for the possibility that other human beings may also be obedient and fear God for no reason other than for who God is.[757]

The accuser's question is, therefore, an essential one to be asked in relation to the mission of God. If there is no such thing as the possibility of genuine piety, this throws into question the integrity of the relationship between God and humanity. Would such a sham relationship amount to nothing more than idolatry?[758] In the *misso Dei* God's purpose is to restore the broken relationship between humanity and himself. However, if this relationship turns out to be a sham, then the project of the *missio Dei* is likewise a sham, rendered meaningless by an

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[753] Weiss, p. 37; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 25.

[754] Weiss, for example, sees the accuser as effectively an extension of God's doubts or 'internal conflict'; p. 42. Cf. Mitchell, p. xi; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 26; Perlstein, location 6056-6058.

[755] J. Goldingay, *Job for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2013), p. 20; cf. Moberly, *Bible*, pp. 87-88.

[756] Goldingay, *Job*, p. 20. Cf. the discussion by Brown, who understands the book as charting, 'the journey of one person's character in response to an instance of seemingly inexplicable suffering, and in so doing, provides a new frame of reference and model of normative character that invites consideration for post-Joban generations.' *Character*, p. 51.

[757] Gutiérrez, p. 4. He also notes that, similarly, Job's underserved suffering opens up the possibility of the unjust suffering of others.

[758] ibid., p. 5: 'In self-seeking religion there is no true encounter with God but rather the construction of an idol.' Janzen also asks a prescient and striking question: 'what sort of covenant is possible between God and humankind?' p. 41.

unattainable goal. It is at this pivotal moment in the mission of God that Job plays his part. His is a role of great cost, yet has a value that is 'fresh and startlingly positive'.[759]

This, I believe, is an essential and particularly Joban contribution to biblical reflection on mission. It also makes a more satisfying connection between Job and the biblical story of God's mission. Rather than trying to find how the book fits into and progresses the story of God's mission in a temporal sense, and by way of awkward historical associations, the book of Job can be understood as standing apart from it and speaking into it. As a way of relating Job to the *missio Dei* this seems to me to account more appropriately and fully for the book on its own terms. As such Job tackles head on a question that threatens the validity of the entire project of the mission of God. Read in this way it becomes clear that, in the book of Job, nothing less than the mission of God is at stake.[760]

I have so far demonstrated that the book of Job presents itself as addressing universally significant (and therefore missionally relevant) concerns, seen especially through the paradigmatic function of the non-Israelite theme. I have also highlighted the missional importance of the crucial question in 1:9b. However, I have yet to explain what the book actually says about these. Do we find, for example, that the piety of Job and, therefore, the integrity of God's mission, is vindicated? How does the book address the question of unattributed or innocent suffering in a way that makes a significant contribution to the international conversation?

In the rest of the chapter I turn to matters of content, focusing especially on the extent to which the book of Job exhibits a missional encounter with ANE beliefs. I will show how Job meets them in affirmation and challenge, ultimately contending for a distinctive, Israelite view on the issue in contrast to alternatives. This is seen especially through the speeches of Yahweh and Job's responses (38:1-42:6), which also provide a way of answering the questions posed in the early stages of the book.

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[759] Clines, 'False Naivety', p. 744.

[760] Cf. Jones, p. 54: 'Indeed the honour and glory of his entire redemptive programme are at stake.' Similarly, Yancey suggests: 'A piece of the history of the universe was at stake in Job and is still at stake in our own responses… How we respond *matters*. By hanging onto the thinnest thread of faith, Job won a crucial victory in God's grand plan to redeem the earth'; p. 66. His italics.

4.4 Job and similar texts of the Ancient Near East

> '… the Joban drama is perhaps the longest-running story in the history of human experience. The biblical Job is but one, even if one of the best, of a cast of characters who has played this role…
>
> This wider context for encountering the Bible's version of the story keeps us mindful that the Joban problem is no aberration; instead, it stands at the center of what it means to be human. For as long as men and women have walked this earth, they have shared the journey with someone, somewhere, named Job.'[761]

> 'Living as a contrast community will mean a missionary encounter with our culture. In a missionary encounter, the gospel challenges the cultural story instead of allowing the cultural story to absorb it. Thus to be faithful we will need to understand our particular cultural context well.'[762]

As I demonstrated in the first part of my thesis, one question that can be probed as part of a missional reading is the extent to which a biblical text engaged with and critiqued the worldviews and ideas of Israel's neighbours.[763] When the biblical writers articulated a rendering of reality that reflected their monotheistic or Yahwistic beliefs they were, implicitly or explicitly, telling an alternative story that encountered and competed with alternative renderings.[764]

It follows, therefore, that the relationship between Job and similar ANE texts would be an appropriate topic of study. Furthermore, this seems to be a natural direction in which to take the prior discussion on the universalising impulse of the book. Having established that Job

[761] Balentine, pp. 4-5.
[762] Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, p. 211.
[763] Of course, it does not automatically follow that detecting elements of cultural critique in a biblical text will then lead to the conclusion that something 'missional' is occurring, but this is a contention I have defended earlier in the thesis.
[764] Although not framing it in the language of mission, Sanders, for example, writes about the Bible as 'monotheizing literature'; See, for example, Sanders, *Canon and Community*, p. 43. See also J. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1987). In addition to Goheen, for a more explicitly missional context in which this process has been discussed see, for example, Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, and Wright, *Mission of God*.

presents itself in universally significant ways it follows that an examination of the distinctive contribution of this Israelite work would be appropriate.[765]

4.4.1 A survey of selected ANE texts

In this section I outline a number of ANE texts that are considered to be similar enough to Job to be worth comparing and contrasting with the biblical book. The survey shows that, although there does not seem to be conclusive evidence of a direct relationship between Job and these works, there are nevertheless some instructive points of similarity and contrast that can be observed. I will demonstrate that, while Job stands in continuity with a tradition of ANE wisdom by dealing with the universal phenomenon of human suffering, it also has a unique, Israelite contribution to the issue. This distinctive element evidences a critique or 'missionary encounter' with certain ideas and worldviews exhibited in the ANE texts and, in evidencing themes of affirmation and critique, provides some insights for missional reflection with which the paper concludes.[766]

My purpose is not to be exhaustive in my coverage; rather, I have sought to be selective in my choice of texts, highlighting six that feature consistently across the literature.[767] In particular I have focused most attention on two Babylonian works that seem to relate most closely to the book of Job: *I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom* (*Ludlul bēl nēmiqi*) and *The Babylonian Theodicy*.

A note of caution should be sounded at this point concerning the extrapolation from a particular text of a culture's religious beliefs.[768] Beliefs in any culture may change over time, there may have been texts with contrasting views that that have not survived, and the ideas expressed in any text may in fact be attempting to subvert rather than exhibit or support a

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[765] As noted in chapter two, see van Zyl, who focuses on the theme of cultural critique when discussing missiological aspects of the book of Job, although he is more interested in the critique of traditions within Israel. My focus in this chapter is on the critique of Israel's neighbouring worldviews although I do acknowledge that there is a tension between Job and some other parts of the OT.

[766] While the note of polemic, implicit or otherwise, is highly significant it should be noted that elements of affirmation and acceptance should be shown as well. This is an important part of Wright's understanding of critique, and leads to a more nuanced and missiologically fruitful encounter with other cultures; *Mission of God*, pp. 442-446. Cf. Glaser who, helpfully in my view, considers some of the positive elements of intercultural engagement in Gen. 1-11, including some notes on how they may provide some wise examples of how Christians may engage with people of other faiths; *Bible and Other Faiths*, pp. 59-66.

[767] For examples of other texts see Hartley, 'Job 2'; Clines, *Job 1-20*, pp. lix-lx; S.J. Vicchio, *Job in the Ancient World* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006); ch. 1; J.L. Crenshaw, 'Job, Book of', in *ABD*, Vol 3, pp. 858-868 (pp. 864-865).

[768] A caution noted helpfully by B. Clarke, 'Misery Loves Company: A Comparative Analysis of Theodicy Literature in Ancient Mesopotamia and Israel', *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies*, 2.1 (2010), 78-92 (p. 91) <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/imwjournal/vol2/iss1/5> [accessed 24 November 2012].

culture's religious norms.[769] However, qualified with suitable care it is still appropriate and useful to compare and contrast these works, which exhibit something of the wrestling of ancient sages with the universal and vexing experience of suffering. What will become evident is that Job does indeed 'meet' the literature and ideas of neighbouring cultures in both affirmation and critique. As such, in the terms that I have framed in my thesis, we may discern a missional encounter between the biblical work that is borne out of Yahweh faith, and alternative explorations of the suffering theme in the ANE.

It is to these alternative explorations that I now turn.

4.4.1.1 A Dispute over Suicide / The Dispute of a Man with His Ba[770]

This Egyptian text recounts an argument between a man and what may loosely be described as his 'soul'.[771] The text presents the 'deep self-reflection' of the suffering character, who has become overwhelmed by the suffering and injustice he sees and experiences in the world, leading him to contemplate suicide.[772] Although the initial section is missing, the poem builds a conversation with the man yearning for death, and his *ba* trying to persuade him otherwise. Both the *Dispute* and Job could be said to have the form of 'a prose prologue and epilogue punctuated by a poetic soliloquy of the unknown sufferer', yet these function differently in each case, for example in the addressees of each speech.[773]

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[769] Cf. W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 1-20; Clarke, pp. 85, 91, 92; cf. Seow, p. 56; Newsom, 'Job', p. 333.

[770] *COS3*, pp. 321-325; *ANET*, pp. 405-407. This Egyptian text dates from either the end of the third millennium or the beginning of the second and is evidenced by one papyrus in particular; *ANET*, p. 405; Longman, *Job*, location 899-900; Vicchio, p. 15. Its text is partial and, at times, obscure which has led to a range of translations and interpretations; *COS3*, p. 321; cf. Longman, *Job*, location 902-903; Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 354; Bricker, 'Egypt', p. 91.

[771] However, note Shupak in *COS3*, p. 321, who suggests that it may be better to think of the text as 'a monologue reflecting the internal struggle of a despairing man. The man, weary of life as a result of private misfortune, wrestles with two opposing perspectives of life versus death. This being the inner psychological situation of the man, one should not look for systematic thought or a rational plot in the composition.' Even if a distinction were to be maintained the concept of Ba is still not quite analogous to the idea of a 'soul'. Though overlapping, the Egyptian concept of the 'Ba' is rather more complex; cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 354; Longman, *Job*, location 903-907. The text involves a combination of three principal genres: 'prose, symmetrically structured speech, and lyric poetry'; Shupak, *COS3*, p. 321.

[772] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 354; cf. Vicchio, p. 15.

[773] Vicchio, p. 16; cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 355. Shupak, *COS3*, p. 321, suggests that 'The juxtaposition of the sufferings of our hero and the replies of his *ba* call to mind the figure of the tortured righteous man and the dispute between him and his friends in the book of Job.' While this may be true in a general sense the details of these resonances (seen, for example, in Shupak's cross-references in the *COS3* text) suggest similarity rather than dependence; for example, line 105, '[To whom shall I speak today?] Kindness has perished, Violence has come to men (cf. Job 24:2-4, 13-17); line 130, 'Death is before me today' (cf. Job 3:11-13, 20-22; 10:18-19; 13:15; 14:13; 17:13-14).

Following four poems that detail the man's suffering and despair, and celebrate the preference for death over life, the *ba* seems to relent and agree to remain with him in this life and the next.[774] In general terms, this desire for death is also seen in the biblical work. In ch. 3, for example, Job longs for the release from his torment that death would provide, although Job's understanding of the afterlife is not as developed as the protagonist's in the *Dispute*, and he certainly never frames this in terms of suicide.[775] Crucially, Job moves away from his initial death wish in ch. 3, to the extent that, by the end of the dialogue, his energy and focus is towards vindication, and hence life.[776] Such a distinction seems much more stark than any similar features or themes.

4.4.1.2 The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant[777]

Like Job, the Egyptian *Protests of the Eloquent Peasant* has a narrative frame surrounding a series of poetic speeches. The victim of an exploitative confrontation with Nemty-nakht, a greedy and opportunistic landowner, the titular peasant, Khu-u-Anup, appeals for vindication to Rensi, a high official and dispenser of justice in that region.[778] Following an account of the initial situation, the central part of the text is made up of a series of nine speeches by Khu-u-Anup that aim to convince Rensi to give him justice.[779] The story concludes with Khu-u-Anup receiving vindication and recompense, albeit following some confusion.

As well as a very broad similarity in its overall structure, *Protests* resonates with several themes that also occur in Job, although these do not seem to indicate anything more

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[774] The theme of the first poem (lines 86-103) is the awful state of the man's reputation; the second (lines 103-130) laments his loneliness due to the lack of true, virtuous friends; the third poem (lines 130-142) describes death using attractive and various metaphors (for example, '[Like] a sick man's recovery', 'Like the smell of myrrh', 'Like the clearing of the sky; COS translation); in the final poem (lines 142-247) he focuses on the privileged status of the one who lives in the next world; cf. *COS3*, p. 323 fn 38; Hartley, 'Job 2', pp. 354-355.

[775] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 355; Vicchio, p. 16.

[776] For example, Job 27:2-4. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 355: 'In contrast to the Egyptian who yielded to despair at life, Job came to prize a full life, which he believed would return upon his vindication.'

[777] *COS1*, pp. 98-104; *ANET*, pp. 407-410. An Egyptian text dating from the Middle Kingdom, around the 22nd to 18th centuries; Vicchio, p. 16; Longman, *Job*, location 879-880; Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 358; Bricker, 'Egypt', p. 93.

[778] Nemty-nakht had forced him to go a certain, precarious way through his property which resulted in Khu-u-Anup's donkey eating a small amount of grain, for which Nemty-nakht demands disproportionate compensation. Khu-u-Anup was travelling to Egypt because of famine in his own land.

[779] Unbeknownst to him, Rensi keeps Khu-u-Anup longer than necessary so that his eloquent speeches can be recorded for the entertainment of the Pharaoh, who agrees to provide for Khu-u-Anup and his family (albeit anonymously) while this is going on. That this has some resonance with God's limiting the extent of the accuser's testing of Job seems a little slight; cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 359.

significant than shared interests. That the character Khu-u-Anup is not Egyptian seems reminiscent of Job being a non-Israelite.[780] However, the action is still set in Egypt which differs, by parallel, with Job.

Justice is seen as a virtue in both books; for example, in his first speech to Remsi, Khu-u-Anup says of his hearer, 'If thou embarkest on the lake of justice, mayest thou sail on it with a fair breeze!... Because thou art the father of the orphan, the husband of the widow, the brother of the divorcee, and the apron of him that is motherless', which has some resonances with biblical texts such as Job 29:11-17 or 31:13-23.[781]

In a similar vein to *Dispute*, above, it is worth noting the movement from despair to a certain type of hope or confidence in Job, in contrast with the protagonist of the Egyptian text, whose speeches seem to be marked by a continuing despair.[782] It may also be noted that it is, finally, an earthly king who restores the peasant, in contrast to Job's divinely initiated restoration.[783]

4.4.1.3 Man and His God[784]

This Sumerian poem begins with a general exhortation that one should revere one's god ('Let a man utter constantly the exaltedness of his god… (For) a man without a god would not obtain food').[785] It then illustrates this with a story of a righteous young man that suffers bitterly, experiencing sickness, hostile enemies, and abandonment by his friends. He wants to stand before his god and complain about his suffering, yet 'My god, to you, who are my father that begot me, let me [lift] my eyes… How long will you not care for me, will you not look at me?'[786]

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[780] As observed in ibid., p. 358.

[781] Cf. ibid., p. 358; Vicchio, pp. 16-17. Although note that in Job these passages are a defence of the speakers integrity rather than attributes applied to the hearer. Balentine, p. 11, draws this into a helpful, broader context by saying that a number of social justice issues are raised by both texts. Other potential resonances include Khu-u-Anup's appeal to the highest level of justice through eloquent speech; that he is met with persistent and confusing silence; that his tone becomes less polite, and that he ultimately receives intervention from a high official are all suggestive but do not lead to anything like evidence that the texts are themselves related. Cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', pp. 358-359 for these ideas. Because of the different dynamics at play in both texts, making comparisons seems to me to be deeply problematic. The quote is from the *ANET* translation.

[782] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 359.

[783] Vicchio, p. 17.

[784] See *COS1*, pp. 573-575; ANET, pp. 589-591. It is generally understood as an early second millennium copy of an older composition; cf. Balentine, p. 6; Longman, *Job*, location 921-922. S.N. Kramer calls it 'A Sumerian Variation of the "Job" motif'; *ANET*, p. 589. It is occasionally referred with an indefinite article in the title, *A Man and His God*; cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 32.

[785] Lines 1, 9; *ANET* translation.

[786] Lines 98, 100; *COS* translation.

Yet the sufferer recalls the words of the wise that, 'Never has a sinless child been born to its mother'[787] and realises that, ultimately, he must have sinned in some way and that the way out of his suffering is confession (line 115). Having done so, the narrator informs the reader that the man's prayer of confession was acceptable to his god, who withdrew his hand of punishment and placed his protection on him instead (lines 120-132).

While there are obvious parallels between this suffering, vexed and righteous individual and the biblical Job, ultimately the focus of *Man and His God* on the connection between sin and suffering sets them apart. The man accepts this contention of the wise, acts on it in confession, and is restored. It was the task of the sufferer, therefore, to plead with their god to show them their sin and confess all. This seems, then, to negate the concept of divine injustice, since suffering can always be attributable to human sin.[788]

4.4.1.4 Dialogue Between a Man and His God[789]

This early, incomplete text tells the story of a man who cries out to his god for relief from his suffering, and sets the story broadly in the form of a dialogue between the man and his personal god. Following a description of his misery and pleading, the man claims, 'My Lord, I have debated with myself, and in my feelings […] of heart: the wrong I did I do not know! Have I [...] a vile forbidden act?'[790]

Unfortunately there is a large gap in the text soon after this. However, the man seems to assume that even though he is unaware of any specific sin in his life, his illness must be the result of such sin and so sees his calamity as bringing his shortcomings to his attention, 'How much you have been kind to me, how much I have blasphemed you, I have not forgotten'.[791]

After another gap in the text the man's restoration is recounted, followed by a declaration of divine confirmation of this, and a reminder of his dependence on the god,

> The path is straight for you, mercy is granted you.
> You must never, till the end of time, forget [your] god

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[787] Line 104; *COS* translation.

[788] Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 199: 'Since there is none without guilt there is no innocent sufferer, only an ignorant one.' Cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 347; Kramer, 'Man and His God', in *ANET*, p. 589. J. Klein suggests that the lack of dialogue is the main difference between Job and *Man and His God*; *COS1*, p. 573). Perhaps this should be qualified as the main difference in form. Ultimately the theological idea seems to be the most significant point of comparison.

[789] See *COS1*, p. 485. Also known as 'The Pious Sufferer', this text is dated to around the seventeenth century and is the earliest known Akkadian text to look at the issue of suffering. Cf. Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 201; *COS1*, p. 485; Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 351.

[790] Lines 12-14; *COS* translation.

[791] *COS* translation. Cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 351.

Your creator, now that you are favoured.[792]

The god then instructs the man to provide for those in need out of the prosperity he will gain in the future, which may be a form of penance.[793]

It is striking that, as in Job, the god himself speaks to the sufferer in this text.[794] However, there are distinctive elements to both stories. In Job the story is resolved without specific instructions to the sufferer like this (apart from praying for the friends) or the assurance (at that stage) from God that Job's future will be any better.[795] Crucially, the *Dialogue Between a Man and His God* retains a clear sense of retribution, even if it might mean retribution for unknown sin, with piety being a best defence against calamity.[796]

4.4.1.5 The Poem of the Righteous Suffer / The Babylonian Job / I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom (Ludlul bēl nēmiqi)[797]

In this lengthy poem, the speaker, Subshi-meshre-Shakkan, recounts how he had suffered greatly but had been restored by Marduk. The poem is framed with praise for Marduk and has the intention of encouraging the hearer to grasp both the deity's anger and kindness: 'I, who touched bottom like a fish, will proclaim his anger… I will teach people that his kindness is nigh, May his favourable thought take away their [guilt?].'[798] Subshi-meshre-Shakkan goes on to recall how he was afflicted with terrible suffering, ranging from social, familial and divine abandonment and hostility, and distressing illness (Tablets one and two). But just as he was about to slip into death, Marduk sent three messengers to assure him, which preceded his restoration (Tablets three and four).

Ludlul exhibits several features in form and content that resonate with Job. Both texts, for example, contain vivid descriptions of the physical suffering experienced by the main character.[799] In *Ludlul*, Subshi-meshre-Shakkan recalls in some detail a variety of ailments

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[792] *COS* translation.
[793] Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 202.
[794] Indeed, Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 35, notes this is the only instance of this happening in the Akkadian literature of this type; cf. Newsom, *Contest*, p. 238.
[795] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 351: 'These contrasts underscore the central concern of the book of Job, which is Job's ongoing relationship with God regardless of whether he was prospering or suffering.'
[796] Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 203.
[797] See *COS1*, pp. 486-492; *ANET*, pp. 596-600. The poem is thought to have originated in the second millennium although it is known from texts dating around the seventh or eighth century and seems to have been a popular work during the period in which the book of Job could have been written; Balentine, p. 6; Lambert, p. 26. Cf. Hoffman, p. 66.
[798] 1.39, 41-42; *COS* translation, p. 487; Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 348. Translations are from *COS* unless stated otherwise.
[799] The length of Job's suffering is unclear whereas in *Ludlul* it lasted for over a year (*Ludlul* 2.1); Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 349.

such as disease (2.50), headache (2.52), coughing (2.53), muscular problems (2.61), convulsions (2.63), digestive and breathing problems (2.65-66) a lack of mobility (2.75-79) and appetite (2.87-89). He declared, pitifully, 'My afflictions were grievous, the blow was severe! … From writhing my joints were separated, My limbs were played and thrust apart. I spent the night in my dung like an ox, I wallowed in my excrement like a sheep.' (2.99, 104-107). In relative terms Job focuses much less on describing his physical suffering, which was exhibited in sores and skin disease (1:7-8; 7:4-5; 30:28, 30), a wasting away (19:20), lack of sleep due to pain (30:17); and inner turmoil (30:27).[800] More common in Job are poignant descriptions of social ostracism and hostility at the hands of various parties, including family, which is also a significant theme in *Ludlul* (Job 12:4; 16:7, 10, 20; 17:2, 6; 19:13-22; 30:1-15; *Ludlul*, 1.55-104).[801]

Both Job and *Ludlul* deal with the unexpected, intense suffering of an individual who considers themselves to be pious and, therefore, underserving of such treatment. The process by which each sufferer defends their integrity is instructive. Subshi-meshre-Shakkan speaks of the care he took over cultic matters such as prayers, sacrifices and other rites, as well as reverence for the king and deities (2.23-32). Neither he nor diviners, interpreters of dreams or exorcists could discover the causes of, or help reverse the divine displeasure under which he lived (2.4-9). Later on, however, Subshi-meshre-Shakkan seems to imply or assume that he must have committed certain infractions in 3.60: 'He made the wind bear away my offences'.[802] It is as if the central character's confidence in his own integrity finally gives way to the force of the retribution principle.

In contrast to Subshi-meshre-Shakkan, Job rarely makes recourse to his cultic credentials in order to defend his integrity, although 1:5 suggests this could have been an option.[803] Instead Job focuses on the way his life was characterised by the attitudes and actions of righteousness and justice, articulated particularly in his final defence of chs. 29-31.[804] Furthermore, when Yahweh chastises Job (38:2) it is for being presumptuous rather than

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[800] Commenting on Job 20:19a, Seow observes that Job's physical torment is closely tied to his more general 'shattered state'; p. 801.

[801] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 348; F. Sedlmeier, 'Ijob und die Auseinandersetzungsliteratur im alten Mesopotamien', in *Das Buch Ijob: Gesamtdeutungen - Einzeltexte - Zentrale Themen*, ed. by T. Seidl and S. Ernst (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 85-136 (p. 111).

[802] *COS1*, p. 490; cf. Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 205. Longman, *Job*, location 954-957, also detects a possible allusion to some form of cultic sin, as suggested by a fragment inserted by B. Foster (in *COS1*, p. 491) in Tablet four: 'I proceeded along Kunush-kadru Street in a state of redemption. He who has done wrong by Esagil, let him learn from me. It was Marduk who put a muzzle on the mouth of the lion that was devouring me. Marduk took away the sling of my pursuer and deflected his slingstone.' However, Longman notes the sense earlier that Subshi-meshre-Shakkan did consider himself to have honoured the gods in the cultic setting.

[803] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 349; Clarke, p. 87; M. Weinfeld, 'Job and its Mesopotamian Parallels – A Typological Analysis', in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham*, ed. by W. Claassen (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), pp. 217-226 (p. 224).

[804] See especially 29:11-17, 31:1-40. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 349; Weinfeld, 'Job', p. 224.

committing wrong.[805] Job withdraws his complaint (42:6) but this does not equate to the confession of a particular sin and neither is Yahweh said to have forgiven Job for any wrongdoing.[806]

A further point of comparison between the two texts is the supposed involvement of the gods in relation to the suffering and recovery of the protagonists. In *Ludlul* Marduk became angry with Subshi-meshre-Shakkan, which caused his protective deities or spirits to abandon him (1.4-46; 2.4-5, 112-113), leaving him vulnerable to human and demonic hostility (1.51-112; 2.49-72).[807] Recovery occurred through the intervention of three intermediaries sent from Marduk (3.9-60), although no direct word from the god is spoken.

Although the accuser is said to be the instigator of Job's suffering it is nevertheless Yahweh who has the final authority (1:11-12; 2:3-6). Job understands Yahweh to be directly involved in his misfortunes (6:4; 16:7-14) and the dynamic of greater or lesser gods or the notion of demonic activity are absent in the biblical book.[808] Just as the cause of Job's suffering is not seen in cultic terms, neither does Job seek the solution to his situation through religious ritual. Instead he yearns for vindication through an encounter with God, even though at points such a prospect seems to overwhelm Job (9; 16:18-22; 19:25-29; 23:1-7). A clear distinctive between the texts is the sustained and unmediated encounter with God experienced by Job in the biblical book (chs. 38-41), to which I will return below. This relates to a further point of comparison, which is the nature of restoration seen in each work. In contrast with *Ludlul* the biblical text does not dwell in great detail on Job's social and physical restoration; indeed it does not mention it, although it may be inferred.[809] Rather Job appears to concentrate on the reconciliation between different parties, seen especially between Job and his friends and family (42:10-11), although it could be argued that this also takes place between Job and God (42:1-6), Job and his comforters, and the comforters and God (42:7-9).[810] While the language of 'reconciliation' is rather broad, it does seem evident

[805] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 350.
[806] ibid., p. 350. Indeed, in contrast to his comforters, in 40:7 Job receives divine vindication.
[807] This is also closely tied to the loss of favour of the king, expressed in 1.55-58. Cf. K. van der Toorn, 'Theodicy in Akkadian Literature', in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. by A. Laato and J.C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 57-89 (p. 78); Sedlmeier, p. 111.
[808] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 350.
[809] Thus in *Ludlul*, tablets three and four: 'My windpipe, which was tight and choking… He made well and lit it si[ng]… My intenstine, which was ever empty for want… Accepts nourishment, holds drink… he made my body like a perfect athlete… I proceeded along Kunush-karu Street in a state of redemption… The Babylonians saw how [Marduk] can restore to life'; *COS*, pp. 490-492. The exact placement of these texts is ambiguous. Cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', pp. 350-351.
[810] So suggested in ibid., p. 351. My hesitation to apply the theme to all parties is due to it being less explicit in the latter cases.

that communion between parties, whether human or divine, is an important theme at the end of Job.[811]

A key dilemma for Subshi-meshre-Shakkan in relation to the gods and their involvement in the world is expressed in tablet two:

> I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to a god!
> What seems good to one's self could be an offense to a god,
> What in one's own heart seems abominable could be good to one's god!
> Who could learn the reasoning of the gods in heaven?
> Who could grasp the intentions of the gods of the depths?
> Where might human beings have learned the way of a god? (2.33-38, COS translation)

Although the ultimate tone of *Ludlul* is one of praise for Marduk this passage illustrates *Ludlul*'s view of the human predicament that, despite our best efforts, the ways of the gods are inscrutable and so life seems arbitrary.[812] The human dilemma, then, is not just that we may sin without realising it, but that the gods who set the criteria for what is right and wrong are not, from a human perspective, consistent.[813] The logic of Subshi-meshre-Shakkan's statement suggests that the notion of retribution is consistent from the divine perspective, but because humans are not privy to this we cannot be sure we are always on safe ground.[814]

It should also be noted that the two texts have different aims. *Ludlul* functions as a hymn of praise to Marduk, beginning and ending with exaltation for the 'lord of wisdom' who exhibits anger, mercy, and a powerful knowledge of and influence over lesser gods, who restores life and is worthy of praise (1.1ff; 4.33-48).[815] In its description of praise for the

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[811] Cf. ibid., p. 350.

[812] Lambert, p. 22; Longman, *Job*, location 961-962. Cf. Crenshaw, 'Job, Book of', p. 864; Balentine, p. 7; Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 349; van der Toorn, p. 80.

[813] For Moran, this was a 'radically new twist' on Mesopotamian belief: 'Not only are the gods inscrutable, but they hold man to norms of behavior that they would not reveal and he could not discover. Indeed, it even appeared that good was evil and evil good. Here is an *Umwertung aller Werte* if there ever was one, but it is the logical conclusion of two convictions: one, the possibility of innocence according to known norms; two, suffering is a consequence of personal sin.' W.L. Moran, 'The Babylonian Job', in *The Most Magic Word: Essays on Babylonian and Biblical Literature*, ed. by R.S. Hendel (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1992), pp. 182-200 (p. 190).

[814] Seow, pp. 52-53; contra van der Toorn, who takes *Ludlul* as being much more undermining of the retribution principle, although in my view he overstates the case; van der Toorn, pp. 80, 81.

[815] Cf. the argument of Moran, who understands the text as a exhibiting a struggle with the sufferer's personal gods, indicating a move away from traditional personal religion to a proclamation and adherence to Marduk himself; pp. 186-187. The hymn of praise to Marduk in Tablet I declares his great wisdom, implying that although it may seem mysterious and unattainable, there is a purpose or plan in the mind of Marduk, even if human beings or even other gods cannot know it; pp. 192, 197; cf. Sedlmeier, pp. 117-118. Marduk has total sovereignty whereby he can, as declared in 1.23-24, cause a person to sin, but also absolve them; Moran, p. 196.

deity and the testimony of the depths of suffering and the joy of restoration, *Ludlul* seems more akin to biblical psalms of thanksgiving than Job, which is a much more sustained and probing examination of the nature of God's governance in the world in the light of the existence of unattributed suffering.[816] While *Ludlul* includes a question concerning the principle of retribution, Job finds in this theme its *raison d'être*.

4.4.1.6 The Babylonian Theodicy[817]

The Babylonian Theodicy contains certain resonances with the book of Job in both form and content. In the Babylonian text a sufferer engages in a dialogue with a learned friend to complain about personal misfortunes as well as the apparent inconsistencies between the principle of retribution and what actually happens in the world. Orphaned as a child, he was left without protection and has suffered greatly (stanza one), even though he has sought to act piously (stanzas five and seven). Despite this he observes the fortune of those unconcerned about the gods (stanza seven). Often the world order seems upside-down (stanza twelve) with the wicked prospering (stanza 25). Although appreciative of his friend's attempts, the sufferer's situation seems unresolved by the end and he invites his friend once again to consider his suffering, and pleads for the gods to take pity on him (stanza 27).

The friend meanwhile seeks to encourage the sufferer by offering wise words. Ultimately, we will all die yet the one without a protector can look to his god (stanza two). The sufferer is like a child and cannot hope to discern the ways of the gods (stanzas six, eight, 24) , yet there is still a mechanism of retribution in the world so he should humble himself, seek after his god and, so, look forward to good fortune which can be delivered in an instant (stanzas six, eight, 20, 22). Towards the end, however, the friend does admit that the falsehood and lies that mark humankind are there by the design of the gods, and that the gods made humans to suffer (stanza 26). Ultimately, however, no resolution is found.

At first glance the *Theodicy* does seem to parallel certain aspects of Job. The dialogue form, between a suffering individual and a friend who seeks to comfort and teach him, is the most immediately evident similarity. Such a form lends itself well to exploring different, even contradictory, views on the nature and significance of suffering.[818] Unlike Job's several participants, the *Theodicy*'s dialogue is only shared by two characters. This is indicative of

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[816] Weinfeld, 'Job', pp. 217-222; Newsom, 'Job', p. 329; K.L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), p. 62.

[817] See *COS1*, pp. 492-495; *ANET*, pp. 601-604. It is probably from around the year 1000 and comprised 27 stanzas in the form of an acrostic; cf. Lambert, p. 63. It seems to have been well-known, as evidenced, for example, by a later commentary on the work; Newsom, 'Job', p. 330.

[818] Seow, p. 55.

the greater complexity evident in Job, not least when the book is viewed in its entirety.[819] With a few exceptions, the dialogue in *Theodicy* is cordial, sympathetic and respectful, unlike the cantankerous exchanges observed in Job, especially as the book progresses.[820] This can also be related to the sense of solidarity shared by the interlocutors. By the end of the *Theodicy* the sufferer and the friend's relationship is maintained, with the friend even becoming persuaded to some extent by the plight and points of the sufferer (stanza 26).[821] Such agreement is absent in Job, which exhibits a breakdown in both the debate and the relationships.[822]

The sufferer cannot understand why the gods do not seem to uphold the principle of retribution in the world. He has been faithful to the gods[823] yet has suffered physical, societal and financial misfortune (3.27-33; 7.76-77), and while he feels abandoned by the gods he observes the thriving of the disobedient and unjust:

> 'The parvenu who multiplies his wealth, Did he weigh out precious gold to the mother goddess for a family? [Have I] withheld my offerings? I prayed to my god, [I said the blessing over my goddess…' (5.52-55)
>
> 'Those who seek not after a god can go the road of favor, Those who pray to a goddess have grown poor and destitute. Indeed, in my youth I tried to find out the will of (my) god, With prayer and supplication I besought my goddess. I bore a yoke of profitless servitude: (My) god decreed (for me) poverty instead of wealth.' (7.70-75)
>
> 'God does not block the progress of a demon… What has it profited me that I knelt before my god? It is I who must (now) bow before my inferior!' (23.244, 251-252)
>
> 'They extol the words of an important man who is accomplished in murder, They denigrate the powerless who has committed no crime. They esteem the wicked to whom tr[uth] is abhorrent, They reject the truthful man who he[eds] the will of god. They fill the oppressor's [st]rongroom with refined gold, They empty the beggar's larder of [his] provisions. They shore up the tyrant whose all is crime, They ruin the weak, they oppress the powerless. And as for me, without means, a parvenu harasses me.' (25.267-275)
>
> 'Though I am humble, learned, suppliant, I have not seen help or succor for an instant. I would pass unobtrusively through the streets of my city, My voice was not raised, I kept my speaking low. I did not hold my head high, I would look to the ground. I was not given to servile praise among my associates.' (27.289-294)

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[819] On the greater complexity of the Joban dialogue alone, see Seow, p. 56; Newsom, 'Job', p. 333; cf. also Newsom's *Contest*, ch. 3.

[820] Contrast, for example, *Theodicy* 1.4-6; 2.12; 3.23-24; 5.45; 7.67-68 with Job 8:2; 15:2-3; 16:3; 22:5. Cf. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 352; Balentine, p. 10; Newsom, *Contest*, p. 81.

[821] R.J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), p. 71; Gray, 'Book of Job', p. 258; Newsom, 'Job', p. 332.

[822] Cf. the third cycle of speeches (chs. 22-27) in particular. Balentine, p. 10; Seow, p. 56.

[823] The grounds for his integrity seem more general and less explicitly cultic than, for example, *Ludlul*; cf. Weinfeld, 'Job', p. 224; Clarke, 'Misery', pp. 86-87.

Job, too, expresses his vexation at what he sees as the reversal of how God should be ordering the world. The wicked do enjoy full and prosperous lives (21:7-34), often at the expense of the poor (24:1-25), whereas Job's life has moved from bliss to wretchedness despite his consistent faithfulness and integrity (chs. 29-31).

In the *Theodicy* the friend responds to the sufferer's complaints in a variety of ways that attempt to defend the orthodox principle of retribution and encourage him to persevere. He accuses the sufferer of perverse and even blasphemous thinking, disregarding the divine design and ordinances (8.78-81; 20.212-214; 24.254-255; cf. Job 8:2; 11:2-6; 15:2-4). He assures the sufferer that, by committing his way to the gods, he will experience a reversal in his fortunes and that the wicked will also receive their just punishment in the end (20.219-220; 22.235-242; cf. Job 5:19-26; 8:5-7, 11-22; 11:13-20; 15:20-35; 18:5-21; 20:4-29; 22:21-30). While these attempts resonate with those of the friends in the Job, the biblical work contains a greater variety of approaches, including the notion that the sufferer's experiences are educational (5:17-18; 33:29-30) and, related to the combative tone of the book, a more direct accusation of the sufferer's supposed wrongdoing (22:5-9).

Of great significance in the *Theodicy* is the friend's view that ultimately the gods and their ways are inaccessible to humanity:

> 'You are a mere child, the purpose of the gods is remote as the netherworld.' (6.58);
>
> 'The strategy of a god is [as remote as] innermost heaven, the command of a goddess cannot be dr[awn] out.' (8.82-83)
>
> 'Divine purpose is as remote as innermost heaven, It is too difficult to understand, people cannot understand it.' (24.256-257)

By implication, therefore, humans can never know the precise reasons for things and so it could be that the exceptions to the rule described by the sufferer are merely part of the inaccessibility of the transcendent gods (cf. Job 11:5-9; 36:22-26).[824]

In his final speech the friend admits that the perversity evident in humanity is there by divine design:

> 'Enlil, king of the gods, who created teeming mankind, Majestic Ea, who pinched off their clay, The queen who fashioned them, mistress Mami, Gave twisted words to the human race, They endowed them in perpetuity with lies and falsehood.' (26.276-280)

This seems particularly striking as it makes the notion of divine and human responsibility for wickedness more ambiguous, especially in light of his and the sufferer's prior assumptions

[824] Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 353; van der Toorn, 'Theodicy', pp. 72-74; Newsom, 'Job', p. 332.

that the gods were responsible for maintaining justice.[825] Ultimately the issue is not resolved and the *Theodicy* ends with the sufferer reiterating that he has lived appropriately, and prays for help from the gods: 'May the god who has cast me off grant help, May the goddess who has [forsaken me] take pity, The shepherd Shamash will past[ure] people as a god should.' (27.295-297)[826]

Although making uncomfortable observations that imply the failure of the gods to maintain a just order in the world, the sufferer tends not to state this explicitly and never directly to the gods.[827] In contrast, Job complains explicitly and vehemently both to his friends and to God directly that God has caused his suffering and does not keep up his commitment to the just maintenance of society.[828]

Given that the *Theodicy* seems to be the closest to Job of the known ANE works, it is notable that the gods are only ever *discussed* in the text. Balentine highlights well this contrasting element with Job:

> The gods never speak, never intervene, never have more than a spoken-about presence in this debate about innocent suffering. By contrast, the *first* and *last* "character" to speak in the biblical Job's story is God (1:7; 42:7). Moreover, although the dialogue between Job and his friends is extensive (Job 4–27), the dialogue on which the book turns is that between God (who, speaking with hurricane force, most clearly does intervene) and Job (Job 38–42).[829]

Furthermore, these instances of God's speech function climactically and transformatively in the broader context of God's 'active presence' in the book in which Yahweh is portrayed as initiating and concluding the events of the drama.[830] I will say more about the function of this crucial distinctive feature of Job below.

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[825] Bricker, 'Theodicy', pp. 207-208; Lambert, *BWL*, p. 65; Newsom, 'Job', p. 332; Mattingly, 'Theodicy', pp. 326-327. Cf. the similar point made above on *Ludlul* 1.23-24. Contra the book of Job 1:1, 8 which sees the possibility at least of human beings leading lives that are blameless and upright; Vicchio, *Job*, p. 21.

[826] Newsom, 'Job', p. 332. Whether he concludes the dialogue because he has now been heard (so, Newsom, 'Job', p. 332) or because he is faced with the 'theological contradiction' of the justice of the gods (so, Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, p. 63) is unclear, although it seems reasonable to suppose that the two are related.

[827] Balentine, p. 10; Mattingly, 'Theodicy', p. 327.

[828] For example, Job 10; 12:13-25; 16:6-17; 24:1-17; 30:19-23. Balentine, p. 10.

[829] ibid., p. 10. His italics.

[830] Clifford, *Wisdom*, p. 73; Newsom, 'Job', pp. 333-334; J. Gray, 'The Book of Job in the Context of Near Eastern Literature', *ZAW*, 82.2 (1970), 251-269 (pp. 268-269); Longman, *Job*, location 988-989.

4.4.2 Job and 'similar' ANE texts: themes of continuity and distinctiveness

Having outlined some of the ANE texts most commonly associated with Job, it is now possible to draw together some broad conclusions concerning the extent and significance of their relationship, thereby suggesting some ways in which a missional encounter may be detected between the book of Job and ANE ideas. As such I will address the issues of literary form, subject matter, and perspective.

4.4.2.1 Literary form and subject matter

It seems evident that there was no single way of exploring the nature of suffering in the ANE, not least in the book of Job which combines a number of different literary forms within its complex whole.[831] From the brief survey above certain literary features do appear to be shared between Job and other works. Like the two Egyptian texts, for example, the structure of Job features a narrative frame surrounding a series of poems. The use of Dialogue is a common feature across the texts, which may not be surprising as it is a literary form that allows for different viewpoints to be expressed and interacted with.[832] Job, however, seems to employ the device in a more complex manner, given the number of participants in Job and the fractured nature of the dialogue which appears to embody the breakdown in the discussion. Parallels with smaller literary units may also be observed, such as the description of the central figure's suffering in *Ludlul*, or the prospering of the wicked in the *Theodicy*. More broadly scholars have noted similarities between, for example, Job's speech in ch. 31 and the 'Declaration of Innocence' found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead,[833] and between texts such as the Yahweh speeches and ANE catalogue or name lists.[834]

The exact significance of such overlap is difficult to determine. While it may suggest evidence of a direct literary relationship between Job and prior ANE texts, this is by no means the only available conclusion. In my view it seems quite possible that the author of Job gathered together different genres that he had observed elsewhere without meaning to make a direct connection. He was clearly someone with a rich knowledge of literary traditions and texts, presumably including some that have not survived.[835] Certainly, Job was part of an ANE literary tradition of sorts, but Hoffman seems reasonable in supposing that

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[831] Cf. J.L. Crenshaw, *Reading Job: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), pp. 10-12.
[832] Cf. Seow, p. 55.
[833] Cf. Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1013; Longman, *Job*, location 9245-9253; Habel, pp. 428-42; Crenshaw, 'Job, Book of', p. 865.
[834] Hoffman, ch. 4; R.E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 44; Clines, *Job 38-42*, p. 1087.
[835] Hoffman, p. 263.

the author of the biblical book may have struggled with conventional literary forms as a vehicle for his unconventional message, and so may have shaped:

> a new literary model… from available types of materials: the hymn, the lamentation, the catalogue, the proverb literature, the speech, and the narrative… As a result, the new literary framework that took shape and the problem of faith… with which he came to grapple were combined with one another.[836]

Related to connections of literary form, a number of common themes may be observed between the book of Job and the other texts.[837] While not necessarily present in every text, certain motifs emerge such as a suffering individual who is vexed by their plight and tries to understand what is happening in relation to the gods, who appear to be inscrutable, by speaking to or with another party, often with some kind of resolution by the end.[838] Hoffman, for example, focuses his treatment of the similarities on *Ludlul* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* and points to a number of features shared by these two texts and Job (and, to a lesser extent, *Man and His God*): all three texts feature afflicted individuals who describe their suffering in great detail (for example, cf. *Ludlul* 2.68-77; *Theodicy* 2.27-32, 137-143; Job 29-30); all three individuals wonder why they are suffering and struggle to find an answer (*Ludlul* 2.4-10; *Theodicy* 2.108-111); in all three texts the sufferer protests his innocence (*Ludlul* 2.12-33; *Theodicy* 2.54-55, 72-74; Job 29, 31); both Job and the *Theodicy* struggle with the prosperity of the wicked (*Theodicy* 2.52-53, 70-72; Job 19, 24); all three exhibit a sense of crisis in which the principle of retribution does not seem to be working, which makes the ways of the gods difficult or impossible to discern (*Ludlul* 2.34-41; *Theodicy* 2.256-257); in the *Theodicy* and Job those coming alongside the sufferer maintain the link between sin and suffering and give advice based on this assumption (*Theodicy* 2.21-22, 2.79-80, 1.66); in *Ludlul* and Job there is an appearance either of a god or of his representatives (*Ludlul* 3.40-44; Job 38-41); in *Ludlul* and Job there is a scene of restoration at the end (*Ludlul* 3.49; Job 42); *Ludlul* and Job both have 'hymns' that exalt the gods through creation language (*Ludlul* 4.37-42; Job 38-41).[839]

It is also worth noting that, as with the coincidence of literary forms, the existence of certain common thematic elements does not in itself prove a direct relationship between Job and the

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[836] ibid., p. 114; cf. Newsom, *Contest*, p. 78.

[837] There is, of course, a degree of circularity here as the texts surveyed above are noted because they deal with similar themes to Job. However, my purpose here is to note that, within this context of broadly similar themes, there are more particular thematic elements in common.

[838] Walton, *Job*, p. 33; cf. Gordis, *God and Man*, pp. 59-60. Note also the point made at various stages in this survey that the degree of similarity differs considerably from text to text to the point where such talk of 'similarity' should not be overplayed; cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 33; Good, pp. 9-10.

[839] Hoffman, pp. 253-258.

other texts.[840] The more cautious approach is to consider the book of Job as standing in a tradition of texts attempting to probe the question of suffering, as expressed helpfully by Crenshaw:

> These explorations of the governance of the universe and unjust suffering may have provided an intellectual stimulus… [The] structural similarities (framework enclosing poetic disputes) and common ideas place the biblical work in the wider context of intellectual and religious foment.[841]

Suffering was a universal and vexing problem in the ancient world, so it should not be a surprise to find such texts in each culture, evidencing that these concerns 'agitated the sages' across the ANE, and led to texts with 'similarities in outlook, mood, and form of expression.'[842]

However, it seems unlikely that the author of Job would have had no knowledge at all of any of the ANE texts in one form or another, and especially the Babylonian examples.[843] It seems reasonable that he would have been aware of certain ANE texts, or certainly the ideas and worldviews behind them, and that he may have used these as stimuli for his own thinking and imagination. The key point is that it is not necessary to establish a direct link between Job and similar ANE texts in order to show that the biblical book encounters alternative beliefs, both in affirmation and critique. The lack of evidence for a direct literary relationship need not diminish the significance of the Job's missional encounter with ANE ideas.

The complexity of this idea of stimulus is important to acknowledge as it can be understood positively and negatively, which relates to the idea of 'open' critique voiced, for example, by Wright, Goheen and Glaser earlier in this thesis. It is at this juncture that the monotheizing or Yahwizing process may be seen at work.

In a positive sense the author of Job could be said to be using certain literary conventions and motifs that would have been familiar to others, building on and, by implication, affirming certain aspects of ideas or approaches already circulating in the ANE. This process, however, would have been discriminative:

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[840] Balentine, p. 12; Vicchio, p. 16; Gordis, *God and Man*, pp. 55, 59-60; Longman, *Job*, location 983. Note the caveat of Anderson, pp. 31-32, who points out that there is so much content in the book of Job that it should not be surprising that certain parallels may be found, although still maintains that there is not direct relationship between Job and other texts.

[841] Crenshaw, 'Job: Book of', p. 865.

[842] Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 55. Cf. Balentine, p. 12; Vicchio, pp. 24-25; Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 360. Cf. also Crenshaw, *OT Wisdom*, p. 271, who notes (concerning Wisdom Literature more generally) that, 'The amazing similarities in the thinking of sages throughout the Fertile Crescent do not demand a hypothesis of borrowing, for most resemblances occur when the teachings address universal problems.'

[843] Cf. Hoffman, p. 263.

> this common oriental heritage was subjected to a far-reaching process of "creative assimilation." The Hebrew genius adopted those elements in the surrounding culture which it found valuable, modified what was potentially useful, and rejected what it recognized as fundamentally alien. Hence, the similarities are often illuminating with regard to details, but it is the differences that go deeper and are more significant.[844]

This phenomenon makes the question of the Joban author's familiarity with ANE texts and ideas more nuanced as it suggests that it may be the distinctive elements and not the similarities that provide a more compelling case for prior knowledge and fruitful interpretation. More negatively, this process also suggests an element of polemic on the part of the author of Job when engaging with ideas in the ANE, which may be discerned by looking at the distinctives of his work.[845] This will become more evident as I look at the distinct perspectives of the Israelite work.

4.4.2.2 A distinct Israelite perspective

Upon closer inspection the approaches taken by the texts to supposed common themes do evidence different perspectives. The nature of the origins of the sufferer's problems is one such example. ANE texts tend to portray the innocence of their characters as resting on correct cultic behaviour which leads to confusion because this behaviour was supposed to lead to divine protection. In contrast, the theme of cultic behaviour is marginal at best in Job, with his innocence being based upon his moral character and his devotion to God (that is, his righteousness), and even the arguments of his friends tend not to draw on the cult.[846] Job is described by both Yahweh and the narrator as תָּם וְיָשָׁר וִירֵא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מֵרָע, 'blameless and upright, fearing God and turning from evil' (1:1, 8; 2:3), whereas in most of the above ANE texts there is a presumption of guilt concerning the individual or mankind as a whole, even if the specific wrongdoing is unknown.[847] While Job does not claim that his life has been completely free of sin (cf. 7:21; 10:6-7, 14; 13:23)[848], his vexation concerns the disproportionality of his suffering in relation to his generally upright life. With this broader

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[844] Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 55. A very similar point is made by Wright when considering the missional nature of the Wisdom Literature, although he does not deal with the book of Job in a sustained way in this regard; *Mission of God*, pp. 50, 442-448.

[845] The question of intentionality is important here. Do the distinctives of Job signify a deliberate attempt at polemic against ANE texts?

[846] Walton, *Job*, pp. 34-35; Hoffman, pp. 258-259; cf. Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 198; Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 64; Newsom, *Contest*, p. 73.

[847] Cf. *Man and His God*, Line 104; *Dialogue Between a Man and His God*, Lines 12-14; *Ludlul* 3.60.

[848] Cf. Seow, p. 649.

view of blamelessness, Job displays an intense, defiant and sustained confidence in his innocence, unmatched in ANE texts (Job 9:20-22; 13:18; 23:2-17; 27:2-6).[849]

As noted above, the *Theodicy* seems to offer a more nuanced view on the sufferer's innocence, making it more general than cultic. However, it still seems to acknowledge an evil tendency in humanity, even if it was put there by the gods (*Theodicy* 26.276-280).

Related to assumptions about the origins of the sufferers' difficulties is how the texts understand the notion of the retribution principle. The figure in *Man and His God*, for example, accepts that he must have done something wrong to be suffering; a view which is vindicated in that his prayer of confession leads to his restoration. The sufferer in the *Dialogue Between a Man and His God* appears to operate under a similar assumption. Even though, initially at least, the particular wrongs are unknown, they are still believed to be the cause of the person's suffering. In *Ludlul* Subshi-meshre-Shakkan claims to have lived a pious life yet there is also an assumption of guilt evident later on (3.60). It seems to me that *Ludlul* still maintains a belief in some kind of retribution principle. If a person suffers it is because they have angered the gods. However, the ways of the gods are inscrutable and, strikingly in *Ludlul*, the gods may redefine what is good, thereby further compounding our inability to maintain an innocent existence. Such arbitrariness therefore throws the worshipper onto the mercy of Marduk. Though he is angered, he also heals (1.1ff; 4.33-48).

As with the theme of the sufferer's innocence, the *Theodicy* appears to have a more nuanced approach to the notion of retribution than other ANE texts. From a human perspective it seems to be inconsistent and ambiguous, although its workings are ultimately inaccessible to humans because of the inscrutability of the gods.[850] This theme of inscrutability is also a crucial point of comparison. Often, the human dilemma in suffering is understood as a problem of ignorance rather than innocence.[851] In *Man and His God* and the *Dialogue Between a Man and His God* the sufferer does not know what he has done wrong and so must plead with his god to enlighten him. *Ludlul* expresses the mystery in a particularly poignant manner, while also expressing doubts concerning the arbitrary nature of the gods (2.33-38).[852] The *Theodicy*, too, expresses the notion of the inaccessibility of the ways of the gods (6.58; 8.82-83; 24.256-257).[853]

[849] Cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 34.
[850] Cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 33.
[851] Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 214; Walton, *Job*, p. 35.
[852] Quoted more fully in section 4.4.1.5.
[853] Quoted more fully in section 4.4.1.6

In the ANE texts, therefore, sufferers are never fully aware of what is required of them and they tend to conclude that the will of the gods is ultimately unknowable.[854] But is God understood as inscrutable in the book of Job? In one sense this is certainly the case. Although it is not because of moral or cultic wrongdoing, the reasons for Job's suffering are never disclosed to him or anyone else. Job regularly expresses a desire for a confrontation with, and explanation from God (13:3, 21-24; 23:3-17; 31:35-37), but such access to God is not up to Job.[855]

Job's complaint is not that he must have committed an unknown sin, since he knows how he should live. Unlike the common theme in the ANE texts, Job has a confident sense of what is expected of him to live a moral life, upon which his righteousness is based (for example, Job 29, 31).[856] For Job, it is not God's standards that are inscrutable, but God's seemingly inconsistent maintenance of his commitment to justice in the world (ch. 24).

Furthermore, Job's comforters do not appear to struggle greatly with the ways of God. Through their concern to bring back their suffering friend to orthodox views of retribution, they display a confidence in their ability to explain what God is like and how and why he acts.[857]

This leads my discussion to one of the most distinctive elements of Job in comparison with the ANE texts: the speeches of Yahweh. In Job Yahweh is not just talked about; he is involved in speech and action. This section of the book of Job (38:1-42:6) therefore requires some attention. Given its context and function within the biblical book, it also provides a helpful means of discussing the distinctive ideas of Job in more depth.

4.4.2.3 The distinctive contribution of the Yahweh speeches

Although there is precedent for a god to act or speak directly in the ANE texts, none do so with such sustained, climactic presence as Yahweh in the book of Job.[858] It would seem appropriate, therefore, to examine the function of this distinctive feature of the biblical book as a means of contributing to an articulation of Israel's faith in Yahweh. Read in the light of

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[854] Hoffman, p. 259: 'In "I will Praise" and "Theodicy", the poet's complaint is not addressed to an ethical evil; rather, his ill fortune is brought about because he does not know the code by which to decipher God's acts and bring about changes.' Cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 35; Bricker, 'Mesopotamia', p. 202.

[855] However, ch. 31 could be seen as Job's way of forcing Yahweh's hand in order to answer him. See my discussion in the following chapter of the thesis.

[856] Hoffman, p. 259.

[857] So, for example, Eliphaz in 5:8-27; 15:20-35; 22:30; Bildad in 8:3-22; 18:15-21; Zophar in 11:13-20; 20:4-29. Elihu does likewise (33:19-33; 36:2-12) although he seems more ready to reflect on the majesty and inaccessibility of God in ch. 37.

[858] See the comment above in the treatment of the *Dialogue Between a Man and His God*.

my missional approach to the text, we will therefore be able to detect some of the ways in which the book of Job embodies a missional encounter with alternative renderings of reality.[859]

Throughout the book Job had been calling for a meeting with Yahweh to make his case and get answers, although he has reflected on such a prospect with a range of emotions from despair and dread to confidence and hope (9:14-20, 32-35; 13:3, 15-28; 23:2-17; 31:35-37).[860] Through two lengthy speeches (38:2-40:2; 40:7-41:34) Yahweh is said to 'answer', עָנָה, Job (38:1; 40:1, 6), with Job responding briefly in each case (40:4-5; 42:2-6). As a whole the speeches conform to the disputation genre with features such as a challenge to an opponent and a series of rhetorical questions.[861] Views on the tone of the speeches are many, varied and sometimes contradictory, with Yahweh's words being labelled as brutal[862], sarcastic and impatient[863], or even playful.[864] However, Clines rightly warns against reading into the text one's own culturally conditioned sense of etiquette, and so it seems best to be cautious in assessing this particular aspect of the text.[865]

The speeches focus on two particular themes. In the first Yahweh asks who it is that obscures his design without knowledge (מִי זֶה מַחְשִׁיךְ עֵצָה בְמִלִּין בְּלִי־דָעַת, 38:2). The design, עֵצָה, refers to 'Yahweh's principles for running the creation… implicit in the descriptions of the universe that follow in Yahweh's speech.'[866] From Yahweh's perspective, Job has 'darkened' or 'obscured', חשׁך, the design by considering it too narrowly through the lens of the retribution principle.[867] In so doing, Job has erred because he presumes to know how the universe works, or should work, even though his knowledge is limited. It is this limited perspective that Yahweh exposes in the speech that ranges around the creation, illustrating the contrast between Job's capacity for insight and Yahweh's superlative perspective and knowledge. Yahweh's strategy, then, for answering Job's complaints about his governance of the universe is to move the debate away from the arena of 'justice' and

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[859] It is important to note this specific line of enquiry as it restricts the scope of my treatment of the speeches to appropriate but meaningful limits.

[860] Newsom, 'Job', p. 595. Clines helpfully describes Job as 'calling on God for a reply, wistfully, hopefully, despairingly, tauntingly, aggressively'; *Job 38-42*, p. 1088.

[861] 38:2-3; 40:2; Clines, *Job 38-42*, p. 1087; Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, p. 44; Habel, pp. 528-530.

[862] C.H. Cornhill, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament mit Einschluss der Apokrypthen und Pseudepigraphen*, 2nd edn (Freiburg, Mohr, 1896), p. 232; cited in D.J.A. Clines, 'Job's Fifth Friend: An Ethical Critique of the Book of Job', *Biblical Interpretation*, 12.3 (2004), 233-250 (p. 243).

[863] Crenshaw, *Reading Job*, p. 149.

[864] Anderson, p. 271. Cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 595.

[865] Clines, *Job 38-42*, pp. 1088-1089.

[866] ibid., p. 1096. Clines prefers to capitalise his translation of 'Design'.

[867] ibid., p. 1096; Walton, 'Job 1', p. 341.

into the broader context of wisdom.[868] In so doing there is an implicit critique of the fundamental assumptions of Job, his friends, and those exhibited in the ANE texts. Retribution is not the defining principle of the universe and so cannot be the only way to frame how we think about our experiences in the world. Rather, the design of Yahweh is defined by the wisdom of Yahweh.

But what, then, of justice? Yahweh addresses this at the beginning of his second speech in which he asks Job, הַאַף תָּפֵר מִשְׁפָּטִי תַּרְשִׁיעֵנִי לְמַעַן תִּצְדָּק, 'Do you indeed deny my justice[869], declare me to be wrong so that you may be in the right?' (40:8). It is close in purpose to the previous challenge in 38:2 and implies that Job has overstepped the bounds of presumption, based on an overly simplistic conception of God's role in the world.[870] Job had asked whether God had reneged on his commitment to justice, either for him as an individual or in the world more generally (see, for example, chs. 23-24).[871] Now Yahweh challenges Job to do better by taking down the proud himself (40:9-14), which is illustrated and pressed home through meditations on those 'creatures of power and pride', Behemoth and Leviathan.[872] These quasi mythical[873] creatures are beyond human (but not divine) capacity to control (40:19).[874]

Responding to the first speech Job declared his small status before God and recognised his inability to answer or say any more than he already has (40:4-5), although neither does he withdraw his complaint, which suggests that he is not quite ready to capitulate: Job, it would seem, is 'shaken, but still steadfast'.[875] Nevertheless, by his second response in 42:2-6 Job is indeed ready to withdraw his complaint. As a consequence of the encounter with Yahweh, Job has a more profound understanding of who Yahweh is and how he works in the world (לְשֵׁמַע־אֹזֶן שָׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְעַתָּה עֵינִי רָאָתְךָ, 'I had heard you with my ears, but now my eyes have seen you', 42:5).[876] This new perception has led Job to change his mind concerning the

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[868] Walton, 'Job 1', p. 341.

[869] On this rendering of מִשְׁפָּטִי cf., Gordis, *Job*, p. 468; Hartley, *Job*, p. 519; Longman, *Job*, location 11900-11904. Contra Clines, who suggests it would be 'unusual' to have a personal suffix ending an abstract term; *Job 38-42*, p. 1147.

[870] Newsom, 'Job', p. 616.

[871] Clines, *Job 38-42*, p. 1135.

[872] Newsom, 'Job', p. 616.

[873] ibid., p. 615: 'These are liminal creatures, betwixt and between the categories of ordinary animal and mythic being… Even more than the wild animals of chaps. 38-39, they represent the frightening and alien "other," bearing the terror of the chaotic in their very being.'

[874] Longman, *Job*, location 11471-11473.

[875] Wilson, p. 450; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 518; Anderson, p. 285; Clines, *Job 38-42*, p. 1139.

[876] Some prefer not to contrast the hearing and seeing temporally, as if both were only now occurring; hence Clines, *Job 38*-42, p. 1205: 'I have heard you with my ears, and my eyes have now seen you' or Janzen, p. 251: 'I have heard with my own ears, and now my eye sees you!'. My translation, however, maintains the traditional contrast rendered, for example, by ESV, NRSV,

pursuit of his case, which he now withdraws, declaring in 42:6: עַל־כֵּן אֶמְאַס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עָפָר וָאֵפֶר, 'Therefore I submit[877] and recant concerning dust and ashes[878]'. Despite the evident difficulties in interpreting this verse[879] it seems that Job is saying that he now recognises his place before Yahweh, his limited capacity to be making judgments concerning the workings of Yahweh's governance of the world, and so withdraws his case that was premised on what he now understands to be insufficient knowledge.

Several points may be made relating to the Yahweh speeches and the themes discussed in this chapter. First, in Job, suffering humanity encounters its creator. Earlier in the chapter I established Job's 'everyman' credentials, meaning that he functions as a representative of suffering humanity. As Gutiérrez puts it so poignantly,

> Here is the encounter Job has so feared but also so awaited. In the person of Job, alone here before God, are all the innocent of this world who suffer unjustly and ask, "why?" of the God in whom they believe.[880]

Job has not simply accused God of the mistreatment of Job and Job alone, but the particularities of his plight have become wrapped up in the plight of humanity. Job has questioned God's governance of the world, a charge with universal implications. Yahweh cannot, then, simply explain to Job why just he has suffered. Instead Yahweh must address the universal theme and, through this, answer not just Job but humanity.[881]

Secondly, as in the narrative frame of the book, the creator of the world and source of wisdom behind its design is named as Israel's God, יהוה, Yahweh. Although this divine name is absent from the Dialogue chapters of 3-37 this is perhaps a further distancing or universalising effect of the book's non-Israelite setting.[882] Having set up the book with

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NIV, Gordis, *Job*, p. 491; Pope, p. 288; Longman, *Job*, location 12161-12162; Hartley, *Job*, p. 535.

[877] Following Clines, *Job 38-42*, p. 1207 who understands אֶמְאַס to be from the second meaning of the root מאס, 'flow, melt', as opposed to the primary meaning of reject or despise.

[878] Here Job 'repents' of his former course of action in that he changes his mind and withdraws his case which, in the light of new information, is no longer tenable and has had its pretentions exposed. He is, after all, 'dust and ashes', a reference to human mortality and vulnerability; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 537; Goldingay, *Job*, p. 207.

[879] See, for example, reviews by Newsom, 'Job', p. 629; Clines, *Job 38-42*, pp. 1207-1211, 1218-1223; T. Krüger, 'Did Job Repent?', in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen*, ed. by T. Krüger and others (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2007), pp. 217-229.

[880] Gutiérrez, p. 68.

[881] It may even be that in protesting and confronting Yahweh, Job may be seen to be living up to his calling as a human being. Janzen, pp. 256-258, and Balentine, pp. 695-698, for example, both note the use of the phrase, עָפָר וָאֵפֶר, dust and ashes, by Job in 42:6 (and 30:19) and Abraham in Gen. 18:27. They note that Gen. 18:27, Job 30:19 and Job 42:6 are the only times in the MT that the phrase occurs.

[882] The occurance in 12:9 is usually taken to be a scribal error; cf., Hartley, *Job*, p. 491 fn 5.

reference to Yahweh in the Prologue and explored the theme using more generic divine terms on the lips of the dialogue's participants, the author now returns to an explicit assertion of Israelite monotheism, which is shaped by an understanding of the transcendent uniqueness of Yahweh.[883] In this way, the author places the universal implications of the divine speeches within the context of the specificity of Israel's covenant God. Through these speeches the book of Job is making claims, not only of the universal implications of what the deity says, but the universality of Yahweh himself. It is Yahweh who speaks decisively into the problem of human suffering; it is therefore in Yahweh that suffering humanity can find the ultimate answer to their vexing plight.

Thirdly, the speeches of Yahweh address the question of inscrutability. It seems to me that the author of Job is not content to conclude with resignation that the ways of Yahweh are inscrutable. The Yahweh speeches are significant in comparison with the ANE texts noted above because they allow for a degree of scrutiny of Yahweh's design. In answering Job, God takes up the challenge to defend his ways before humanity, thereby correcting ignorance. While acknowledging the limitations of human capacity to knowledge of God and his ways, the Yahweh speeches, and the book more broadly, nevertheless place this within the context of wisdom and relationship. In conjunction with ch. 28 the Yahweh speeches function in part as an invitation to Job, indeed to humanity, to recognise their limits as humans, yet to throw themselves into the arms of the wisdom of Yahweh. Yahweh is transcendent yet encountered. He has provided a way of negotiating life as he has ordered it and that way is the way of wisdom, accessed through a fear of God.[884]

It seems, then, that the book of Job offers a more profound account of the ways of God in relation to suffering. While still acknowledging the deep mystery of God's ways and the nature of unattributed suffering, humanity is offered hope in the wisdom of Yahweh. As such they are invited to Yahweh himself.

The book of Job acknowledges the mystery and transcendence of Yahweh, but this does not lead to despair. Rather it should drive us to a fear of Yahweh, which leads to hope because this fear is the beginning of wisdom. The inscrutability of the divine is, thus, reframed (even transformed) into something hopeful and relational.

Fourthly, in the speeches of Yahweh we see that encounter with Yahweh leads to vindication and transformation. Yahweh's speeches do not contain an explicit declaration of Job's guilt or innocence, or instructions about how to reverse his plight, or an assurance of divine favour or restoration. Nevertheless, implicit in Job 38-42:6 (and explicit in the Epilogue,

[883] Cf. Seow, p. 105. Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 122.
[884] Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, pp. 122-123; Glaser, *Trauma*, pp. 14-15.

42:7-17) is the vindication of Job's integrity. Additionally, it becomes clear that by the end of the book the crucial question posed by the accuser in 1:9b has been answered: disinterested piety is indeed possible. The speeches therefore act as an implicit vindication not just of Job, but of the divine-human relationship in general and, in a sense, of God himself. By implication the book therefore resolves the doubts over the validity of the mission of God, which has been at stake in the book: the divine-human relationship is not a sham and, therefore, neither is the mission of God to restore that relationship with humanity. The book has voiced and now answered the question that had to be asked.

As well as vindication, the speeches of Yahweh lead to transformation. In particular Yahweh's reframing of the question of his governance, from the sphere of retribution to the arena of wisdom, redefines for Job how he now perceives his place in the world. In dismantling the retribution principle as the only way of understanding how the world works Yahweh provides a corrective to Job, and to humanity, that we cannot reduce God's operation of the universe to a simplistic or mechanical application of action and consequence. As such the book of Job offers a corrective to faulty religious thinking and practice that assumes that suffering must necessarily imply sin.

4.4.2.4 The defining effect of Israel's monotheism

A driving force behind the distinctiveness of the book of Job is Israel's core belief in the transcendent uniqueness of Yahweh. Whether it was meant explicitly or implicitly, we may therefore detect a monotheizing or Yahwizing process at work in Job, in continuity with the rest of the biblical canon, and in line with my understanding set out in chapter three. To state it simply, I discern in the book of Job a distinctively Israelite contribution to the international conversation concerning unattributed suffering, which finds its discussion framed by a belief in the transcendent uniqueness of Yahweh.

In Job, Yahweh is portrayed in fundamentally different terms than the gods of the ANE. Of great importance in the biblical work is the justice of God, which is thoroughly probed by Job; indeed Job's commitment to God being just drives his vexation and argument (cf. 24:1).[885] However, in the ANE texts the issue of the justice or ethics of the gods is not a significant theme, which would seem to be because there never seems to be a point at which the human cannot be assumed to be at fault.[886] Human beings are sinful by design and cannot know all that is required of them. Given this foundational assumption, to speak of 'innocent' or 'righteous' suffering and, therefore, 'theodicy' in relation to Babylonians texts may be

[885] Walton, *Job*, p. 36.

[886] This is not to say that other ANE texts do not deal with justice themes. Rather, that justice as a characteristic of the gods is not in view in the surveyed texts. Cf. Walton, *Job*, pp. 35-36.

seen as inappropriate.[887] The book of Job, however, exhibits an 'ethical pathos' because it deals with the vexation of innocent suffering in a world governed by a supposedly just God.[888] In contrast to other works, which tend to view unattributed suffering as 'a confusing and frightening state', Job takes it on as a matter of theological, ethical and philosophical importance.[889] Gordis captures the issue well stating,

> The burning conviction that man's suffering in the world is an affront to the goodness of God was possible only to a Hebrew. For him alone, the essential nature of God resided in His ethical character.[890]

It seems, therefore, that Job is asking fundamentally different questions about the nature of suffering and what it implies about the moral governance of God. Hoffman may well be correct in suggesting that,

> only in the book of Job is there a confrontation among central and powerful ideas presented by God and humanity, and only in it, and not in the Mesopotamian works, are the necessary conditions created for true tragedy. The rebellious nature of the book of Job, which is entirely different from the tone of elegiac submission in "I Will Praise" and "Theodicy", follows from this.[891]

The transcendent uniqueness of Yahweh, therefore, intensifies the biblical work's exploration of unattributed suffering because, 'The perception of the one God as the God of justice necessarily exacerbates both the theological crisis and the emotional crisis.'[892] Compared to other religious belief systems, Israel's monotheism made them less flexible in terms of attributing blame for misfortune; 'thus, questioning the deity's justice was more unsettling and opaque in the Israelite worldview.'[893]

I would add, however, that the uniqueness of Yahweh also provides the author of Job with a way out of the confusion through the definitive word of the Yahweh speeches. Yahweh is not just one personal god to whom Job turns as his representative, who might intercede on

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[887] Cf. Bricker who suggests that 'innocent' suffering is virtually unheard of in Mesopotamia, and there is no such thing as 'theodicy' in the Egyptian literature; 'Mesopotamia', p. 214; 'Egypt', p. 100. Cf. Hoffman, pp. 260-261; Gordis, *God and Man*, pp. 61-62. Similarly, Newsom, *Contest*, p. 77: [according to Mesopotamian thought] 'Suffering is caused by the anger of a god provoked by a human. Though a person may be good, the nature of the human condition ensures that one will inevitably offend against deity'; cf. also p. 73.

[888] Hoffman, p. 260.

[889] ibid., p. 261.

[890] Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 62.

[891] Hoffman, p. 261.

[892] ibid., p. 261.

[893] Clarke, p. 90. Cf. Clifford, p. 73: 'The Bible's confession of one God, all-wise and all-powerful, makes its exploration of the problem of evil and of the righteous sufferer more pressing and more poignant than those of its neighbors. For who but the *one* God of Israel is ultimately responsible for *everything* that happens in the world?' His italics.

his behalf amongst the pantheon of other deities.[894] Neither is Job's situation purely personal to him and his relationship with his particular personal God.[895] Although the circumstances of his suffering are specific to him, Job's commitment to God's uniqueness in the world necessarily moves his questions from the particular to the universal.[896]

Although statements about the relative worth or profundity of one text over another should be made carefully, it does seem reasonable to suggest that, in comparison with known ANE texts, the book of Job is set apart in terms of its length, complexity and depth. Concluding his survey of ANE parallels, Anderson exemplifies some of the superlatives with which the book of Job has been described:

> Job stands far above its nearest competitors, in the coherence of its sustained treatment of the theme of human misery, in the scope of its many-sided examination of the problem, in the strength and clarity of its defiant moral monotheism, in the characterization of the protagonists, in the heights of its lyrical poetry, in its dramatic impact, and in the intellectual integrity with which it faces the "unintelligible burden" of human existence. In all this Job stands alone. Nothing we know before it provides a model, and nothing since, including its numerous imitations, has risen to the same heights. Comparison only serves to enhance the solitary greatness of the book of Job.[897]

Albeit with a note of caution, it may be true to say that the book of Job offers a more profound, more 'true' engagement with the problem of suffering and, as such, could be seen as a gift of Israel to the world, for whose benefit they were called by God. Suffering is a universal and vexing problem and, from the perspective of Israel who had been entrusted with the true rendering of reality, the other explorations of the theme were inadequate. That is not to say that there was nothing valuable in what they said or how they said it, but until

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[894] Hoffman, p. 261, with reference to 'Man and His God'. Hartley, 'Job 2', p. 360 also see Israel's monotheism accounting for an absence of fate or demons being seen as responsible for human suffering; cf. Walton, *Job*, p. 36; Wright, *The Mission of God*, chs. 3-5.

[895] Hoffman, pp. 261-262: 'In 'I Will Praise' the understanding of god is also personal, and hence lacking in the sense of universal ethical injustice manifested in the case of the suffering righteous.'

[896] ibid., p. 262: citing Job 13:7, 16-17 Hoffman suggests that these texts 'express the quintessence of the conflict involving both a theological and a personal side. These cannot be separated: in expressing the dual nature of Job's faith in God, he is both personal and universal-ethical.'

[897] Anderson, p. 32. Cf. Vicchio, p. 25; Clines, *Job 38-42*, pp. ix-x. Although I agree in large part with Anderson's assessment, a note of caution should be given about comparing the 'worth' of different works. Perhaps the relative complexity of Job can be explained in part by it being a much a later work, 'A masterpiece emerges not at the beginning of a movement, but at its culmination'; Gordis, *God and Man*, p. 59. Newsom's note of caution when dealing with one particular text is also helpful here: 'As compared to the Babylonian Theodicy, the Joban dialogue is a much more sophisticated literary work. Without other examples, however, one cannot say whether the more ambitious scope and daring tone of the Joban dialogues mark a radical departure from the tradition or build on examples more fully developed than the Babylonian Theodicy'; 'Job', p. 333.

the problem was explored from the perspective of Israel's distinctive beliefs, the world did not have a wholly true way of approaching the problem of their pain.

Returning to the question of literary dependence, there is still no indication that Job borrowed from or engaged explicitly with the specific texts under discussion. However, it does seem that the ideas and worldviews expressed in these texts, and others now lost to us, would have provided the author of Job with some of the raw materials with which he wrote his work.[898] We may go as far as to say that the ANE texts and ideas function as a 'foil' for the biblical writer as he sought to present a distinctively Israelite investigation into the question of suffering, which would act in part as a polemic against the inadequacy of alternative worldviews.[899] It is in this sense that the book of Job may be understood as exhibiting a missional encounter with ANE religious beliefs. These findings can now be set within the broader context of the whole chapter.

4.5 Missional reflections on the universalising impulse in the book of Job

This substantial chapter has demonstrated some of the ways in which the book of Job can be approached using a missional hermeneutic. In so doing I have isolated several key themes important, not only to the book of Job, but relevant also to the mission of God. In this final section I draw together the insights from the chapter, and present the findings in a number of missional reflections.

4.5.1 The book of Job is missional because it addresses a universal concern

It is evident that Israel did not have a monopoly on either the experience of suffering, or its exploration. Given the universality of such vexing human experience, it is inevitable that any culture's sages will attempt to ask questions relating to suffering in an attempt to articulate and understand it. In writing the book of Job the author joined a long-standing,

[898] Addressing the theme, Newsom, *Contest*, p. 72, speaks 'of a degree of cultural continuity', which is a helpful phrase in my view.

[899] Walton, *Job*, p. 38. Walton sees the book of Job as exposing the 'inadequacy' of ANE solutions to individual suffering, and considers it, 'remarkable that some still speak of the book of Job as borrowing from the ancient Near Eastern exemplars. A more defensible model sees the ancient Near Eastern literature and mentality as a foil for the book of Job. Job's friends are the representatives of the ancient Near Eastern perspectives, and their views are soundly rejected'; pp. 32, 38.

'international' tradition in the ANE and showed that he 'knows what people think, what people say in whispers–and not just in Israel.'[900]

Such an honest engagement with the realities and complexities of the world provides a challenge for the church's contemporary engagement in the world. Through the book of Job it seems incumbent on the church to be involved in the 'universal' conversations common to humanity, irrespective of cultural context. Such an honest engagement is missionally relevant because it has great potential:

> The questions that Israel's wise men and women reflected on, the answers they came up with, the dilemmas they left without final solution, the advice and guidance they offered, all of these resonate with common human experience everywhere. For that reason some missiologists and crosscultural practitioners suggest that the Wisdom literature provides one of the best bridges for biblical faith to establish meaningful contact and engagement with widely different human cultures around the world… So to engage people's own answers to life's questions and then introduce them to how the Bible handles them can be a friendly, nonthreatening way of gaining people's interest in the wider truth of the biblical revelation.[901]

This is no less true for the universal experience of suffering, concerning which the people of God must provide ways of engaging and understanding.

4.5.2 The book of Job is missional because it presents itself as universally relevant

By setting Job within a non-Israelite context and, in particular, casting the central character as a non-Israelite, the author sets up his treatment of the universal and vexing experience of unattributed suffering in an idealised way. In addition, Job's 'everyman' status is emphasised by a degree of anonymity and ambiguity surrounding his characterisation. By doing this the author is able to examine more freely the question of suffering and the justice of God without the need to refer, explicitly at least, to Israel's history or cultic traditions. Although the book is uniquely Israelite, the phenomenon of the non-Israelite motif pushes the horizon of the book beyond purely internal debates.

The missional significance of this is clear. In making Job into a representative figure, the author pours into Job the questions of humanity. Because of its covenant relationship with Yahweh, Israel was uniquely positioned before God to probe the depths of questions of suffering and justice. Setting the events of the book of Job outside of Israel allows Job to

[900] Duquoc, p. 83.
[901] Wright, *Mission of God*, p. 445.

speak 'to and for all humanity' more effectively.[902] In so doing, I would argue the book of Job requires and equips the church to do the same.

I have sought to distinguish between Job as representative (his suffering embodies the pain of humanity's inexplicable suffering) and Job as paradigmatic (in Job we have models of how one might suffer, process and persevere in the light of a relationship with the Yahweh). As Crenshaw so incisively puts it, one must recognize,

> The first step toward answering this question requires one's recognizing the exemplary character of Job, who must surely stand for all the innocent sufferers in Israel, but his sufferings also particularize the universal situation enveloping humanity. For that reason his cries seem to arise in the depths of our being, and his longing for God who withdraws farther and farther away strikes a familiar chord in us. This means that Job's exemplary character extends to the present, transcending time and space, for his suffering resembles our own.[903]

In my view this way of understanding Job's non-Israelite provenance is a corrective to discussions that limit its significance to Job being a 'righteous pagan' in a similar vein to figures such as Melchizedek, Jethro or Ruth. Certainly this perspective on Job's non-Israelite identity is important. Job is indeed an example of a commended non-Israelite engaging with Yahweh in important ways. While this phenomenon may have some contribution to make to the discussion of the Bible's dealing with 'outsiders', it is my view that drawing confident conclusions for that discussion is problematic. While he could be described as a 'righteous Gentile', he is so much more. As noted, my view is that reducing Job's provenance to an example of 'holy outsiders' represents both an inadequate reflection of its context in Job and also a diluting of its missiological significance. As a more universalised figure than those he is usually mentioned alongside, Job is in a category of his own.

4.5.3 The book of Job is missional because in it the very mission of God is at stake

Particularly in the discussion on the accuser's question, 'Is it for nothing that Job fears God?' I suggested that Job could be understood as of critical importance for the mission of God. As I indicated in my review of BMS earlier in the thesis, scholars have tended to ask how texts fit into the 'grand narrative' of the Bible. While this may be a fruitful line of enquiry for texts that may easily be located within the chronological storyline of the biblical narrative, it becomes difficult to know what to do with texts that do not 'progress' that plot. While these kinds of texts could be connected to the narrative by association with a

[902] Pope, p. xxxviii.
[903] Crenshaw, *OT Wisdom*, p. 112.

particular stage or person of Israel's history (such as Solomon[904]), I would understand the book of Job to be functioning in a different, and ultimately more compelling way. Although we could attempt to place the book historically, this is no easy task for a book that has an ancient setting yet was written much later. Additionally, there is no firm conclusion about when the final form of the book was put together.

However, this does not mean that the relationship between the book of Job and the grand narrative becomes unfruitful or futile. Instead, more nuanced questions need to be asked. Rather than 'where does this text fit into the grand narrative?' a more appropriate and fruitful question would be, 'How does this text function in relation to the grand narrative?' or, more specifically in the case of Job, 'How does this text stand apart from, and speak into the grand narrative?'

The book of Job fits into and speaks into the grand narrative by standing apart from it. It stands apart from the 'story' yet functions in a deep and critical way in relation to the worldview of Yahweh faith. The book of Job is vital to the missional story of the Bible, the *missio Dei*, because it asks the question only whispered previously: is the relationship to which God is restoring humanity genuine?

Although an uncomfortable, 'theological irruption', the question of 1:9b is absolutely necessary.[905] At some point in the story of God's mission somebody, somewhere had to address this question. Yahweh's confidence in Job is so sure that he is willing to stake his name on his servant's response and, in so doing, enters into solidarity with him.[906] Though he did not choose to be so and was not aware of it, Job finds himself with the unique (dare we say privileged?) role of bearing the weight of the divine reputation. In his story a troubling doubt is raised about the very integrity of the mission of God. Ultimately vindication is achieved in and through Job on behalf of humanity, on behalf of God, and on behalf of God's mission.

4.5.4 The book of Job is missional in the way it addresses the potential and cost of character formation

Although in a more concentrated and definitive way, it would therefore follow that the person of Job, and the book of Job, offer some kind of model for those experiencing unattributed suffering in the light of the mission of God. As such the book of Job contributes

[904] As Wright does when discussing Wisdom, although this is part of a more developed discussion on the missional significance of the Wisdom Literature, which I addressed earlier in the thesis; *Mission of God*, p. 448.
[905] Ticciati, *Job*, p. 50.
[906] Ticciati, 'for Naught?', p. 363; Ticciati, *Job*, p. 74.

to the formation of the people of God, who will process unattributed suffering 'missionally'.[907] By this I mean that, even though there may be no purpose behind a person's experience of suffering, it can still be purposeful.

The book of Job provides a model of a faithful believer in Yahweh who, in his mixed responses of acceptance, grief, confusion and fury, evidences a committed, honest engagement with his God. As such he witnesses to a genuine relationship that is more than just a 'sham' arrangement of mutual benefit. Thus Job becomes a universalised or paradigmatic figure of the suffering believer, both in his experience of suffering, but also in how he processes it.

In chapter one I noted Wright's inclusion of 'The Missional Cost to the Messenger' as part of his missional reflections on the book of Jeremiah.[908] Although his points were made specifically with reference to the prophet it seems to me that this may also (perhaps especially) be applied fruitfully to Job. As explored in this chapter, Job occupied a unique and remarkable place in the questioning and vindication of the validity of the mission of God. But this privilege was, by definition, accompanied by terrible suffering. It is possible, therefore, to understand Job, paradigmatically, as someone who participated in God's mission through and because of unattributed suffering. As Bosch notes, mainly in the context of the servant of Yahweh in Isa. 53 and the NT understanding of the cross, suffering is a key element of biblical mission.[909] While Job does not effect salvation through the suffering itself, God's mission is seen to be vindicated through Job's response to it. In clinging to God with all the honest, probing questions and struggle, does not the suffering believer witness to a genuine relationship with God?[910] Furthermore, if Bosch is correct in suggesting that, 'True mission manifests itself only in a Church which agonizes with the victims of this world', Job provides the people of God with a compelling model.[911]

It seems to me, therefore, that the view that Job's acceptance and submission are the only missionally valid response to his suffering is deeply inadequate as long as it fails to account for the missional legitimacy of his protest as well.[912]

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[907] I do not make these points lightly and hope I do not come across as being flippant. I am writing as someone who has experienced some measure of intense grief, which inevitably will have influenced my reading of a text like Job.

[908] See Wright, '"Prophet to the Nations"', p. 128.

[909] Bosch, 'Hermeneutical Principles', especially pp. 444-445, 450.

[910] Cf. Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 451-452.

[911] Bosch, 'Hermeneutical Principles', p. 450. Glaser speaks of suffering, or trauma, as 'Perhaps… a necessary equipment for mission.' *Trauma*, p. 22.

[912] This relates particularly to my treatment of Waters' article, '*Missio Dei*' earlier in the thesis.

4.5.5 The book of Job is missional in the way that it encounters other cultures

Although the book was primarily for an Israelite audience it seems reasonable to me that, just as the author of Job consciously drew upon the wisdom ideas of other cultures, so he may have understood his own work as contributing to that international body of work. In that sense, then, perhaps this particularly Israelite text could then go on to have a 'missional encounter' with non-Israelites as they heard and considered this particular take on the question of unattributed suffering. Among many other things, could the book of Job be described, therefore, as a 'gift' to the nations?

As I have shown in this thesis an important aspect of the missional nature of the Bible is the way in which biblical texts contribute to a rendering of reality based on Israel's faith in Yahweh, in contrast to alternative renderings offered by neighbouring cultures. In the current chapter I have shown how the book of Job may be seen as exhibiting such a missional encounter, particularly in relation to Babylonian religious beliefs.

I have suggested that it is not possible to establish definitively a direct relationship between Job and similar ANE texts, although I do not think this undermines the possibility of an implicit engagement with the ideas represented in both.

It seems reasonable (indeed, inevitable) that the author of Job was aware of at least some of the ways in which neighbouring cultures sought to address the question of suffering. This may even be understood as adopting a known story (or stories) of a legendary suffering righteous person called Job and adapting it to suit his purposes, which certainly would have included giving it a more Yahweh-centred approach. The degree of consciousness with which the author did this is difficult to assess. Was the author deliberately 'taking on' the neighbouring worldviews, or did this happen indirectly? It is my assessment that there must have been an element of the former going on in the book, although this is mixed in with a desire to tackle the mis-application of certain teachings found elsewhere in Israel's traditions. As such the book of Job does not deliver the only word in the Bible on suffering or Yahweh's governance; rather it contributes to a nuanced, canonical articulation of Israel's attempts to understand how they were to understand and live in the light of unattributed suffering while maintaining that Yahweh still ruled.

The book of Job's encounter with alternative explorations of unattributed suffering may be seen in both affirmation and contrast; that is, a stance of 'critical openness'. As noted above, it affirms the reality and significance of the vexing human problem of suffering. It also exhibits a cultural openness by employing a non-Israelite motif, thereby universalising the significance of the biblical contribution, although such 'openness' should not be over-interpreted as some have been prone to do.

While similarities of literary and thematic features may suggest a limited degree of affirmation or openness, I have shown that the distinctively Israelite perspectives offered by Job may be understood as evidencing a significant element of polemic. The driving contributory factor in Job's distinctiveness is Israel's monotheistic beliefs; that is, Yahweh's 'transcendent uniqueness'. Such a view of God intensified the central tension of the book of Job because, as creator and just ruler of the world, it is only to Yahweh that circumstances can be attributed. However, as well as intensifying the problem of unattributed suffering, I detect in Job an intensifying of the solution offered by the book, seen especially in the speeches of Yahweh which display a distinctive characteristic of the book.

Through the book of Job we see the articulation of Israel's monotheized and monotheizing worldview that sought to preserve the faith and identity of the people of God in contrast to idolatrous and false ideas. For the writer of Job, it was not enough to join the conversation; he had to present the truest word and, in doing so, expose the inadequacies of other attempts.[913] What seems particularly striking here is that the book of Job contains a strong polemic for Yahweh at the very moment when it is asking the most difficult questions of their God. Perhaps questions of the dissonance between the Wisdom Literature and other parts of the OT are not quite so stark when set against this ANE context.

On the assumption that the book of Job exhibits a degree of adoption and adaptation of a non-Israelite source, perhaps too this 'transformed borrowing' may serve as a type of model for communication of the gospel that may be carried out in contemporary mission contexts. There is a degree of acknowledgment of the wisdom of the nations, yet a critical engagement with it. There is an honest engagement with the questions of humanity, yet probed from Israel's unique and privileged position in relationship with Yahweh. Does this also encourage the people of God to search for elements of a culture that can be used as starting points or bridges for communication? I would suggest that there are indeed possibilities for missional practice exhibited in the book of Job which may be applied either in a local context or in a more cross-cultural setting.[914]

4.5.6 The book of Job is missional because it articulates the universality of the pain of the world through the means of the particularity of Israel's relationship with Yahweh

I have said that the book of Job encounters these other stories and (albeit with some affirmation) seeks to expose their inadequacies. However, in the context of a missional

[913] Walton, *Job*, p. 38. Cf. Glaser, *Bible and Other Faiths*, p. 122.

[914] This builds on the thinking of several writers on wisdom and mission surveyed in chapter two, although this had rarely been addressed specifically in relation to Job.

reading of the Bible, it is essential that this process of missional encounter is not seen as simply undermining the nations. If the book of Job critiques the worldviews of other cultures, it critiques falsehood within Israel's borders as well.[915]

It is not only natural and inevitable that the Bible contain a treatment on the universal theme of suffering. Missiologically speaking, it is *essential* that it does so. Suffering is a particularly stark example of the results of what has gone 'awry' in the world and if mission can be understood as '*getting at the something awry*' it seems evident that an honest examination of the question of suffering and divine justice is an essential part of biblical mission.[916] If Israel's faith in Yahweh really is the true rendering of reality then it is incumbent on them to have a 'true word' on the subject, not to the detriment of the world but for the sake of the world.

While this is true of any part of the Bible, the book of Job presents a particularly striking aspect of this contention which is that this true word does not just mean a valid and clear answer to vexing human problems. In the book of Job, Israel's most sustained treatment of the theme of suffering exhibits a raw, honest, painful articulation of the problems, as well as probing its Yahwistic faith for possible answers.[917] Job plumbs the depths of suffering like no other work and so addresses human pain and suffering more profoundly and more truly than any other.

Israel must ask these questions on behalf of the world because, as Yahweh's chosen people, they are uniquely positioned to do so. In their particularity they are uniquely able to articulate universal pain and probe universal questions. In so doing they are able to speak 'to and for all humanity' and it becomes incumbent on the church to do so as well as part of their participation in the mission of God.[918]

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[915] Again, van Zyl's article makes this point clearly.

[916] Seitz, *Figured Out*, p. 147. His italics.

[917] Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, p. 324: 'The core testimony of Israel, by appeal to the great transformative verbs of Yahweh and by the derivative adjectives and noun-metaphors of Israel's speech, made a case that Yahweh is competently sovereign and utterly faithful. And on most days that conclusion is adequate. It is a welcome conclusion because it issues in a coherent narrative account of reality. Israel, to be sure, affirms that conclusion of competent sovereignty and reliable fidelity. But Israel lives in the real world and notices what is going on around it. Israel is candid, refusing to deny what it notices. And so issues of competent sovereignty and reliable fidelity will remain in the Old Testament as Israel's belief-ful, candid, unfinished business. We know, moreover, that these two issues are paramount for all those who live in the world, whether they engage in God-talk or not. Thus these two points of cross-examination are not a safe intramural exercise for Israel. They are rather issues with which Israel struggles for the sake of the world.' Cf. Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 450-452.

[918] Pope, p. xxxviii.

In this chapter I have used a missional hermeneutic to study the missional relevance of the book of Job. I have shown that Job may be understood as intensely missional, addressing crucial themes that connect with the mission of God in a variety of ways. In the next, final main chapter of my thesis I continue my application to Job of a missional hermeneutic, by examining a particular theme that is of considerable importance, both in a holistic conception of mission and also in the book of Job itself: the treatment of the poor. Such a study builds on the groundwork laid in previous chapters and brings together some important elements of the current chapter on the universalising impulse in Job. It is, therefore, a natural and, I would argue, compelling element of a mission reading of the book of Job.

5 Chapter Five: The Treatment of the Poor in Job

5.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this thesis I placed the idea of a missional reading of Job at the intersection of three converging trends: the increased acceptance of *missio Dei* and a holistic understanding of mission, the developing conversation of missional hermeneutics, and the surge of more general scholarly interest in the Wisdom Literature of the OT. In each of these cases the issue of the treatment of the poor features to some degree and, as such, provides an appropriate theme to which I may apply my missional reading of Job.

The theme of poverty also featured in chapter two, where I highlighted social justice as a category of the use of Job in BMS. Here, writers such as Jesurathnam and van Zyl sought to engage with the issue of poverty in relation to Job, finding important connections and demonstrating the relevance of the book for missional reflection.[919]

In the current chapter I seek to build on this work by examining the treatment of the poor in Job using my missional approach to the text. Following a brief expansion on the featuring of poverty in the spheres noted above I show how poverty may be identified as a significant motif in the book of Job itself. As well as providing further justification for my choice of this theme, this also sets an initial context for the Job texts under discussion later in the chapter.[920] To do this I present, in tabular form, the frequency and distribution of key poverty terms in Job. After some preliminary remarks I give a synopsis of Job, summarising the context, content and function of each pericope that addresses poverty to show how it fits into the flow of argument of the book.

It is beyond the scope of the chapter to perform a detailed analysis of each reference to poverty and so I select three passages for in-depth examination: Job 24:1-17; 29:11-17 and 31:13-23. These texts are particularly worthy of attention because they contain the densest

[919] Jesurathnam; van Zyl.

[920] It is not, in my view, necessary to demonstrate that poverty is the most dominant theme in these areas. Perhaps it comes closest to this in a holistic understand of mission but, by definition, no one theme would be seen to dominate to the exclusion of others. However, by showing that poverty is at least acknowledged as a legitimate topic of study by writers in these fields, I hope to give just cause for examining it in this chapter. Moreover, when taken together, it could be said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The theme of poverty, it will transpire, is a very natural and important focus of attention arising as part of a missional reading, and particularly of a text such as the book of Job. As a middle class, Western scholar I note the caution of Brueggemann that the interpreter's 'social location' can skew their view of what is most relevant to focus on: 'our habitual approach may be reflective of our social location as scholars, for we tend to be well-placed within the social system and therefore not inclined to let our theological reflection spill over into social criticism.' W. Brueggemann, 'Theodicy in a Social Dimension', *JSOT*, 33 (1985), 3-25 (pp. 20-21).

clusters of poverty terminology and the most sustained treatments of the poverty theme in the book.[921] They can also be seen as important moments within the book as a whole, which will be demonstrated in the synopsis. For each of the three texts I give a detailed exegesis, which culminates in a missional reading of each one, based on the concluding reflections of chapter four, but also drawing on broader missional questions identified in chapters two and three.

In the final section of the chapter I conclude with a series of reflections based on the preceding discussion. In particular I set out how the book of Job speaks 'to and for all humanity' about poverty, outlining a five-fold series of challenges that may be understood in relation to the church's mission.[922] In so doing I demonstrate how studying poverty in Job arises naturally out of a missional approach, and gives an enriched reading of the book. I also show how Job makes a significant and unique contribution to an understanding of the relationship between poverty and the mission of God.

5.2 Poverty as a significant theme

As noted in the introduction to the thesis, writing on holistic mission makes particular and consistent reference to the issue of poverty, which was one of the drivers behind its development.[923] This is aptly represented by Sugden who discusses,

> the place of the poor in the proclamation and demonstration of the good news: what did good news to the poor really mean, the definition of the good news as the good news of the kingdom of God, and that the good news had to do with redeeming and reconciling the whole of the world.[924]

Given this background, a missional reading of the Bible that is governed by a holistic view of mission would very naturally be sensitive to poverty issues.

Similarly, although in a less focused way, missional hermeneutics scholars have also addressed the significance of poverty as part of their approaches. As noted in chapter three of this thesis, for example, Wright devotes two chapters of *The Mission of God* to material on the themes of redemption and restoration, seeing these texts as closely related to a holistic

[921] As it happens they are also all attributed to Job, though note the discussion on the speaker(s) of chs. 24 and 27 below.
[922] Pope, p. xxxviii.
[923] This can be seen in the accounts of the development of holistic mission. Cf. Tizon, chs. 1-4; Padilla, pp. 157-158.
[924] Sugden, 'Mission as Transformation', p. 32.

view of mission and, as such, particularly relevant to issues of poverty and justice.[925] For Wright, poverty (alongside other social, economic and political concerns) is a most appropriate (indeed, necessary) topic of interest for a missional reading.

While Bauckham does not involve himself in technical discussions concerning the validity of holistic mission, he does note the importance of the theme of poverty, and integrates it as a core characteristic of the biblical narrative.[926] As part of his controlling motif for mission, which is the movement he discerns in the biblical story from the particular to the universal, Bauckham identifies the way in which God tends to facilitate the one-to-the-many movement through weakness: 'God's way to his universal kingdom is through a movement of identification with the least.'[927] For Bauckham this motif is profoundly important for how the people of God conduct themselves in the world and he is worth quoting at length:

> the church's mission cannot be indifferent to the inequalities and injustices of the world into which it is sent. The gospel does not come to each person only in terms of some abstracted generality of human nature, but in the realities and differences of their social and economic situations. It engages with the injustices of the world on its way to the kingdom of God. This means that as well as the outward movement of the church's mission in geographical extension and numerical increase, there must also be this (in the Bible's imagery) downward movement of solidarity with the people at the bottom of the social scale of importance and wealth. It is to these – the poorest, those with no power or influence, the wretched, the neglected – to whom God has given priority in the kingdom, not only for their own sake, but also for all the rest of us who can enter the kingdom only alongside *them*.[928]

Wright and Bauckham's contributions are different but complementary. Both see important connections between the missional nature of the Bible and issues of poverty, power and justice. They therefore give precedent for poverty to be a topic of interest in a missional reading of biblical texts.[929]

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[925] Wright, *Mission of God*; ch. 8, 'God's Model of Redemption: The Exodus' and ch. 9, 'God's Model of Restoration: The Jubilee'. For other references to 'poor' or 'poverty' cf. pp. 43-44, 216, 230, 245, 359, 398, 413, 418, 431, 426-437, 449, 451, 481, 505, 524, 549, 553.

[926] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, pp. 53-54.

[927] ibid., p. 52.

[928] ibid., pp. 53-54. His italics.

[929] It is not my purpose here to critique the work of Wright and Bauckham but rather to show that poverty is an acknowledged point of interest in a missional reading. The relative neglect of this theme in other missional hermeneutic writers should not be overplayed. Rather, they seem to have their foci elsewhere. Nevertheless, cf. Beeby, *Canon and Mission*, p. 56; Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, p. 93; Penner, *Missionale Hermeneutik*, ch. 2; Barram, '"Located" Questions'. For example, in a list of possible missional questions Barram includes, 'In what ways does this text proclaim good news to the poor and release to the captives, and how might our own social locations make it difficult to hear that news as good?'; n.p. See my discussion of Barram in the first part of the thesis.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the rise in scholarly interest in the Wisdom Literature in the latter part of the twentieth century is well documented.[930] As part of this trend scholars have also paid greater attention to issues of wealth and poverty in these texts.[931] Similarly, the plethora of studies on poverty and social justice in the Bible often include treatments of the Wisdom books, albeit to varying degrees of depth.[932] Pleins, for example, surveys the book of Job as part of a wider project outlining the 'social visions' of the OT.[933] He sees the book's use of both complaint and dialogue genres as creating a voice that is contrary to traditional wisdom reflections on social justice.[934]

In a similar work, albeit with a narrower focus on social justice, Houston, like Pleins, devotes several pages to the book of Job.[935] Despite the book of Job's 'upper-class orientation' Houston considers social justice to be a highly significant issue, and one in whose light the broader issue of theodicy should be read.[936] For Houston, Job brings out for explicit examination certain implicit tensions embedded in the book of Proverbs, and it is Job 20-24 where the issue of social justice 'comes to a head'.[937] Of particular interest for Houston is Job's former status as a man of great wealth, power and honour, which meant that any talk of his own ethics revolved around the issue of how he treated those of lesser status.[938]

Another notable work on the theme is, *On Job*, in which liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez reads the biblical book through the lens of his experience of suffering in Latin America.[939] While he shies away from 'facile direct applications to the reality we face in Latin America' he does see as valuable a reading of the text that keeps his 'attention on what

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[930] For a brief survey see, for example, Crenshaw, *OT Wisdom*, pp. xi, xiii, 1-4; cf. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*, ch. 1.

[931] There has been a particular interest in the topic as it occurs in the book of Proverbs. See, for example, Sandoval, p. 2: 'Only recently, however, has intensive and extensive work having to do with matters of wealth and poverty in specifically wisdom texts begun'; Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*; Pleins, 'Poverty'; Washington; van Leeuwen, 'Wealth and Poverty'; Wittenberg. See also, Míguez-Bonino; Gutiérrez; Ruíz Pesce; Ceresko; Grenzer.

[932] Cf. J.D. Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); J.D. Pleins, 'Poor, Poverty (Old Testament)', in *ABD*, Vol 5, pp. 402-414; B.V. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996); Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*; W.J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006); M. Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

[933] Pleins, *Social Visions*, pp. 484-508.

[934] ibid., pp. 484-485. Pleins' insights will be drawn upon in the synopsis below.

[935] Houston, pp. 126-131.

[936] ibid., p. 127. On this question of the 'elite' audience of the book of Job Houston draws upon Brueggemann, 'Theodicy', and D.J.A. Clines, 'Why is There a Book of Job, and What does it Do to You if You Read it?', in *The Book of Job*, ed. by W.A.M. Beuken (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), pp. 1-20. See also M. Hamilton, 'Elite Lives: Job 29-31 and Traditional Authority', *JSOT*, 21.1 (2007), 69-89.

[937] Houston, p. 127.

[938] ibid., p. 128.

[939] Gutiérrez.

it means to talk of God in the context of … the suffering of the poor–which is to say, the vast majority of the population.'[940] At root Gutiérrez sees Job as asking, 'How are human beings to speak of God in the midst of poverty and suffering?'[941] He then traces this theme through the book including two chapters focusing on 'The Suffering of Others' and 'God and the Poor'.[942]

It is evident, therefore, that the theme of poverty is a legitimate issue to examine in a study on the book of Job and that this is particularly (though not exclusively) relevant to a holistic missional approach. I now begin that study by looking at the language of poverty in the book.

5.3 An overview of the frequency, distribution and function of poverty terms in Job

This section sets out a brief overview of the frequency, distribution, context and function of certain key poverty terms in the book of Job.[943] The frequency and distribution of אֶבְיוֹן (poor/destitute/needy),[944] דַּל (poor/weak),[945] עָנִי (poor/oppressed),[946] יָתוֹם

[940] ibid., pp. xix, xviii. There are clear connections here with integral mission concerns noted above although it should be acknowledged that Gutiérrez should be understood on his own terms.

[941] ibid., p. 12.

[942] ibid., chs. 5 and 6, respectively.

[943] For a helpful survey of the variety, meaning and usage of poverty terms in the OT see Pleins, 'Poor, Poverty'. In the article he lists seven main words for 'poor' and demonstrates how the terms are used with varying frequency and in different ways in different parts of the canon. The purpose of my argument here, however, is not to provide a lexical study of the poverty terms or even an examination of why some terms are used in Job but others are neglected (valuable though this would be). Rather, my focus is on the general theme of poverty and how it functions within Job; that is, what Job or his friends say about the poor. I have kept the survey focused on these five key terms as they best illustrate the poverty material, although I note that it could have been broadened to include less frequent terms such as רָעֵב 'hungry' (Job 5:5; 22:7; 24:10) or עֲרוּמִּים 'naked' (Job 22:6). It should also be noted that there is at points significant overlap between the terms, although this is not to deny that they have their own specific nuances (see below).

[944] The term אֶבְיוֹן occurs 61x in the OT and is generally associated with being in extreme need, at the point of destitution and utter dependence, for example, through day labour; W.R. Domeris, 'אֶבְיוֹן', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 1, pp. 228-232 (p. 228). This may have meant begging; Pleins, for example, uses the term, 'Beggarly Poor'; 'Poor, Poverty', p. 403. Although it has tended to be associated with the root אבה (want, be in need) there are some who question how instructive this is for discerning its meaning; E. Gerstenberger, 'אבה *'bh* to want', in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol 1, ed. by E. Jenni and C. Westermann, translated by M.E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 15-19 (p. 16).

[945] דַּל is used 48x in the OT, with a bias towards Prophetic and Wisdom texts (5x in the Pentateuch; 5x in the Historical Books; 12x in the Prophets; 5x in the Psalms; and 21x in the Wisdom Literature, including 6x in Job); Pleins, 'Poor, Poverty', p. 405. Although most occurrences refer to poverty, it can also be taken in a broader sense, being used to describe emaciated cows (Gen. 41:19); psychological weakness and desperation (2 Sam. 13:4); and familial and

(orphan/fatherless)[947] and אַלְמָנָה (widow)[948] are shown in the following table. The purpose is not to do a word study of poverty terms in the book of Job *per se*. Rather, these terms are

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inferiority and decline (Judg. 6:15; 2 Sam 3:1); M.D. Carroll R., 'דלל', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 1, pp. 951-954 (p. 951); H.-J. Fabry, 'דַּל *dal*', in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol 3, ed. by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, translated by J.T. Willis, G.W. Bromiley and D.E. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 208-230 (p. 217). Unlike the אֶבְיוֹן, the דַּל may have had land but was not able to make this pay or was the object of abuse from more powerful people; hence Pleins calls the דַּל the poor, or 'beleaguered peasant farmer'; 'Poor, Poverty', p. 405.

[946] עָנִי is the most frequently used term for poverty in the OT (80x) and is particularly prominent in the prophetic literature (25x), Psalms (31x) and Wisdom literature (16x); Pleins, 'Poor, Poverty', p. 408. The term is closely linked to the אֶבְיוֹן, with which it is often paired or paralleled, which may suggest the two terms were used as a 'stylized rhetorical device for speaking of poverty'; ibid., p. 408 (though Pleins does not commit to whether this device emerged from a prophetic or cultic influence. Cf. Deut. 24:14; Job 24:4, 14; Ps. 9:8; 12:5; Prov. 30:14; Isa. 41:17; Ezek. 16:49; Amos 8:4). In any case it seems that the עָנִי and אֶבְיוֹן shared characteristics such as a dependence on the wider society for provision and protection, either through welfare or employment; E. Gerstenberger, 'עָנָה II *'ānâ*', in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol 11, ed. by G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H.-J. Fabry, translated by D.E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 230-252 (p. 243). The עָנִי is also placed alongside other marginalised or impoverished groups such as the alien (Lev. 19:10), the orphan and widow (Isa. 10:2), those who are without food, shelter or clothing (Isa. 58:7), the oppressed (Ps. 74:21), those in need of help (Job 29:12), and the broken in spirit (Isa. 66:2); R. Martin-Achard, 'ענה *'nh* to be destitute', in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol 2, ed. by E. Jenni and C. Westermann, translated by M.E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 931-937 (p. 933). While it is difficult to place the precise social status of the עָנִי, it may have been on or near the level of the widow, orphan and alien; that is, precarious and dependent on others; W.J. Dumbrell, 'עָנָו', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 3, pp. 454-464 (p. 455).

[947] The term יָתוֹם occurs 42x in the OT. It is found most frequently in Deuteronomy (11x), normally in the context of legal texts ensuring their protection and provision (for example, Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 24:17). In Deuteronomy the יָתוֹם is always coupled with the אַלְמָנָה. Together with the גֵּר (alien) the three form a particularly vulnerable marginalised grouping. In the Psalms (8x) the יָתוֹם is evoked in material concerning God's justice and benevolence (Pss. 10:14, 18; 68:5; 82:3; 146:9) as well as a device for reflecting on the wicked (Pss. 94:6; 109:9, 12). Apart from a spread of references in the Prophets (largely on issues of social justice; for example, Isa. 1:17; Jer. 5:28; Zech. 7:10), most of the remaining occurrences of the יָתוֹם are in Job (7x, in 6:27; 22:9; 24:3, 9; 29:12; 31:17, 21; although 31:18 is also clearly referring to the יָתוֹם). These texts are detailed below but tend to revolve around similar themes of power, vulnerability, and the presence or absence of social justice. Although יָתוֹם could imply the loss of both parents, it is most likely that the term refers more strictly to the 'fatherless'; Ringgren makes this distinction with reference to the parallelism in Lam. 5:3; H. Ringgren, 'יָתוֹם *yāṯôm*', in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol 6, ed. by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, translated by D.E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 477-481 (p. 479). Most likely the child's father would be dead but it could mean simply that the father is absent, unable or unwilling to provide protection for his children; H.V. Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 54.

[948] The term אַלְמָנָה features 55x in the OT; C. van Leeuwen, 'אַלְמָנָה', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 1, pp. 413-415 (p. 413). Perhaps unsurprisingly it follows a similar pattern of distribution to the יָתוֹם although features more than the latter in narrative texts (1 Kgs. 7:14; 11:26; 17:9). It has what

viewed as a way of locating the poverty theme throughout the book. The speaker is also noted in each case to illustrate how discussions of poverty fit within the overall flow of the book of Job.

Following a few preliminary remarks I will set out an account of the flow of the book, thereby locating the poverty texts within a broader context and showing how they function in each case to illustrate and accentuate the differing perspectives and strategies of the speakers.

Hoffner calls 'a completely negative nuance. It means a woman who has been divested of her male protector (husband, sons, often also brothers)'; H.A. Hoffner, 'אַלְמָנָה *'almānāh*', in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol 1, Revised edn, ed. by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, translated by J.T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 287-291 (p. 288).

5.3.1 Frequency and distribution of key poverty terms in Job

Section	Speaker	אֶבְיוֹן	דַּל	עָנִי	יָתוֹם	אַלְמָנָה
		6x	6x	7x	7x (8x)	6x (7x)
1-2	Prologue					
3	Job					
4-5	Eliphaz	5:15	5:16			
6-7	Job				6:27	
8	Bildad					
9-10	Job					
11	Zophar					
12-14	Job					
15	Eliphaz					
16-17	Job					
18	Bildad					
19	Job					
20	Zophar		20:10 20:19			
21	Job					
22	Eliphaz				22:9	22:9
23-24	Job	24:4 24:14		24:4 24:9 24:14	24:3 24:9	24:3 24:21
25	Bildad					
26-27	Job					27:15
28	Job					
29-31	Job	29:16 30:25 31:19	31:16	29:12	29:12 31:17 (31:18) 31:21	29:13 31:16 (31:18)
32-37	Elihu		34:19 34:28	34:28 36:6 36:15		
38-41	Yahweh					
42	Epilogue					

Table 1: Frequency and distribution of key poverty terms in Job

Even a cursory glance at the above table is revealing. The poor are not mentioned at all in the frame narrative, although perhaps this is not surprising given the focus of the Prologue and Epilogue on events in heaven and on earth, specifically in relation to Job. Apart from three references early in the first speech cycle, and two in Zophar's second speech, poverty language is concentrated in the third speech cycle and Job's final defence, with five instances in Elihu's contribution. The terms tend to be clustered together, which is perhaps

understandable given the frequent parallelism used in Hebrew poetry. With the exception of דַּל Job is the character who uses each poverty term the most.

When Yahweh answers Job in chs. 38-41 he makes no reference to the poor. Again, perhaps this is not surprising given the nature of the speeches, which focus on more general concerns of Yahweh's governance of the world, using language predominantly from the non-human spheres of the creation.

5.3.2 Poverty language in the flow of the book of Job: a brief synopsis

Following the book's Prologue and Job's soliloquy, in which he curses the day of his birth and the night of his conception (ch. 3), Eliphaz is the first of the friends to address Job. Speaking in relatively conciliatory terms Eliphaz attempts to draw Job back to orthodoxy and instil in him hope (4:1-6). Ultimately, it is the wicked that will perish, not the innocent (4:7-11). Drawing upon a revelation he was given, Eliphaz reminds Job that human beings are fragile and can't possibly withstand the moral attention of God (4:12-21). Even if the undeserving prosper for a short while, they are a short step from calamity (5:1-7). His main point is that, in the midst of his trouble, Job should seek God and commit his way to him, who is the great reverser of fortunes (5:8). God raises the lowly and the mourning (5:11), frustrates the scheming 'wise' and hoists them on their own petard, leaving them groping about in the dark (5:13-15). Eliphaz's reference to the poor occurs in this section, which further illustrates an orthodox understanding of retribution. God saves the אֶבְיוֹן from the mouth of the sword of the schemers and from the hand of the mighty (5:15). Because of the vindicating and saving work of God against the wicked and on behalf of the poor, Eliphaz sees the דַּל (poor/weak) as having hope and injustice shutting its mouth (5:16). For Eliphaz Job has every reason to have hope. His present experiences can be reversed and Job should see it as divine discipline (מוּסַר שַׁדַּי) (5:17; cf. Prov. 3:11, מוּסַר יְהוָה). He should stand firm, commit his ways to God, and be assured that he will enjoy life, peace and blessing once more (5:17-27).

For Eliphaz, then, although the poor are victims of abuse, this is only a temporary situation and is part of the fleeting moment before the wicked are inevitably punished by God. The poor move from being objects of oppression to objects of rescue and, thus, instruments that confirm a theology of retribution.

In the following speech Job complains bitterly to his supposed comforters that they have not faced up to his situation. Indeed, they have withheld kindness and acted treacherously towards him (6:14-17). They distance themselves from him because they are threatened by

his circumstances (6:21). To portray the depth of his sense of betrayal and abandonment by his friends (though it is curious that only Eliphaz has spoken thus far), Job characterises them saying they would even cast lots for the יָתוֹם and bargain over their friend (6:27). In this context, then, the orphan is referenced in order to evoke abandonment and abuse.

The next use of poverty language is in two references in Zophar's second speech, which function as part of a lengthy poem on the fate of the wicked. In so doing he follows Eliphaz (15:17-35) and Bildad (18:5-21) who both discuss the fate of the wicked, which is a dominant motif in the second cycle, which paves the way for the third cycle.[949]

Any exultation and happiness enjoyed by the wicked, claims Zophar, is fleeting (20:5) and the godless person will soon be forgotten forever (20:6-9). Such will be his ignominious demise that his children will look to the poor (דַּל) for favour (20:10). Though initially sweet on his lips his evil will turn sour in his stomach and his ill-gotten gains will bring him no satisfaction and he will end up giving them back (20:12-18). In 20:19 Zophar reminds Job why such a dramatic fate awaits the wicked person:

כִּי־רָצַץ עָזַב דַּלִּים בַּיִת גָּזַל וְלֹא יִבְנֵהוּ׃

For he crushed and abandoned the poor; he seized a house he did not build

The speech finishes with continued predictions of doom for the wicked at divine hands. Indeed, it is his portion and heritage from God (20:20-29).

For Zophar the poor function within the past and future of the wicked. They are both victims of his wicked schemes, but also beneficiaries of his downfall and a relative measure of how far the mighty fall. Behind the radical reversal of fortunes of the wicked is God himself, a guarantor of just order in the world.

Zophar's reintroduction of the poverty theme occurs at an important juncture in the development of the dialogue. Indeed, he seems to provide a new and potentially game-changing line of attack for Job.[950] It seems that the dialogue reaches a turning point at this

[949] Newsom, 'Job', p. 446.

[950] Pleins, *Social Visons*, p. 489: 'Ironically, by raising the wealth issue, Zophar has unwittingly provided Job with the means to launch a frontal assault on the increasingly encircling arguments of the friends.' Pleins also speaks of the 'wealth question' as a 'catalyst' for Job's argument; p. 488. He also detects in the book of Job a commitment to 'solidarity with the poor', which is exemplified in this section of the book: 'at the point where their success seems assured, where Job seems hopelessly trapped, the friends provide Job with a way of escape that deconstructs their entire system of thought. The friends are exposed as liars. If we fail to keenly observe the juxtaposition and movement of these speeches, we risk missing the question of wealth as a turning point. By introducing solidarity with the poor as a way out of

stage. Following the intensification of the theme of the fate of the wicked by all three friends, it may appear as if they now have the clinching argument. Job responds by declaring in ch. 21 that the Emperor has no clothes. The wicked do indeed prosper and are not consigned to a miserable fate. Reversing the contentions of the friends, the wicked pass through life enjoying longevity, power, family, security, prosperity, joy, peace and a timely, contended end (21:7-13).[951] All this occurs despite rejecting God and his ways (21:14-16). The friends, Job declares, are naive and do not pay attention to what is observed far and wide: the wicked not only avoid retribution for their evil deeds; they prosper (21:29-33).

The dialogue, it seems, has now reached a tipping point for Job and his interlocutors, arriving at the heart of the issue.[952] In defending an orthodox view of retribution the friends have asserted that God punishes wrongdoing and vindicates the suffering. Job now directly repudiates that basic assumption of moral order. It is not that Job thinks this should not be how the world works. Rather, he claims that God is not consistent in, or faithful to his design of moral governance.

This is all too much for Eliphaz who, in the opening speech of the third cycle employs the treatment of the poor in a diatribe against Job. The gloves are now off. Job, he contends, must have behaved abominably in the past to be experiencing his current level of suffering (22:4-5). Job must have exerted his power with great cruelty towards the indebted, the naked, the weary and the hungry (22:6-8; cf. 29:11-17 and 31:16-23) and must even have abused the widow and orphan:

אַלְמָנוֹת שִׁלַּחְתָּ רֵיקָם וּזְרֹעוֹת יְתֹמִים יְדֻכָּא׃

You have sent away widows empty, and the arms of orphans were crushed. (22:9)

As with Zophar in ch. 20, for Eliphaz the mistreatment of the poor and vulnerable seems particularly heinous, positioned as it is at the culmination of a list of crimes. While Zophar was describing the actions of the wicked in general that lead to their demise, Eliphaz speaks of these abuses as the assumed wicked deeds of Job. In the theme of wealth, poverty and injustice Eliphaz at last finds the explanation for Job's suffering.[953] They are the only explanation for the calamities he has experienced. God has done this to Job as punishment

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the trap, the writer of the book of Job, as Gutiérrez so persuasively observes, has achieved a real breakthrough on the question of human suffering'; p. 490.

[951] Contrast the themes of strength (21:7, contra 15:29-34; 18:5-7; 20:6-11); the secure and fruitful household (21:8-11, contra 18:14-15, 19; 20:10, 28); multiplied wealth (21:10, contra 15:29; 20:10, 15); happiness, security and a peaceful death (21:9-14, contra 15:21, 30; 18:13-14; 20:23-25); Newsom, *Contest*, p. 162.

[952] Cf. Houston, p. 127.

[953] Pleins, *Social Visions*, p. 488.

for his presumed wickedness (22:10-11). He then reasserts the clear moral governance of God in the world in relation to the wicked and the righteous and disapproves of Job's questioning of this (22:12-20). In keeping with his interest in hope for Job (cf. Job 5:17-21) Eliphaz reiterates that there is a way out for his suffering friend: submit to God and you will be restored (22:21-30).

Job opens the third speech cycle by yearning for an encounter with God for vindication, despite the terror of such a meeting (23:1-17). The second part of that speech has a dense concentration of poverty language (אֶבְיוֹן x 2; עָנִי x 3; יָתוֹם x 2; אַלְמָנָה x 2) and forms Job's most intense questioning of God's moral governance in the world. Why does God refrain from bringing timely, just judgments on the wicked? (24:1). His evidence for this is the plight of the poor and vulnerable, and the unanswered abuse of the wicked. His points are made concrete in a particularly poignant description of the poor and their abuse.[954] The wicked move landmarks and seize flocks, exploiting the widow and orphan (24:2-3). The אֶבְיוֹן are thrust out of the way by the wicked and the עָנִי are forced to hide (24:4), thereby making them eke out a meagre existence on the margins of society, without even adequate clothing or shelter (24:4-8). In a parenthesis Job then declares that

יִגְזְלוּ מִשַּׁד יָתוֹם וְעַל־עָנִי יַחְבֹּלוּ׃

There are those who seize the orphan from the breast, and take a pledge against the poor.

How could God allow such a thing to go unpunished? These wretched people work for others for little return (24:10-11). God must hear their groaning but he does nothing (24:12). Alongside the terrible plight of the poor are the equally outrageous habits of the wicked. Job highlights the evil attitudes and actions of the wicked. They rebel against the light (24:12), kill the אֶבְיוֹן and עָנִי (24:14), and love the darkness (24:15-17). He also notes how the wicked do wrong to the childless woman and do no good to the אַלְמָנָה (24:21). The difficult passage 24:18-25 follows Job's train of thought in a series of imprecations against the wicked, accompanied by further complaint that God is not intervening in justice with enough consistency.[955] In chs. 3 and 31 Job curses his origins and his future; here in ch. 24, he curses

[954] It is difficult to disagree with Gutiérrez who goes as far as to say this passage includes 'the most radical and cruel description of the wretchedness of the poor that is to be found in the Bible'; p. 32. Cf. Grenzer, p. 229.

[955] The broader passage of 24:18-24 seems strange on the lips of Job in that it appears to express views closer to the friends. For a thorough survey of the issues see, for example, Lo, pp. 104-126. Lo demonstrates how Job's statements in 24:18-25 seem more in line with his friends' ideas, and in direct contradiction with his own, especially those voiced in ch. 21 and, most immediately, 24:1-17. She then reviews the strategies commentators use for accounting for this

the wicked and, in so doing, appeals to God to act according to his own just character. The irony is that this should not be so. Why should Job need to remind God of his responsibilities?

For Job the poor in ch. 24 function as a case study in the inattentiveness of God to the moral order of the world. They are victims of oppressors who are not held to account by God. Job's focus at this point suggests that his experience of suffering has now developed his awareness of the plight of others in a more intense and personal way, giving him a solidarity with his 'many counterparts in adversity'.[956] Indeed, it may even be said that Job has a new perspective and a new sense of obligation to speak out on behalf of the poor and despised, now that he relates more fully with them.[957]

What becomes apparent is that Job and his friends are speaking of wholly different perceptions of reality. His offer of 'counter-narratives' that expose the clichéd, iconic narratives of the friends with regards to the fate of the wicked suggest that the plight of the

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which range from: (1) the passage is a pious gloss and should be removed (as with Peake, p. 230); (2) the passage is an independent poem of the author (Habel, pp. 357-358, though he considers Zophar to be the most likely candidate if it were to be attributed to one of the friends); (3) the passage belongs to one of the friends (P. van der Lugt assigns it to Bildad; *Rhetorical Criticism and the Poetry of the Book of Job* [Leiden: Brill, 1995], pp. 284-285; whereas Dhorme, pp. 386-393, and Pope, pp. 173-174, understand it as the speech of Zophar); (4) the passage continues Job's speech but, in part at least, includes a quotation of his friends' views (Gordis, *Job*, pp. 532-534, ESV); (5) the passage is all Job's speech (Newsom, 'Job', pp. 511-512, and Hartley, *Job*, pp. 350-351, for example, read the verbs in vv. 18ff as curses upon the wicked). For Lo all of these views are based on the assumption 'that Job's expression of ideas should remain constant throughout the speech cycles'; p. 118. She notes Habel's observation of repeated catchwords throughout the chapter: גָּזַל, for example, in vv. 2, 9 and 19, or יָקוּם in vv. 14 and 22 (see also דרך in vv. 11 and 18; רעה in vv. 2 and 21; and אַלְמָנָה in vv. 3 and 21); pp. 355-357. Acknowledging that this in itself is not conclusive, demonstrated not least by Habel's preference to read vv. 18-24 as Zophar's speech, Lo develops the case for the unity of ch. 24 by drawing on the rhetorical impact of Job's contradictory sayings as seen, for example, in Job's fear of, and desire for a confrontation with God in ch. 23; Lo, pp. 120-126. However it remains difficult to see how Job can be meaning to affirm both a critique of, and a vote of confidence in God's justice. Newsom argues both for the idea of curses but also for an understanding that moves beyond what Job actually says to the rhetorical impact of Job using the language of the friends; cf. 'Job', pp. 511-512; *Contest*, pp. 165-167. Though with some merit in its nuancing of the discussion it is not a straightforward argument. Long considers vv. 18-25 to be a poem by Job on 'the *eventual* fate of the wicked' but this seems to resolve the tensions too easily; V.P. Long, 'On the Coherence of the Third Dialogic Cycle in the Book of Job', in G. Khan and D. Lipton, eds, *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 113-125 (p. 118). His italics.

No single view, therefore, is without its complications. As indicated above, my own view on this complex issue is to read the passage with those who consider the passage to be including a series of curses on the wicked (though these authors differ on the precise occurrences of such curses); Newsom, 'Job', pp. 511-512; Hartley, *Job*, pp. 350-351; Anderson, p. 214; Wilson, p. 275; Balentine, p. 371. This seems to make the most sense of the flow of Job's thought and emotion in the context of the preceding passage.

[956] Gutiérrez, p. 31.

[957] Míguez-Bonino, p. 9; Gutiérrez, p. 32: 'Job now sees that the question being debated does not concern him alone. This realization gives new vigor to the protest of supposedly "patient" Job'. Cf. Ceresko, p. 185; Ruíz Pesce, n.p.

poor illustrates not just an exception to the rule, but a statement of a more universal truth that God does not seem to intervene as mechanically as was thought.[958]

Bildad's final contribution is short and concentrates on the finitude and weakness of humanity in comparison with God (25:1-6). Job follows this with a speech on the unsearchable and powerful nature of God and his ways (26:1-14) and a restatement of his conviction that he is in the right (27:1-6). He concludes with a wish that the fate of his enemy be like that of the wicked (27:7). Addressing his friends once more he pre-empts anything Zophar might say by issuing a parody of a speech on the fate of the wicked, thereby demonstrating the breakdown in the dialogue.[959] Albeit a parody, as part of this final portrait Job declares that the אַלְמָנָה of the wicked man will not weep. In this case, the emphasis seems to be not on poverty, although he does predict that the wicked man (and thereby his widow) will become poor; rather it is on the lack of fond remembrance. Because of the satirical nature of the speech it is reasonable to assume that he does not mean what he says, especially in the light of 21:7-18.

Unlike the poem on wisdom in ch. 28, which contains no references to the poor, Job's final speech has two clear clusters of material on poverty, 29:11-17 and 31:13-23.[960] In chs. 29-31 Job returns to the poverty theme reintroduced by Zophar and developed by Eliphaz and himself and casts it in the context of justice.[961]

Job's final defence begins with recalling his life prior to the calamities. He was blessed by God and enjoyed much respect among his community (29:1-11). The reason for his favoured social standing was his treatment of the poor and vulnerable: he rescued the helpless עָנִי and יָתוֹם (29:12); received blessing from the one about to perish and caused the heart of the אַלְמָנָה to sing (29:13); he met the needs of the אֶבְיוֹן and vulnerable, whoever they were and whatever their needs (29:15-17). Indeed, he clothed himself in justice and righteousness, and righteousness clothed itself with Job (29:14).[962] Because of his standing and character Job assumed his life of blessing was to continue uninterrupted (29:18-25). However, as the middle section of his final speech laments, his present condition is radically and tragically different. He is now the object of ridicule of people that formerly were far beneath him

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[958] Houston, p. 127; cf. Newsom, *Contest*, pp. 122-125. And, of course, this is what the friends find so threatening; cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 382.

[959] 'These are persons who finally have no more to say to one another and no desire to hear one another any longer'; Newsom, 'Job', p. 522. As with 24:18-25 the speaker of 27:13-23 has been widely debated. For the view that these are Job's words anticipating (rather sarcastically) those of the friends, and particularly Zophar, see Newsom, 'Job', p. 522; Janzen, p. 185; Good, pp. 288-289; Alden, pp. 261, 265; Balentine, pp. 406-410.

[960] As with ch. 24, this material will be treated in considerably more depth below.

[961] Pleins, *Social Visions*, p. 489.

[962] See discussion on this verse below.

socially and economically (30:1-15).[963] In the final section of ch. 30 Job focuses on his turmoil in relation to God. He is in a wretched condition (30:16-19). He cries out to God but receives no answer; indeed he is persecuted by God rather than helped (30:20-23). What seems so unfair to Job is that he is being denied from God the compassion and help Job himself gave to the suffering, including the אֶבְיוֹן. His is a truly abject state, despite the solidarity he had with the poor and vulnerable (30:24-31).[964]

Job concludes his defence with a series of curses upon himself for crimes he denies committing, which (at least partially) deny Eliphaz's charges in 22:1-9.[965] He has not acted lustfully (31:1) or been deceitful (31:5). He has kept his heart and his ways pure (31:7-12). He has treated his slaves justly (31:13-15) and provided for all manner of poor and vulnerable people including the דַּל, the אַלְמָנָה, the יָתוֹם and the אֶבְיוֹן (31:16-23). He has not placed his trust in wealth or fallen into idolatry (31:24-29). He refrained from gloating over or wishing for the misfortune of his enemies, and sought to offer hospitality to the stranger (31:29-32). He did not conceal his sin or misuse the land or its workers (31:33-34; 38-40). If only he could encounter God and gain an answer to his suffering! (31:35-37).

The poor and vulnerable feature significantly in these final parts of Job's main contribution to the book. On the surface their main function seems to be to illustrate Job's integrity: he has treated them well, defending them and providing for them. While the material on poverty in ch. 29 focuses on Job's 'interfering with the relationship between client and patron where that had descended into exploitation', in ch. 31 he concentrates on 'his conduct of relationships with his own dependents'.[966]

However, through this they function as a point of contention between Job and God, illustrating the deep ambiguity of his situation. Unlike in chapter 24 where their plight seems to evidence a lack of coherence in God's governance of the world, in chs. 29-31 Job's treatment of the poor and vulnerable demonstrate Job's plight. Job's perception of God's treatment of him is in marked contrast to his own treatment of the unfortunate. In setting it up this way Job aims to expose the mismatch between how God should treat Job, and how he does treat him.

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[963] Houston's depiction of those taunting Job in 30:1-15 seems overly dismissive: 'To give *them* charity would be a breach of justice rather than an instance of it: they stand altogether outside the community in which justice is meaningful. Who precisely might fill this role in the real world, and why, is uncertain'; p. 129. His italics. Rather, I would understand them as literary figures whose company with and attitude towards Job depict the heights from which he has fallen.

[964] Gutiérrez, pp. 40, 42.

[965] ibid., p. 41.

[966] Houston, p. 129.

With the words of Job ended, in the dialogue section at least, Elihu takes centre stage and gives his own perspective on the situation in chs. 32-37. Having listened to the preceding debate out of deference to his superiors, Elihu can keep silent no longer (32:1-22). He considers Job to be at fault in the way he has spoken about God (33:8-13) and suggests that God uses suffering to rebuke mankind and bring him back to repentance and righteousness (33:15-33). In light of Job's challenges of God's moral governance, Elihu seeks to reassert the justice of God. God does not act wickedly or commit wrongdoing; rather he acts justly towards humanity (34:1-37). Indeed, he shows no partiality towards the rich over and against the דַּל because they are all created by him (34:19). Moreover, he punishes the wicked for their misdeeds and wrong attitudes: they caused the דַּל and the עָנִי to cry out, and so he hears them and takes action on their behalves (34:26-28). Elihu acknowledges that oppression happens, but looks on with praise as he sees God intervening; and even when God appears to be inactive, who are we to question him? (34:39-30).[967]

Following a dismissal of what he sees as Job's overly-inflated view of his own place before God (35:1-16) Elihu returns to a meditation on the greatness of God. In his might he brings the wicked to account and defends the עָנִי (36:5-6). While giving the wicked the chance to change their ways he will exact justice if they refuse to do so (36:9-12). Again, Elihu sees suffering as a potential method of communication from God, opening the ears of the עָנִי through their affliction (36:15). He then exhorts Job to respond correctly to his plight: he should choose the path of praise rather than the path of iniquity (36:17-24).

The remainder of Elihu's material focuses on the grandeur of God in relation to creation, which he feels should be the proper object of Job's attention (37:14). His final conclusion is that, because of the inviolability of God's justice, mankind should fear him and not think of their own wisdom too highly (37:23-24).

As noted above, poverty language does not occur in either the divine speeches or the book's Epilogue.[968] However, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Yahweh's speeches do shape how the book as a whole should be understood. Ultimately Job is led through his encounter with Yahweh to a place of acceptance that he is not equipped to tell God how he should govern the universe. However, this does not and should not negate the legitimacy of

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[967] Pleins, *Social Visions*, pp. 495-496: 'For the writer, the language of praise can reach into the world of suffering and social injustice… The language of praise and creation permits crying out to God for justice, but it does not permit condemning God for inaction… the language of worship does not supply an "answer" or a "reason" for suffering. Instead, worship molds a posture toward that suffering and toward God in the midst of suffering, the posture of anxious waiting'.

[968] Although, see the discussion in chapter four of this thesis on the term, מִשְׁפָּטִי in Job 40:8.

his complaints and questions. Yahweh still considers Job to have spoken 'rightly' (42:7), which I take to mean that Job has spoken to God with honesty, even though he has also been presumptuous.[969]

Having painted in broad brushstrokes the ways in which the poverty theme occurs in the flow of the book of Job, I now pay particularly close attention to three passages that contain dense clusters of poverty language: Job 24:1-17; 29:11-17 and 31:13-23. In each case I offer an exegetical analysis, leading to a missional reflection in the light of questions raised in chapter three, and conclusions made in chapter four.

5.4 Exegesis and missional reflection: Job 24:1-17

Job 24:1-17 forms part of a larger speech of Job's in chs. 23-24.[970] While a treatment of the whole of this speech would be instructive, the concentration of poverty language in 24:1-17 commends this smaller unit for more focused analysis.

Following Job's initial question in v. 1, Job 24:1-17 focuses on the wicked actions and attitudes of those who oppress the poor, and the plight of the poor themselves. The theme of poverty is evident throughout, both in the evocative scenes depicted and in the frequency of poverty terms used (אֶבְיוֹן in vv. 4, 14; עָנִי in vv. 4, 9, 14; יָתוֹם in vv. 3, 9; and אַלְמָנָה in v. 3).

Scholars differ over how to divide vv. 1-17, which is due, in part, to the broader discussion of the relationship between these verses and the rest of the chapter.[971] The other main issues are the placement of v. 9 and, to a lesser extent, v. 14c. Thematically, v.9 seems out of place and is much closer to vv. 2-4 than its current context. Hartley, for example, places v. 9 after v. 3 as part of a section on 'Civil Injustice'.[972] Although this seems like a neat solution to the seemingly strange placement, my preference is to retain the current position of v. 9 as I consider its location to be performing a significant function within the flow of the passage. The issue of v. 14c will be addressed when analysing that verse, below.

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[969] Cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 539; Lo, p. 53; Brown, *Character*, p. 112.

[970] See above for a discussion on Job as the speaker of the whole chs. 23-24.

[971] Indeed, Clines goes so far as to say that, because of this, 'a comparison among commentators is not always meaningful.' *Job 21-37,* p. 590. Helpful caveat though this is, some comparative work can be instructive.

[972] The order being: vv. 1-3, 9, 4-8, 10-11. Hartley, *Job*, p. 343. See also Pope, p. 158 who offers an even more complex reconstruction of the passage, including moving v. 14c (as does Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 589) and bringing in v. 21 from later in the chapter; hence his outline is vv. 1-3; 9; 21; 4-8; 10:14b; 15; 14c; 16-17.

The structure to be used in this exegesis reflects a palistrophe as follows[973]:

1 Opening complaint
2-4 Those who act against the poor
5-8 The plight of the poor
9 Reprise: those who act against the poor
10-12 The plight of the poor
13-17 Those who act against the poor

Verse 1 is taken on its own, functioning as it does as an opening rhetorical question, although it could be absorbed into a larger opening section.

A key issue in discerning the overall flow of the passage is the identification of the subjects of verbs, which need to be worked out from the context.[974] The above structure reflects the changes in subject, and treats them as indicators of new units.

As in ch. 3, Job gives a speech that has no stated audience (whether God or his friends).[975] The overall genre of the passage seems to be a complaint in the form of a soliloquy and, although the extent to which it could be described as a disputation is debated, I take it to have an element of disputation in it as well.[976] Minor forms in the text include: lament, (v. 1)[977]; rhetorical questioning (v. 1); and a '*pathetic* description' of the poor (vv. 5-8, 10-12).[978]

The passage continues Job's speech, in which he had earlier expressed a yearning to meet with God so that Job could lay his case before him (23:3-4). Job is confident of the justice of his cause, but fearful of the prospect of such an encounter (23:7, 15-16). Yet despite his terror and the dark mystery he experiences, he refuses to be silenced (23:16-17).

The relationship between 24:1-17 and the rest of the chapter has been debated.[979] As indicated above, I have taken the view that 24:18-25 develops the complaint against God's

[973] Though with different headings, this is the structure adopted, for example, by Wilson, pp. 264-273, and Gordis, *Job*, p. 253.
[974] As observed by N. Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 109. Gordis suggests this anonymity is common in the Wisdom literature, although does not illustrate or elaborate his claim; *Job*, p. 253.
[975] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 591; cf. Good, pp. 278-279.
[976] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 591; Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, p. 35; Habel, p. 356; Janzen, p. 164. For example, Gordis, *Job*, p. 253, places ch. 24 in the ANE genre of complaint with reference to 'the injustice of the world', while Hartley, *Job*, p. 336, describes the chapter as 'a complaint about unjust social conditions'.
[977] Gordis, *Job*, p. 253. Although this is disputed by Habel who sees v. 1 as the opening in a dispute rather than a lament; p. 356.
[978] Both suggested by Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 591. His italics.
[979] See the discussion in the synopsis of the whole book above.

inaction, and also includes a series of curses that attempt to prompt God to intervene against the wicked.

Job 24:1 Opening complaint

1 מַדּוּעַ מִשַּׁדַּי לֹא־נִצְפְּנוּ עִתִּים וְיָדְעוּ לֹא־חָזוּ יָמָיו׃

Why are times of judgment[980] not kept by[981] the Almighty?

And why do those who know him not see his days[982]?

Building on ch. 23 in which he sees God (and his justice) as inaccessible, in ch. 24 Job explores the unjust, unvidicated suffering of others to illustrate that he is not alone in his plight, and to illustrate 'God's abdication of responsibility for the world's moral governance' (ch. 21).[983]

Neither Job, nor the exploited poor of this world receive appropriate justice or vindication, and so this depiction of the plight of the poor functions to develop Job's case as one who has been abused and abandoned. Given Yahweh's known commitment to the poor, it is also a challenge to God to say otherwise.

Rather than expecting an answer, Job's preliminary מַדּוּעַ functions as an opening to the complaint or lament.[984] While he may accept that God's punishment of the wicked may not be instantaneous, Job cannot understand why God does not intervene (at the very least!) at regular intervals.[985] Job's focus on 'those who know him' וְיָדְעוּ as the desired witnesses of these undelivered days emphasises (un)vindicated piety.[986]

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[980] 'of judgment' is not present in the Hebrew but is implied by the context.

[981] Many scholars (for example, Newsom, Gordis, Habel, Hartley) prefer the nuance of hiddenness for the term צפן and see the clause as subordinate to the question; hence, Gordis, *Job*, p. 264: 'Why, since times of judgment are not hidden from Shaddai, do His Friends not see His day (of judgment)?'; cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 510; Habel, p. 351; Hartley, *Job*, p. 343. However, Clines sees this as unnecessary, given that the rendering of kept or being 'treasured up' is perfectly permissible and, indeed, has just been employed in Job 23:12; *Job 21-37*, pp. 581-2; cf. Driver and Gray, *Job*, Part 1, p. 206, and Good, p. 278.

[982] That is, of judgment.

[983] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 601. Cf. Balentine, p. 358; Newsom, 'Job', p. 514; Gutiérrez, p. 34: 'Where, then, is God in the midst of it all? Will God be deaf to the prayer of the poor? This time, Job's cry is not simply for himself…'.

[984] See Job 3:12 and 21:7 for similar uses of מַדּוּעַ; cf. Balentine, p. 366; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 601.

[985] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 601; cf. Alden, p. 244; Longman, *Job*, location 7698.

[986] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 602. Clines understands 'knowing God' as esteeming God, rather than simply acknowledging him. The concept is, he suggests, much more common in prophetic texts than

That the righteous do not see God's judgment on the wicked is doubly vexing; it allows the wicked to keep at their evil deeds, and also denies the upright hope and reward for their 'faithful perseverance… Consequently, God's administration of justice seems sporadic, partial, and inconsistent.'[987]

Job 24:2-4 Those who act against the poor

2 גְּבֻלוֹת יַשִּׂיגוּ עֵדֶר גָּזְלוּ וַיִּרְעוּ׃
3 חֲמוֹר יְתוֹמִים יִנְהָגוּ יַחְבְּלוּ שׁוֹר אַלְמָנָה׃
4 יַטּוּ אֶבְיוֹנִים מִדָּרֶךְ יַחַד חָבְאוּ עֲנִיֵּי־אָרֶץ׃

2 The wicked[988] remove landmarks,
they seize flocks and pasture them.
3 They drive away the orphan's donkey,
they take for a pledge the widow's ox.
4 They thrust off the poor from the way,
the poor of the land are utterly[989] driven into hiding.

Job now gives evidence for his initial complaint by offering some examples of unpunished wicked deeds, which would both discourage the pious and embolden the wicked, thus illustrating that 'oppression and criminality flourish on the earth without any discernible sign of God's judgment.'[990]

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in wisdom, and sees its use in Job 24 as highly appropriate, given the subject matter of Job's speech. Similarly, Wilson associates knowing God with 'entering into an intimate experiential relationship with him that involves both reliance and loyalty', and sees a lack of the knowledge of God as the 'greatest condemnation' of Israel, as exemplified in Hos. 4:1; p. 266. Cf. Gordis, *Job*, p. 204.

987 Hartley, *Job*, p. 345.

988 'The wicked' is not found in the Hebrew but is implied in the context.

989 Taking יַחַד as 'altogether, utterly' rather than suggesting that the poor all take flight together (cf. Job 3:18); with Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 583 but contra Driver and Gray, *Job*, Part 1, p. 207; Gordis, *Job*, p. 254; Good, p. 115.

990 Newsom, 'Job', p. 510; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 602. Cf. Good, p. 279; Hartley, *Job*, pp. 345-347; Balentine, p. 367.

To remove someone's גְּבֻלוֹת was a serious offence and meant to assert one's power over a neighbour by absorbing their property into one's own.[991] Whether on the dubiously acquired land or elsewhere, the wicked also seize others' flocks and tend them as if they were their own.

While the victims of the deeds of v. 2 are not stated explicitly, in v. 3 it is the orphan and widow who receive unjust treatment. Without someone to protect them and their property, they have no means of recourse. It is likely in both cases that the animals are seized because of debt, either initially as a pledge or following a defaulting on payment.[992] In any case, to take them away from the orphan and widow was to remove a basic means of survival, and was considered to be an act of the worst kind of injustice.[993]

In v. 4 the poor (both אֶבְיוֹן and עֲנִי) are denied the right to go freely about their business in public, being (perhaps violently) forced to leave the road and also driven into hiding.[994] Thus the attitude and acts of the wealthy wicked force the poor into hiding.[995] Their place in society is marginalised to make way for the greed and excesses of the wealthy. But who is challenging these abhorrent social structures that allow or even encourage this to happen?

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[991] Describing it as 'an assault on the social stability of the community', Newsom rightly sees a significance in the range of ways in which the issue is discussed, in 'laws (Deut 19:14), covenant curses (Deut 27:17), prophetic denunciations (Hos 5:10), and wisdom teachings (Prov 22:28; 23:10)'; 'Job', p. 510. Clines notes that this would have been achieved with the 'tacit approval' of the community, which adds a disquieting structural element to this case of abuse; *Job 21-37*, p. 602; D.J.A. Clines, 'Quarter Days Gone: Job 24 and the Absence of God', in *On the Way to Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967-1998*, Vol 2, ed. by D.J.A. Clines, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 801-819 (p. 806). Originally published in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. by T. Linafelt and T.K. Beal (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), pp. 242-58.

[992] Hartley, *Job*, p. 346. He cites Deut. 24:6 as a prohibition against this kind of activity. Clines suggests that v. 2 is also connected with peasant debt; *Job 21-37*, p. 603; cf. Wilson, p. 267.

[993] Habel, p. 359; Newsom, 'Job', p. 510; Longman, *Job*, location 7698; Whybray, *Job*, pp. 109-110. The implied characterisation of the wicked so far suggests that these evildoers are not opportunists or petty criminals acting on their own, but 'people of the same community as the poor, people who are careless of ancestral custom, public opinion, and divine displeasure'; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 603. As noted above, they are enabled to do these things by the system at work in that society; cf. Wilson, p. 268.

[994] Gordis, *Job*, p. 265; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 604. Gordis detects either violence or the threat of violence here. Cf. Habel, p. 359. As with the previous verses, there is a subtle undercurrent of sanctioned, structural threat to the poor. Their fear is not for being set upon by opportunist criminals. Rather, they are afraid of the powerful in their midst who will (literally) add insult to injury by treating them with such callous contempt and, in this context, may cause great psychological damage as a result: '[It is as if] their very presence in society is a standing inducement to their oppressors to fasten upon them. It may also be a sign of self-effacement, as if they had internalized the scorn of their oppressors for them and had come to feel themselves unworthy members of society.' Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 604.

[995] Habel depicts them as being 'compelled to leave the mainstream of society and eke out an existence in the hidden corners of their community'; p. 359; cf. Alden, p. 246.

Job 24:5-8 The plight of the poor

5 הֵן פְּרָאִים בַּמִּדְבָּר יָצְאוּ בְּפָעֳלָם מְשַׁחֲרֵי לַטָּרֶף עֲרָבָה לוֹ לֶחֶם לַנְּעָרִים׃
6 בַּשָּׂדֶה בְּלִילוֹ יַקְצִירוּ וְכֶרֶם רָשָׁע יְלַקֵּשׁוּ׃
7 עָרוֹם יָלִינוּ מִבְּלִי לְבוּשׁ וְאֵין כְּסוּת בַּקָּרָה׃
8 מִזֶּרֶם הָרִים יִרְטָבוּ וּמִבְּלִי מַחְסֶה חִבְּקוּ־צוּר׃

5 See[996], wild asses in the steppe country,
they go out to their toil,
foraging for food,
the desert yields[997] for him food for his children.
6 They reap in a field that is not theirs[998],
they glean in a wicked man's vineyard.
7 They spend the night naked, without clothing,
they have no covering against the cold.
8 By the rain of the mountains they are drenched,
and without shelter they cling to the rock.

In rather stylised language, Job moves from the actions of the wicked against the poor to a more concentrated depiction of their resultant plight with a focus on survival.[999] Having been stripped of the means to generate their own income, the poor must forage for food in places usually associated with animals searching for food, thus capturing 'the social and economic exclusion of the poor'.[1000] This image also seems apt as a metaphor for the meagre existence of the poor in the context of their work in the fields and vineyards of unscrupulous landowners.[1001] Not only have the poor lost their property and must endure (at best) a negligible wage while they increase the wealth of the wicked, in vv. 7-8 Job describes them as without clothing and shelter. While an initial reading may suggest they have literally no

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[996] 'See' is preferred for the הֵן opening v. 5 as it is in keeping with the dismal and shocking portrait of the poor. It has been taken as 'they' or could even be emended to הֵיךְ, 'like'. For a discussion on this question see Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 583, although it seems moot.

[997] Not in the Hebrew but implied.

[998] Emending בְּלִילוֹ to בְּלִי־לוֹ, with Gordis, *Job*, pp. 265-266, who explains the singular form as a 'petrified form'; cf. Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 584.

[999] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 605; cf. Habel, p. 359; Wilson, p. 268.

[1000] Newsom, 'Job', p. 510. The wild ass, or 'onager', seems like an apt metaphor, known as it was for its 'ceaseless search for food'; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 605. Cf. Job 38:8; cf. Habel, p. 359.

[1001] Clines, *Job 21-37*, pp. 605-6; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 347; Wilson, pp. 268-269. Also with Clines, Q. עָקְצוֹרוּ, 'they harvest' seems preferable; see *Job 21-37*, p. 584.

clothing and cling to a rock in the midst of a storm, a more likely meaning is that the poor lack an outer garment and find shelter amongst the rocks.[1002] The use of the singular צוּר here may imply 'an ironic allusion'[1003] or 'added sting'[1004] to the tradition of God as a rock, a refuge and protector in difficult times and for the poor (Pss. 18:3 ET 2; 62:3 ET 2; Deut. 32:15; cf. Isa. 25:4).

Job 24:9 Reprise: those who acts against the poor

9 יִגְזְלוּ מִשֹּׁד יָתוֹם וְעַל־עָנִי יַחְבֹּלוּ׃

The wicked[1005] snatch the orphan from the breast,
and seize the child[1006] of the poor as a pledge

Changing the referent for 'they' from the poor to the wicked, and returning to the theme of actions by the wicked against the poor, v. 9 seems to disrupt the flow of its surrounding verses. However, this need not mean that v. 9 is displaced.[1007] Rather, as the focal point of the palistrophe, I choose to see it as a 'reprise', breaking in with a former theme in an especially stark way. In this verse Job selects the worst instance of callousness to explain the extent of the wickedness in the world and, hence, the extent of God's supposed lack of proper governance.

As before, the language of exploitation seems tied to the abusive extremes of the debt system. The striking language of the nursing child being snatched seems hyperbolic, emphasizing once again the dismal plight and suffering of the poor alongside the wickedness of those who prey upon the vulnerable.[1008]

[1002] Clines, *Job 21-37*, pp. 606-607; Wilson, p. 269; Hartley, *Job*, p. 347; Alden, p. 247. It is worth speculating whether the poor person has also lost this garment because of wicked creditor, *contra* Deut. 23:10-13.

[1003] Habel, p. 339

[1004] Newsom, 'Job', pp. 510-511; cf. Balentine, p. 368: 'If they expect God to be the "Rock"… of their salvation… they will be sorely disappointed, for the "rock"… they embrace provides neither companionship nor protection.'

[1005] As has often been the case in this passage, the subject of the verbs is not identified, although it is clearly the wicked.

[1006] Reading וְעֵל instead of וְעַל, as proposed by *BHS*; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 585; Gordis, *Job*, p. 266; Driver and Gray, Part 2, p. 167.

[1007] As suggested for example, by Hartley, *Job*, p. 344, and Pope, p. 160, who both places it after v. 3.

[1008] Wilson, pp. 269-270; Habel, pp. 359-360; Hartley, *Job*, p. 347; Newsom, 'Job', p. 511. It should also be noted that, as in v. 2, Job is complaining about the community or system that legitimates and facilitates this practice, rather than just unscrupulous individuals; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 608.

Job 24:10-12 The plight of the poor

10 עָרֹום הִלְכוּ בְּלִי לְבוּשׁ וּרְעֵבִים נָשְׂאוּ עֹמֶר׃
11 בֵּין־שׁוּרֹתָם יַצָהִירוּ יְקָבִים דָּרְכוּ וַיִּצְמָאוּ׃
12 מֵעִיר מְתִים יִנְאָקוּ וְנֶפֶשׁ־חֲלָלִים תְּשַׁוַּע וֵאֱלֹוהַ לֹא־יָשִׂים תִּפְלָה׃

10 The poor[1009] go about naked, without clothing,
starving, even as[1010] they carry sheaves.
11 Among the olive groves of the wicked[1011] they make oil,
they tread the wine presses but suffer thirst.
12 From the city the dying[1012] groan,
and the souls of the fatally wounded cry for help,
but God does not charge anyone with wrong.[1013]

Echoing his similar complaint in vv. 5-8, Job laments the pitiful working conditions and meagre existence of the poor labourers. In even sharper, ironic tones he portrays a certain societal evil by juxtaposing the hunger of the poor with the plenty that surrounds them; indeed, that they have a hand in producing.[1014] Despite their hard work, they are denied a share in the staples of grain, oil and wine, which were representative of God's blessed provision of the land.[1015] They are worse off than the oxen, alongside whom they work, or the visiting neighbour who does not work on the land but may still benefit from it (Deut. 25:4; 23:25-26, ET 24-25).[1016]

Job's sweeping generalisations about the plight of the poor labourer should be seen in the context of his original contention in v. 1. His complaint is not that every landowner is

[1009] Although not explicit, the change of subject is clear from the context.
[1010] 'even as' is added to make the ironic juxtaposition more explicit.
[1011] Literally, 'their olive groves' but given the context these groves must also belong to wicked.
[1012] Reading מְתִים (men) as מֵתִים (dying); Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 586; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 348; Driver and Gray, Part 2, p. 168; Gordis, *Job*, p. 267.
[1013] Literally, 'but God does not set wrongdoing/folly', meaning either that God does not impute the wicked with wrongdoing, or that he does not 'set' the wrongdoing to his heart; cf. Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 586; Gordis, *Job*, p. 267; Hartley, *Job*, p. 348; Newsom, 'Job', p. 511.
[1014] Habel, p. 360; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 608: 'That some people should be able to starve in the midst of plenty is an especial injustice in the social structure.' Cf. Gutiérrez, p. 34: 'The injustice is even more scandalous because the poor who lack everything and suffer hunger and thirst are the very ones who work to produce for others the food they cannot have for themselves. There is no respect for their basic right to life, though this is the foundation of all justice.'
[1015] Hartley, *Job*, p. 348. See Clines, *Job 21-37*, pp. 608-609, for the significance of the harvests.
[1016] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 609; Newsom, 'Job', p. 511.

oppressive but that, in general, society and (much more significantly for Job) God himself look on while the poor are exploited and denied the proper means for survival.[1017] Job's current argument could be summed up in v. 12. The poor are as good as dead. They groan (נאק) and cry out (שׁבע).[1018] Yet despite the pitiful conditions of the poor and the violation of justice as seen in the exploitation of the poor, Job contends that God does not act. In answer to his question in v. 1, Job suggests that God does not act because he does not perceive that there is anything wrong with the world.[1019] For Job, God seems complicit in the social wickedness he has reflected upon, because by refusing to punish its perpetrators as committing wrongdoing, he is saying that these things do not matter. But, says Job, they matter intensely.

Although his subject echoes certain prophetic texts (for example, Isa. 58) Job does not call on society to mend its ways, but on God to mend his: 'This is the way the world is, says Job, and the real injustice is that God does nothing about it, neither avenging the oppressed nor punishing their oppressors.'[1020] In an ironic echo of 1:22, in which Job refuses to charge God with תִּפְלָה (wrongdoing), Job now questions God on the basis of God's apparent refusal to charge the wicked with תִּפְלָה.[1021]

Having moved from his own experience to the suffering he sees more widely in the world, it seems likely that Job identifies in some way with those he is depicting in this passage.[1022] As Gutiérrez so poignantly puts it,

> Job realizes that his own situation is that of the poor. Where, then, is God in the midst of it all? Will God be deaf to the prayer of the poor? This time, Job's cry is not simply for himself, for he knows that he is part of the world of the poor. It is in that setting that he asks his question, and it carries with it the questions of all those whom he has just recognized as his fellows in misfortune.[1023]

[1017] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 609; Hartley, *Job*, p. 349; Wilson, p. 271.
[1018] Cf. the groaning of the oppressed in Exod. 2:24; 6:5, and of the poor in Ps. 12:6, ET 5); Cf. also Job crying out in 19:7; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 610; Newsom, 'Job', p. 511.
[1019] Newsom, 'Job', p. 511; Balentine, pp. 368-369.
[1020] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 609. For connections here with Exodus, cf. Balentine, p. 369 and, especially, Janzen, pp. 169-171 who sees a critique of the Exodus tradition of God hearing the cries of the oppressed: 'in contrast to Exodus 3, however, God does not think anything is wrong (24:12*c*). Where is the God of the Exodus? Where is the God of the burning bush? Where is *Yahweh*?'; p. 170. His italics.
[1021] Newsom, 'Job', p. 511; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 610.
[1022] Longman, *Job*, location 7773-7774.
[1023] Gutiérrez, p. 34.

Job 24:13-17 Those who act against the poor

13 הֵמָּה הָיוּ בְּמֹרְדֵי־אוֹר לֹא־הִכִּירוּ דְרָכָיו וְלֹא יָשָׁבוּ בִּנְתִיבֹתָיו׃
14 לָאוֹר יָקוּם רוֹצֵחַ יִקְטָל־עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן וּבַלַּיְלָה יְהִי כַגַּנָּב׃
15 וְעֵין נֹאֵף שָׁמְרָה נָשֶׁף לֵאמֹר לֹא־תְשׁוּרֵנִי עָיִן וְסֵתֶר פָּנִים יָשִׂים׃
16 חָתַר בַּחֹשֶׁךְ בָּתִּים יוֹמָם חָתָמוּ־לָמוֹ לֹא־יָדְעוּ אוֹר׃
17 כִּי יַחְדָּו בֹּקֶר לָמוֹ צַלְמָוֶת כִּי־יַכִּיר בַּלְהוֹת צַלְמָוֶת׃

13 They[1024] are among those who rebel against the light,
they do not know its ways,
and they do not frequent its paths.
14 At twilight[1025] the murderer rises,
he kills the poor and needy,
and at night that he may be as the thief.[1026]
15 And the eye of the adulterer watches for dusk,
thinking, ‘no-one will see me’,
and he covers his face.
16 At night he breaks into houses,
by day they seal themselves in.
They do not know the light.
17 For to all of them the morning is as deep darkness,
for they know the terrors of deep darkness.

Continuing his assessment of the corrupt world in which he lives, Job turns to ‘the moral chaos of criminality’ in which the values of light and darkness are reversed by the corrupt.[1027] These particular evildoing enemies of the light break the sixth, seventh and eighth commandments and tend to do so under the cover of darkness.[1028]

In previous verses the wicked have committed their moral wrongdoing largely through the legitimating social systems. In vv. 13-17, however, Job places the wicked in the company of

[1024] That is, the wicked.
[1025] לָאוֹר, ‘at the light’, is taken here as referring to twilight; Hartley, *Job*, p. 348. This seems to fit the context better, with the murderer getting up at twilight evidencing a further reversal of the normal order of things; Newsom, ‘Job’, p. 511; Habel, p. 354; Pope, p. 162.
[1026] Verse 14c is retained here, although the subject matter seems more closely related to the thief of v. 16.
[1027] Newsom, ‘Job’, p. 511; Habel, p. 361; Balentine, p. 361.
[1028] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 610; Balentine, p. 370.

undeniable lawbreakers, thus portraying their legitimated acts of exploitation as no better than the kind of crimes that are acknowledged by all.[1029]

In the context of the present discussion v. 14b is particularly important, continuing as it does the theme of the (mis)treatment of the poor. Clines questions the need to identify the wealth or social standing of the murder victim prior to their death; their victimisation has made them oppressed.[1030] While he is right to conclude that the verse places the wicked of vv. 2-12 in the company of outright lawbreakers, to dilute the identity of the poor and needy in v. 14 seems unnecessary. Verses 2-12 give many and varied ways in which the poor are oppressed; adding their murder to this disturbing list gives Job's rhetoric a final flourish.

To murder the poor and needy is the ultimate act of power over them. Perhaps it might also be said that the various injustices depicted in vv. 2-12 become a slow form of murder. The wicked squeeze the life out of the poor, which ultimately results in murder: 'The daily life of the poor is a dying'.[1031]

The point is that these victims are, 'innocent citizens who are unable to muster any resistance' and whose murder will go unnoticed and unpunished.[1032] And yet God seems to do nothing.

The intense and poignant portrait of the plight of the poor is particularly strong in Job 24:1-17 and exhibits Job's paradigmatic function well. The mistreatment of the poor is a generally observed phenomenon to which Job can appeal, and so his argument has a universal resonance. Job's point is that these things matter and so, I would argue, they matter in mission. As he meditates on the general abuse of the poor, Job himself embodies the movement from the particular to the universal. He now speaks, not only about the injustice of his own situation, but also the injustice of God's apparent inactivity concerning the universally observed mistreatment of the poor. Here is a prime example of Job speaking 'to and for all humanity' concerning the clear disconnect between how things are and how things should be.[1033] In so doing it seems that in Job the book provides a model of advocacy before humanity and, ultimately, before God on behalf of the poor. The suffering of the poor should be named and brought to the attention of those who would choose to ignore it.[1034] Even in the midst of pain the church's participation in the mission of God should include an

[1029] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 611; cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 511, who sees continuity in the passage through the continued victimisation of the vulnerable.
[1030] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 612.
[1031] Gutiérrez, p. 33.
[1032] Hartley, *Job*, p. 350.
[1033] Pope, p. xxxviii.
[1034] Cf. Ruíz Pesce, n.p.

element of such speech. Moreover, it seems precisely because Job's complaints concerning the abuse of the poor arise out of the context of his own wrestling with unattributed suffering, that they have such intensity and power. The text may, therefore, function in formative ways to shape the people of God in and through unattributed suffering in ways that may not occur without these experiences. The missional potential of such costly vulnerabilility speaks not only to the missional potential of submission, but also to the missional potential of complaint.[1035]

5.5 Exegesis and missional reflection: Job 29:11-17

Job's concluding speech, in which he makes a final assertion of his innocence, divides into three clear sections. Chapter 29 focuses on Job's past and portrays his life before the calamities in idealistic imagery. His yearning for former days sets up the stark contrast of ch. 30 which concentrates on his present dire straits. This contrast is regularly alluded to by means of the repeated phrase, 'and now' (וְעַתָּה) in 30:1, 9 and 16.[1036] While Job evokes his past in ch. 31, this passage has more to do with the future, both as the time when the curses he calls upon himself would occur, but also in anticipation of the long-awaited encounter with God.[1037]

In broad terms the speech as a whole can be understood as a soliloquy, although this description should be nuanced to allow for the oddity, for example, of Job's direct address to God in 30:20-23.[1038] As with ch. 3, however, Job's soliloquy in chs. 29-31 has a purpose and an implied audience. Job is intent on eliciting a response from God and in his closing speech he seeks to do just that. The speech moves from a poignant remembrance of his past (ch. 29) to a lament (ch. 30), and finally to an oath of innocence or purification (ch. 31).[1039]

[1035] Contra Waters, who only sees the former; 'Job'.

[1036] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 976; Newsom, 'Job', p. 544; Balentine, p. 453; Habel, p. 417.

[1037] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 976.

[1038] ibid., p. 976. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, p. 39, and Gordis, *Job*, p. 313, for example, both designate it as a soliloquy. Hartley prefers the term, 'avowal of innocence' although he does not seem to contradict the concept of soliloquy; *Job*, p. 385. Not so Habel, who states explicitly, 'Chapters 29–31 are not a soliloquy in which Job reflects on his past and present situation, but a formal testimony'; *Job*, p. 404. Clines helpfully articulates the distinction between the genre and function of the passage, which seems to reconcile these views to some extent; *Job 21-37*, p. 978. This seems to be a helpful clarification. While it may indeed fit the form of soliloquy, Job has not, 'lapsed into an inner world… it is evident that he speaks in order to be heard'; *Job 21-37*, p. 979. Drawing on legal language, Job concludes climaxes his speech at 31:25 which depict it as a deposition and call for response: 'it is the last phase of a process that will force God to reply, a legal procedure that will indeed shortly prove entirely effective'; *Job 21-37*, p. 979. Similarly, Murphy likens Job 29-31 to 'a final statement before a judge'; *Wisdom Literature*, p. 39.

[1039] Designations of the genres of these sub-units vary slightly but exhibit a large degree of commonality: Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, p. 39, for example, suggests an element of

In ch. 29 Job looks back to his past, remembering better times. This recollecting is done using a '*description of an experience*', an unusual form with possible connections to texts such as Song. 3:1-4 and 5:2-7, certain Psalms that reflect on Israel's historical experiences (Pss. 105; 106), or even Prov. 8.[1040]

Job 29:11-17 seems to function as the focal point of the chapter as a whole, the most useful structure being offered by Habel who sets it out as a form of a palistrophe:[1041]

2 Introduction
- 3-6 A Remembrance of Past Blessings
  - 7-10 B Remembrance of Past Honor
    - 11-17 C Remembrance of Past Administration of Justice
  - 18-20 A' Remembrance of Expected Blessings
    - 21-24 B' Remembrance of Past Honor

25 Summation

The framing of the speech with an introduction and summation sets the themes of the chapter in context. The structure as a whole picks up on the key themes of blessing and honour, two grievous losses in Job's life, and these in turn surround the central passage in which he describes the reason for his good standing. This core set of verses can be more fully outlined to demonstrate the focal point still further:[1042]

11 Acclaimed as Good
12-13 Savior of the Oppressed
- 14 Pivot: The Righteous One

15-16 Savior of the Oppressed
17 Ruler Over Evil

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communal complaint (29); complaint (30); and purification oath (31); Hartley, *Job*, p. 385: remembrance of his former abundant life (29); lament (30); and oath of innocence (31); Habel, p. 405: speech of remembrance (29); lament (30); and final oath (31); Wilson, p. 312: longing reflection on a lost past (29); lament for present circumstances (30); and affidavit of innocence (31).

[1040] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 978. His italics; Habel, p. 406. Clines dismisses the Psalms connection as the remembrance there is of God's deeds, whereas Job concentrates mainly on his own acts.

[1041] Habel, pp. 406-407; cf. Alden, p. 282; also, Murphy, who opts for similar units though without identifying the passage as a palistophe; *Wisdom Literature*, p. 38.

[1042] Habel, p. 407. The phrases are Habel's, although he replicates the text below each one.

The exegesis below treats the passage as one unit rather than breaking it down into small subunits. However, the outline above informs the overall message of the text and should therefore play a part in its interpretation. In particular, special attention should be paid to the central verse, 29:14.[1043]

11 כִּי אֹזֶן שָׁמְעָה וַתְּאַשְּׁרֵנִי וְעַיִן רָאֲתָה וַתְּעִידֵנִי׃
12 כִּי־אֲמַלֵּט עָנִי מְשַׁוֵּעַ וְיָתוֹם וְלֹא־עֹזֵר לוֹ׃
13 בִּרְכַּת אֹבֵד עָלַי תָּבֹא וְלֵב אַלְמָנָה אַרְנֵן׃
14 צֶדֶק לָבַשְׁתִּי וַיִּלְבָּשֵׁנִי כִּמְעִיל וְצָנִיף מִשְׁפָּטִי׃
15 עֵינַיִם הָיִיתִי לַעִוֵּר וְרַגְלַיִם לַפִּסֵּחַ אָנִי׃
16 אָב אָנֹכִי לָאֶבְיוֹנִים וְרִב לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי אֶחְקְרֵהוּ׃
17 וָאֲשַׁבְּרָה מְתַלְּעוֹת עַוָּל וּמִשִּׁנָּיו אַשְׁלִיךְ טָרֶף׃

11 When[1044] the ear heard it blessed me,
when the eye saw it approved[1045] of me.
12 For I rescued the poor who cried out,
the orphan who[1046] had none to help[1047] him.
13 The blessing of those about to perish came upon me,
and I caused the heart of the widow to sing for joy.
14 I put on righteousness and it clothed itself with me,[1048]

[1043] Balentine, p. 441: 'At the centre of Job's memory is the conviction that his blessed life was built on relationships cemented by righteousness and justice (v. 14).'

[1044] Translating the כִּי has been a matter of some discussion amongst scholars. It has been taken as 'Indeed' (Gordis, *Job*, p. 320; Hartley, *Job*, p. 390); 'For' (Driver and Gray, Part 1, p. 248), or even left untranslated (Habel, p. 402). 'When' seems a perfectly acceptable rendering (Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 938; Pope, p. 184), although Clines' claim that v. 11 is not the reason for the reactions of vv. 9-10 seems unnecessarily restrictive.

[1045] עוד has the sense of approval (ESV; Habel, p. 402) or commendation (NRSV, Hartley, *Job*, p. 390) but could also suggest a more legal setting (so, Clines, 'it testified for me', *Job 21-37*, p. 929).

[1046] It could be that two different classes of people are in view in v. 12b (the orphan and the one who has no help), as chosen by Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 938. However, the one who does not have help is here understood as the orphan, assuming an explicative function of the ו; see Hartley, *Job*, p. 390. Cf. Pope, p. 185; Gordis, *Job*, p. 320.

[1047] Habel prefers 'deliver' here which is attractive; p. 404. However, the more usual 'help' (as with, for example, Gordis, *Job*, p. 314; Pope, p. 185; Driver and Gray, Part 1, p. 249) is retained although in practice it could easily have this stronger nuance, given the context of Job's argument.

[1048] Many (for example, ESV, NRSV, Hartley, *Job*, p. 390; Gordis, *Job*, p. 314) take וַיִּלְבָּשֵׁנִי as repeating the idea of the first verb; hence, 'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me'. Others, however, understand it as referring to righteousness clothing *itself* with Job, which is the

my justice was like a robe and a turban.

15 I was eyes to the blind,

I was feet to the lame.

16 I was a father to the poor,

and I championed[1049] the cause of the one I did not know.

17 I broke the jawbone[1050] of the wicked,

and caused him to drop his prey from his teeth.

In 29:11-17 Job reflects upon his past efforts to administer justice in his community. Judging by the previous verses, he was held in high esteem by all those around him. This is in part explained as an acknowledgment of his high social standing, which he used to great effect on the behalf of the poor.

Verse 11 opens the section by claiming that Job was resoundingly approved of by those who witnessed him. The honour ascribed to Job, that he is blessed and approved, suggest that he 'embodies the values of the community'.[1051]

This sign of communal respect was important enough to Job that he uses it to headline his acts of righteousness and justice.[1052] In the following verses he gives a number of examples of the kind of acts that have earned this respect, even awe. In so doing, they give a window into the values Job and his community held as particularly worthy.

The first beneficiaries of Job's dispensations of justice are the עָנִי and יָתוֹם, who are said to have cried out (שוע) and been without help (וְלֹא־עֹזֵר לוֹ), respectively. Job claims to have rescued (מלט) them, which seems to function both as a denial of Eliphaz's charge in Job

rendering taken here; cf. Driver and Gray, Part 1, p. 249; Part 2, p. 201; Balentine, p. 442; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 929; Pope, p. 185; Janzen, p. 203.

[1049] With NRSV and Pope, p. 185, חקר is taken as 'championed' rather than the more usual but bland 'studied' (Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 929), 'took up' (Gordis, *Job*, p. 314) or 'investigated' (Habel, p. 402).

[1050] It is not clear whether this refers to the jawbone or teeth (Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 939); jawbone is preferred to give symmetry to the use of teeth in v. 17b; cf. Longman, *Job*, location 8644.

[1051] Newsom, 'Job', p. 539; cf. Houston, p. 129; Balentine, pp. 441-442.

[1052] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 988. Indeed, it appears that 'Job presents his justice as his sole claim for honour in the community, in preference to his wealth or his ancestry'; Houston, p. 129. It is unclear whether the demarcation between those who heard and those who saw implies a distinction between those who witnessed and those who experienced his good deeds. As suggested by Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 988: 'both the beneficiaries and an applauding public are in view.' Regardless, the beneficiaries are certainly in view in the following verses.

22:6-9, while simultaneously exposing what he perceives as God's refusal to do the same for him or the 'wounded' (Job 19:7; 30:20; 24:12).[1053]

Thus Job has acted like an ideal ruler, reversing the fortunes of the vulnerable.[1054]

In v. 13 Job recalls how the one about to perish blessed him.[1055] This could mean that he prevented them from dying (as may have been the case with the poor in v. 12), or that he made their impending death more comfortable, or that just before they die these people thanked Job for all he had done for them.[1056] All three options seem plausible and it is attractive to consider all three as being true. In any case, what is clear is that, with all his power and status, Job was in that privileged place of engaging with people at their most finite and vulnerable. Yet he acknowledges that he too gained from the encounter; indeed, there is a sense in which he was the ultimate recipient from the exchange, receiving the blessing of the one whom he helped.[1057]

Paralleled with the blessing of the one about to perish is the joyful song of the widow. The likely tone of this song is not clear, although it was probably more than her heart being inspired 'to hum a tune joyfully'[1058] and seems more likely to be referring to 'a metaphorical "cry" of heart, greeting a relief from a situation of despair' thanks to Job's provision of food, clothing or protection from creditors.[1059]

At the heart of the passage is a movement from the concrete to the abstract as Job reflects on his intimate acquaintance with righteousness and justice.[1060] The clothing oneself with righteousness metaphor is used elsewhere (for example, Isa. 59:17; Ps. 132:9) and suggests that Job 'adorned himself with this quality, and it brought honor to him, as a costly garment would.'[1061] Righteousness became, as it were, Job's 'public skin' and, combined with the מְעִיל and צָנִיף of his justice, were to communicate the persona appropriate for office.[1062]

[1053] Pope, p. 188; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 988; Habel, p. 410; Anderson, p. 232. Cf. Gutiérrez, p. 41 who sees the complaint to God as added in a related passage in 30:24-25.

[1054] Cf. Ps. 72:1-4, 12-17; Habel, p. 410; Hartley, *Job*, p. 391; Gordis, *Job*, p. 320; Newsom, 'Job', p. 538; Houston, p. 128.

[1055] Perhaps there is a faint, ironic echo here of Job's wife's charge to him in 2:9 to ברך God and die.

[1056] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 988; cf. Alden, *Job*, p. 283; Wilson, p. 317.

[1057] Newsom, 'Job', p. 538; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 391.

[1058] Hartley, *Job*, p. 391.

[1059] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 988.

[1060] Habel, p. 408, notes this change at this 'pivotal' verse. Cf. Houston, p. 129.

[1061] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 988.

[1062] Newsom, 'Job', p. 538; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 989. The robe and turban were thought to symbolize 'one's status, e.g., that of a king (Isa. 62:3) or a high priest (Zech. 3:5). While Job presided as elder his clothes witnessed to his complete commitment to justice. Indeed, Job implanted these qualities deep within himself so that they controlled his words and decisions'; Hartley, *Job*, p. 391.

Verse 14b is of particular note, functioning as a 'rhetorical flourish' to the already lofty claim that Job adorned himself in righteousness and justice.[1063] What is more, he contends, righteousness actually clothed itself with him. Given the oddness of this phrase, it is perhaps unsurprising that commentators and translators have often tended to render this in a way that makes a similar point to the first half of the stich.[1064]

Explanations for the phrasing are provided by a few, older scholars. Driver and Gray, for example, expand on their translation with, 'it filled or possessed me'.[1065] Gesenius explains, 'I am covered without with righteousness as a garment, and within it wholly fills me.'[1066] Strahan calls it, 'a fine expression, meaning that righteousness made itself visible in me–one might almost say, embodied or incarnated itself in me', a concept suggested by Peake as well.[1067]

Clines is not convinced by most of these explanations, concluding that, 'it is rather that righteousness itself became more glorious, more noticeable and acclaimed, through adopting Job as its outward form, making itself visible in Job (Strahan).'[1068]

Reference is often made in the discussion to Judg. 6:34 in which the Spirit of Yahweh is said to clothe itself with Gideon (וְרוּחַ יְהוָה לָבְשָׁה אֶת־גִּדְעוֹן).[1069]

In my view Clines dismisses too readily the suggestions of others, which all contribute to the overall idea being put across by Job. It is not just that Job 'put on' his ethical values; rather, they penetrated, saturated and possessed him. To see Job was to see righteousness. His claim, hyperbole though it may have been, was that righteousness was incarnated or embodied in him.

In the final three verses of the section (vv. 15-17) Job highlights further case studies in his implementation of righteousness and justice. It is perhaps notable that, having talked in incarnational terms for the way righteousness has clothed itself with him, Job now incarnates or contextualises himself according to the needs he perceives. He himself embodies what is lacking. His language is 'personal and intimate', taking on the form of need in each case

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[1063] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 989.
[1064] See textual note above.
[1065] Driver and Gray, Part 1, p. 249. They further elaborate, 'I wore righteousness and righteousness wore me.'
[1066] W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, translated by S.P. Tregelles (London: S. Bagster and Sons, 1857), p. 430.
[1067] J. Strahan, *The Book of Job Interpreted* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), p. 246; A.S. Peake, *Job*, Revised edn (Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1905), p. 256: 'as we might say, became incarnate in me.'
[1068] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 989.
[1069] As cited, for example, in ibid., p. 989.

(eyes for the blind and feet to the lame), and evoking the parental metaphor to conceptualise his assistance to the poor.[1070]

However, the language of vv. 15-16 is not simply 'pious sentiment… but rather a forceful expression of Job's capacity to protect the interests of such people in the court and the community at large.'[1071] As the father was the economic and legal linchpin of the family unit, by taking on this persona, Job was stepping into the essential power role that ensured the protection and survival of those who in effect became his dependents.[1072] This was economic reality, not just literary artistry.

Job's ethics, suggests v. 16b, also went well beyond the call of duty in that he took up the cause of the stranger or outsider.[1073] Again, Job embodies Israel's ethics in his distribution of righteousness and justice. As noted briefly above, the גֵּר (who is presumably in view here) was often set alongside other marginal groups in Israel, and so it fits that Job mentions dealing with them, especially as they were vulnerable in comparable ways to the orphan and widow.

The incarnation of righteousness and justice in Job could manifest itself as 'a protective rage' against the victimisation of the weak, as depicted, for example, in v. 17 where Job took on the wicked 'beasts' by establishing justice and nullifying their power.[1074]

The missional significance of Job 29:11-17 follows two related themes. First, the passage continues Job's complaint to God, which I have depicted as functioning paradigmatically for universal questions. The imagery that Job employs in vv. 11-17 resembles that used of Yahweh in his dealing with the vulnerable and their oppressors. Indeed, 'The values and identity that Job articulates for himself are very similar to those Israel attributed to God.'[1075] This seems particularly prescient in Job 40:10-13 when Yahweh challenges Job to take on a

[1070] Newsom, 'Job', p. 538.
[1071] Habel, p. 411.
[1072] Clines, *Job 21-37*, pp. 989-990.
[1073] ibid., p. 990.
[1074] Newsom, 'Job', p. 539; Habel, p. 411. It should be noticed that vv. 12-17 begins and ends with Job's rescuing, at times with force; Houston, p. 129. Gutiérrez suggests that Job's reflections on the poor in recent speeches now come to his mind and enrich his final monologue: 'He continues to defend his integrity, as he had promised. But because he now has in mind other innocent persons besides himself, his argument is enriched, and his voice changes pitch, as it were. As he recalls his past and the demands made by his God, he shows a clear understanding of the religious meaning of service to the poor'; p. 39.
[1075] Newsom, 'Job', p. 539. She elaborates, 'God, too, is a champion of the oppressed (Deut 24:17-22; Prov 23:10-11), a father to the orphan and protector of widows (Ps 68:5[6]), closely identified with righteousness and justice (Ps 89:14[15]), a shepherd (23:1) who delivers victims from the jaws of the wicked (Ps 3:7[8]).' Cf. Gutiérrez, p. 40.

more cosmic, divine role and clothe himself in majesty, dignity, glory and splendour (ESV), and crush the wicked.[1076]

As well as defending his integrity, therefore, Job is making the point that he is intimately acquainted with righteousness and justice. In the context of the book, this seems deeply ironic, adding both power and poignancy to his complaints that God has abandoned these indispensable values in the world (24:1-17), and more specifically, in Job's life (19:7-9).[1077] While Job went out of his way for justice by championing the cause of the one he did not know, God, who knew him most intimately neglected Job's cause and persecuted him (ch. 10).

Secondly, Job 29:11-17 has the effect of setting out examples of a model of ideal ethical behaviour, which relates closely to the missional shaping function of the Bible. Job's actions in 29:11-17 exhibit his attempt to bring about the blessing and שָׁלוֹם of Yahweh into a society marked by the results of a world gone 'awry'.[1078] Of particular significance, in my view, is the role v. 14 plays in this portrait. Job does not simply carry out acts of justice and righteousness; he is their very embodiment. Such an intimate expression of the relationship between Job and these characteristics speaks of an intense and holistic expression of Yahweh's ethics. As such, the passage acts as a profound challenge to the church as it seeks to exhibit the values of the Kingdom of God.

5.6 Exegesis and missional reflection: Job 31:13-23

The climax of Job's final speech is an extended oath of innocence in which he attempts to force God's hand. It is structured around a series of curses relating to sins he claims not to have committed. Notably, the sins under examination are more to do with Job's 'attitudes and motives' than specific acts outlawed, for example, in the Decalogue.[1079]

Scholars differ over exactly how many sins (and therefore sub-units) are present in the chapter, although it tends to be between ten and sixteen.[1080] The placement of vv. 35-37 is also contested as it seems out of place, appearing to be more appropriate at the very end of

[1076] Habel, p. 411.
[1077] ibid., p. 410. Cf. Good, p. 300 who sees Job's claims as surpassing the justice not only of other people but of God himself.
[1078] Cf. Seitz, *Figured Out*, pp. 147, 157.
[1079] Hartley, *Job*, p. 407. Though he notes that adultery (vv. 9-12) and covetousness (vv. 7-8) are addressed. This seems important as it implies that the legal form possibly being used in ch. 31 has been adapted for a different purpose. Newsom, for example, notes that the sins covered relate to issues not covered by the law; 'Job', p. 551. Cf. Whybray, *Job*, p. 132; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1012.
[1080] For a discussion on this, see Hartley, *Job*, p. 408; cf. Gordis, *Job*, pp. 542-546; Newsom, 'Job', pp. 553-554; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1013.

the chapter. However, Habel's structure allows for their existing location and is adopted here:[1081]

31:1-3		A Covenant and Curse Motif
	4-6	B Challenge
		7-34 C Catalogue of Crimes
	35-37	B1 Challenge
38-40		A1 Covenant Witness and Curse

Having set the passage in context, the focus of this exegesis now turns to vv. 13-23, which concentrate on Job's treatment of the poor and vulnerable in a particularly sustained way. The passage is divided into two parts, reflecting its two main thematic units.

Job 31:13-15

13 אִם־אֶמְאַס מִשְׁפַּט עַבְדִּי וַאֲמָתִי בְּרִבָם עִמָּדִי׃
14 וּמָה אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּי־יָקוּם אֵל וְכִי־יִפְקֹד מָה אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ׃
15 הֲלֹא־בַבֶּטֶן עֹשֵׂנִי עָשָׂהוּ וַיְכֹנְנֻנוּ בָּרֶחֶם אֶחָד׃

13 If I have rejected the cause of my male and female servants[1082],
when they had a claim against me,
14 what shall I do when God rises up?
when he enquires how would I answer him?
15 Did not he who made me in the womb make them[1083]?
Did not the same One[1084] fashion us[1085] in the womb?

[1081] Habel, pp. 427-428. For the inner inclusio Habel notes the repeated use of the key terms of counting ספר and steps צעד in vv. 4 and 37.

[1082] This rather general translation attempts to avoid the unhelpful English terms (for example, 'maidservant' or 'slave girl') which may wrongly suggest that the female slave was particularly young; hence, Clines, 'If I have rejected the cause of my servant, man or woman'; *Job 21-37*, p. 932. Cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 553.

[1083] Literally, 'make him' but there is a plural of parties in view here (male and female servants, v. 13) so it is taken in the plural, 'make them'; cf. Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 964; Alden, *Job*, p. 302.

[1084] The capitalisation here reflects an ambiguity. Habel, p. 426, for example, sees this use of אֶחָד as a reference to a divine title (Zech. 14:9; Deut. 6:4; Job 23:13); cf. Janzen, p. 214. Whether this is a legitimate rendering is not clear. The phrase makes perfect sense without loading this particular term with any more meaning. So, for example Hartley has 'Did not one fashion us in the womb?'; *Job*, p. 414. Clines opts for 'Did not the same God fashion us in the womb?'; *Job 21-37*, p. 932. This need not be a divine title, but merely acknowledging that the referent is indeed God. I have capitalised 'One' in the translation to keep the possibility open.

In this opening section Job rejects the notion that he has mistreated his slaves, and builds on his assertion in 29:11-17 that he has been a champion of justice. Although slaves had few legal rights (for example, Exod. 21:1-11; Jer. 34:8-22) Job was committed to justice to such an extent that he was prepared to acknowledge their just complaints when they arose, even when they were about him.[1086] By not rejecting their cause Job was agreeing to recognise it and take it seriously and, in effect, claim to have gone far beyond what was required of him, acknowledging that both male and female slaves had rights and that they could question his treatment of them.[1087]

His motivation for such righteous behaviour related, claims Job, to his sense of the potential for God to intervene and call him to account for his treatment of his servants. Given their lack of access to normal civil legal proceedings, Job seems to be suggesting that the slave's cause would go to a hearing with God.[1088]

Verse 15 adds a further motivation for Job's ethics towards his slaves, although it has broader implications as well. As well as a sober acknowledgement that God is on the side of the slaves and will hold Job to account for any mistreatment, Job's behaviour towards them is driven by a belief that he and they share the same origins.

The imagery of the womb (בֶּטֶן and רֶחֶם) has already been a motif of the book.[1089] In the present context it functions to highlight a certain degree of equality amongst people. It is important to establish what Job is, and is not saying in this verse. Gordis, for example, suggests that these verses offer 'a ringing affirmation of Job's conviction that all men, the

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[1085] Literally, 'and fashioned him', although it is taken as 'us' (as per ESV; Driver and Gray, Part 1, p. 266; Pope, p. 198) because of the context, especially in light of the choice made about 'make them' earlier in the verse. See Clines, who takes it in this way but also emends it to וַיְכוֹנֵנוּ; *Job 21-37*, p. 964.

[1086] Habel, p. 434. Habel then suggests that this may not have meant that Job would action their cause through formal legal proceedings. However, the radical sentiment of Job's claimed ethics towards his servants, however, should not be weakened by this caveat.

[1087] Longman, *Job*, location 9330-9333; Balentine, p. 487; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1020.

[1088] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1020; citing, though building upon a point made by Rowley, *Job*, p. 255; cf. Hartley, *Job*, p. 414. For God to rise up (יָקוּם) and enquire (יִפָּקֵד) of Job suggested that God could act as a plaintiff, a judge, an accusing witness, or possibly a combination of these; Gordis, *Job*, p. 348. Gordis cites as examples, Mic. 6:1; Ps. 74:22; 82:8; Deut. 19:15, 16; Ps. 27:12; 35:11 and notes, 'there was not always a clear line of demarcation between these functions'. In this context God would ask difficult questions of Job which, if he had ignored the cause of his slaves, would have left him without a defence.

[1089] Cf. Job 1:21; 3:1-19; 10:8-22; 24:20; 31:13-23; 38:8, 29. Both terms are found more frequently in Job than in any other biblical book: בֶּטֶן 16x in Job (72 in OT); רֶחֶם 5x in Job (31 in OT). Of particular note on this theme are Janzen, and L.G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991). Cf. Balentine, p. 488.

lowest and the highest alike, are equal in rights because they have been created by God in the identical manner.'[1090] Similarly, for Habel,

> Job's rationale for regarding his slaves as equals with other citizens is his common humanity with them (v. 15). The belief that a common Creator and a common human origin justifies regarding all mortals as equals with common rights before God and the court is consistent with the creation theology elsewhere in wisdom literature (Prov. 17:5a; 22:2).[1091]

Clines, however, is more circumspect: Job

> says nothing of human equality, which he does not believe in: he only says that he and slaves have also been created by the one God, and implies that that fact gives them some basic human rights, not that all humans should be treated alike or that they are "equal in rights" (Gordis).[1092]

Clines' caveat is instructive but Job does seem to be saying something about human equality. At the very least he is suggesting, as Clines admits, that there is a degree of equality inherent among humankind, even if Job is not advocating a total equality in legal or social status.[1093]

A further comment needs to be made about the justice and slavery theme and how it connects to Job's broader agenda. One image that the book employs to depict the relationship between God and Job, or humanity more broadly is that of a master and עֶבֶד (Job 1:8; 2:3; 7:2). In 7:1-2 Job likens humanity to a slave who longs for relief. Perhaps Job 31:15 is Job's way of claiming a more righteous understanding and execution of the slave-

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[1090] Gordis, *Job*, p. 348. As a chilling aside he also observes that G. Hölscher, *Das Buch Hiob* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1937) deleted v. 15 on linguistic grounds, but Gordis speculates, 'Is it possible that in publishing his commentary in Germany in 1937 in the heyday of Nazism this statement of human solidarity was not palatable and that its deletion represents a tribute which virtue paid to vice?'.

[1091] Habel, p. 435.

[1092] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1021; citing Gordis, *Job*, p. 348.

[1093] As suggested above, he was still assuming that the slaves would not have access to the legal process. Houston, p. 130, is instructive: 'That he had a responsibility for his slaves could be taken for granted. That that responsibility implied always taking complaints seriously, and that having the same Maker imposed that reading of his responsibility–these are points that masters could well have disputed with Job. They are a significant contribution to theological ethics. Yet the legitimacy of slavery as such, which left men and women subject to the discretionary justice of one man, is not questioned.' Cf. H.G.M. Williamson, *He Has Shown You What is Good: Old Testament Justice Then and Now* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2012), location 569-575, Kindle edn. Overall, Newsom's conclusion, that Job's creation theology in this passage forms the basis of 'a more general concern for fairness', seems wise; 'Job', p. 553.

owner's commitment to justice than God.[1094] While Job has not rejected his servant's just cause, he feels that God has rejected his (Job 19:1-12).

Job 31:16-23

16 אִם־אֶמְנַע מֵחֵפֶץ דַּלִּים וְעֵינֵי אַלְמָנָה אֲכַלֶּה׃
17 וְאֹכַל פִּתִּי לְבַדִּי וְלֹא־אָכַל יָתוֹם מִמֶּנָּה׃
18 כִּי מִנְּעוּרַי גְּדָלַנִי כְאָב וּמִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי אַנְחֶנָּה׃
19 אִם־אֶרְאֶה אוֹבֵד מִבְלִי לְבוּשׁ וְאֵין כְּסוּת לָאֶבְיוֹן׃
20 אִם־לֹא בֵרֲכוּנִי חֲלָצָו וּמִגֵּז כְּבָשַׂי יִתְחַמָּם׃
21 אִם־הֲנִיפוֹתִי עַל־יָתוֹם יָדִי כִּי־אֶרְאֶה בַשַּׁעַר עֶזְרָתִי׃
22 כְּתֵפִי מִשִּׁכְמָה תִּפּוֹל וְאָזְרֹעִי מִקָּנָה תִּשָּׁבֵר׃
23 כִּי פַחַד אֵלַי אֵיד אֵל וּמִשְּׂאֵתוֹ לֹא אוּכָל׃

16 If I have withheld the poor from what they desired,
or caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
17 if I have eaten my crust[1095] alone,
and the orphan did not share[1096] it,
18 (for from my youth the orphan grew up with me[1097] as with[1098] a father,

[1094] Habel, p. 434. This seems more compelling than Newsom's idea that, at this point at least, Job's use of this analogy gives him hope that he will, indeed, see justice because God expects justice from him; 'Job', p. 553.

[1095] More strictly, 'morsel' (ESV, Gordis, *Job*, p. 340), but it often refers to a piece of bread, which fits the context here; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1022.

[1096] Literally, 'did not eat from it'. 'Share' is preferred as it brings out themes of relationship and mutuality.

[1097] Several issues are at play in translating the term, גְּדָלַנִי, as reflected in the attention given to it by scholars. Driver and Gray, for example, amend the text to גִּדְּלַנִי (he raised me) with the subject as God; Part 2, p. 225. This leads them to the attractive idea that, 'Job's care for the needy… rested on another… principle of religion, viz. gratitude for God's fatherly care of himself from his earliest days…, and the consequent desire to be like God in his conduct towards his needy fellow-men'; ibid., Part 1, p. 267. Habel considers a reference to God at this point as 'intrusive' and rejects their emendation; p. 426. However, it does not seem too out of place in what Job is trying to achieve. It could be, for example, a further ironic point made by Job to both defend his righteousness, and also accuse God of abandoning such a close relationship. Drawing a connection between an interpretation like this and the meaning of Job's name, 'Where is the father?' is tempting; cf. Janzen, p. 214.

Pope, p. 426, and Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 965, prefer to alter גְּדָלַנִי to a piel first person form, אֲגַדְּלֶנּוּ (I brought him up). However, while this simplifies matters in one sense, the text as it stands can be understood as suggesting this meaning without the need for alteration. Gordis, *Job*, p. 349 and Habel, p. 426 understand the MT as an intransitive qal form ('he grew up with me'), which D. Clines (accounting for their rendering) describes as having a 'datival sufix'; *Job 21-37*, p.

and from my mother's womb I guided the widow[1099])

19 if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing[1100],

or a poor person without covering,

20 if their[1101] loins did not bless me,

Having not[1102] been warmed with a fleece of my lambs,

21 if I raised my hand against the orphan,

when I saw my help in the gate,

22 then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder,

and let my arm be broken from its socket.

23 For I was in terror before God[1103],

I could not have endured[1104] his majesty.[1105]

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965. My preference is to retain the MT although Clines and Pope's rendering produces the same idea. Although not explicit in the Hebrew, the 'he' must be referring to the orphan of v. 17.

[1098] כְּאָב could either be seen as (with Gordis, *Job*, p. 349, who cites Ps. 118:12 [כְּבָאֵשׁ for כְּאָשׁ] and Job 29:2 [כִּירְחֵי for כְּבִירְחֵי] as examples) 'a contraction of two prepositions' or (with Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 966) an omission. Either way it can be taken as meaning, 'as with a father'.

[1099] The object is not identified but, presumably refers to the widow of v. 16. Cf. Gordis, *Job*, p. 349; Pope, p. 204; Longman, *Job*, location 9369-9370. See Clines for a review of the discussion, though it need not concern us here; *Job 21-37*, p. 966.

[1100] Understood as an abstract term rather than a specific garment; cf. Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 966; Pope, p. 198; Gordis, *Job*, p. 340.

[1101] Literally, 'his loins' but should probably still be understood as referring to the two parties of v. 19, whether it is emended or not; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 966).

[1102] This phrasing reflects the assumption that the לֹא in the first colon is doing 'double duty'; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 966.

[1103] Literally, 'For a terror to me [was] the calamity of God'; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 968. Clines prefers the subjunctive, 'For I would have been in terror before God'; that is, Job would experience this terror if he had done the acts mentioned; Clines, *Job 21-37*, pp. 933, 968. While I have retained the past tense I have taken it to be broader than referring just to the fictitious scenario of Job's disobedience.

[1104] 'endured' is supplied here.

[1105] The meaning of this line is contested. The two main issues are, firstly, whether to understand מְשָׂאֵתוֹ as 'his majesty' (Hartley, *Job*, p. 416; Habel, p. 426; ESV, NRSV) or 'his destruction/terror/fear' (Gordis, *Job*, p. 350; Pope, p. 204; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 933) and, secondly, what Job could not do in the light of this. Understanding מְשָׂאֵתוֹ as 'his majesty' assumes a relation to נשׂא; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 968. In Job 13:11 and 31:23 שְׂאֵתוֹ and מְשָׂאֵתוֹ (respectively) are both paralleled with פחד (terror). However, both sides claim the parallel with Job 13:11 as support so that in itself is not conclusive. Gordis suggests, 'and I could not have borne His destroying me', emending מְשָׂאֵתוֹ to מְשֹׁאָתוֹ ('His ruin, destruction'); *Job*, pp. 342, 350. Clines revocalises to וּמִשֹּׁאָתוֹ to read, 'and from (in the presence of) his fear'; *Job 21-37*, p. 968. However, the more popular rendering of 'majesty' still seems reasonable, in that it is still something to be in awe of and, perhaps terrified by; Hartley, *Job*, pp. 220-221.

In light of this it seems that Job would not have been able to face, or endure, the majesty of God, had he contemplated committing some of the wicked acts under discussion. The Hebrew for the first half of the line simply reads, לֹא אוּכָל so an extra verb needs to be supplied in translation. Job could not bring himself to do these things because he knew he would not have been able to face the presence of God and get away with it.

In echoes of Eliphaz's accusations in 22:6-9 and Job's claims of 29:11-17, this section focuses on Job's righteous treatment of the poor and vulnerable in society.[1106] In a series of five 'if…' statements Job highlights a number of actions that would deserve punishment. Implicit in these, of course, is the right way to live and act.

In vv. 16-23 Job reflects upon his treatment of the דַּל, the אַלְמָנָה, the יָתוֹם, the אוֹבֵד, and the אֶבְיוֹן. The greatest desire (חֵפֶץ) of the poor must be the basic means of survival, which would include food (v. 18), clothing (vv. 19-20), and legal protection (v. 21).[1107] Perhaps other necessities of a whole life are hinted at as well, such as hope (v. 16) and fellowship or belonging (vv. 17, 18).

Failing eyes may refer to the physical symptoms of hunger and impending death.[1108] More likely it refers to a loss of hope. Figuratively, the widow has strained her eyes looking desperately for help, only to be denied or ignored and, so, to have lost hope of deliverance.[1109]

It is not quite clear whether Job intends v. 17 as a general metaphor for his generosity towards the orphan, or whether he actually did sit down with the marginalised around his table.[1110] Likewise, it is not evident why Job would be eating a morsel or crust (פַּת) in the first place. It may be a (rather dubious) claim to humble eating habits.[1111] Alternatively, it could be that Job is arguing from the extreme to make a point. To deny the poor a mere crust would be rather callous; what would Job be losing by doing so?

[1106] Gutiérrez, p. 42; Anderson, *Job*, p. 242; Habel, p. 435; Pope, p. 204. While he admits that Job uses similar language to Eliphaz, Clines suggests 'it is not at all clear that he is offering a riposte to him'; *Job 21-37*, p. 1021. It does seem clear that Job is at least referring to ideas Eliphaz has raised, although perhaps Job's real interlocutor is the theology implicit in Eliphaz's speech. In a sense, Job is really arguing with God, not his supposed comforter.

[1107] Without the capacity for legal 'survival', a person was vulnerable and risked losing their capacity for physical 'survival'.

[1108] Cf. Wilson, p. 343: 'death is not far away, since the eyes lose their light and focus as life slips away. Lackluster eyes can also be the result of suffering and hunger, with consequent loss of vitality.'

[1109] Cf. Job 11:20; Ps. 69:4 ET 3. Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1021; Balentine, p. 488. Hartley sees it more as a sense of worthlessness, gained by the degradation of being turned away despite one's begging; *Job*, p. 416. While this is possible the issue of hope seems more appropriate as the dominant motif.

[1110] A tension brought out by Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1022.

[1111] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1022. Strahan has a more positive take, proposing that Job was consciously rejecting corpulent eating habits (cited by Clines but quoted here more fully from Strahan's original work): 'for he was never a gourmand… The simplest words become revolutionary when they touch the heart or the conscience of humanity; and this line of an ancient drama, magnifying the negative virtue of self-restraint and the positive of thoughtfulness for others, has perhaps had more power to slay the sins of the epicure and the egoist than a hundred ancient sumptuary and modern socialist laws'; pp. 260-261. It is difficult to assess whether this is going too far in its depiction of Job but it is an attractive idea nevertheless.

Regardless of the exact significance of what is being eaten, sharing his food with the marginalised (cf. Prov. 22:9; Isa. 58:7) is another way of illustrating 'that he is a hero of the oppressed'.[1112]

As indicated in the textual notes, v. 18 has been much discussed by scholars. Job claims that the orphan has grown up with him since Job's youth. There are two main ways this could be understood. First, it could simply be an expression of hyperbole, suggesting that it has been Job's lifelong habit to act as a father figure for the orphan. Related to this, the second way of reading the verse is to see it as also explaining Job's extraordinary compassion for the orphan. Could it be, as proposed by Hartley[1113] and Davidson[1114], that Job learned his ethics towards the marginalised because his own father modelled it to him?

While it is most likely that the former reading is the correct one, Clines is unnecessarily harsh to dismiss Hartley and Davidson's suggestion as 'gratuitous supposition'.[1115] At the very least they raise the issue of whether Job's ethics were shaped by his family context, in addition to his own thinking and sense of righteousness and justice. It seems at least possible that, in the communal culture in which Job lived, his own upbringing shaped him. He himself sought to shape and guide his own children (Job 1:1-5) and so it does not seem unreasonable that Job's father would have sought to do the same with him.[1116]

In parallel with v. 18a is an even more extreme hyperbole that Job guided (נחה) the widow from the time he was in his mother's womb.[1117] The repeated idea is that Job acted towards

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[1112] Habel, p. 435. Habel also cites here the Phoenecian Kilamuwa Inscription as a close parallel with some of the ideas Job is putting across in vv. 18-21, suggesting they illustrate 'the widespread ideal of the ruler as one whose generosity and goodness restored the underprivileged to positions of status in the community'. He then quotes Kilamuwa: 'But I was for one a father, and I was for another a mother, and I was for a third a brother… The one who had never seen a tunic from his youth in my own days was clothed with byssos. I held the Mškbm by the hand, and they showed a disposition like the orphan's disposition toward its mother'; pp. 435-436. Cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 553; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1021.

[1113] Hartley, *Job*, p. 416: 'Possibly the phrase… indicates that Job learned to care for the unfortunate because his father raised orphans alongside his own children'.

[1114] A. Davidson, *The Book of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889), p. 18: 'Job probably did not achieve his greatness, he was born to it. And possibly he inherited the traditions of a great and benevolent house. And thus even from his youth he took the place toward the poor of a patron and father.'

[1115] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1022.

[1116] Otherwise, is the reader to suppose that Job came to economic, social and political prominence from nowhere? To push the speculation one step further, perhaps it is notable that both Hartley and Davidson assume that Job was a natural child of his father. Is it at all possible that he himself was an orphan, and that this, too, drives his sense of obligation to the poor?

[1117] Although נחה usually connotes divine guidance, there are several instances of people as the subject, leading or guiding; for example, Num. 23:27; Ps. 78:72; Prov. 6:22; 11:3; E. Merrill, 'נחה', in *NIDOTTE*, Vol 3, p. 76.

the vulnerable in ways that they needed. Gordis explains the use of נחה with reference to the imagery of Isa. 51:18, suggesting that he treated the widow 'with filial loyalty'.[1118]

In vv. 19-20 Job turns to the theme of clothing the poor and the perishing. He claims to have ensured their survival through the gift of a fleece from his flock. If the fleece was tied around the waist the loins (חלצים) would have been particularly warmed.[1119] There must also be an echo here of Job 29:13, where Job similarly received a blessing from the perishing one.

In v. 21 Job returns to the judicial scene. It is not certain what Job means by raising (נוף) his hand against the orphan but the sentiment is clear.[1120] Despite his legal power and status, and all the implied support available to him, Job refused to take the easy path and protect the interests of the powerful (himself included) at the expense of the vulnerable, who had no such support. Were this to have been the case, Job calls on God to exact poetic justice on his body. Mirroring the raised arm, to have one's shoulder or arm dislocated or broken was to have one's power compromised.[1121]

Job completes this unit with a related yet widening reflection on his motivation for avoiding unrighteousness and injustice. As in v. 14 he is fully aware that his deeds do not go unnoticed by God, although this seems a little ironic in view of his claims in, for example, ch. 24. His sense of God here is more disturbed than the foundational wisdom value of the fear of Yahweh, and is reminiscent of Bildad's idea that dominion and dread are with God (הַמְשֵׁל וָפַחַד עִמּוֹ).[1122] The thought of encountering God and being condemned for wickedness terrified him and, therefore, acted as a guiding motivation for correct

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[1118] Gordis, *Job*, p. 349. Although the verb used in Isa. 51:18 is נהל.

[1119] Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1023. Cf. Pope, p. 204.

[1120] Suggestions vary amongst scholars. Hartley understands it either as (citing Isa. 10:32 and 19:16) making a gesture that indicts someone, or perhaps signalling to a servant or supporter to 'arouse the crowd in shouting down the poor defendant'; *Job*, p. 417. Pope includes the latter thought although considers the hand to be swung or waved 'to strike or menace; cf. Isa xi 15, xix 16; Zech ii 13'; p. 205. Alden is unsure but speculates that those making legal decisions may have done so by raising hands, or it may have been a gesture to indicate to those present with whom they should side; p. 304.

[1121] Hartley notes the common OT motif which 'indicates that one's power has been decisively broken', and comments that God is often the one who does the breaking (referring to Ps. 10:15; 37:17; Jer. 48:25; Ezek. 30:21-22. In Job 29:12 the יָתוֹם is said to be without help (וְלֹא־עֹזֵר לוֹ); *Job*, p. 417. If Job, who had help (וְאֶזְרֹעִי), had abused the יָתוֹם he himself would end up, figuratively at least, without help. Hartley notes that the curse would leave his strength broken, 'leaving him helpless' although he does not pick up explicitly on the irony noted above; *Job*, p. 417.

[1122] Job 25:2; Clines, *Job 21-37*, p. 1023.

behaviour.[1123] Specific to the preceding denials, Job stood in the middle of the power spectrum. However great and powerful, the man with power will answer to the God with ultimate power for the way he treats those without power.

Job 31:13-23 continues the missional elements observed in the previous passages in that it both contributes to the articulation of Job's (and hence, humanity's) struggles in relation to God, while also exhibiting an implicit ethical challenge to its audience. In defending his own justice and righteousness, Job intensifies the seeming incongruity between his past actions and present experience, thereby defending himself and attacking Yahweh. Job knows what justice should look like, as he demonstrates with a range of examples from his past. As well as laudable action he also exhibited an attitude of integrity, thereby eschewing any sense of hidden sin or hypocrisy.

As in 29:11-17 Job describes an idealised picture of his correct use of power, bringing blessing and שָׁלוֹם to a broken world. His commitment to human equality (albeit with the caveats noted above) and action on behalf of the marginalised, add further scope to the formative function of the text, in relation to the participation of the church in God's mission. These elements will be drawn out in greater detail in the final section of this chapter.

5.7 The treatment of the poor, the book of Job and the mission of God

The connection between mission and the poverty theme in Job is predicated on the assumption that the people of God are to be engaged in significant ways in the issues of poverty and justice and that this engagement is understood as being a profoundly missional activity.

It has also been shown in this chapter that the poverty motif, particularly seen in descriptions of the plight and (mis-)treatment of the poor, plays an important role in the development of the book of Job, and especially from Job's perspective as he seeks to question his circumstances and achieve vindication.

This concluding section to the chapter offers some reflection on the theme of poverty in the book of Job as it might relate to the participation of the people of God in the mission of God. Of particular interest is how the book of Job contributes uniquely in this way; that is, not just

[1123] Hartley, *Job*, p. 417. Cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 554: 'he knows that he would have to answer to one wielding even greater power (v. 22). Once again, the relation between Job and a more vulnerable member of the community is mirrored by Job's relation to God.'

what Job affirms about broadly held views on poverty, but what the book teaches that is additional to, or even in tension with these.

In Barram's previously cited paper he asks, 'In what ways does this text proclaim good news to the poor and release to the captives…?'[1124] Perhaps a prior question the book of Job poses is whether in fact there *is* good news to be preached to the poor in this particular text. More than any other part of the Bible, Job confronts the reader with the desperate plight of the poor and the brutal reality of oppression. But it also brings these issues into a broader framework exploring the question of God's governance of the world, and how human beings are supposed to live in the light of this.

It is commonplace to think of the book of Job as the literature of struggle and protest. I would propose that as part of this description we might consider the ways in which the book struggles and protests on behalf of the poor. This protest can be conceptualised as challenging five different parties concerning their engagement with the poor: God, the friends, the wicked, the self, and the world. How the book does this will shape the content and structure of this concluding reflection.

5.7.1 The depiction of the poor in the book of Job[1125]

The book of Job does not flinch in the face of poverty. In various texts the plight of the poor is acknowledged and investigated leading to the identification of several characteristic motifs, which I have summarised as: victimhood, dispossession, hopelessness and advocacy.[1126] Before moving to the main missional reflection, a brief review of the motifs connected with the poor would be useful.

5.7.1.1 Victimhood

In a broad sense, the poor are often understood as victims of oppression and exploitation. Eliphaz recognised that the poor were vulnerably weak and could be exploited by the might of the wicked and, more abstractly, a personified injustice (5:15-16). He also acknowledged that they could be the victim of callous disregard and that their strength and power (such as

[1124] Barram, '"Located" Questions', n.p.

[1125] I am well aware of the complexities of delineating sociological terms and identities such as 'the poor' and 'justice'. Though sociologically informed, my primary purpose here is not to provide a sociological examination of 'the poor' in the time of Job or the supposed setting in Uz. Rather, I am examining the literary and theological personalities as they are presented in Job.

[1126] It should be noted that some elements of the motifs are inferred. For example, when Job claims to have delivered the poor and the orphan who had cried for help and had not received any (29:12) it may be inferred that the normal situation, without Job's intervention was that their plight remained the same. Thus, Job's action was the exception to the miserable norm.

it was) could easily be crushed (22:9). The poor are seen as victims of the exploitation, overly zealous application and perversion of the debt system (24:2-3, 9). They are the victims of marginalisation (24:4), unscrupulous working conditions (24:10-11), and even murder (24:14).

Often on the receiving end of the attitudes and acts of the wicked, the poor are wronged (24:21), crushed and abandoned (20:19), and trapped like prey in the teeth of the unrighteous (29:17). Clearly the poor were often the victims of exploitation in the legal setting, which relates to the debt system noted above, as well as being implied by texts such as 22:9; 29:11-12, 17; 31:21.

To an extent the poor are also seen as victims of the harsh realities of nature, to which they are vulnerable following other aspects of their victimhood (24:7-8).

Finally, Job considers the poor as victims of God. While Elihu considers affliction and adversity to be instruments of God's deliverance and teaching of the poor (34:15), Job focuses instead on the way in which the poor are exploited precisely because God does not hold the wicked to account.[1127] Thus, he suggests, the poor are both the victims of the wicked and of God's negligence (24:1).

5.7.1.2 Dispossession

Related to their victimhood, the poor are described in the book of Job as being dispossessed in a variety of ways. The emphasis with this motif is on what they lose and are deprived of.

Job's terrible new world (or, rather, the world he feels he knows in new and profoundly intensified ways) is one in which widows have their children taken away (6:27; 24:9) and the poor are dispossessed of much needed property (20:19; 24:2-4, 9). Their vulnerability is seen in part in their loss of help and hope (29:12-13; 31:16). The exploitation of others and the more general hostile circumstances of life can lead to the poor being without basic commodities necessary for survival such as food, clothing and shelter (24:5-8, 10-12; 31:16-20). In the extreme case the poor are dispossessed of life itself (24:14).

In the court setting the poor are easily exploited, meaning they are often dispossessed of their legal voice either because they have lost the protection of a patriarchal figure or because their voice carries little weight compared with wealthy opponents (29:12, 16-17; 31:21). Thus, because of the close ties between economic wealth and legal influence, the poor are disempowered to such an extent that they are dispossessed of justice.

[1127] Of course, Elihu would not use the language of victimhood; the reason for bringing in his contention here is to draw out the contrast between his and Job's reflection on the (in)action of God.

As well as these more obvious forms of dispossession other forms of loss and degradation should be noted. These may be categorised into two related areas. First, the poor are to some extent dispossessed of their identity, humanity and dignity. They are treated as objects to be gambled over (6:27); they are marginalised and terrified (24:4); they become like animals in their struggle to survive and in how they are treated by the wicked (24:5-6; 29:17); they experience the ignominy of not being able to provide the basic necessities of life for themselves and their families (24:4-8) and the humiliation of having to work amongst great wealth without the recourse to enjoy it (24:10-11).

The second category may refer to the ways in which the poor are dispossessed of fellowship, community and social standing. The marginalisation they experience at the hands of the wicked (24:4) forces them outside of the normal societal context, as does their need to roam around the wastelands for food rather than in the bosom of the community (24:5-6). How could the poor enjoy the fellowship of a communal meal if they had no food (31:17)? Easily ignored and oppressed, theirs is a shadow existence, moving in and out of society community yet maintaining little substance in the community.

5.7.1.3 Hopelessness

The result of this exploitation and loss is the wretched, desperate plight of the poor. This motif emphasises the more subjective, though no less real, experience of those trapped in poverty.

The pathetic conditions in which the poor (fail to) eke out an existence exercise Job's mind considerably. Their impotence in the economic and legal spheres (24:2-14) suggests little hope of reversal. They are trapped in a downward spiral of poverty, debt and exploitation. They are hardly able to survive, let alone build for a sustained future. Although Eliphaz sees the intervention of God as giving the poor hope (5:15-16), Job sees no such reason for optimism, unless someone like him is able to get involved (29:12-17; 31:16; cf. 22:9).

5.7.1.4 Advocacy

Because of their desperate plight and powerlessness, the poor are depicted as being in dire need of advocacy by those in a position to give them help and hope. Being unable to stand up for themselves, they need individuals and communities to act with righteousness and justice and intervene on their behalves.

For Eliphaz and Elihu it is God himself who intervenes by punishing the wicked and rescuing the poor (5:15-16; 36:6).[1128] Job, however, focuses on God's lack of intervention, most notably when complaining that God does not keep adequate account of the oppressive deeds of the wicked (24:1-17). Therefore, when one is in a position to intervene effectively, passivity in the face of oppression seems as bad as oppression itself. Eliphaz seems to recognise this when challenging Job about his ethical behaviour: Job, he believes, has allowed the orphan's arms to be crushed, presumably when he could have championed his cause (22:9). By contrast, Job maintains that if he had not intervened on their behalf, the poor would still have not been heard or had help (29:12); would have perished or done so more miserably (29:13); would have had no joyful song to sing (29:13); would have starved and been isolated (31:17); and would have been perpetual victims in legal proceedings (31:21).

The plight of the poor is seen to be closely tied to a cycle, or downward spiral of poverty leading to vulnerability and oppression, which in turn leads to further and deeper experiences of poverty. Without intervention the cycle cannot be broken.

5.7.2 Job and solidarity with the poor

It seems evident that Job saw himself as occupying a place of solidarity with the poor, thus exhibiting Bauckham's call for the church to mirror the Bible's 'downward movement of solidarity with the people at the bottom of the social scale of importance and wealth.'[1129]

One repeated theme in the book of Job is the way in which Job seems to draw inspiration from the reality and plight of the poor in relation to his own circumstances, and how he uses this motif of poverty to explore his own predicament. Building on the previous section it could be suggested that in some way the motifs of the plight of the poor could also offer ways in which Job understands himself and his relationship with God. Although his mood and beliefs change and develop there are times where Job certainly does struggle with feelings of victimisation (for example, 30:16-23), dispossession (29:2-10), hopelessness (17:1-16) and a need for advocacy (19:23-29).[1130]

Job seems to have had some sense of solidarity with the poor prior to the catastrophes of the Prologue, as evidenced in the way he engaged with the poor in his former days, mainly

[1128] Indeed, for Eliphaz in particular, God is the one who intervenes and Job is the one who has oppressed (22:9). Job reverses this contention.
[1129] Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, p. 54.
[1130] This could be pressed too far but it is a suggestive thought nevertheless.

through his speeches in chs. 29-31. Although there is a degree of power distance between him and the poor in these passages, with Job as the powerful one acting on their behalf, in places the language suggests a degree of mutuality (29:13; 30:25; 31:15).[1131] However, following the calamities and the following grief and vexation, Job experiences an invigorated sense of identity with those who are suffering, as if their plight is now more vivid, intense and personal to him than it had been before. Suddenly he now has:

> many counterparts in adversity…
>
> The question he asks of God ceases to be a purely personal one and takes concrete form in the suffering of the poor of this world. The answer he seeks will not come except through commitment to them and by following the road–which God alone knows–that leads to wisdom.[1132]

Nothing else has changed in the world yet everything has changed for Job and it is with this new perspective that he looks on the familiar and finds new vexation. In ch. 24, for example, Job articulates the elephant in the room that he seems to have been content to ignore in his former life.

Indeed, it may even be said that Job has a new sense of obligation to speak out on behalf of the poor and despised, now that he relates more fully with them.[1133] Suddenly his questions are not just for himself but for the poor as well.[1134] And in so doing he is also asking the questions for all humanity, thereby further demonstrating the paradigmatic function I have discussed as part of my missional reading. Job is representative of humanity, embodying the pain and vexation of the human experience and struggling to understand how this relates to a God who assures us that he is governing the world with righteousness and justice. Job asks honest questions on behalf of a hurting world.[1135] He is able to because he is uniquely positioned to do so, both in his relationship with God but also through his experiences.

In some way Job seems to provide a model for the people of God to ask these hard questions of God in the midst of our own pain, yet in the context of relationship. Who else can ask these questions? When else do we face up to these questions? Perhaps the crucible of suffering and solidarity, then, provides the necessary context in which to confront what the

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[1131] Gutiérrez, p. 42: 'Job, then, sees himself as a father to the poor and enemy of those who seek to devour them. He regards himself as upright because he has cultivated a neighborly solidarity with the oppressed and dispossessed'. Perhaps Gutiérrez is slightly overstating the case but it still seems a valid point.

[1132] ibid., p. 31.

[1133] 'Job now sees that the question being debated does not concern him alone. This realization gives new vigor to the protest of supposedly "patient" Job'; Gutiérrez, p. 32. Cf. Ceresko, p. 185.

[1134] Gutiérrez, p. 34.

[1135] Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, p. 324; Wright, *Mission of God*, pp. 450-452.

world needs the people of God to wrestle with. It is to the nature of these confrontations that I now turn.

5.7.3 Ways in which the book of Job challenges on behalf of the poor

The theme of the treatment of the poor in Job opens the way to a series of challenges envisioned by the book of Job, and relates closely to the shaping of the church for its participation in God's mission. These challenges relate to God himself, to the false theology of the friends, to the wicked in society, to the self, and to the world at large.

5.7.3.1 Challenging God

As part of his overall effort to challenge God about his own experience and the seeming lack of God's moral governance in the world, Job questions God about the existence of poverty and injustice. In his former days Job's advocacy on behalf of the poor was seen, among other places, in the court of law. He used his power for their benefit. Now that Job has no power and influence, and is himself in need, his advocacy takes a different form. Now he is advocating for himself, but in doing so he advocates for the poor as well. Out of a place of suffering rather than power, he is able to bring his complaint (and hence the complaint of the whole world) to God.

Perhaps it is precisely because of his (former) close relationship with God, and because of his current circumstances, that Job was uniquely positioned to ask such questions of God. He does so not only for himself and for the poor but, in a sense, for humanity as a whole.

Job's deep pathos with the poor occurs because he has been confronted personally with injustice in a way that has opened his eyes to a much more troubled perspective on what was there all along. Why does God allow oppression, abuse, corruption, suffering and poverty to go unpunished?

Job 24 is a crucial text in this regard, depicting as it does the desperate plight of the poor and the wickedness that so often causes and exploits this poverty.[1136] While I would not claim that Job is right in his assertions at all times, he is surely correct to bring the issue to bear. This form of lament and questioning is an essential part of relating to God in that it maintains a '*genuine covenant interaction*' that enables humanity to engage with God in all

[1136] Job's speeches in chs. 22 and 24 seem to be crucial in the debate because they name to obvious flaws in the cause-consequence theology. In echoes of so-called prosperity theology, Job points out that the emperor has no clothes: the tight relationship between cause and consequence plainly does match reality.

experiences of life, rather than just the joyful ones.[1137] It also guards against a '*stifling of the question of theodicy*' which could have dangerous repercussions for public discourse on questions of justice.[1138]

In challenging God, Job tries to provoke him into action on behalf of himself but also, in the broader scheme, on behalf of the poor, as exemplified in the movement between pathetic description and calls for retribution in ch. 24. It is not, as will be shown, that Job is uninterested in the culpability of the wicked in the sins of oppression. Rather, Job sees the ultimate moral arbiter as not carrying out his responsibilities thoroughly enough.[1139] In confronting God (or trying to at least) with the plight of the poor, Job is giving their cries a voice.[1140]

Later in the book Job will repent of the presumptuous claims he has made in the dialogue (42:1-6). However, this does not delegitimise the questions he has brought to bear.[1141]

5.7.3.2 Challenging the friends

Throughout the dialogue Job contends with his comforters (though he never interacts with Elihu) and challenges their simplistic assumptions about the nature of the causes and consequences of sin and suffering. It has been shown that the question of social injustice became a pivotal theme in the developing dialogue, especially in chs. 20-24.

Job's experience has left him deeply dissatisfied with the attempts of his friends to make sense of his life and, consequently, the governance of God in the world. By challenging the friends, Job confronts what he perceives as simplistic and inadequate talk about God. Instead he advocates for an honest assessment of the dissonance between what is believed and what is experienced. Through his suffering Job has undergone a paradigm shift in how he views

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[1137] W. Brueggemann, 'The Costly Loss of Lament', *JSOT*, 36 (1986), 57-71 (p. 60). His italics. My thinking on the church's responsibility to lament before God on behalf of the world was crystalised by a devotional talk given by Micah Network's International Director, Sheryl Haw at Redcliffe College some years ago.

[1138] ibid., p. 61. His italics. Cf. p. 64: 'I believe it thus follows that if justice questions are improper questions at the throne (which is a conclusion drawn through liturgic use), they soon appear to be improper questions in public places, in schools, in hospitals, with the government, and eventually even in the courts. Justice questions disappear into civility and docility. The order of the day comes to seem absolute, beyond question, and we are left with only grim obedience and eventually despair. The point of access for serious change has been forfeited when the propriety of this speech form is denied.'

[1139] Balentine, p. 370 'Job has come to believe, however, that the wicked are no more than secondarily culpable for these breeches of covenant fidelity. The One who bears primary responsibility is God. It is none other than God who has inexplicably transmuted divine glory (not human glory) into divine shame. For the sake of the dying wounded, and for the sake of a world that should be more than an open grave, Job believes that covenantal fidelity requires a courageous indictment of injustice, even if it means rebelling against the Creator who sees nothing wrong.'

[1140] Cf. the connection with the exodus in Job 24, discussed above.

[1141] See my final reflection on the Yahweh speeches, below.

the relationship between his deeds and their inevitable reward; trying to convince his friends of his new perspective, which now seems so obvious, is a task that he must undertake, but ultimately fails to do.[1142] Nevertheless, the book of Job calls on the people of God to challenge false assumptions about God's dealings with the world when they are exposed as inadequate, even if in doing so cherished beliefs are questioned.[1143]

On behalf of himself and the poor, Job confronts the friends with the inadequacy of their theology. In so doing he gives a voice and a dignity to their suffering, and forces those with over-simplistic theology to face the limitations of their views.[1144]

5.7.3.3 Challenging the wicked

Although Job's primary focus is on the God who seems to let the wicked get away with all manner of social injustices, the book of Job nevertheless includes a theme of challenge to the wicked. This can be seen in two ways. First, through his defence of his former life, Job set out elements of what he considered to be an appropriate response to seeing social injustice for a person in a position of power (cf. 29:11-17; 31:13-23). One of Job's commendable actions was to confront the wicked, sometimes with force, to free those being exploited (29:12, 17).

The irony of these claims is seen in the way Job seems to use his own example of righteousness and justice as a way of pointing to what he sees as God's neglect of these attributes in his dealings with the world and, more specifically, with Job.[1145]

5.7.3.4 Challenging the self

Three challenges can be detected in the book of Job concerning the self in relation to poverty and injustice. The first can be seen in Job's review of his past life and his defence of his righteousness and justice. In such a review there is an implicit challenge to the self to examine one's own actions and attitudes towards the poor and marginalised. From his own

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[1142] Cf. Newsom, *Contest*, for an exploration of the enormity of the gap between Job's perspective and theirs.

[1143] Cf. Newsom, 'Job', p. 382.

[1144] One issue which has some contemporary resonances with the friends' misapplication of cause and consequence is that of the 'prosperity teaching' roundly criticised, for example, in Lausanne, *Cape Town Commitment*: 'The widespread preaching and teaching of 'prosperity gospel' around the world raises significant concerns… Where prosperity teaching happens in the context of poverty, we must counter it with authentic compassion and action to bring justice and lasting transformation to the poor'; pp. 63, 65.

[1145] Since the calamities Job also opens up a new challenge to the wicked by protesting against their success and injustice (21:7-34; 24:1-17) and calling on God to bring vindication and justice (24:18-25) but this cannot be seen as a direct confrontation with the wicked.

perspective he passes the test of self-examination. Both in what he has done (for example, 29:11-17) and in what he has refrained from doing (ch. 31) Job is satisfied, although it is not until ch. 42 that Job reaches some kind of resolution in his own mind concerning Yahweh's actions.

But what of the reader? With its vision of social ethics the one encountering the book of Job must ask themselves the same questions, and prepare to be challenged as to their own ethical standards.

A second challenge that could be evoked is a more implicit, even anachronous one. For all his empathy with the poor and efforts to address their circumstances, Job never seems to question either the effect of his wealth on them or the societal system in which he played a formidable part. These seem to me to be anachronistic questions that have the potential to lead the reader away from the core message of the book.[1146] However, while not the primary issue within the book's overt dealings with injustice, the suspicions of some as to the motives and presuppositions of Job do raise an important questions about the systemic nature of the poverty and oppression cycle.

While it may be unfair and anachronous to question Job's unquestioning complicity in the social structures of his world it would seem appropriate for the reader to consider their own complicity in unjust structures.[1147] To what extent are we complicit in, as well as working against injustices?

A third challenge is for the church to walk alongside the poor and participate in their suffering as a means of solidarity, eschewing a purely arm's length engagement with social justice issues.[1148]

5.7.3.5 Challenging the world

In what ways (implicitly or explicitly) does the book of Job contribute towards an engagement with issues of poverty? How is the individual or community to respond when confronted with the sometimes brutal realities of poverty in the world? A number of themes can be discerned from the Joban material under discussion, which I present as: acknowledgement; lament; telling the story of poverty; and interventional ethics.

[1146] See, for example, Wilson's discussion on this question; pp. 344-346.
[1147] Cf. van Zyl, pp. 29-30.
[1148] Míguez-Bonino, p. 11.

5.7.3.5.1 Acknowledgement

One response to poverty, of course, is to ignore it. This has never been an option for Job who claims to have engaged with the issue from an early age (31:18). There seems to be an inherent tension in chs. 29-31 in that Job was able to work for the poor without feeling the need to question why God allowed them to be oppressed in the first place. Following the calamities of chs. 1-2 he now views the world differently, and the issue of poverty becomes a fundamentally troubling question (24:1). For Job, the phenomenon of poverty, suffering and oppression had become heavily loaded and needed to be acknowledged by his interlocutors, as well as by God himself.

For Elihu God is the one who hears the cry of the poor and afflicted (34:28), yet Job dares to suggest that God fails to do so (24:1, 12). The first step to tackling poverty and injustice is to acknowledge that it exists and needs addressing.

5.7.3.5.2 Lament

At one point in his reflection on his former life Job says that he wept and grieved for the poor (30:25). This is a rare insight into how Job felt about the poor. Most of the material reflects on his actions on their behalf and we are left to infer his emotional connection to them. This particular text seems designed to shame God: Job responded rightly to the unfortunate, yet when Job was in trouble, God refused to meet him in comfort and rescue (30:20). Moreover, Job accuses God of cruelty and persecution (30:21-22).

As well as this explicit comment, Job's heartfelt response to poverty can be discerned through his descriptions of the plight of the poor in the main texts examined above. There seems to be genuine pathos in his language, especially ch. 24. Job now sits with the poor and sees his unjust treatment echoed and exposed in more general injustice.

To push the boundaries of the language, Job might say that to truly understand and engage with brokenness one must be broken oneself.

5.7.3.5.3 Telling the story of poverty

It is not enough for Job to face up to poverty himself. Albeit in the context of proving his argument, Job tells the story of the poor to force recognition in his interlocutors (24:1-17). Should not his comforters be similarly grieved and vexed by the phenomenon of poverty, suffering and oppression in the world?

While Job advocates for the poor in formal settings (see discussion below) it should be noted that Job's response to the plight of the poor is in part to voice their plight, with great eloquence and pathos. How else will they be heard?

5.7.3.5.4 Interventional ethics: protection, provision and restoration

As well as acknowledging and grieving over the cries of the poor, Job describes ways in which he intervened on their behalf. Largely in his final speech of chs. 29-31, Job sets out his ethic. Through direct claim and implication Job outlines what actions could and should be taken on behalf of the poor including: rescue (29:12, 17); relief and provision (29:13, 15; 31:16-20); a meeting of need (29:15); a pursuit of legal justice (29:15-16; 31:21); and the giving of hope (31:16).

In these deeds Job shows some of the ways in which he sought to bring transformation to the lives of the poor and vulnerable. With reference to his description of the realities of poverty above, Job addressed their sense of victimhood, dispossession, hopelessness and need for advocacy. As such he is instrumental in breaking the cycle of poverty and oppression, for some at least.

The key idea driving his ethics is 29:14 in which he talks of the intimate relationship (embodiment, even) between himself and the concept of righteousness and justice. He did not do his ethics purely out of duty or at a distance. His attitude and actions towards the poor and vulnerable flowed out of his identity, as he sought to live out kingly and divine values.

A missional reading of Job, as I have conceived it, therefore places the suffering of the believer within the hopeful context of transformational encounter with Yahweh. We articulate our pain and the pain of the world before God, as only the people of God are able to do. The book of Job suggests that facing up to the experience of unattributed suffering, with all the attendant vexation, weakness and confusion, is an inevitable, indeed, necessary part of our participation in God's mission. It is this pain that leads us into a more meaningful solidarity with and advocacy on behalf of the suffering. Yet even while the lament goes on, we also find ourselves as dust and ashes, commiting ourselves and others to the wisdom of Yahweh and, therefore, to Yahweh himself.

6 Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusions

This final chapter has four aims. First, I provide a brief summary of the overall aim and content of the thesis. Secondly, I revisit the three aspects of the missional nature of the Bible outlined in chapter one: the Bible as a product, record and means of mission. However, I now apply the categories specifically to Job in order to draw out the findings of my thesis. Thirdly, I discuss the contribution of my thesis to scholarship. I do this by stating how my thesis develops preceding work connecting the book of Job and mission, how it furthers the missional hermeneutics conversation, and how it might benefit more general scholarship on Job. Finally, I make some brief suggestions for further research.

6.1 Aim and summary of the thesis

The aim of this thesis has been to develop and apply a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job; that is, to offer a reading of Job in the light of the missional nature of the Bible. Part one of the thesis set out to approach a missional hermeneutic for Job. In the introductory chapter I set the initial context for this reading by clarifying my understanding of Christian mission to include the concepts of *missio Dei* and holistic mission. Drawing on the emerging conversation on missional hermeneutics, I then set out how different dimensions of biblical texts might be understood as missional, addressing the concepts of the Bible as a product, record and means of mission.

In chapter two I gave a detailed analysis of the ways in which the book of Job has featured in previous scholarship that has sought to bring together the Bible and mission, especially those works aiming to set out a biblical theology of mission. A significant proportion of such works either did not engage with Job at all or did so in rather peripheral and underdeveloped ways. However, a good number of studies did make at least some mention of Job and I was able to isolate a number of themes on which scholars concentrated when addressing the book. These themes included: Job's international outlook; Job as a non-Israelite; the relationship between Job and the ANE; Job as illustrative of suffering and weakness as the context of mission; Job and social justice; correcting false teaching; the accuser (הַשָּׂטָן) in Job; Job as a 'tool' of mission; Job and the rest of the biblical narrative; Job and creation; and Job as an example of dialogue. For each theme I assessed scholars' use of Job and pointed to ways in which my thesis differed from them, either through a development of the theme or because I chose not to incorporate it significantly within the scope of my work.

Of particular note in this chapter were three articles that dealt specifically and exclusively with the subject of Job and mission: van Zyl's 'Missiological Dimensions in the Book of Job'; Allen's 'The Missionary Message of Job: God's Universal Concern For Healing'; and Waters' '*Missio Dei* in the Book of Job'. These were works I returned to throughout the rest of the thesis and, while they each contain insights useful to missional reflection on Job, I considered them to be rather mixed in scope and success. Therefore I discerned significant room left by scholarship and concluded that the time is ripe for a more intentional, substantial, sustained and nuanced treatment of Job in the light of the missional nature of the Bible. I also suggested that missional hermeneutics provides a promising approach for just such a project. I will say more below about how my work contributes to the conversation on Job and mission, with particular reference to these three works.

But precisely how should a more intentional, substantial, sustained and nuanced treatment of Job and mission proceed? This was the purpose of chapter three in which I provided a framework for a missional reading of Job developed through an engagement with the emerging conversation on missional hermeneutics. This chapter, therefore, examined the different approaches taken by advocates of missional hermeneutics, which include: the relationship between the text and the *missio Dei*; the way the text forms the people of God for participating in the *missio Dei*, the 'locatedness' of the reading community; the ways in which the text relates previous tradition to new contexts in the light of the reign of God; and the notion that the meaning of the text is most fully known when read with the 'other'. Although overlapping at some important points (especially in their use of the *missio Dei* concept), these approaches are somewhat varied and, in my view, uneven in places. My treatment in chapter three led me to develop my own approach to Job that adopted and adapted certain elements of the missional hermeneutics conversation, in a way that made them most appropriate for a reading of the book of Job, within the scope of this thesis. I therefore concluded the chapter with several lines of enquiry for a missional reading of Job, which were followed through in the rest of the thesis. These lines included the relationship between Job and the *missio Dei*; the function of a universalising impulse within Job; the way in which Job contributes to an articulation of a Yahweh-shaped rendering of reality (over and against other renderings) in relation to the question of unattributed suffering; and the way in which the treatment of the poor functions within Job. At several points these issues also connected with the idea of Job as a text that shapes and equips its audience for their participation in the mission of God.

Taking on these themes, in chapter four I paid particular attention to the universalising impulse evident in Job. This involved a detailed treatment of the significance of the non-Israelite theme in the book, and the way in which this motif, along with others, sets up the

book as of universal (and therefore missional) significance. This tied my discussion particularly closely to the way in which the book of Job relates to the *missio Dei*. Of special note was the question of the accuser in 1:9b ('Is it for nothing חִנָּם that Job fears God?') which, in my view, challenged the very legitimacy of the *missio Dei*. In the book of Job, I concluded, the very mission of God is questioned and vindicated.

I then moved the discussion in a different, though related direction, which was to consider how the book of Job related to similar texts in the ANE. While this demonstrated that Job was in a long-established tradition of reflections on unattributed suffering, I also showed, crucially, that the book exhibits some important Israelite distinctives. This is evident especially in the monotheistic assumptions driving the book, seen especially in the Yahweh speeches in chs. 38-41.

Chapter five continued my missional reading of Job in an important direction. Given my holistic understanding of mission, the treatment of the poor became a clearly appropriate subject of study. While continuing some of the themes evident in chapter four (for example, Job as a universalised figure) it also set them in the context of a particular thematic study. While others have noted the theme of poverty in Job, my framing of it in the context of mission enabled me to tie the ethical teaching on poverty in the book to the shaping of the Christian church's participation in the *missio Dei*. In this regard, I concluded the chapter by setting out a series of challenges made by the book: challenges to God, to Job's friends, to the wicked, to the self, and to the world.

6.2 The missional dimensions of the book of Job

In chapter one I defined a missional hermeneutic as an approach to biblical interpretation that seeks to read texts in the light of the missional nature of the Bible. The result of my application of a missional hermeneutic to Job is that I am able to articulate more fully than has hitherto been achieved some of the ways in which the book might be described as missional. To show this I will return to the three aspects of the missional nature of the Bible outlined in chapter one, but now with specific reference to the book of Job. Although there are some elements of overlap between the three categories, I prefer to keep them distinct for the purposes of clarity.

6.2.1 Job as a product of God's mission

That such a sustained and probing examination of unattributed suffering is part of Scripture says something profoundly important for the mission of God. In my view the inclusion of

the book of Job acknowledges such vexing and intense human experiences, and legitimises serious attempts to engage with them in a constructive manner. As such, Israelite sages are seen to be contributing to an established international conversation on suffering, and offering a probing of the issue that is shaped by faith in Yahweh. The very existence of the book of Job declares that Yahweh takes the universal experience of human suffering seriously. This would suggest that the book similarly obligates the church to engage with this issue with honesty and integrity as part of our participation in the mission of God.

The way in which the book of Job sets itself up as being universally relevant is also significant. Israel's perspective on unattributed suffering is not to be understood as applicable only within the borders of Israel, even if this is assumed to be the book's primary audience. The universalising motif present in the book appears to make a claim that the book 'speaks to and for all humanity'; that is, Israel's answers are the world's answers.[1149]

Implicit in this universal appeal of the book, however, is a critique of explanations for unattributed suffering that are not governed by a belief in Israelite monotheism. As such the book of Job exhibits a missional encounter with alternative belief systems. While affirming certain aspects of alternative treatments (in literary form and certain thematic elements) the book of Job offers a contrasting and distinctive understanding of the issues in line with Israel's faith in Yahweh. Ultimately it offers a deeper probing of the question of unattributed suffering, while also pointing forward to hope in Yahweh himself. As such it exhibits the way in which the Bible may be understood as a monotheizing or Yahwizing literature, contributing to an articulation of a rendering of reality shaped by Yahweh faith, which is voiced over and against competing renderings.

6.2.2 Job and the story of God's mission

How does the book of Job relate to the *missio Dei*? An important qualification I have articulated in my treatment of this theme is that, contrary to how it is often understood, it is not sufficient to ask simply how a text fits into and progresses the chronological storyline of God's mission. For a book like Job this line of questioning will be of limited value, not least because of the complexities of its compositional origins, but also because it does not record events that progress the 'plot' of the biblical story. Instead I have preferred to ask the question, in what ways does this text relate to the story of God's mission? A distinctive contribution of the book of Job to thinking about the biblical story is, I have concluded, to ask how the book stands apart from, and speaks into that story. The book of Job is vital to

[1149] Pope, p. xxxviii.

the missional story of the Bible, the *missio Dei*, because it probes a necessary yet uncomfortable question: is the relationship to which God is restoring humanity genuine?

As the book of Job reaches its climax it responds to the essential question by vindicating both Job and Yahweh and, in doing so, vindicates the *missio Dei* itself.

6.2.3 Job as a means of God's mission

In what ways did the book of Job seek to shape and equip the people of God for their participation in the *missio Dei*? Moreover, how might Job be continuing 'to confront, to convert, and to transform the [Church] for faithful witness?'[1150] Within the scope of this thesis I have identified a number of ways in which the book of Job functions formatively for mission.

While Job occupied a unique place in the questioning and vindication of the validity of the mission of God, his representative or paradigmatic function identified particularly in chapters four and five contributes to formative ways in which the people of God may process unattributed suffering 'missionally'. That is, though suffering may appear purposeless it may be faced purposefully. Unlike the approach of Waters, I do not restrict the missional potential of such experience solely to submission and acceptance, missionally appropriate though these responses may be. Rather, I understand the book of Job to be providing a model of a faithful believer in Yahweh who, in his mixed responses of acceptance, grief, confusion and fury, witnesses to a genuine, committed, honest engagement with his God. Ultimately, this seems to me to witness to a more complete picture of faith and, as such, offers to a watching world a more compelling vision of life with God.

The suffering people of God, then, may understand themselves to be in a painfully privileged space. With the rest of the world we experience the ambiguities and pain of human experience, yet we do so as conscious participants in the *missio Dei*. Moreover we are uniquely placed to articulate our pain to God and, following Job, to do so on behalf of the world. This is one way in which the church may carry out its missional mandate to agonise with the world's victims.[1151] Protest and complaint in all its particularities before God, therefore, may be understood as being just as missionally significant as acceptance and submission. However, the book of Job also suggests that God is more than a sounding board for the world's pain. Job's way of understanding his experiences is transformed through his

[1150] Guder, 'Biblical Formation', p. 62.
[1151] Bosch, 'Hermeneutical Principles', p. 450.

encounter with Yahweh, which leads him to reframe his view of the world from a principle of retribution to that of wisdom, and the fear of Yahweh.

This dismantling of the retribution principle has significant missional implications, not least through the Church's engagement with poverty. In chapter five I rooted the discussion in the poverty theme in Job. Acknowledging the importance of poverty issues in a holistic conception of mission, the book of Job may be understood as seeking to shape the church by issuing a series of challenges. In the light of the book of Job the church must consider how we enter into solidarity with the poor and advocate alongside them concerning unjust structures and practices. Job issues a call to the church to acknowledge poverty, to lament over it, to articulate it, and to practice interventional ethics in terms of protection, provision and restoration. Crucially it requires the church to critique false beliefs and assumptions concerning the poor, whether this is observed in society in general or within Christian theology and practice. As such the church should examine itself to consider possible ways in which we are complicit in the exploitation of the poor.

This outline of the different missional dimensions of the book of Job demonstrates how my work has brought the missional nature of Job into sharper focus. As such my conviction expressed in chapter one that Job warrants greater missional attention seems vindicated. Related to this, I will now set out the contribution of the thesis to scholarship.

6.3 The contribution of this thesis to scholarship

While I would not claim that Job must be accounted for in any and every treatment relating the Bible and mission, I do maintain that the general paucity of engagement with Job across the literature is concerning. My review in chapter two highlighted a number of themes concerning which scholars have engaged when addressing Job and mission.

Certain themes have not featured heavily in my thesis due to space. The way in which Job might contribute to the discussion of creation care and mission is one such example. Similarly I have not had the scope to address the ways in which the book of Job might be used in interfaith dialogue or to build bridges with the wisdom traditions of contemporary cultures.

However, my treatment in chapter four of the universalising impulse in Job connects with certain other themes in the scholarship by developing the missional import of Job's universal significance, seen especially through the non-Israelite motif and the relationship between Job and the ideas of the ANE. My work has, in my view, probed the missional implications

of these elements to a more significant degree, providing a more nuanced, substantial and sustained treatment of issues, such as the relationship between Job and the *missio Dei*, the way in which Job shapes its audience for participation in the *missio Dei*, and the distinctive rendering of reality of the book in relation to ANE ideas.

As well as works that engage with Job as part of a broader treatment of the Bible and mission, I identified articles by van Zyl, Allen and Waters as more focused missional reflections on Job. These have provided useful reference points throughout my thesis as I have sought to develop my missional reading of Job. Nevertheless, in comparison with the various emphases of these short publications, I consider the thesis to have progressed the conversation significantly. With its focus on mission as critiquing culture, van Zyl's 'Missiological Dimensions in the Book of Job' coincided with my thesis is certain ways. Both works considered the missional significance of poverty and the way in which the book of Job critiqued the prevailing belief in an overly simplistic application of the retribution principle. Both van Zyl and I detect in Job a call to the church to engage with poverty through identification, advocacy and attention to the possibilities of complicity. However, because of the greater scope of my thesis I have been able to broaden the missional connections of Job to encompass other aspects of mission that may not be brought out through the theme of cultural critique. I have also based my work on a more thorough exegetical treatment of Job than van Zyl provides.

While my thesis touches on certain themes present in Allen's 'The Missionary Message of Job: God's Universal Healing' my work also addresses a number of weaknesses in his approach. For example, Allen's emphasis when dealing with Job's non-Israelite provenance, and the relationship between Job and the chronological storyline of the Bible, lies in Job being representative of humanity's ignorance of God's revelation, thus anticipating the call of Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3. In contrast I have sought to develop a more nuanced understanding of the setting of the book and of Job's representative function. I have also shown what I consider to be a more satisfactory explanation for how the book of Job may relate to the biblical story. Allen's decision to concentrate on the ignorance of revelation, at the expense of a genuine engagement with the book's exploration of faith in the midst of unattributed suffering, undermines his missional reflections on Job. In my view, it is essential that a missional reading of Job must engage with the book's central theme. As such I have sought in my thesis to show how the issue of suffering should be held together more intentionally with other missional aspects of the book.

Like Waters' article, '*Missio Dei* in the Book of Job', my thesis attempts to read the book of Job in the light of the *missio Dei*. One similar approach is to consider how the book might form suffering believers by showing how their experiences may function within the mission

of God. However, I drew a stark and important contrast with Waters in one area in particular. While, in line with his article, my work notes the missional potential of acceptance and submission, my greater concern has been, *contra* Waters, to argue that there is much missional significance in Job's protest and complaint. This, it seems to me, is a way of approaching Job that allows for a fuller account of the book on its own terms, and is therefore a more satisfying missional reading.

Although Waters notes the ambiguity and universality suggested by Job's provenance, my own work gives significantly more attention to this aspect of the book. Similarly, my thesis moves beyond Waters' treatment of the accuser by allowing a more nuanced understanding of the figure's identity and function in the book. Finally, both works address the attempts of Job to offer a corrective to false teaching concerning retribution in the ANE. In my view, however, because of the larger scope of my thesis I have been able to root my discussion in a significantly more developed way.

In sum, my thesis has addressed the relative neglect and general weakness of missional reflection on the book of Job by providing a more intentional, substantial, sustained and nuanced treatment of the book which has brought out more sharply Job's missional relevance and implications. In particular I would suggest that my understanding of the missional significance of the accuser's question in 1:9b brings in Job from the margins of the missional conversation to its very heart.

This thesis owes a great debt to the scholars engaging in missional hermeneutics, while also contributing to the developing conversation. In the introduction, I suggested that the thesis would act in part as a case study in applying the emerging approach of missional hermeneutics to a text that may be considered a less likely candidate for missional reflection. Through my application of a missional hermeneutic to the book of Job, I have demonstrated that it is not only possible, but also beneficial and important for biblical scholars and missiologists to read Job missionally. By bringing the missional significance of Job into sharper focus, the approach has shown how Job can and should be considered more intentionally and more substantially when relating the Bible and mission, and that missional hermeneutics can be usefully employed to provide an appropriate framework.

More specifically, it seems to me that my thesis points the missional hermeneutics conversation forward in a number of important ways.

First, while the approach of missional hermeneutics as a whole has been shown to be effective, this thesis has also highlighted some limitations in the conversation. Although still emerging, it seems that the conversation has not yet paid sufficient attention to texts that do not fit neatly within and progress the chronological storyline of the *missio Dei*. Perhaps one

reason for this is the way in which the question concerning the *missio Dei* has been framed, implying that a text must be shown to fit into the missional narrative of the Bible. By asking the question, 'How does this text stand apart from, and speak into the grand narrative?', my treatment of Job has shown how framing the question slightly differently can prove very effective in understanding the relationship between a text and the *missio Dei*. Put simply, different texts may require different types of questions to bring out their missional significance most fully.

Secondly, more consistent and detailed work should be carried out on the ANE background of texts. As I demonstrated in chapter four, such insights enable the monotheizing process of the text to be seen much more clearly and aid the articulation of Yahweh's transcendent uniqueness. In so doing, we are able to gain greater insights into the text's missional origins and context, and, therefore, its contemporary missional relevance.

Thirdly, building on the discussion in chapter four, scholars should probe more deeply the question of how Old Testament texts feature and engage with non-Israelites. As I have sought to do with Job, more nuanced questions should be asked about the significance of their non-Israelite status and how we are to think of them in relation to the *missio Dei*.

The final and, in my view, most significant challenge to those working in the field of missional hermeneutics encompasses both an affirmation of the approach and a call to action. That missional hermeneutics facilitates a fruitful reading of a text like Job should be a significant encouragement to missional hermeneutics scholars. However, I would also argue that its emergence has profound implications for BMS because it gives scholars the tools actively to seek out texts that cannot be fitted into the chronological storyline of the *mission Dei* as simply as those often treated. It is therefore the responsibility of missional hermeneutics scholars actively to pursue readings of texts that have hitherto been marginalised or neglected. If we take up this challenge, I am convinced that many new insights will be gained for the academy and the church.

Although my concentration has been on the contribution of my thesis to BMS, such a missional reading also has implications for more general Job scholarship. By bringing into sharper focus the ways in which the book of Job may be considered as missional, I have provided a fresh perspective from which to read the book. If this thesis has made it more likely that missional questions will be on the agenda of more general biblical scholarship, then it has served its purpose well.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

Although setting out a more thorough and substantial treatment of the missional nature of Job than any previous attempts, this thesis has been necessarily selective in its approach. Future research could take the ideas of this thesis in a number of different directions. For example, an expanded treatment of the Yahweh speeches could be explored in relation to other divine encounters in the Bible, with particular reference to the vulnerability of humanity at such encounters, seen supremely in the incarnation.[1152] Further work on the speeches could relate more explicitly how their dismantling of a human-centred view of creation might influence discussions concerning creation care and holistic mission.[1153]

A deeper engagement with Barram's notion of the missional 'locatedness' of the reading community was beyond the scope of this thesis and could provide some valuable perspectives from specific contexts. Missional themes such as creation care or the way the book of Job could be used in contemporary interfaith dialogue would also be potential areas of exploration. Finally, having shown how the book of Job can be read missionally, a natural next step would be to consider how missional hermeneutics might be applied to Ecclesiastes or the book of Proverbs.

[1152] I am grateful to Dr Ida Glaser, who shared this suggestion in conversation.
[1153] Cf. R. Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010), ch. 2.

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