
THE NIGHT SCHOOL (TNS) 8, 2 – GANZ NOTES ON THE BOOK OF JOB

[OR, MERE HUMANITY]

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QUOTES

John E. Hartley – “Thus the author was a highly educated person and a devout servant of Yahweh; he may be numbered among the great wise men of ancient Israel.”¹

Francis I. Andersen – “But much of Job’s utterance is in an entirely different direction. **Job is not arguing a point; he is trying to understand his experience.** Hence he often talks to himself, struggling in his own mind. He is also trying to retain (or recover) his lost friendship with God. Hence he appeals to God again and again. His prayers may shock his religious friends, but at least he keeps on talking to the heedless God. **His friends talk about God. Job talks to God. And this makes him the only authentic theologian in the book.**”²

Baruch Levine – “**René Girard on Job**” – “Girard focuses attention on social issues and has, at least for me, posed a question I had failed to confront in my own reading of the dialogues of Job: **Why is it that societies react as they do to the victims of misfortune in their midst?** How are we to understand the often-endorsed rationalization that such victims have only themselves to blame, that they are responsible for their own plight?”

¹ John E. Hartley, [The Book of Job](#), The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 17.

² Francis I. Andersen, [Job: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 104.

Francis I. Andersen – “Eliphaz thinks he knows how to get along with a **predictable (and that means, to some extent, manageable) God**. Job, who has no such pretensions, faces the agony of getting along with a God over whom he has absolutely no control or even influence.”³

Francis I. Andersen – “Gen. 22 is a miniature book of Job. Abraham was driven into an ordeal as cruel as Job’s, and he could never again be as he was before. *He had enlarged his life with God through suffering. The theology is the same. Abraham’s agony, like Job’s, was neither punitive (for the sinner) nor corrective (for the saint).*” (Francis Andersen, footnote #78.)

John E. Hartley – “Throughout the centuries the book of Job has had a great impact on the Western mind, including the great authors.¹⁵ Three examples, Milton’s *Samson*, Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Kafka’s *The Trial*, testify to its impact on thinkers from widely differing perspectives, times, and cultures. Even the psychologist C. J. Jung entered the discussion with his *Answer to Job* (1963). Thus the book of Job continues to speak to the issues of human suffering and theodicy.”⁴

St. Gregory the Great (540-604 CE) – “And because a person *asks a question* in order to be able to learn that of which that person is ignorant, for a person *to question God*, is for that person to acknowledge that he or she is ignorant in God’s sight.”⁵

Francis I. Andersen – “**The book of Job is about the unchanging human realities—war, destitution, sickness, humiliation, bereavement, depression. Also the unchanging goodness of God, who transforms our human agony into justice, kindness, love and joy. It is about ‘the terror of the Lord’ (2 Cor. 5:11) and his great tenderness (Jas 5:11). It is the story of one man who held on to his life in God with a faith that survived the torments of utter loss and expanded into new realms of wonder and delight.**”⁶

Francis I. Andersen – “**The Old Testament book about Job is one of the supreme offerings of the human mind to the living God and one of the best gifts of God to men. The task of understanding it is as rewarding as it is strenuous.** For his help, the modern student has a rich

³ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 134.

¹⁵ See, e.g., M. Friedman, “The Modern Job: On Melville, Dostoevsky, and Kafka,” *Judaism* 12 (1963) 436–55; N. A. Francisco, “Job in World Literature,” *RevExp* 68 (1971) 521–33.

⁴ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 11.

⁵ S. Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, Vol. III.2, 35.3.4, trans. J. Bliss (Oxford: John Henry Parker; F. and J. Rivington, London, 1850), 664.

⁶ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 9–10.

legacy from the labours of the past. It is a tribute to the greatness of the book that the work of interpreting it is never finished. After each fresh exploration the challenge to scale the heights remains. **One is constantly amazed at its audacious theology and at the magnitude of its intellectual achievement. Job is a prodigious book in the vast range of its ideas, in its broad coverage of human experience, in the intensity of its passions, in the immensity of its concept of God, and not least in its superb literary craftsmanship.** It reaches widely over the complexities of existence, seeking a place for animals as well as men in God's world. It plumbs the depths of human despair, the anger of moral outrage, and the anguish of desertion by God. From one man's agony it reaches out to the mystery of God, beyond all words and explanations. It is only God himself who brings Job joy in the end. **And, when all is done, the mystery remains. God stands revealed in his hiddenness, an object of terror, adoration and love. And Job stands before him 'like a man' (38:3; 40:7), trusting and satisfied.**"⁷

Rainer Marie Rilke – "I want to ask you, as clearly as I can, to bear with patience all that is unresolved in your heart, **and try to love the questions themselves**, as if they were rooms yet to enter or books written in a foreign language. Don't dig for answers that can't be given you yet: you cannot live them now. For everything must be lived. Live the questions now, perhaps then, someday, you will gradually, without noticing, live into the answer." Worpsswede, July 16, 1903 in *Letters to a Young Poet* [Barrows, Anita; Macy, Joanna. *A Year with Rilke* (p. 49) on February 18th. HarperOne. Kindle Edition.]

Peter Kreeft - [Socrates speaking] "**This is why I seek out people who disagree with me. They are my special friends and allies.** Their opposition helps me to be surer of the truth, as iron sharpens iron, or as a sparring partner strengthens your muscles, or an experiment confirms your theory." [Peter Kreeft. *The Journey: A Spiritual Roadmap for Modern Pilgrims* (Kindle Locations 280-282), from the chapter called "The Cynic". Kindle Edition.]

Peter Kreeft - "Nevertheless I [Socrates] praise you for it," he said. "In an insane asylum like your world, simple sanity can be a heroic achievement." [Peter Kreeft. *The Journey: A Spiritual Roadmap for Modern Pilgrims* (Kindle Locations 342-343), in the chapter called "The Cynic". Kindle Edition.]

John C. L. Gibson – "But of one thing we will be certain. When we reach the end of this unique and scarifying and excoriating⁸ book, we will know that we have had an exceedingly uncomfortable and tempestuous ride. **No book before or since has so remorselessly peeled**

⁷ Francis I. Andersen, [*Job: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 16.

⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb "**to excoriate**" – "*transitive*. To pull off the skin or hide from (a person or animal); to flay. *Obsolete*."

away the layers of piety and hypocrisy, of self-pity and self-deceit, of meretricious⁹ groveling and heaven-defying arrogance with which, down the ages, humankind has tried to cover over the truth about itself. And no book before or since has so pitilessly confronted men with the claims of the One in whom alone their soiled and burdened lives can find meaning and peace. To read and study the Book of Job is to grow up in the faith with a vengeance; and that is worth all the theology in the world.”¹⁰

Carol A. Newsom - To the reader who is willing to forgo simplistic answers, however, **the book offers a challenging exploration of religious issues of fundamental importance:** the motivation for piety, the meaning of suffering, the nature of God, the place of justice in the world, and the relationship of order and chaos in God’s design of creation.”¹¹

Walton & Longman – “As in the book of Job, no explanation [by Jesus] for the suffering is forthcoming, possible or necessary. Jesus’ words stress what is important: **to trust God’s wisdom and to seek out his purpose.**”¹²

Mike Mason – “Knowing this gives a brand-new dignity to being human, and to all that being human entails. It gives one the sudden freedom to doubt, to be overwhelmed, to fail, to fear, to be angry, to have passions—in short, to be completely oneself. This is the kind of man Job was. What I discovered through my study of Job was that it is all right to be a human being. ***I found out that mercy is the permission to be human.***” [Mason, Mike. *The Gospel According to Job* (p. 11). Crossway. Kindle Edition.]

Hebrews 2 (NABRE) – ¹Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away.¹³

⁹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**meretricious**” – “Alluring by false show; showily or superficially attractive but having in reality no value or integrity.”

¹⁰ John C. L. Gibson, [Job](#), The Daily Study Bible Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 4.

¹¹ Carol A. Newsom, “[The Book of Job](#),” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 319.

¹² John H. Walton and Tremper Longman III, [How to Read Job](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 105.

¹³ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Heb 2:1.

SONG – “THESE ALONE ARE ENOUGH”

Dan Schutte, SJ¹⁴ - “These Alone Are Enough” based on the words of the *Suscipe* prayer by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises* (see original below). Hear a recording on his 2009 album (some collected works), *Walking the Sacred Path*.

Take¹⁵ my heart, O Lord, **take** my hopes and dreams.

Take my mind with all its plans and schemes.¹⁶

Give me *nothing more than*¹⁷ your love and grace.

These alone, O God, are enough for me.¹⁸

¹⁴ “**Dan Schutte, SJ** is one of the best-known and most influential composers of Catholic music for liturgy in the English-speaking world. In addition to his Jesuit formation, Dan holds two master’s degrees, one in theology and one in liturgy, from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. He did graduate studies in music composition under the direction of Fr. Kevin Waters, SJ, at Seattle University. He has three honorary doctoral degrees for his contribution to the life of the Church.”

¹⁵ “**Take!**” – This verb in the Imperative Mood is written **six times** in this lyric. One must not miss the significance of this word “**Take!**” It is in the Imperative or “Command” form. A person “commands” God to take something (he or she is about to indicate what in particular). Why? Because that person knows that he or she has no capacity to give things so centrally precious to him or her. But the person has been brought by God far enough along the Path of Depth that he or she now knows that even things so centrally precious to him or her can be misused, left unrecognized. The person here “commands” God to “take” them from him or her and then to help him or her to use these powers in the way God wanted them to be used for His greater glory (i.e., “greater” meaning *greater than my own glory!*).

¹⁶ “**plans and schemes**” – Actually this is a nice way of indicating the kind of practical knowledge – “how to” knowledge, worldly savvy, etc. – that the Wisdom traditions of the Bible collect and esteem. Job, in the Book of Job, has all of his unusually successful “plans and schemes” taken from him.

¹⁷ “**nothing more than**” – This phrase appears once in each of the four stanzas of this lyric. This is a central rhythmic element in this poem. It repetition over and over again emphasizes this thought. Consider how it is that when we wonder whether we have *enough* (of anything), we conclude about that **in a comparative way**. We, because our desires are *mimetic* (see René Girard), cannot seem to decide about “enough” from within a thing itself. We must compare how much of it we have *compared to* someone else! Also “nothing more” is another way of saying “enough.”

¹⁸ “**Give me nothing more than ... enough for me**” – These two lines are the second two lines of each of the four stanzas of this lyric. Notice how all that I ask God to “take” from me – my central power, my possessions, anything that I have or hold on to – **is not so that I have nothing left, but so that I have nothing now that stands in the way, competes with, God’s gift of Himself** – the indwelling of the Holy Trinity; that is, “your love and your grace.”

Take my thoughts, Oh Lord, and my memory.
Take my tears, my joys, my liberty¹⁹.
Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

I surrender,²⁰ Lord, all I have and Hold.
I return to you your gifts untold.²¹
Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

When the darkness falls on my final days,
take the very breath that sang your praise.
Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

THE ORIGINAL TEXT BY ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

See my Ganz Notes on this text – *Spiritual Exercises*, “the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God”, in an attached document.

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius [234] – **First Point** [translation by Louis Puhl, SJ]

¹⁹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the noun “**liberty**”, as to “the state or condition of being free – *Theology*. Freedom from the bondage or dominating influence of sin, spiritual servitude, worldly ties, etc.” Notice here how the long effort we must exert, and through so many trials, finally to become free: free of self; free of compulsions or addictions; free the distorting power of a Capital Sin; free of the disordered expectations of others, etc. “Free at last! Free at last! Praise God Almighty, we are free at last!” concluded Dr. Martin Luther King in his “I Have a Dream” speech. Why then would I ever consider handing that over to God?! I am finally free, and I am to give that up, to God? We must pay attention to what we are asking God to do: “Take it!”

²⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb “**to surrender**” – “More widely: To give up, resign, abandon, relinquish possession of, esp. in favour of or for the sake of another.” This is a strong word. To surrender, and especially to surrender oneself so fully, in all of one’s most central Powers, is not easily done at all! To do so, to surrender so fully, is beyond a person’s ability; it is just feels too close to dying! That is why that first word in this prayer “Take!” is so important. The person is asking God *for the grace* to be able to give himself or herself fully to God. **This kind of word in this prayer proves that this prayer has no *romance* in it at all. This is difficult, the work of sacrificial love.**

²¹ “**gifts untold**” – What are gifts “untold”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**untold**” – “Uncounted, unreckoned, because of amount or numbers; immense, vast.”

This is to recall to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favors I have received.

I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.

Then I will reflect upon myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. Thus, as one would do who is *moved by great feeling*, I will make this offering of myself:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book divides into the following literary units:

The Prologue (1:1–2:13)

Three Rounds of Speeches among Job and His Friends (3:1–14:22; 15:1–21:34; 22:1–31:37)

Hymn to Wisdom (28:1–28)

Job’s Self-Defense (29:1–31:37)

Elihu’s Speeches (32:1–37:24)

The Encounter with God in the Storm (38:1–42:6)

The Epilogue (42:7–17)²²

The frame-story (chapters 1 and 2, concluded in chapter 42) is in all likelihood a folktale that had been in circulation for centuries, probably through oral transmission. In the original form of the story, with no debate involved, the three companions would not have appeared: instead, Job would have been tested through the wager between God and the Adversary, undergone his sufferings, and in the end would have had his fortunes splendidly

²² Kathleen M. O’Connor, *Job*, ed. Daniel Durken, vol. 19, The New Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 8.

restored. [Alter, Robert. *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, “Introduction” to the Book of Job. W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle location 91411.]

Amy Lacey asked me one day whether it was right to say that Job was an actual historical person, whether one should insist on this. In asking this, she was asking in relation to a “literal” way of reading and understanding the Bible that was taught to her when she was younger. I replied that what is far more important here is that the story of Job, and in relation to his three and four Friends, and to God, *is* a story that we recognize. **We know people, perhaps ourselves, who have lived this story. Therefore, the far more important question to answer is not whether Job was a “real” historical person, but whether we let God make us as real and deep and finally free as Job did.**

The prologue (chaps. 1–2) provides the setting for Job’s testing. When challenged by the satan’s questioning of Job’s sincerity, **the Lord gives leave** for a series of catastrophes to afflict Job. Three friends come to console him. Job breaks out in complaint (chap. 3), and a cycle of speeches begins. **Job’s friends insist that his plight can only be a punishment for personal wrongdoing and an invitation from God to repent.** Job rejects their inadequate explanation and challenges God to respond (chaps. 3–31). A young bystander, Elihu, now delivers four speeches in support of the views of the three friends (chaps. 32–37). In response to Job’s plea that he be allowed to see God and hear directly the reason for his suffering, **the Lord answers (38:1–42:6), not by explaining divine justice, but by cataloguing the wonders of creation.** Job is apparently content with this, and, in an epilogue (42:7–17), the Lord restores Job’s fortune.²³

This book is divided into three parts: the first part describes Job’s state **before his temptation**; the second part contains a disputation on the cause of his temptation, and begins further along in chapter 3, in this place:¹ *After these things Job opened his mouth*; and the third part describes Job’s state after his temptation, beginning below in chapter 42, in this place:² *Then Job answered the Lord and said.*²⁴

²³ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Job.

¹ Jb 3:1.

² Jb 42:1.

²⁴ Albert the Great, [St. Albert the Great on Job](#), trans. Franklin T. Harkins, vol. 1, The Fathers of the Church Medieval Continuations (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 52.

THE “FRAME STORY”

A short account of Job’s trial sets the stage for the long debate between Job and his friends (3:1–42:6). **This prose account is divided into two parts, the prologue (1:1–2:13) and the epilogue (42:7–17). It has a very ancient substratum that possibly goes back to the pre-patriarchal era.¹ *The author of Job took over the ancient form and adapted it as the framework for the dialogue....* The prologue consists of six scenes set up in an a-b-c-b’-c’-d pattern. In the first scene Job is characterized as a great sheikh who worshiped God scrupulously with pure devotion (1:1–5). The next four scenes, which alternate between a meeting of the sons of God (1:6–12; 2:1–7a) and the resulting events that happen to Job (1:13–22; 2:7b–10), recount Job’s trial. In the last scene Job’s three comforters are introduced (2:11–13).²⁵**

The stark simplicity of the narrative contrasts markedly with the depth of the problem addressed. Consequently the account, though simple, captures the audience’s imagination. It has a remarkable fascination that has transcended ages and cultures.²⁶

WHAT IS THE BOOK OF JOB ABOUT?

The reader knows, and Job believes, that what has happened is not punishment for some past sin. If there is a grain of truth in Eliphaz’s teaching about ‘the chastening of the Almighty’ (5:17), it is not in the negative sense of training so that a person is restrained from potential sin. Job had long since attained perfection in this stage of character development (1:1, 8; 2:3). **The reader knows what Job does not know, namely that Job’s highest wisdom is to love God for himself alone. Hence Eliphaz’s words, far from being a comfort, are a trap. The violence with which Job rejects them shows his recognition of the danger.**²⁷

¹ Cf. N. Sarna, “Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job,” *JBL* 76 (1957) 13–25. For further discussion see section VIII in the Introduction above.

²⁵ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 64.

²⁶ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 64.

²⁷ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 134.

Job is being tested.⁷⁸ It is essential that he does not know why. **He must ask why.** He must test and reject all the answers attempted by men. In the end he will find satisfaction in what God himself tells him.⁷⁹ ²⁸

I feel fury rise in me as I consider Andersen's deft insight in what vexes Job about Eliphaz. The fury rises in me as I recognize how often in my life I lived in Institutions that demanded of its men to submit to the most childish dominion of retribution. "If you will only submit to my domination of you, then I will reward you. If you do not, then I, and with others, will destroy you." (God, Who He is, what God is like, they ignored.) Job is furious (chapter 6) when he recognizes how Eliphaz misses completely what Job means. Job is far more spiritually advanced than Eliphaz is or ever will be. And then, even more painfully, Eliphaz tries to get Job to ignore or to disavow all that he, Job, had with great cost learned about God in his life, and through much suffering.

While Job is primarily a tale of one man's pain, there is also an implied sequel to the story, which concerns **the peculiar suffering of the man's three friends as they are brought face-to-face with the treachery of their heartless rectitude.** [Mason, Mike. *The Gospel According to Job* (p. 13). Crossway. Kindle Edition.]

We need to begin, then, with some adjustments to our expectations. First of all, Job has trials, but he is not on trial. We will propose that God's policies are on trial. **Second, the book of Job is not primarily about Job; it is primarily about God.** Third, if this is so, the book is more about the reasons for righteousness than about the reasons for suffering. Finally, the topic of wisdom plays a central role in the book. Indeed, Job's suffering leads to a heated debate as to who has the wisdom that will help the characters diagnose and prescribe a remedy for Job's problems. **Here we will see that, though all the human characters claim that they are wise, it is only God who is wise.** Let's look at these in more detail.²⁹

[W]e can begin to see that **righteousness is more under consideration than is suffering.** The question asked is, "*Why is Job righteous?*" not, "*Why is Job suffering?*" No paradigmatic explanation is offered for why suffering takes place, but there is a lot of interest in what

^{*78} Gen. 22 is a miniature book of Job. *Abraham was driven into an ordeal as cruel as Job's, and he could never again be as he was before. He had enlarged his life with God through suffering. The theology is the same. Abraham's agony, like Job's, was neither punitive (for the sinner) nor corrective (for the saint).*

^{*79} Many critics do not share Job's satisfaction with the Yahweh speeches, precisely because they are not what they expect God to say!

²⁸ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 134–135.

²⁹ John H. Walton and Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Job* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 13.

constitutes righteousness. We don't have to understand Job's suffering; we do have to understand his righteousness. **His suffering does not give us direction about our suffering, but his reasons for righteousness should make us think about our reasons for righteousness.** Will Job's righteousness be sustained even when God's policies are incomprehensible and nothing seems to make sense? Will ours? As the book unfolds, we will see that this is the critical issue to be resolved.³⁰

BI-LINGUAL READERS: WORDS & EMOTIONS

The words we speak, and the words that we hear, in all of our communications with others are *never* merely about the words and their meanings! The *affects* inside of which are carried the words we speak and the words we hear are often far more important in getting to the meaning of the words than are the words themselves.

To read/hear Job correctly, we must learn to pay close attention to the affects of Job, as well as those of God – not merely to their words.

THERE IS NO “MINE” IN GOD

As human beings in a fallen world, we “come from” the 9th and 10th Commandments – the only two Commandments of the Ten that address our disordered desires – to **covet**;³¹ to possess; to make **mine**.

Ninth – “Thou shalt not *covet* thy neighbor's wife” (i.e., coveting the good and closest friends of others)

Tenth – “Thou shalt not *covet* thy neighbor's goods: slave, animals, possessions, etc.

I first wondered about this in C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (1956),³² a novel that Lewis considered one of his finest works ... but which others did not think so. The lines that follow are

³⁰ John H. Walton and Tremper Longman III, [How to Read Job](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 16.

³¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb “**to covet**” – “To have inordinate or culpable desire *for, after.*”

³² *Wikipedia* – “*Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* is a 1956 novel by C. S. Lewis. It is a retelling of Cupid and Psyche, based on its telling in a chapter of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. **This story had haunted Lewis all his life**, because he realized that some of the main characters' actions were illogical. As a consequence, his retelling of the story is characterized by a highly developed character, the narrator, with the reader being drawn into her

the concluding lines of Part III of the novel. Orual, the older sister of Psyche, is finally before the gods and able to read out her Complaint.

I'll thank you to let me feed my own; it needed no titbits from your table. Did you ever remember whose the girl was? **She [Psyche] was mine. Mine. Do you not know what the word means? Mine!** You're thieves, seducers. That's my wrong. I'll not complain (not now) that you're blood-drinkers and man-eaters. I'm past that. . . . '**Enough,**' said the judge. **There was utter silence all round me. And now for the first time I knew what I had been doing. While I was reading, it had, once and again, seemed strange to me that the reading took so long; for the book was a small one. Now I knew that I had been reading it over and over—perhaps a dozen times.** I would have read it forever, quick as I could, starting the first word again almost before the last was out of my mouth, if the judge had not stopped me. **And the voice I read it in was strange to my ears. There was given to me a certainty that this, at last, was my real voice.**

[Lewis, C. S.. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. HarperCollins. Kindle location 3661.]

Then these lines that follow immediately after the above, and which contain the title of the novel. They are the opening lines of Part IV, the last part of the novel. Orual is the older sister of Psyche, whose life had been full of complaints about the injustice of the gods, and who has all her life wanted finally to let the gods have it, to tell them off, to read her Complaint aloud to them.³³

The complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered. Lightly men talk of saying what they mean. Often when he was teaching me to write in Greek the Fox would say, 'Child, to say the very thing you really mean, the whole of it, nothing more or less or other than what you really mean; that's the whole art and joy of words.' A glib saying. When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the centre of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you'll not talk about joy of words. **I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can**

reasoning and her emotions. **This was his last novel, and he considered it his most mature, written in conjunction with his wife, Joy Davidman.**"

³³ *Wikipedia* – "It is in the midst of this last vision that she is led to a huge chamber in the land of the dead and given the opportunity to read out her complaint in the gods' hearing. **She discovers, however, that instead of reading the book she has written, she reads off a paper that appears in her hand and contains her true feelings, which are indeed less noble than Part One of the book would suggest.** Still, rather than being jealous of Psyche, as the story she heard in the temple suggested, she reveals that she was jealous of the gods because they were allowed to enjoy Psyche's love while she herself was not."

they meet us face to face till we have faces? [Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. HarperCollins. Kindle location 3683.]

THE UGLINESS OF JOB & HIS CIRCUMSTANCES – “THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM”

Isaiah 52 – [from the Fourth Song of the Servant]

- ¹³ See, my servant shall prosper,
he shall be raised high and greatly exalted.
¹⁴ Even as many were amazed at him—
so marred were his features,
beyond that of mortals
his appearance, beyond that of human beings—^d
¹⁵ So shall he startle many nations,
kings shall stand speechless;
For those who have not been told shall see,
those who have not heard shall ponder it.^{e 34}

Notice how when the Friends first see Job, they are compelled to a horrifying silence, and inability to speak, *in relation to what they see*. I believe that what they see is what jolts them all most profoundly, after which they rise to reflection about all that Job has lost.

Job 2 - ⁶And the LORD said to the Adversary, “Here he is in your hands. Only preserve his life.” ⁷And the Adversary went out from before the LORD’s presence. **And he struck Job with a grievous burning rash from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head.** ⁸**And he took a potsherd to scrape himself with, and he was sitting among the ashes.**
[Alter, Robert. *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*. W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle location 91648.]

Robert Alter notes concerning this “rash” – “The Hebrew *shehin* derives from a root that means “hot” and is the same term used in Exodus for the fifth plague. Attempts at a precise medical diagnosis are pointless: the essential idea is that a burning rash covering the entire body

^d Ps 69:8.

^e Mi 7:16.

³⁴ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Is 52:13–15.

from the soles of the feet to the head would be agonizing (and also disfiguring, as the initial failure of the three friends to recognize Job suggests).”

Job 2 - ¹¹ Now when three of Job’s friends heard of all the misfortune that had come upon him, they set out each one from his own place: Eliphaz from Teman,* Bildad from Shuh, and Zophar from Naamath. They met and journeyed together to give him sympathy and comfort. ¹² **But when, at a distance, they lifted up their eyes and did not recognize him, they began to weep aloud; they tore their cloaks and threw dust into the air over their heads.** ¹³ Then they sat down upon the ground with him seven days and seven nights, but none of them spoke a word to him; for they saw how great was his suffering. ³⁵

“THE DRAGON” OF ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

Steven Chase, “Re-reading Job” – “I ran across this wonderful quotation from Cyril of Jerusalem, instructing catechumens: ‘The dragon is at the side of the road watching those who pass. Take care lest he devour you! You are going to the Father of souls, but it is necessary to pass by the dragon.’³⁶ The opposite of illusion has, I believe, something to do with that dragon, necessary to pass. It is necessary because our journey to the Father of Souls takes us just there where the dragon is watching; to get there we *must* pass.

In Job 40, there is a dramatic portrayal by God of His creation “**behemoth**” [dragon], about which Alter notes at Job 40:15 – “The Hebrew word means “beast.” It is in plural form, possibly a plural of intensification or majesty, but the noun is treated as singular and masculine (indeed, spectacularly masculine) throughout. Behemoth clearly takes off from the Egyptian hippopotamus, but in his daunting proportions, his fierce virility, and his absolute impregnability, he represents a mythological heightening of the actual beast, just as Leviathan is even more patently a mythological heightening of the Egyptian crocodile. The fact that the

* *Teman*: in Edom (see Gn 36:9–11). The Temanites (Jer 49:7; cf. Ob 8) **enjoyed a reputation for wisdom**. *Shuh* and *Naamath*: locations unknown.

³⁵ [*New American Bible*](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Job 2:11–13.

³⁶ Steven Chase finds this quotation in **Flannery O’Connor**, who uses it: “St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in instructing catechumens, wrote: “The dragon sits by the side of the road, watching those who pass. Beware lest he devour you. We go to the Father of Souls, but it is necessary to pass by the dragon.” No matter what form the dragon may take, it is of this mysterious passage past him, or into his jaws, that stories of any depth will always be concerned to tell, and this being the case, it requires considerable courage at any time, in any country, not to turn away from the storyteller.”

poet probably never laid eyes on these fabled beasts but knew of them through travelers' yarns no doubt facilitated this transition from zoology to myth. Whether there is some counterpart to Behemoth in Canaanite or Sumerian myth, as some have claimed, is a matter of dispute." [Alter, Robert. *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*. W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle location 96551.]

Flannery O'Connor – "The dragon sits by the side of the road, watching those who pass. Beware lest he devour you. We go to the Father of Souls, **but it is necessary to pass by the dragon.**" It was Flannery O'Connor who, in a perhaps unconscious echoing of Dante, said that all literature is anagogic. Here is her comment on St. Cyril: "No matter what form the dragon may take, it is of this mysterious passage past him, or into his jaws, that stories of any depth will always be concerned to tell, and this being the case, it requires considerable courage at any time, in any country, not to turn away from the storyteller.

O'Connor, Flannery (Mary Flannery O'Connor), 1925–1964, American author, b. Savannah, Ga., grad. Women's College of Georgia (A.B., 1945), Iowa State Univ. (M.F.A., 1947). As a writer, O'Connor is highly regarded for her bizarre imagination, uncompromising moral vision, and superb literary style. **Combining the grotesque and the gothic, her fiction treats contemporary Southern life in terms of stark, brutal comedy and violent tragedy.** Her characters, although often deformed in both body and spirit, are impelled toward redemption. All of O'Connor's fiction reflects her strong Roman Catholic faith. *Wise Blood* (1952) and *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960) are novels focusing on religious fanaticism; *A Good Man Is Hard To Find* (1955) and *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965) are short-story collections. Her *Collected Stories* was published in 1971.³⁷

AN IMPORTANT FACT: JOB NEVER ASKS TO HAVE IT ALL BACK

Job believes that God, as Sovereign, may give or retrieve his gifts at his pleasure (1:21b); he may send good or bad (2:10b). **He [God] is not accountable to any man for such actions.** Eliphaz thinks he knows how to get along with a predictable (and that means, to some extent, manageable) God. Job, who has no such pretensions, faces the agony of getting along with a God over whom he has absolutely no control or even influence. Eliphaz's speech, with which Job has no quarrel as a general statement of the power and justice of God, is beside the mark, because it simply does not fit Job's case. **Job had long since learnt to view his good life as a**

³⁷ Paul Lagassé, Columbia University, [The Columbia Encyclopedia](#) (New York; Detroit: Columbia University Press; Sold and distributed by Gale Group, 2000).

gift, not a reward, so he has no complaint when it is removed. *He has submitted no petition for its restoration.* Even in the end that will not come as an answer to prayer. Hence he does not want from Eliphaz the soothing word that if he would only do this or that, everything could be restored to ‘normal’. As if Job 1:1–5 defined the norm! The affirmations which Job has so magnificently made in 1:21 and 2:10 lead him into a new task. **He must normalize, find the rightness of, his relationship with God as it is ‘now’ (6:3). His lament in chapter 3 marks his entry upon that assignment.** To find consolation in the thought that his afflictions will be brief, that soon all will be as it used to be (5:17–26), would deflect him from this necessary and immediate task. **Unless we see this, we shall not appreciate the vehemence of the outburst that instantly follows in Job’s next speech.**³⁸

Job is being tested.⁷⁸ It is essential that he does not know why. *He must ask why. He must test and reject all the answers attempted by men. In the end he will find satisfaction in what God himself tells him.*⁷⁹ The final restoration of Job to the happy circumstances described by Eliphaz in 5:17–26, including the peaceful death in grand old age, surrounded by descendants to the fourth generation (42:11–17), is not in conflict with the conclusion reached at this point that Eliphaz is wrong. **For one thing, all that restoration comes well after Job has settled everything with God, and it is not the means by which God renews their friendship.** Furthermore, Job’s way back to this happy state is completely different from the route prescribed by Eliphaz in his first speech.³⁹

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SILENCE IN THIS TELLING

Job 2 – ¹² But when, at a distance, they lifted up their eyes and did not recognize him, they began to weep aloud; they tore their cloaks and threw dust into the air over their

³⁸ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 134.

^{*78} **Gen. 22 is a miniature book of Job. Abraham was driven into an ordeal as cruel as Job’s, and he could never again be as he was before. He had enlarged his life with God through suffering. The theology is the same. Abraham’s agony, like Job’s, was neither punitive (for the sinner) nor corrective (for the saint).**

^{*79} Many critics do not share Job’s satisfaction with the Yahweh speeches, precisely because they are not what they expect God to say!

³⁹ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 134–135.

heads. ¹³Then they sat down upon the ground with him seven days and seven nights, but none of them spoke a word to him; for they saw how great was his suffering. ⁴⁰

“Seven days” is a holy number of days. But it is also the number of “days” that God set aside to create the whole universe, in which one of those days – the last day – was *a contemplative day*: the Sabbath Day.

And so we begin to wonder whether these “seven days” (Job 2:13) are *the deconstruction days*, the *undoing* of the created world, and of the meaning of the world as it had been theologically understood to this point. In other words, these seven days of silence correspond to **the First Movement of re-creation, which is deconstruction**. And the long silence may therefore correspond to the opening lines of Genesis:

Genesis 1 (Robert Alter) – ¹When God began to create heaven and earth, ²and the earth then was *welter and waste* and darkness over the deep and God’s breath hovering over the waters, ³God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. ⁴And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness.

Job, through this terrible testing of his life, in his life, apparently against his life, will now begin **to re-construct Theology** on a far more mature level of understanding. The former, stale Theologies of the Friends of Job has too many fundamental and serious mistakes. **These theologies mislead even their most devoted thinkers.**

What Job is experiencing in his life, thrust into his life by God’s intention, was primordial **CHAOS** – “**welter and waste**” as Alter translates the untranslatable *tohu wobohu*.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**welter**” – “A state of confusion, upheaval, or turmoil.” And, “The rolling, tossing, or tumbling (of the sea or waves).”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**waste**” – “Uninhabited (or sparsely inhabited) and uncultivated country; a wild and desolate region, a desert, wilderness.”

Notice how in 3:4, Job speaks “**Let it be darkness**”, which directly echoes the first word God speaks at the moment of Creation ... though in Job’s case, Job is undoing Creation – *deconstructing* it!

⁴⁰ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Job 2:12–13.

WHY WE FEEL THE LOSS OF GOD WHEN OUR CENTRAL RELATIONSHIPS BREAK

Another general feature of Job's speeches cannot be emphasized too strongly. Scholars who find his volcanic outbursts in the dialogue utterly different from his tranquility in the prologue⁵ **overlook the fact that nowhere does Job bewail the losses of chapter 1 nor the illness of chapter 2. In this he is utterly consistent. His concern from beginning to end is God; not his wealth or health, but his life with God. It is because he seems to have lost God that he is in such torment.** This vivid consciousness does not remove the particulars of his human life—his work and his family and his body—from the scene as having nothing to do with God. Nothing could be more alien to his thought, and to Israelite religion in general, than to isolate the relationship with God as the only thing of value for a man, rendering him indifferent to poverty, callous in bereavement, heedless of pain. **On the contrary, the relationship with God is known in and by means of these ordinary things. Without them Job does not only lose his humanity; he loses God. Already we are prepared for an answer that comes, not when God (alone) confronts Job (alone), but when God is found in his world (the Yahweh speeches) and when Job finds himself once more surrounded by animals and friends and family.**⁴¹

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

1. Where have you hidden,
Beloved, and left me moaning?
You fled like the stag
After wounding me;
I went out calling you, and you were gone.

2. Shepherds, you that go
Up through the sheepfolds to the hill,
If by chance you see
Him I love most,
Tell him that I sicken, suffer, and die.

⁵ See the Introduction (pp. 44ff.) for the use of this alleged contrast to assign the prose and the poetry to two different sources.

⁴¹ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 104–105.

3. Seeking my love
I will head for the mountains and for watersides,
I will not gather flowers,
Nor fear wild beasts;
I will go beyond strong men and frontiers.

4. O woods and thickets
Planted by the hand of my beloved!
O green meadow,
Coated, bright with flowers.
Tell me, has he passed by you?

5. Pouring out a thousand graces,
He passed these groves in haste;
And having looked at them,
With his image alone,
Clothed them in beauty.

**6. Ah, who has the power to heal me?
Now wholly surrender yourself!
Do not send me
Any more messengers,
They cannot tell me what I must hear.**

**7. All who are free
Tell me a thousand graceful things of you;
All wound me more
And leave me dying
Of, ah, I-don't-know-what behind their stammering.**⁴²

Steven Chase, “Re-reading Job”, quoting Flannery O’Connor – “Flannery O’Conner again, in her no-nonsense way, helps us into the infernal night-vision of Jobean faith. She writes: ‘Ivan Karamazov cannot believe, as long as one child is in torment; Camus’ hero cannot accept the divinity of Christ, because of the massacre of the innocents. **In this popular piety, we mark our aim in sensibility and our loss in vision. If other ages felt less, they saw more, even though they saw with the blind, prophetic, unsentimental eye of acceptance, which is to say, faith. In the absence of faith now, we govern by tenderness.** [But] it is a tenderness which, long since cut off from the person of Christ, is wrapped in theory. When tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness, its logical outcome is terror.’”⁴³

⁴² John of the Cross, *John of the Cross: Selected Writings*, ed. Kieran Kavanaugh and John Farina, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 221–222.

⁴³ Flannery O’Conner, “Introduction to a Memoir of Mary Ann” in *Complete Works*, 830.

JOB 3

Version: 14, 15, 16, 17 March 2021

TEXT

II. FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES

CHAPTER 3

Job's Complaint. ¹ After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. ² Job spoke out and said:

- ³ Perish the day on which I was born,^a
the night when they said, "The child is a boy!"
- ⁴ May that day be darkness:
may God* above not care for it,
may light not shine upon it!
- ⁵ May darkness and gloom claim it,
clouds settle upon it,
blackness of day* affright it!
- ⁶ May obscurity seize that night;
may it not be counted among the days of the year,
nor enter into the number of the months!
- ⁷ May that night be barren;
let no joyful outcry greet it!

* *His day*: that is, the day of his birth.

^a Jer 20:14.

* *God*: in Heb. *'Eloah*, another name for the divinity, used frequently in Job.

* *Blackness of day*: that is, an eclipse.

- ⁸ Let them curse it who curse the Sea,
those skilled at disturbing Leviathan!*
- ⁹ May the stars of its twilight be darkened;
may it look for daylight, but have none,
nor gaze on the eyes of the dawn,
- ¹⁰ Because it did not keep shut the doors of the womb
to shield my eyes from trouble!
- ¹¹ Why did I not die at birth,^b
come forth from the womb and expire?
- ¹² Why did knees receive me,
or breasts nurse me?
- ¹³ For then I should have lain down and been tranquil;
had I slept, I should then have been at rest
- ¹⁴ With kings and counselors of the earth
who rebuilt what were ruins
- ¹⁵ Or with princes who had gold
and filled their houses with silver.
- ¹⁶ Or why was I not buried away like a stillborn child,
like babies that have never seen the light?
- ¹⁷ There* the wicked cease from troubling,
there the weary are at rest.
- ¹⁸ The captives are at ease together,
and hear no overseer's voice.
- ¹⁹ Small and great are there;
the servant is free from the master.
- ²⁰ Why is light given to the toilers,
life to the bitter in spirit?
- ²¹ They wait for death and it does not come;
they search for it more than for hidden treasures.
- ²² They rejoice in it exultingly,
and are glad when they find the grave:
- ²³ A man whose path is hidden from him,
one whom God has hemmed in!*
- ²⁴ For to me sighing comes more readily than food;
my groans well forth like water.

* *Leviathan*: a mythological sea monster symbolizing primeval chaos. It is parallel to Sea, which was the opponent of Baal in the Ugaritic legends. Cf. 9:13; 26:13; 40:25–41:26; Ps 74:13–14; 104:26; Is 27:1.

^b Jb 10:18–19.

* *There*: in death.

* *Hemmed in*: contrast the same verb as used in 1:10.

- ²⁵ For what I feared overtakes me;
what I dreaded comes upon me.
²⁶ I have no peace nor ease;
I have no rest, for trouble has come! ¹

COMMENTARY

Some of Job's prayers are wild, and must have seemed dangerous to his dignified friends. His audacious attempts to reach the mind of God leave us breathless, and must have worried his cautious friends. **He is passionate; they are cold. Job is dreadfully in earnest, and transparently honest. He tells God exactly how he feels and just what he thinks.** There could hardly be better prayers than that.²

Another general feature of Job's speeches cannot be emphasized too strongly. Scholars who find his volcanic outbursts in the dialogue utterly different from his tranquility in the prologue⁵ **overlook the fact that nowhere does Job bewail the losses of chapter 1 nor the illness of chapter 2. In this he is utterly consistent. His concern from beginning to end is God; not his wealth or health, but his life with God. It is because he seems to have lost God that he is in such torment.** This vivid consciousness does not remove the particulars of his human life—his work and his family and his body—from the scene as having nothing to do with God. *Nothing could be more alien to his thought, and to Israelite religion in general, than to isolate the relationship with God as the only thing of value for a man*, rendering him indifferent to poverty, callous in bereavement, heedless of pain. **On the contrary, the relationship with God is known in and by means of these ordinary things. Without them Job does not only lose his humanity; he loses God. Already we are prepared for an answer that comes, not when God (alone) confronts Job (alone), but when God is found in his world (the Yahweh speeches) and when Job finds himself once more surrounded by animals and friends and family.**³

¹ *New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Job 3:1–26.

² Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 104.

⁵ See the Introduction (pp. 44ff.) for the use of this alleged contrast to assign the prose and the poetry to two different sources.

³ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 104–105.

But much of Job's utterance is in an entirely different direction. **Job is not arguing a point; he is trying to understand his experience.** Hence he often talks to himself, struggling in his own mind. **He is also trying to retain (or recover) his lost friendship with God.** Hence he appeals to God again and again. His prayers may shock his religious friends, but at least he keeps on talking to the heedless God. **His friends talk about God. Job talks to God. And this makes him the only authentic theologian in the book.**⁴

In the first speech the spectacle of human misery is presented with a poignancy that is quite overwhelming. Job is stunned because he cannot deny that it is the Lord who has done all this to him. Even more piteous than his question 'Why?', which the best answers of his friends cannot satisfy, is **his desperate need to find again his lost Friend.**⁵

Overcome by dismay yet observant of tradition, Job's friends offer consolation in sympathetic silence, waiting for Job to speak. **Job at last breaks the silence.** The words that gush forth from his agitated soul surprise everyone. His words are bold and caustic. Wishing that he had never been born, Job curses the day of his birth.⁶

CURSING THE DAY OF HIS BIRTH (3:1-13)

The fact that Job's first words are those cursing the day of his conception and birth, regretting that he ever had a life in this world, tells us something important. Notice how his intense pain and feelings of foundational loss in every domain of his life – all that gave it meaning – causes him to overlook all the BLESSINGS that he had in this life up to a week ago, when he felt daily the consolation of children, wife, stature for the right reasons in his community, fame, and people all around him who knew him as a good man. That Job could overlook so obvious a thing means that all of that, all of those Blessings, do not match the LOSS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD that he is feeling. All of those BLESSINGS seem suddenly to have been an illusion of sorts, in as much as they kept Job from seeing that something (apparently) had gone really wrong with him and God. Why?! What was it?!

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the startling sentiments expressed in this speech do not mean that Job has cracked under the strain. There is no hint that the Satan has finally

⁴ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 104.

⁵ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 105.

⁶ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 89.

made his point. The bourgeois etiquette that has dominated the mores of Western Christendom, especially in the Puritan tradition, is no guide to the rightness of Job's speech. **Self-control is something quite different from not showing one's emotions. Job is no Stoic, striving to be pure mind with no feeling. The Bible knows nothing of such dehumanizing philosophy; but we stand in a long tradition of a pallid piety that has confused the Christian way⁷ with the noble but heathen ethic of the Stoa.** Further perversions were fostered by various kinds of Gnosticism and Manicheism, until Christian perfection is defined as the triumph of reason over passion,⁸ sometimes masquerading under the Pauline terms 'spirit' and 'flesh'. Its prescription for the afflicted is torpid resignation to the unquestionable will of God, a strict curb on all feelings, or at least on the outward expression of them, with disapproval of the weakling majority who cannot walk calmly in the furnace with 'tranquillity undisturbed by the fierce fires of passion'.⁹ **It is little wonder that this tradition has *not* taken Job as its patron saint and has found James's reference to his 'patience'¹⁰ incredible, and his overmastering sorrow,¹¹ his outburst of anger, unspiritual.** But Job is a man bereaved, humiliated, and in pain.⁷

⁷ The history of interpretation of that fruit of the Spirit generally translated 'self-control' (Gal. 5:23) is very instructive in this regard. From that self-mastery that releases the energies of an athlete into a superb performance (1 Cor. 9:25) it withers to a purely negative suppression of desire, especially condemning the gratification of bodily needs so that sexual continence, for instance, becomes in itself a great virtue.

⁸ One need only refer to the reiterated theme of William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Here is a typical passage: 'The Religion of the Gospel is only the refinement, and exaltation of our best faculties, as it only requires a life of the highest Reason, as it only requires us to use this world as in reason it ought to be used, to live in such *temper*s as are the glory of intelligent beings ...' (*Editio princeps*, 1729, p. 75). Commentators trained in such piety could only conclude that Job was a great sinner for being so emotional.

⁹ Froude in a letter to Carlyle.

¹⁰ Jas. 5:11, AV. The word really refers to **the active virtue of endurance, of steadfast persistence**. Cf. NEB.

¹¹ The example of Jesus (Mark. 14:34) should forever silence all criticisms of Job, for His tears (the Logos took a human body in order to weep with it) make it true—*res est sacra miser*. **The deep hold that the virtue of the 'stiff upper lip' has taken in Anglo-Saxon standards of propriety (especially for men) can be traced to the impact of Cicero and others on Renaissance man.** See, for example, de Montaigne's essay *On Sadness*. In our day the press continues to applaud public figures who are stoical in bereavement. Job's friends show a limited capacity to 'weep with those who weep' (Rom. 12:15), and our embarrassment in the presence of mourners betrays a similar failure all too often.

⁷ Francis I. Andersen, [*Job: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 106–108.

Verse 3 – In this verse Job refers to himself as a *male* (*geber*).¹⁵ The several Hebrew words for “man” emphasize various aspects of his being, e.g., *ʾiṣ*, his strength, or *ʾādām*, his earthiness and limitedness (cf. *ʾāḏāmâ*, “earth, ground”), but *geber* connotes a powerful man, particularly in contrast to a child or a woman. In the darkest hour of his crisis, Job refers to himself as a full-blooded, stalwart person. Thus his curse is not designed to eliminate from the human race a weakling unworthy of dignity. Rather he views himself as a distinguished person who has been shamed by misfortune.⁸

Verse 4 – In seeking to remove the day of his birth from existence Job commands, *That day—let it be darkness!* This curse directly counters God’s first words in creating the world, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). Any day or block of time that remained in darkness never came into being. That is the reason Job piles up words for darkness in vv. 4–6: *darkness* (*ḥōšek*, vv. 4a, 5a), *deep dark* (*šalmāwet* v. 5a),¹⁶ *cloud mass* (*ʾānānâ*, v. 5b), *blackness* (*kamrîr*, v. 5c),¹⁷ *gloom* (*ʾōpēl*, v. 6a).⁹

Verses 6-7 – Job next addresses the night of his conception. It was a night when life was conceived, life that challenged the disordered lifelessness of darkness. That is, each birth participates in the victory of cosmos over the forces of chaos. In celebration of that victory a

¹⁵ See H. Kosmala, “The Term *geber* in the Old Testament and in the Scrolls,” in *Congress Volume: Rome 1968*, VTSup 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1969), pp. 159–69.

⁸ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 92.

¹⁶ *šalmāwet* used to be taken most often as a compound word, *šēl* + *māwet*, and translated lit., “shadow of death” (so AV). Others (e. g., Dhorme; KB, p. 964) posited the revocalization *šalmût*, i.e., it is the combination of a word for darkness, *šelem* (cognate of Akk. *šalāmu*, “be dark”) plus the abstract ending *-ôt*. But D. W. Thomas (“*šalmawet* in the Old Testament,” *JSS* 7 [1962] 191–200) argues that *māwet*, “death,” possesses superlative force; thus he explains that the expression “shadow of death” means “very deep shadow, thick darkness.” It is the darkness encountered in a mineshaft (28:3) or in the region of the dead (10:21–22; 38:17). Amos also uses this term to refer to the darkness prior to creation (5:8). In Job 28:3 and 10:22 *ʾōpēl*, “gloom,” accompanies *šalmāwet*.

¹⁷ It seems best to understand MT *kimrîrê* as a noun form from a root *kmr*, “be black,” hence “blackness” (cf. Syr.). Grabbe (*Comparative Philology*, pp. 29–31) seriously doubts this position; the cognate evidence is weak and the Syriac root means “be sad, mourn.” He also notes that *bmryry ywm*, “bitterness of the day,” appears in Sir. 11:4 and *bmrwry ywm* (a slight variant with the same meaning) in the Thanksgiving Hymn, 1QH 5:34 (cf. M. Mansoor, “Thanksgiving Hymns and Massoretic Text,” *RevQ* 3 [1961–62] 259–66), which for him “leaves no alternative” that the root must be *mrr*, not *kmr*. But the parallelism suggests that *kimrîrê* is the subject of the verb and that it connotes some type of darkness. Dhorme associates it with the mist or fog that hides the sun. Influenced by Rashi and Ibn Ezra, Gordis finds here “the demons of the day.” He thinks that *mʾrîrê* is related to Arab. *mara*, “pass, pass by,” and refers to demons in flight. He takes the *kap̄*, then, as the asseverative *kap̄*, also known in Ugaritic (R. Gordis, “The Asseverative Kaph in Hebrew and Ugaritic,” *JAOS* 63 [1943] 176–78).

⁹ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 92.

joyful shout (*r'nānâ*) breaks the stillness of the night, proclaiming that a new life has been conceived and darkness has been defeated (v. 7). But the hopeful expectation of that moment has eventuated in the bitter pain of Job's present suffering.¹⁰

In this cursing prayer, Job is doing something that I have often seen as a regular (bad) habit of people who find themselves trapped in a misery of life. **They want a do-over.** Their pain is so significant that they desire "another chance" to "get it right" this time. Think of the addict's misery here. But what turns out to be the case is that there is no do-over; never could be. What a person has done, his or her responsibility for the misery, permanently changes him or her. The only way is to go forward, to accept what is, and to look for help as one goes. Remember Ged the Archmage and Arren in "The Dry Land" in Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore*:

Ged said nothing. As soon as they halted, he had sunk down, sitting on a lava-boulder, forspent, his head hanging. **Arren knew that the way they had come was closed to them. They could only go on. They must go all the way.** Even too far is not far enough, he thought. He looked up at the black peaks, cold and silent against the unmoving stars, terrible; and once more that ironic, mocking voice of his will spoke in him, unrelenting: "Will you stop halfway, Lebannen?" He went to Ged and said very gently, "We must go on, my lord." [Le Guin, Ursula K.. *The Farthest Shore* (The Earthsea Cycle Series Book 3), chapter 12. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Kindle location 2614.]

What Job prays is kind of a "do-over" in the sense that he prays never to have been born.

Verse 9 – Job continues his imprecations by cursing *the first rays of dawn* (lit. "eyelids of the dawn") that begin to etch their way across the horizon and *the stars of its twilight*, Venus and Mercury, which shine brightly and announce the end of night. **These first signs of light on the horizon foreshadow a new victory of light over darkness. A new day is beginning to be created. Job pronounces this curse to prevent that victory from taking place.** If his curse is effective, the night will continue to reign. Light will never shine on that day.¹¹

There is something to be said for a "curse" that is written with such poetic power, skill, and beauty. A "curse" should be ugly, written ugly. Job's "curse" is beautiful.

Verses 11-12 – In agony Job asks *Why did I not die at birth?* If he had been given no breath, he would have expired as he came from the womb. He would simply have been transported from the womb to the grave. Next Job asks, *Why did the knees*, most likely his father's, but possibly

¹⁰ John E. Hartley, [The Book of Job](#), The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 93.

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his mother's, *receive him?*²² **In holding the newborn the parents bind themselves to the child, signifying their acceptance of the infant and the responsibility of raising the baby, and the breasts that I should suck?** He wishes that he had been discarded, left to die unattended.¹²

Because of how Job speaks, we imagine that this all primarily about him. But this simply does not match the descriptions of the kind of mature and spiritually deep man Job was. Job's agony is as much or more about his family, and all of those who depended on him and his wife by way of resources and encouragement and wisdom. They are all gone! His children, all of them, killed in a moment. WHY would he ever have wanted with his wife to bring beautiful children into the world only to see them die, or each of their children to have their rich lives snuffed out? Perhaps what Job is doing in this "curse of the day I was conceived/born" has far more to do with anger at what their children had taken from them just as they were into the productive and creative parts of their lives.

Verse 13 – In the theology of this book, judgment is not postponed to the afterlife. It is only in a negative sense that the turbulence of life abates (verse 13) and the inequalities of life become irrelevant (14–19). **In spite of the vagueness with which the living conditions of Sheol are described, the continuation of conscious personal existence and identity after death is clearly believed. The book knows nothing about the heaven of bliss or the hell of torment in later eschatology, but there is never a thought that death means *extinction*.** In fact, Job provides a long list of the denizens of Sheol, ranging from those who had achieved the highest eminence (kings and others, verse 14) to those who had achieved nothing (the stillborn, verse 16).²⁹ **He envies them all, for nothing happens in the grave.**¹³

²² Cf. B. Stade, "Auf Jemandes Knieen gebaren," *ZAW* 6 (1886) 143–56. Although taking a child on the knees may be a father's act to show his acceptance of and concern for his child (Gen. 50:23b; cf. 30:3), it often refers to the motherly custom of gladly taking up the newborn infant to nurse it (cf. Isa. 66:12). She thus recognizes it as her own and commits herself to its nurture and upbringing.

¹² John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 95.

²⁹ This is only one of several good reasons for leaving verse 16 in its present position, instead of moving it around as has become fashionable in modern translations (JB, NEB, NAB).

¹³ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 114.

A LAMENT (3:14-26)

Verses 14-19 – The social inequalities are evened up in the grave. This is summed up in verse 19, which says that the small and the great, the slave and his master are now all alike. Two lists of representatives of the two ends of the scale are given, with nice symmetry. There seem to be four categories in each list: *kings, counsellors, builders, princes* (or rich) in verses 14 and 15; the wicked, the over-worked, criminals, the exploited in verses 17 and 18. This grouping makes it clear that verse 16 is in its proper place in the middle, while verse 19 sums up the whole by bringing both classes together.¹⁴

In light of the comment by Andersen above, I think of the all too typical response to Death – the reality that one’s life is not completely in one’s power – is **to build up security, or what seems like security (worldly possessions)**, but the possession of which actually intensifies the experience of Death: “I have now even more to lose!”

Verse 17 - Sheol is the place of rest and relief (verse 13). Even *the wicked*, far from receiving their long overdue punishment, find repose. It is less likely that he means that they are now prevented *from troubling* others. The same word is used at the end of verse 26 to describe Job’s present ‘agitation’. It implies that *the wicked* live in a state of emotional disturbance which happily ends for them in death. **We are already near the bitter thought that being good or bad makes no difference in the end.**¹⁵

Until very late in the Old Testament biblical perspective does the idea of an *afterlife as something that one lives, a kind of Time within which a person has ongoing experiences*, start to appear. Long before there was an understanding of the afterlife as the dull place, the gray place, the vague place – the great Leveler of worldly stature. Persons *did* exist there, in the Afterlife (Sheol), but there was no activity there at all – **nothing mattered there.**

The only way to “solve” what Andersen remarks – “the bitter thought that being good or bad makes no difference in the end” – is to lay claim to the insight that Life is about learning how to exercise it wholeheartedly in the present moment. It is not to be for such a person about “gaming” the next stage – the Afterlife – by acting “in the hope of rewards” later.

Verse 20 – So far Job has found life intolerable (verses 3–10) and death desirable (verses 11–19). Now he strikes deeper into the problem by asking *why* any of this should happen at all.

¹⁴ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 114–115.

¹⁵ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 115.

Light and life are similar, since the realm of death is a dark place. **Why should the result of God's good gift of life be that those who have it wish to be rid of it?**^{32 16}

Verses 24-26 – The last three verses of Job's speech are so unintelligible in the Hebrew original that translators have had to take various liberties to secure reasonable English. The words *sighing* and *groanings* are not strong enough. The latter describes the roaring of lions, and reading *km-ym* instead of *k-mym*, which requires no change in the text, yields a more powerful simile: 'my bellowings cascade like the sea.' The apparent reference to *my bread* in the preceding line has defeated all commentators, unless 'my flesh'³⁴ affords a clue. ***Sighing is too feeble a sound to express Job's tragic sorrow. The impression is given that groans come from his whole body.***¹⁷

Verse 26 – Dhorme distinguishes the words as *ease* (*šālâ*) for mental rest, *quiet* (*šāqat*) for physical rest, and *rest* (*nûah*) for rest in general. That delineation may be somewhat artificial, but the rest Job desired encompasses both poise and tranquility. A person with a deep sense of serenity may enjoy life to its fullest. **Conversely, one lacking repose is filled with deep agitation, which encompasses physical torment, agony of mind, and social discomfort. Such is Job's case.** He exclaims, *turmoil comes!* The word for turmoil (*rōḡez*; cf. v. 17) describes the agitated state that results from complete lack of peace.¹⁸

³² Although translations agree in making *him that is in misery* and its parallel *the bitter in soul* the indirect objects of the verb *given*, this makes sense only if it means, 'Why does God keep on giving light and life to such persons, instead of letting them die, as they would prefer?' But the enquiry is more fundamental. **Why is life given at all, since it results only in exhaustion (see comment on *trouble*—the same word—at verse 10) and disillusionment (the bitterness describes someone who has nothing to live for, especially a desolate widow).** The preposition thus points to the outcome of the gift, not the recipient.

¹⁶ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 116.

³⁴ Cf. Pope, p. 51 (on Job. 6:7).

¹⁷ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 117.

¹⁸ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 100.

GANZ NOTES ON THE SUSCIPE¹ PRAYER

SONG – “THESE ALONE ARE ENOUGH”

See my Notes on the original text of St. Ignatius presented below after the lyrics to Schutte’s song:

Dan Schutte, SJ² - “These Alone Are Enough” based on the words of the *Suscipe* prayer by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises* (see original below):

Take³ my heart, O Lord, **take** my hopes and dreams.
Take my mind with all its plans and schemes.⁴

¹ This Latin verb form – Imperative Mood, Present Tense (= kind of action, not time of action) – is pronounced SOO-she-pay.

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³ “**Take!**” – This verb in the Imperative Mood is written **six times** in this lyric. One must not miss the significance of this word “**Take!**” It is in the Imperative or “Command” form. A person “commands” God to take something (he or she is about to indicate what in particular). Why? Because that person knows that he or she has no capacity to give things so centrally precious to him or her. But the person has been brought by God far enough along the Path of Depth that he or she now knows that even things so centrally precious to him or her can be misused, left unrecognized. The person here “commands” God to “take” them from him or her and then to help him or her to use these powers in the way God wanted them to be used for His greater glory (i.e., greater meaning, greater than my own glory!).

⁴ “**plans and schemes**” – Actually this is a nice way of indicating the kind of practical knowledge – “how to” knowledge, worldly savvy, etc. – that the Wisdom traditions of the Bible collect and esteem. Job, in the Book of Job, has all of his unusually successful “plans and schemes” taken from him.

Give me *nothing more than*⁵ your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.⁶

Take my thoughts, Oh Lord, and my memory.
Take my tears, my joys, my liberty⁷.
Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

I **surrender**,⁸ Lord, all I have and Hold.
I **return** to you your gifts untold.⁹
Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

When the darkness falls on my final days,
take the very breath that sang your praise.

⁵ “**nothing more than**” – This phrase appears once in each of the four stanzas of this lyric. This is a central rhythmic element in this poem. Its repetition over and over again emphasizes this thought. Consider how it is that when we wonder whether we have *enough* (of anything), we conclude about that **in a comparative way**. We, because our desires are *mimetic* (see René Girard), cannot seem to decide about “enough” from within a thing itself. We must compare how much of it we have *compared to* someone else! Also “nothing more” is another way of saying “enough.”

⁶ “**Give me nothing more than ... enough for me**” – These two lines are the second two lines of each of the four stanzas of this lyric. Notice how all that I ask God to “take” from me – my central power, my possessions, anything that I have or hold on to – **is not so that I have nothing left, but so that I have nothing now that stands in the way, competes with, God’s gift of Himself** – the indwelling of the Holy Trinity; that is, “your love and your grace.”

⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the noun “**liberty**”, as to “the state or condition of being free – *Theology*. Freedom from the bondage or dominating influence of sin, spiritual servitude, worldly ties, etc.” Notice here how the long effort we must exert, and through so many trials, finally to become free: free of self; free of compulsions or addictions; free the distorting power of a Capital Sin; free of the disordered expectations of others, etc. “Free at last! Free at last! Praise God Almighty, we are free at last!” concluded Dr. Martin Luther King in his “I Have a Dream” speech. Why then would I ever consider handing that over to God?! I am finally free, and I am to give that up, to God? We must pay attention to what we are asking God to do: “Take it!”

⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb “**to surrender**” – “More widely: To give up, resign, abandon, relinquish possession of, esp. in favour of or for the sake of another.” This is a strong word. To surrender, and especially to surrender oneself so fully, in all of one’s most central Powers, is not easily done at all! To do so, to surrender so fully, is beyond a person’s ability; it just feels too close to dying! That is why that first word in this prayer “Take!” is so important. The person is asking God *for the grace* to be able to give himself or herself fully to God. **This kind of word in this prayer proves that this prayer has no romance in it at all. This is difficult, the work of sacrificial love.**

⁹ “**gifts untold**” – What are gifts “untold”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**untold**” – “Uncounted, unreckoned, because of amount or numbers; immense, vast.”

Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

Regarding especially that notion of “**liberty**,” I found this quotation in Ursula Le Guin’s *The Farthest Shore*, Chapter 3, Kindle location 517:

He [Ged/Sparrowhawk/the Archmage] stopped and after a while went on, “Try to choose carefully, Arren, when the great choices must be made. When I was young, I had to choose between the life of being and the life of doing. And I leapt at the latter like a trout to a fly. But each deed you do, each act, binds you to itself and to its consequences, and makes you act again and yet again. Then very seldom do you come upon a space, a time like this, between act and act, when you may stop and simply be. Or wonder who, after all, you are.” How could such a man, thought Arren, be in doubt as to who and what he was? He had believed such doubts were reserved for the young, who had not done anything yet. [Le Guin, Ursula K.. *The Farthest Shore* (The Earthsea Cycle Series Book 3) . Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Kindle Edition.]

THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (1491-1556)

LATIN

Suscipe, Domine, universam meam libertatem. **Accipe** memoriam, intellectum atque voluntatem omnem. Quicquid habeo vel possideo, mihi largitus es : **id tibi totum restituo**, ac tuae prorsus voluntati trado, gubernandum. Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis, nec aliud quicquam ultra posco.

I should note here that these ‘spiritual exercises’ refer to a set of interlocking, and developmentally integrated, set of “exercises” (as in “inner” exercises, as in “efforts” of prayer) through which a retreatant is guided by his or her Spiritual Director.

So, the first meaning of these “spiritual exercises” refers to this set of experiences through which a person is guided towards a much more profound experience of his or her relationship with God ... or better, God’s relationship to him or her.

The second meaning of “spiritual exercises” refers to the published text, or *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, which is a manual given to spiritual directors to guide them in their directing of those under their care – the retreatants – during a time of Retreat.

As a manual, then, a person should not purchase the *Spiritual Exercises* as one would a book he or she wished to read for spiritual enjoyment or benefit. Rather only after one has been guided through the experience, or as he or she is being guided through it, ought a person to have for him or herself a copy of this text.

ENGLISH

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius [234]¹⁰ – **First Point** [English translation by Louis Puhl, SJ.]

This is to recall to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favors I have received.

I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.

Then I will reflect upon myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. Thus, as one would do who is *moved by great feeling*, I will make this offering of myself:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.

A study of the boldfaced text above – the *Suscipe* prayer – now follows below.

¹⁰ This number in brackets directs a person to a specific section in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which in this case refers in that text to the “Fourth Week,” and to a specific contemplation there called “A Contemplation for Stimulating within us Divine Love.”

Take,¹¹ O Lord, all my liberty.¹² Receive¹³ my memory, my understanding, and my entire will.¹⁴ Whatsoever I have or hold on to¹⁵ You have given to me; I give it all back to You and surrender it wholly to be governed by your will. Give me only your love and your grace, and I am rich enough¹⁶ and ask for nothing more.

¹¹ Third conjugation Latin verb: *suscipio, suscipere, suscepi, susceptus*. The verb means “to support, to hold up, or to sustain.” It can also mean “to defend.” And when it refers to a person’s willingness to take something upon himself or herself voluntarily, as a favor to someone, it means “to take upon oneself” – to become responsible for something on behalf of someone else. What is important to notice in the Latin form of “Take” used here is that it is in the Imperative mood, Present. What this means is that “Take” is addressed to a single Other – in this case to God, the One in Three – as a command – “**take it!**” – but being in the Present tense (in this case, not *time* of action but *type* of action) it means: “take it – my liberty – **and keep taking it unceasingly.**”

¹² Latin, feminine noun *libertas, libertatis* means “the state or condition of being a free human being (i.e., one is no longer a slave). It also means as an abstract noun “freedom” itself, as in free from external restraint or obligation (as in civil or political freedom; being free from being subject to someone else’s freedom and power to compel him or her). In this regard it is worth recalling the famous distinction of the political philosopher Isaiah Berlin between “freedom *from*” and “freedom *for*.” In other words, what is the use of being “free from” restraint if it is not for the sake of being “free for” others, for the common good, and for the service of the Kingdom of God? **I have defined “liberty” here in the sense of what remains of our actual dispositional freedom, which our decisions over the years make smaller and smaller.** And so for a person to “command” God to take even that – what is left of my dispositional freedom – is to command Him to take complete possession of my life!

¹³ Third conjugation Latin verb: *accipio, accipere, accepi, acceptum*. The verb means “to accept a person, or a thing, to oneself” as having been received from another. It can also by extension mean “to hear or to perceive, and therefore to learn.” And when referring to something disagreeable or difficult, this verb can mean “to bear, to endure, or to suffer” something imposed on me by someone else or by some circumstance.

¹⁴ One cannot directly observe the soul. **However, it is possible to recognize the presence of the soul by observing its powers.** In the medieval period, the human soul came to be characterized as exercising *three* powers – the famous “Powers of Soul”: *memory* (the capacity to remember our experiences and what we have learned, but also our power of imagination), *understanding* (all the activities of human intellect: the ability be awake and alert to experience; the ability to think about what we are experiencing and to gain insight into its meaning; the ability to judge what is the genuine and true) and *will* (the activity of deciding to act according to the truth, rather than, for example, to do what is popular to do, to do what feels so good to do even if not true or good or worthy, or to do what the powerful prefer us to do; but this power includes the rich affective side of the soul by which we *desire* what is valuable and good and beautiful and right). **Thus, to surrender these central powers of the soul to God through this prayer means to give God direct access to all that makes me what I am or to become.**

¹⁵ Literally, “whatever I am having or possessing” (notice the present tense of these verbs, implying continuous action – I am actively and always having and possessing these things: my memories, understandings, feelings, and values and decisions. I translate, for this reason “whatever I have or *am holding on to*” to capture the idea of **how precious these things are to me**, which in grace I am now able to turn over to God continuously for Him to “have and to hold on to” for me, and for His purposes.

¹⁶ One of the very long and widely perceived things about those who are wealthy (in money or status or gifts) is that *enough is never enough*. And so to pray for the grace to be “rich enough ... and to ask for nothing more” is something of great spiritual and social and cultural and religious significance.

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⁵ “**nothing more than**” – This phrase appears once in each of the four stanzas of this lyric. This is a central rhythmic element in this poem. Its repetition over and over again emphasizes this thought. Consider how it is that when we wonder whether we have *enough* (of anything), we conclude about that **in a comparative way**. We, because our desires are *mimetic* (see René Girard), cannot seem to decide about “enough” from within a thing itself. We must compare how much of it we have *compared to* someone else! Also “nothing more” is another way of saying “enough.”

⁶ “**Give me nothing more than ... enough for me**” – These two lines are the second two lines of each of the four stanzas of this lyric. Notice how all that I ask God to “take” from me – my central power, my possessions, anything that I have or hold on to – **is not so that I have nothing left, but so that I have nothing now that stands in the way, competes with, God’s gift of Himself** – the indwelling of the Holy Trinity; that is, “your love and your grace.”

⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the noun “**liberty**”, as to “the state or condition of being free – *Theology*. Freedom from the bondage or dominating influence of sin, spiritual servitude, worldly ties, etc.” Notice here how the long effort we must exert, and through so many trials, finally to become free: free of self; free of compulsions or addictions; free the distorting power of a Capital Sin; free of the disordered expectations of others, etc. “Free at last! Free at last! Praise God Almighty, we are free at last!” concluded Dr. Martin Luther King in his “I Have a Dream” speech. Why then would I ever consider handing that over to God?! I am finally free, and I am to give that up, to God? We must pay attention to what we are asking God to do: “Take it!”

⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb “**to surrender**” – “More widely: To give up, resign, abandon, relinquish possession of, esp. in favour of or for the sake of another.” This is a strong word. To surrender, and especially to surrender oneself so fully, in all of one’s most central Powers, is not easily done at all! To do so, to surrender so fully, is beyond a person’s ability; it just feels too close to dying! That is why that first word in this prayer “Take!” is so important. The person is asking God *for the grace* to be able to give himself or herself fully to God. **This kind of word in this prayer proves that this prayer has no romance in it at all. This is difficult, the work of sacrificial love.**

⁹ “**gifts untold**” – What are gifts “untold”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**untold**” – “Uncounted, unreckoned, because of amount or numbers; immense, vast.”

Give me *nothing more than* your love and grace.
These alone, O God, are enough for me.

Regarding especially that notion of “**liberty**,” I found this quotation in Ursula Le Guin’s *The Farthest Shore*, Chapter 3, Kindle location 517:

He [Ged/Sparrowhawk/the Archmage] stopped and after a while went on, “Try to choose carefully, Arren, when the great choices must be made. When I was young, I had to choose between the life of being and the life of doing. And I leapt at the latter like a trout to a fly. But each deed you do, each act, binds you to itself and to its consequences, and makes you act again and yet again. Then very seldom do you come upon a space, a time like this, between act and act, when you may stop and simply be. Or wonder who, after all, you are.” How could such a man, thought Arren, be in doubt as to who and what he was? He had believed such doubts were reserved for the young, who had not done anything yet. [Le Guin, Ursula K.. *The Farthest Shore* (The Earthsea Cycle Series Book 3) . Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Kindle Edition.]

THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (1491-1556)

LATIN

Suscipe, Domine, universam meam libertatem. **Accipe** memoriam, intellectum atque voluntatem omnem. Quicquid habeo vel possideo, mihi largitus es : **id tibi totum restituo**, ac tuae prorsus voluntati trado, gubernandum. Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis, nec aliud quicquam ultra posco.

I should note here that these ‘spiritual exercises’ refer to a set of interlocking, and developmentally integrated, set of “exercises” (as in “inner” exercises, as in “efforts” of prayer) through which a retreatant is guided by his or her Spiritual Director.

So, the first meaning of these “spiritual exercises” refers to this set of experiences through which a person is guided towards a much more profound experience of his or her relationship with God ... or better, God’s relationship to him or her.

The second meaning of “spiritual exercises” refers to the published text, or *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, which is a manual given to spiritual directors to guide them in their directing of those under their care – the retreatants – during a time of Retreat.

As a manual, then, a person should not purchase the *Spiritual Exercises* as one would a book he or she wished to read for spiritual enjoyment or benefit. Rather only after one has been guided through the experience, or as he or she is being guided through it, ought a person to have for him or herself a copy of this text.

ENGLISH

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius [234]¹⁰ – **First Point** [English translation by Louis Puhl, SJ.]

This is to recall to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favors I have received.

I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.

Then I will reflect upon myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. Thus, as one would do who is *moved by great feeling*, I will make this offering of myself:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.

A study of the boldfaced text above – the *Suscipe* prayer – now follows below.

¹⁰ This number in brackets directs a person to a specific section in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which in this case refers in that text to the “Fourth Week,” and to a specific contemplation there called “A Contemplation for Stimulating within us Divine Love.”

Take,¹¹ O Lord, all my liberty.¹² Receive¹³ my memory, my understanding, and my entire will.¹⁴ Whatsoever I have or hold on to¹⁵ You have given to me; I give it all back to You and surrender it wholly to be governed by your will. Give me only your love and your grace, and I am rich enough¹⁶ and ask for nothing more.

¹¹ Third conjugation Latin verb: *suscipio, suscipere, suscepi, susceptus*. The verb means “to support, to hold up, or to sustain.” It can also mean “to defend.” And when it refers to a person’s willingness to take something upon himself or herself voluntarily, as a favor to someone, it means “to take upon oneself” – to become responsible for something on behalf of someone else. What is important to notice in the Latin form of “Take” used here is that it is in the Imperative mood, Present. What this means is that “Take” is addressed to a single Other – in this case to God, the One in Three – as a command – “**take it!**” – but being in the Present tense (in this case, not *time* of action but *type* of action) it means: “take it – my liberty – **and keep taking it unceasingly.**”

¹² Latin, feminine noun *libertas, libertatis* means “the state or condition of being a free human being (i.e., one is no longer a slave). It also means as an abstract noun “freedom” itself, as in free from external restraint or obligation (as in civil or political freedom; being free from being subject to someone else’s freedom and power to compel him or her). In this regard it is worth recalling the famous distinction of the political philosopher Isaiah Berlin between “freedom *from*” and “freedom *for*.” In other words, what is the use of being “free from” restraint if it is not for the sake of being “free for” others, for the common good, and for the service of the Kingdom of God? **I have defined “liberty” here in the sense of what remains of our actual dispositional freedom, which our decisions over the years make smaller and smaller.** And so for a person to “command” God to take even that – what is left of my dispositional freedom – is to command Him to take complete possession of my life!

¹³ Third conjugation Latin verb: *accipio, accipere, accepi, acceptum*. The verb means “to accept a person, or a thing, to oneself” as having been received from another. It can also by extension mean “to hear or to perceive, and therefore to learn.” And when referring to something disagreeable or difficult, this verb can mean “to bear, to endure, or to suffer” something imposed on me by someone else or by some circumstance.

¹⁴ One cannot directly observe the soul. **However, it is possible to recognize the presence of the soul by observing its powers.** In the medieval period, the human soul came to be characterized as exercising *three* powers – the famous “Powers of Soul”: *memory* (the capacity to remember our experiences and what we have learned, but also our power of imagination), *understanding* (all the activities of human intellect: the ability be awake and alert to experience; the ability to think about what we are experiencing and to gain insight into its meaning; the ability to judge what is the genuine and true) and *will* (the activity of deciding to act according to the truth, rather than, for example, to do what is popular to do, to do what feels so good to do even if not true or good or worthy, or to do what the powerful prefer us to do; but this power includes the rich affective side of the soul by which we *desire* what is valuable and good and beautiful and right). **Thus, to surrender these central powers of the soul to God through this prayer means to give God direct access to all that makes me what I am or to become.**

¹⁵ Literally, “whatever I am having or possessing” (notice the present tense of these verbs, implying continuous action – I am actively and always having and possessing these things: my memories, understandings, feelings, and values and decisions. I translate, for this reason “whatever I have or *am holding on to*” to capture the idea of **how precious these things are to me**, which in grace I am now able to turn over to God continuously for Him to “have and to hold on to” for me, and for His purposes.

¹⁶ One of the very long and widely perceived things about those who are wealthy (in money or status or gifts) is that *enough is never enough*. And so to pray for the grace to be “rich enough ... and to ask for nothing more” is something of great spiritual and social and cultural and religious significance.

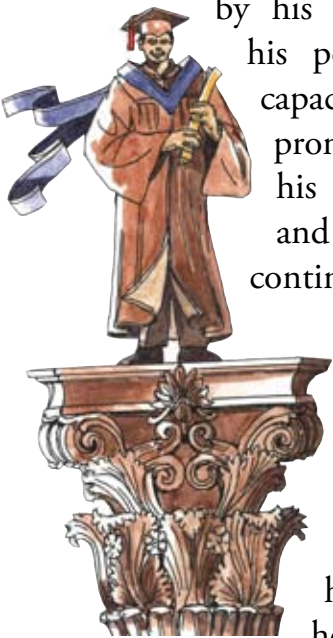
Are you weak enough to be a priest?

“BECAUSE BESET BY WEAKNESS...”

By Michael J. Buckley, S.J.

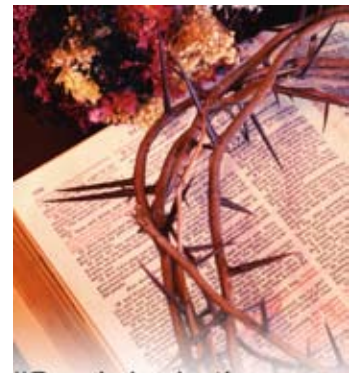
There is a tendency among us Americans, common and obvious enough, recommended by common sense and successful practice, to estimate a person's aptitude for a profession or for a career by listing his strengths. Jane speaks well, possesses an able mind, exhibits genuine talents for leadership and debate; she would be an excellent lawyer. John has recognizably good judgment, a scientific turn of interest, obvious manual dexterity and deep human concerns; he would make a splendid surgeon.

The tendency is to transfer this method of evaluation to the priesthood, to estimate a man by his gifts and talents, to line up his positive achievements and his capacity for more, to understand his promise for the future in terms of his accomplishments in the past, and to make the call within his life contingent on the attainments of personality or grace. Because a man is religiously serious, prayerful, socially adept, intellectually perceptive; possesses interior integrity, sound common sense, and habits of hard work -- therefore he will make a fine priest.



I think that transfer is disastrous. There is a different question, one proper to the priesthood as of its very essence, if not uniquely proper to it: *Is this man weak enough to be a priest?* Is this man deficient enough so that he cannot ward off significant suffering from his life, so that he lives with a certain amount of failure, so that he feels

what it is to be an average man? Is there any history of confusion, of self-doubt, of interior anguish? Has he had to deal with fear, come to terms with frustrations, or accept deflated expectations? These are critical questions and they probe for weakness. Why weakness? Because, according to Hebrews, it is in this deficiency, in this interior lack, in this weakness, that the efficacy of the ministry and priesthood of Christ lies.



**“Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows.”
Isaiah 53:4**

“For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning...He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward since he himself is beset with weakness.” (Hebrews 2: 18; 4: 15; 5:2).

How critically important it is for us to enter into the seriousness of this revelation, of this conjunction between priesthood and weakness, that we dwell upon deficiency as part of our vocation! Otherwise we can secularize our lives into an amalgam of desires and talents; and we can feel our weakness as a threat to our priesthood, as indicative that we should rethink what was previously resolved, as symptomatic that we were never genuinely called, that we do not have the resources to complete what we once thought was our destiny and which once spoke to our generosity and fidelity.

What do I mean by weakness? Not the experience of sin; almost its opposite. Weakness is the experience of a peculiar liability to suffering a profound sense of inability both to do and to protect, an inability, even after great effort, to author, to perform as we should want, to effect what we had determined, to succeed with the completeness that we might have hoped. It is this openness to suffering which issues in the inability to secure our own future, to protect ourselves from any adversity, to live with easy clarity and assurance; or to ward off shame, pain, or even interior anguish.

If a man is clever enough or devious enough or poised enough, he can limit his horizons and expectations and accomplish pretty much what he would want. He can secure his perimeters and live without a sense of ineffectual efforts, a feeling of failure or inadequacy or of shame before his temperament or his task -- then he experiences weakness at the heart of his life. And this experience, rather than militating against his priesthood, is part of its essential structure. This liability to suffering forms a critically important indication of the call of God, that terrible sinking sense of incapacity before the mission of Moses and the vocation of Jeremiah, that profound conviction of sinfulness when the vision of God rose before Isaiah and demanded response.

There is a classic comparison running through contemporary philosophy between Socrates and Christ, a judgment between them in human excellence. Socrates went to his death with calmness and poise. He accepted the judgment of the court, discoursed on the alternatives suggested by death and on the dialectical indications of immortality, found no cause for fear, drank the poison and died. Jesus -- how much the contrary.

Jesus was almost hysterical with terror and fear; "with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death." He looked repeatedly to his friends for comfort and prayed for an escape from death, and he found neither. Finally he established control over himself and moved into his death in silence and lonely isolation, even into the terrible interior suffering of the hidden divinity, the absence of God.

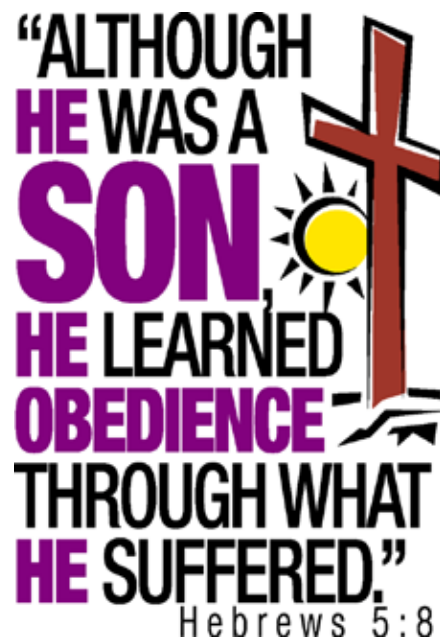
I once thought that this was because Socrates and Jesus suffered different deaths, the one so much more terrible than the other, the pain and agony

of the cross so overshadowing the release of the hemlock. But now I think that this explanation, though correct as far as it runs, is superficial and secondary.

Now I believe that Jesus was a more profoundly weak man than Socrates, more liable to physical pain and weariness, more sensitive to human rejection and contempt, more affected by love and hate. Socrates never wept over Athens. Socrates never expressed sorrow and pain over the betrayal

of friends. He was possessed and integral, never over-extended, convinced that the just man could never suffer genuine hurt. And for this reason, Socrates -- one of the greatest and most heroic men who have ever existed, a paradigm of what humanity can achieve within the individual -- was a philosopher. And for the same reason, Jesus of Nazareth was a priest -- ambiguous, suffering, mysterious, and salvific.

So with us, a priest must also be liable to suffering, weak because he must become like what he touches -- the body of Christ. Obviously the ordinary person understands priest primarily and imaginatively through the Eucharist within the Church. And what is this Eucharist? The body



The strength of our priesthood lies precisely in the weakness that seems to threaten it. condition, the human struggle and darkness and anguish that call out for salvation.

of Christ? Yes, certainly, but how understood? How does Christ conceive and present this, his body? This is an important question, for psychologists maintain that a man evaluates himself in terms of his spontaneous body-images, that what he senses and feels about his body is what he senses and feels about himself, that as he perceives his body so he perceives himself.

How then does Christ perceive this, his body? A body that was broken for us. A blood that was shed for us. He understands himself as a sacrificed self, effective only passing through his destruction,

(For to be a human being is to take a certain amount of suffering into life.) It is hard to get at this consideration, since so much in Western civilization attempts to disguise it or affects to despise it. One of the most debilitating aspects of American society is that we do not authentically admit the cost in a struggle and almost never allow real fear to surface. Yet most of us must struggle to make a living, must wonder about our future and about our sense of personal value in a market economy, must deal with the half-articulated and half-understood problems of our children, must

Weakness relates us profoundly with other people. It allows us to feel with them the human condition, the human struggle and darkness and anguish that call out for salvation.

giving life and freedom only because he himself has moved through death and terror and achieved new life. In our Mass, when we celebrate "the great mystery which he has left us," the Eucharist only achieves its graced entrance into our lives if it is broken and distributed. Thus it is the liability of Christ to suffer, his ability to be broken and shed that makes his priesthood effective and his Eucharist possible. How paradoxical this mystery is! The strength of our priesthood lies precisely in the weakness that seems to threaten it. The sensitivity and openness to discouragement and suffering are constitutive of the mystery of the priesthood itself.

fear what our death will be like -- what it will mean to die; we must deal with the temptation to believe that life is without meaning, that actions are inconsequential and selfish, and that other people are to be used.

Being a priest does not mean, must not mean, "that we are excised from all of that, as if called to deal with others as from a higher eminence; that the struggle for meaning and value and fidelity to the Gospel has been completed in our lives, and that we now deal out of our strengths. God has called us to the salvation of men, and there is no salvation without incarnation.

Weakness more profoundly relates us to God, because it provides the arena in which his grace can be seen.

Weakness relates us profoundly with other people. It allows us to feel with them the human

The means of human salvation are other men, as Christ was a man, and we can understand and respond to the degree that we feel ourselves “beset with weakness.” If part of our life becomes a subtle, only occasionally noticed effort to maintain a daily sense of priestly call in a culture that increasingly finds us anachronistic and dying – a struggle against a sense of barrenness when God seems so distant, so unreal, and yet his reality is the one thing to which we have given our entire life; an exertion to deal sensitively and honestly with nagging occupations, with difficult colleagues, or with distant superiors in a context that seems lifeless and without promise -- then remember that we are called to be men, to enter as Christ so deeply into the human condition that we can redeem it, that our temptations and desolations are the grace of God calling us to a more profound sensitivity with those who are similarly in battle. As we are tempted, as we ourselves suffer or are in pain, so shall we understand and call upon our compassion.

Secondly, weakness more profoundly relates us to God, because it provides the ambit or the arena in which his grace can be seen, in which his sustaining presence can reveal itself, in which even his power can become manifest. This is why it contradicts expectations and stands as almost the contrary of sin. Weakness is the context for the epiphany of the Lord, it is the night in which he appears -- not always as felt reassurance, but more often as a power to continue, faithful even when we do not feel the strength, even when fidelity means simply putting one foot in front of the other.

Paul saw his own life’s history as this litany of reversals or sufferings, as linking moments of weakness, but transformed through the supporting power of Christ: “I will all the more gladly boast

of my weakness that the power of God may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

The priest often discovers what his vocation means in these moments, as the power of God becomes evident in the continuity of his life, a fidelity which his weakness would only seem to undermine but actually supports as it evokes the presence of the Lord. Weakness becomes the vocation of the Lord, our call upon him. It is this night, and the heavy work of rowing against the storm, and the threatening waves that bring him to us. It is not that a priest’s life would

My Grace
is sufficient for thee:
for my **strength**
is made perfect
in weakness.

ideally be some other thing -- without struggle, self-doubt, or suffering -- but that circumstances have unfortunately introduced obduracy and humiliations and a sense of incapacity. Quite the contrary. It is in and through this night that a priest is joined to Christ, as it is in and through this night that he learns that he can trust in the Lord, that he can call out to Jesus in faith, even when this seems the most lifeless thing to do, and find that Jesus Christ is enough. Only in this way will that which we preach and urge upon others become part of our own lives. To commit our lives in trust to the Lord. It is in this experience, the experience of personal weakness, and of having read even limitations as the presence of Christ, of having trusted in him in darkness and having found that one can trust him -- it is the experience that joins Christ to his disciples, as he comes to them walking on the waters.

The experience of weakness deepens both our sensitivity to human religious need and our experience in prayer.

There is a collective consequence that follows from all of this. We must make such a life possible for one another. We must support one another in weakness, forgiving one another our daily faults and carrying one another's burdens. It would be absurd to maintain weakness as essentially a part of the priestly vocation and then to belittle those who are deficient; to resent those who are insensitive, unsophisticated, or clumsy; to allow disagreements to become hostilities. It would be a dreadful thing for us to reject, under one criterion or another, those whom God has called.

The sad fact stands that it is frequently no great trick to get religious men or women to condemn one another. Wars, even personal wars, are terrible realities, and the most horrible of these are religious. For under the guise of good, under the rubric of orthodoxy or liberality, of community or of personal freedom, even of holiness itself, religious men and women can slowly disintegrate into pettiness or cynicism or hostility or bitterness so that "the second state of the man is worse than the first."

Priests are of the same stuff as other men, and they also depend upon men for the unconditioned love of God to be mediated to their weakness. The command of Christ, that we should love one another as he has loved us, is more than a general norm of total benevolence; it is a particular mission: as he cared -- out of his weakness -- for our weakness, and so became our Eucharist.

For us to refuse this support to one another, no matter how religious our articulated standard, is to deceive ourselves almost irremediably

and to limit the mercy and understanding of God that should have come through our life. It is not our weakness that hinders the compassion and the goodness of God. It is that often what others count, our strengths, now become the criteria by which we distance ourselves from others not so gifted, interests through which we discover others as boring or unproductive, dedications and religious attainments by which we judge others as mediocre or obviously compromising. There is nothing in our lives that cannot be twisted into a means for evil, if we are not discerning, and we know when that moment has come, when Satan has finally effected his transformation into an angel of light, when we have judged others by our own achievements and found them wanting, too inconsequential for our support, unworthy of our time and concern. The greatest protection against this terrible pride -- masked as religious seriousness or apostolic commitment, as purity about the things of God, or as honesty about the qualities of men -- is an abiding sense of our own weakness, that searing reminder that as we are strengthened by one who has loved us, so we should support one another.

To live this way is to live the paschal mystery of Christ in weakness and in love. We have made a costly choice deciding to become priests, and we should not disguise that choice. Neither should we disguise the love that we are about nor the sense of personal weakness as we confront those lives. God will grace us in the priesthood, in the ministry that lies before us: "He is not weak

in dealing with you, but powerful in you. For he was crucified in weakness; but lives by the power of God. (2 Corinthians 13: 3, 4).





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Re-reading Job: Entertaining Spiritualities of Suffering

STEVEN CHASE

“Entertainment” and “entertaining” suffering, at first glance or first hearing, may seem and sound, well, a little odd. But from time to time in this essay I will turn to “entertainment” as a way to keep the exploration of suffering not just an academic enterprise but, as it were, a spiritual practice. The “entertainment” provided is from Job and from other writers and poets. What do I mean by “entertaining suffering”?

As a verb, “entertaining” means holding something attentively in a pleasant, agreeable, diverting or amusing way. “Entertaining” suffering means holding, maintaining, and keeping suffering as a guest with a certain amount of hospitality; it means admitting suffering into the mind and body and soul, harboring it, even cherishing it. As a gerundive adjective “entertaining” suffering suggests not a species of masochism but rather a way of giving suffering its due, which is in part, I believe, the capacity to invert and inflict mayhem upon any of the above verbal meanings of “entertaining.” Etymologically, “entertaining” is from the Latin *inter*, which connotes variously in the midst of, in between, betwixt, among, amid, or surrounded by, and *tenere* meaning to hold, to keep, to have, to maintain. “Entertaining suffering,” then, is being in the midst of, in between, betwixt, among, amid, or surrounded by suffering; to hold, to keep, to have, to maintain suffering, or, with an accessory idea of firmness or persistence, to hold fast to, to occupy, to watch, to guard, to defend suffering. But since remaining “in the midst of holding fast to suffering” is difficult, uncomfortable, and intuitively not an unalienable right, I will thus from time to time turn to “entertainment” as a means of helping us remain “in the midst of holding fast to suffering.”

Entertainment: This first “entertainment” is from Job himself.

If I look for Sheol as my house,
 if I spread my couch in darkness,
 if I say to the Pit, ‘You are my father,’
 and to the worm, ‘My mother,’ my ‘My sister,’
 where then is my hope?

Who will see my hope?
Will it go down to the bars of Sheol?
Shall we descend together into the dust?¹

Job 17:13-16

A CONFERENCE ON HAPPINESS

What is the opposite of illusion? Or, if illusion is on one side of a coin, what is stamped on the other side?

This fall, as I returned to the Collegeville Institute at St. John's University and St. John's Monastery ready to give suffering and Job another good year of my life, the first thing I noticed as I arrived was their large brown sign in white lettering that says simply, year-round, "Welcome to St. John's." The second thing I noticed was the smaller "event sign" beneath the "welcome sign." The event sign read simply: "A Conference on Happiness."

Checking the Conference out, I found that papers, discussions, and lectures sounded good and were to be given by scholars and scientists in a range of fields, from biochemistry to philosophy. Neither theologians, nor, as I noticed, teachers of spirituality, were represented: no doubt these are already known for having set the happiness bar just a bit too low.

"Happiness" is a hot topic—much hotter than "suffering" for instance. And why shouldn't it be. Is it not the case that, as our own Declaration of Independence reassuringly tells us, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [persons] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of . . . Happiness." And for real evidence of the current "hotness" of happiness, we can go to any local bookstore. We can look at the self-help, psychology, new-age, spirituality, and religion sections; we can glance over the business, cooking, travel, pets and language section: all of these will testify that "happiness" is indeed very much in vogue. Only a few musty, dusty poets still practice the art of the curmudgeon or bore us with that most unhappy of subjects, death. Oh yes, and the nature section, beside the field guides, not much happiness to report there either. But overall, the conference on happiness did not disappoint: I learned a lot about suffering at the happiness conference.

And I was given a focus for this essay though I didn't realize it at the time. One of the sessions I attended ended with a fairly good give-and-take discussion, only to be hijacked towards the end by a philosophy professor who only had one point: everything is an illusion. Happiness, he said sadly, is the biggest illusion of all. Others tried to get the discussion back on track but with no luck. To an attempt to locate happiness within narrative, the philosopher responded that narratives are "fictions" and are therefore "illusions." And so it went. He really was an unpleasant person. "Not a happy guy," I thought. After



a time I raised my hand and asked, very sincerely, “so what is the opposite of illusion?” But by now the session was lost and, of course, our philosopher friend immediately piped up, “the opposite of illusion is an illusion.” I felt like we were in some horror movie about the eternal return of the sophomore class.

But thinking about the happiness conference over the next few days, I felt I had a pretty good question: what is the opposite of illusion? Flip a coin. On one side is illusion, if the other side comes up, what do you see?

Entertainment: A Poem by Emily Dickinson

The Heart asks Pleasure—first—
And then—Excuse from Pain—
And then—those little Anodynes
That deaden suffering—

And then—to go to sleep—
And then—if it should be
The will of its Inquisitor
The privilege to die—²

Flip a coin. On one side is illusion, if the other side comes up, what do you see?

SUFFERING QUESTIONS

In her book on the history of exegesis of the book of Job, Susan E. Schreiner writes:

A pawn in a contest about which he knew nothing, the beneficiary of “friendly” advice he refused to accept, the target of suffering he could not understand, and a victim in a universe that threatened to overwhelm him, Job has been a man for all ages. Ever since the biblical era, the legend of Job has been part of the collective memory of the West and one of the defining myths of our civilization. The man on the dung heap repeatedly raised questions that would haunt the ages that followed him . . . [Job’s] story has forced its readers to wrestle with the most painful realities of human existence.³

Job’s endless “questions” are the substance of Job’s response to “the painful realities of human existence.” Using an image from nature—as Yahweh will later likewise do to excess—Job has, for instance, many questions about hope. He asks at one point:

For there is hope for a tree,
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,

and that its shoots will not cease.
 Though its root grows old in the earth,
 and its stump dies in the ground,
 yet at the scent of water it will bud
 and put forth branches like a young plant.
 But mortals die and are laid low;
 humans expire, and where are they? Job 14:7-10

Job's seven days of silence are also seven days of silent questioning. Then, the first time Job opens his mouth after his seven-day, silent question he says, "God damn the day of my birth" (3:3).⁴ This seems not to be a very helpful *answer*. "God damn the day of my birth" is a pretty emphatic declaration. Yet, as so often happens in Job, an opening declaration actually contains the seeds of what will become a whole new garden of questions. And so after a few lines of damning and turning creation on its ear, Job lets rip with a doozy of a question, a righteous question, a turning away from evil and fearing God kind of question:

Why is light given to one in misery,
 and life to the bitter in soul who long for death,
 but it does not come,
 and who dig for it more than for hidden treasures;
 who rejoice exceedingly,
 and are glad when they find the grave? Job 3:20-22.

"I dig for death like another digs for treasure," Job implies; I find my treasure in the earth as a treasure-seeker finds gold in a mine; I find my treasure in the soil of a grave. Why?

The most influential writer on the book of Job in the Christian spiritual traditions is St. Gregory the Great. According to St. Gregory, however, one may ask questions in order to learn, but one does not ask questions about God; asking questions about God only displays one's ignorance. Of course asking such questions about divine power and righteousness is exactly what Job *does*; but for St. Gregory such inquisitiveness is ignorance. Still, Gregory's book, *Morals on the Book of Job*, is for me an astonishing, serpentine and endlessly fascinating piece of work. I've grown to love it. But it is also a demon of a book from which St. Gregory himself seems never quite able to escape. For instance, about questions, St. Gregory writes:

And because a person asks a *question* in order to be able to learn that of which that person is ignorant, for a person to *question God*, is for that person to acknowledge that he or she is ignorant in God's sight.⁵

In his elephantine book, St. Gregory wrote a lot of astonishing and endlessly fascinating things. But this is not one of them. The God of Job could care less whether the divine omniscience spies an ignorant man or woman. Job asks questions precisely because Job is ignorant *of God*. And Job asks questions because *God* seems to be *ignorant* about God's own creation, especially about his human creation, Job. *Morals on the Book of Job* is a book to love and reverence. But it is not a place to engage those "questions that would haunt the ages that followed," nor a place to "wrestle with the most painful realities of human existence," as Susan Schreiner calls them. As a book of answers, it is not particularly adept itself at entertaining suffering.

Entertainment: From a poem by Randall Jarrell:

I see at last that all the knowledge

I wrung from the darkness—that the darkness flung me—
Is worthless as ignorance: nothing comes from nothing,
The darkness from the darkness. Pain comes from the darkness
And we call it wisdom. It is pain.⁶

SUFFERING ANSWERS

Still, those who try to pose an answer to that "why?" of suffering are legion. Here are four perspectives that propose an "answer" to suffering, each of which in their own way is applicable to Job.

First, the Buddhists' answer to suffering seems straightforward and honest: they recognize the infinite, phenomenological "why?" of suffering and through various metaphysical reasonings and spiritual techniques and practices, try to transcend it. Indeed, according to The Fourfold Noble Truths, 1) all is suffering (*dukkha*); 2) suffering is caused by desire/attachment; 3) if one can eliminate desire/attachment, one can eliminate suffering; and 4) the Noble Eight-fold Path can eliminate desire. Buddhists, then, seek to eliminate suffering through the elimination of desire. There may be some wisdom in this, but the book of Job itself is altogether on another spiritual path: Job experiences nothing in suffering that allows him to transcend suffering. As Randall Jarrell implies, only suffering comes from the darkness. Others may call it wisdom, but it is suffering, it is pain.

A second perspective on answering suffering that has its roots in St. Gregory the Great and, from within the Christian tradition, tries to answer "Job's dilemma" in terms of divine pedagogy. According to this perspective, God has arranged suffering in such a way that, though it may seem otherwise at the

time, suffering makes us strong, wiser, more faithful, more hopeful, and/or more loving. Peter Kreeft, for instance, is confident enough to entitle a recent book, *Making Sense Out of Suffering*.⁷

A third response is that of Karl Jung who does not try to make sense out of suffering, but does have the audacity to entitle a book-length essay, “Answer to Job.” Jung’s formula for finding an “answer to Job” is itself formulated according to the internal logic of a question, namely, “What is the real reason for the Incarnation as an historical event?” His answer in part is:

Yahweh evidently has a disinclination to take his absolute knowledge into account as a counter balance to the dynamism of omnipotence. The most instructive example of this is his relation to Satan [in Job]: it always looks as if Yahweh were completely uninformed about his son’s intentions. That is because he never consults his omniscience. We can only explain this on the assumption that Yahweh is so fascinated by his successive acts of creation, so taken up by them, that he forgot about his omniscience altogether.⁸

For Jung this failure of divine omniscience results in a confrontation with Job in which Yahweh moves from a state of blissful unconsciousness to one of very concerned consciousness. For Jung, the knowledge of Job’s moral superiority to Yahweh touches off Yahweh’s transition from a state of unconsciousness to one of conscious awareness and response. Yahweh’s response is also a response to Jung’s original question about the real reason for the incarnation to which Jung can now give his “answer”:

The life of Christ is just what it had to be if it is the life of a god and a man at the same time. It is a bringing together of heterogeneous natures, rather as if Job and Yahweh were combined in a single personality. Yahweh’s intention to become man, which resulted from his collision with Job, is fulfilled in Christ’s life and suffering.⁹

A fourth philosophical approach aimed at answering the problem of suffering, is theodicy. Theodicy is a modern, post-enlightenment endeavor which proposes a “solution” to the “problem of evil.” The term was introduced into philosophy by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz who, in 1710, published an essay the purpose of which was to show philosophically that the evil in the world does not conflict with the goodness of God. Many theodicians in fact have called the book of Job itself a theodicy. This, the book of Job, definitely is not. The book is anything but a solution to the problem of evil; Job’s friends are budding theodicians, but neither Job himself nor the book in total is anything like a theodicy. Job does *not* answer, he *only* questions.

Entertainment: William Styron, from *Darkness Visible*, writes:

The pain is unrelenting, and what makes the condition intolerable is the foreknowledge that no remedy will come—not in a day, an hour, a month, or a minute. If there is mild relief, one knows that it is only temporary; more pain will follow. It is hopelessness even more than pain that crushes the soul.¹⁰

SUFFERING DIVINE PEDAGOGY

In the allegorical tradition, of which St. Gregory the Great is a part, the book of Job is an occasion for discussing divine providence working to effect beneficial results by means of suffering. Writing two centuries before St. Gregory, St. Ambrose, in his four sermons *On the Prayer of Job and David*, used two themes to explain the suffering endured by Job. One theme, reminiscent of St. Paul, is that suffering achieves beneficial results to the extent that it builds strength and athleticism. Job, for St. Jerome, is like an “athlete of Christ” whose “strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9) and for whom suffering enables one to gain spiritual fortitude so that, “when Job was suffering weakness, then he had the greater strength.”¹¹

St. Ambrose’s second theme is also picked up by St. Gregory and thus handed on in the Latin west well into the medieval period and to Calvin and beyond. This theme has to do simply with the salutary nature of adversity and suffering which leads, in time, to the wisdom of freedom from worldly things. St. Gregory calls clinging or acquiescence to worldly things “fatal tranquility.”¹² Job, however, never experiences the supposedly curative powers of suffering which themselves might insure against “tranquility” becoming “fatal.” God has insured that holy Job has no temporal goods to which Job might cling. He has no temporal goods, no peace of soul, no health of body or spirit, no meaningful ministry, no rest from constant, inner turmoil (cf. Job 30).

Carol Straw has also argued that St. Gregory considers the *constantia mentis* (steadiness, constancy, stillness of mind) to be the ideal state in both adversity and prosperity.¹³ This is an aspect of acquiescence as detachment, as *apatheia*, which begins, I know, to set St. Gregory and his interpretation of Job on familiar ground for many of us. In this sense, “suffering well” is the ability to have suffering enlarge and transform the soul. In particular, suffering well is thought to create three spiritual realities: self-knowledge, freedom, and perception. Or, to put it in even more familiar terms in the literature of spirituality, suffering is transformative; it leads to illumination, promotes *apatheia* or detachment. This is wonderful stuff. But it is not found in the book of Job. On the contrary Job entertains nothing like *constantia mentis*: Job is rather inconstant, unstill, even, in fact, terrified. Suffering has made him so.

Entertainment: Job, inconstant and unstill, but not silenced:

Today also my complaint is bitter,

Therefore I am terrified at his presence;
when I consider, I am in dread of him.

God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty has terrified me;

If only I could vanish in darkness,
and thick darkness would cover my face. Job 23:2a; 15-17

112

SUFFERING METHOD

Method is something about which students of Christian spirituality are rightfully serious. As students of Christian spirituality we have tried a variety of methodological strategies including, “spiritual anthropology,”¹⁴ “the spiritual life as experience,”¹⁵ “the real or existential level,”¹⁶ “the multi-faceted living of faith,”¹⁷ “spirituality as discipline and practice,”¹⁸ and the “role of metaphor and the symbol making process.”¹⁹ But suffering has a nasty habit of dismantling method. In fact, borrowing a title from Arthur Rimbaud and a reference to a false cure from Emily Dickinson, students of Christian spirituality can ask: how do we spend “A Season In Hell” without recourse to the Dickensonian “Anodynes” of methodology?

Philosophical hermeneutics provides just one example of how suffering can dismantle method. Even within the title of his *magnum opus*, *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer hints that the ability of method to circumscribe suffering is limited. For Gadamer, “truth” and “method” are, hermeneutically, at odds with each other. Or to put it another way that addresses our opening question about illusion, we could say that for Gadamer “illusion” and “method” are synonymous. And to put it yet another way, since “truth” is at odds with “illusion,” we can assume that Gadamer is saying that “illusion” and “method” are *not* at odds, but somehow equivalent. Method, for Gadamer, only succeeds in revealing illusion; illusion is the only phenomenon that method effectively perceives. Hermeneutics at least dislodges the conceit that suffering and method might somehow be compatible.

Having suggested that suffering makes method problematic, I would like to back-track and offer one newly configured method that has not as yet, to my knowledge, been applied to the discipline of spirituality. This method *may* open the possibility of “sitting” with the Joban questions of suffering in a less equivocal way.

In his William James lectures given at Harvard in 1955, J. L. Austin first publically proposed his idea that speech itself is a form of action, a “performative utterance” that in itself can generate and direct action. Austin claimed that whenever we say something, we perform a number of actions. For instance, we perform a “locutionary act” simply by saying a sentence. We perform an “illocutionary act” in speaking a sentence that in turn achieves effects in others. We participate in a “perlocutionary act” that affects the speech of an addressee. For instance, depending on the context in which I say, “Oh, God,” I may be performing any number of locutionary acts: “praying, expostulating, naming a new-found deity or Hollywood film, blaspheming, or concluding an argument, etc.” The act may then have the illocutionary or perlocutionary results, “of ingratiating, upsetting, damning myself, informing others, persuading others, etc.”²⁰ Writing in 1983, John R. Searle noted that there are five things one can do with language and the acts embedded in language. These include, “telling people how things are (assertive); telling them to do things (directives); committing yourself to doing things (commissives); expressing your feelings and attitudes (expressives); and bringing about changes in the world through your utterance (declarations).”²¹

Whether speech act theory is a passing fad or in the early stages of at least a minor revolution in linguistic and interpretive method, I cannot say. But I do believe that the first creation story in Genesis is the mother of all speech acts. Today, this assertive, commissive speech act is still speaking, still acting, still creating. Extending the metaphor, the second creation story in Genesis is our mother in stillbirth: this second, directive speech act is the after-birth of all speech acts. The later Augustine, unfortunately, gave shape to this stillbirth in the form of doctrine, specifically that of original sin with this doctrine’s consequent denial of innocent suffering. As the new mother of all baptism for the stillborn, the gospel of St. John actually affirms Job’s innocent suffering. We find no “answer” to Joban suffering in John’s gospel; we find instead this strange, expressive, declarative, incarnate speech act baptizing all those already once born dead. Thus in Job we do not find an “answer” to suffering: in his book, *Evils of Theodicy*, Terrence Tilley writes that, “The book of Job offers no solutions to problems of suffering. Job is not a book of answers, but a text of warning, perhaps even a text of terror.”²²

If not answers, perhaps we can ask that in the context of suffering, our methods offer at least something like guidance. I believe speech act theory holds possibility because it is at least linked to an ancient culture of guidance already present within the Christian spiritual tradition. Douglas Burton-Christie, in turning for inspiration for method to the *Sayings* of the fourth century desert fathers and mothers, uncovers both the cost (suffering) and the shaping knife (love) of the desert formation traditions. In the process, Burton-

Christie finds early speech act as a form of desert spiritual guidance. He writes, for instance, “For the monks, the parameters of the interpretive quest were set by their two primary questions, ‘Speak to me a word’ [speech], and ‘What should I do?’ [act] These questions determined the participative shape of the search for God, and the demanding cost of fulfilling that quest.”²³ “Speak to me a word,” is speech in search of active wisdom; “What should I do?” is the quest for moral directive. The “word” of guidance and the “act” that guides—whether uttered and enacted by ancients of the desert or from the desert-like postmodern landscape of contemporary thought—may be our best methods for entertaining the illusion-shattering capacity of suffering.

But beyond the possibility of guidance, we can hope for little from suffering beyond what it is again, as William Styron describes it, soul-crushing pain. It is no coincidence that Job too, from his own desert of dust and ash, asks both his friends and his God to “speak to me a word” and “what should I do?” The “answers” he receives based on these questions seem to be more about loss, grief, and pain than about direction, more about ever-new ways of expressing suffering than about discernment, guidance, or illumination. As scholars we need the guidance of method. Method is our Comforter. But suffering—a major object of our study—comforts little. In fact, as scholars, truly entertaining suffering we are as hollow as a bone, desperately constructing agencies of method, groping for the simple charity of guidance. This is harsh to be sure, but suffering, as Robert Burns writes, is a desolate brother of comfort.

Entertainment: Robert Burns, the Scottish poet and lyricist, in a letter writes:

Lord, what is Man! Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure. Today, in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence; In a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments and refusing or denied a Comforter.²⁴

SUFFERING SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

Suffering is and has always been a part of Christian spirituality. It has always been “entertained” as a natural part of the spiritual journey. As Robert Ellsberg has written, “the saints do not teach us how to avoid suffering; they teach us how to suffer.”²⁵

Apatheia, in its most positive sense, is the mark of a healthy soul; it is life lived at the *center* of Fortune’s wheel. Boethius, in his *Consolations of Philosophy* written in prison, writes of living on the edge of Fortune’s wheel, clinging to *things*. This clinging can give us the illusion of rising or the illusion of falling, depending not on our own ability to grasp hold of the wheel but depend-

ing only on where we find ourselves in the wheel's cycle.²⁶

Philosophically, Boethius is a stoic. Job is not a stoic. The stoic philosopher, Seneca, for instance writes that:

Pain is trivial if opinion has added nothing to it; . . . by thinking it trivial, you will make it so. Everything depends on our opinion; ambition, luxury, and avarice are regulated by opinion. It is according to opinion that we suffer.²⁷

For Seneca, *apatheia* is that state in which we add nothing of opinion to suffering; that is, the ability to live at the center of the wheel. This is not Job. For Job, to suffer *is* to have an opinion; suffering is not suffering, for Job, lest it have an opinion. Job has an opinion of his friends: "Your maxims are proverbs of ashes" (13:12). He has an opinion of his God:

You put my feet in the stocks,
and wrath in all my paths;
you set a bond to the soles of my feet.
One wastes away like a rotten thing,
like a garment that is moth-eaten.

Job 13: 27-28

But another tradition in Christian spirituality also takes suffering very seriously. This is the tradition perhaps most famously exemplified by St. John of the Cross and now perhaps also by St. Thérèse of Lisieux. I will look for a moment to St. John's imagery and teaching and his depiction of suffering as a "dark night."

Not unlike the tradition of St. Gregory the Great, St. John of the Cross is convinced that the dark nights of the soul, both active and passive, somehow purify and illuminate the human person and unite the soul to divine providence. His word for the process of unity is "love": "a soul journeys toward perfect union with God," St. John writes, "through love."²⁸

Job's own dark night strips him and renders incomprehensible his life, his death, and his God. This happens also to St. John of the Cross of course—"nada, nada, nada, nada," he says as he pictures it in the Ascent of Mt. Carmel—but, whereas St. John's experience of darkness leads to a "perfect union with God . . . through love," Job knows nothing of the path of love. Job knows nothing of seraphim—the *angels* of love—and their path of "holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6), a path that has potential to add positive content to "nada, nada, nada." But who, given Gethsemane and Golgotha, is in a position to judge the relative merit of suffering and love, to judge the merit of the blessing to be found within the holy or within the hopeless?:

I was at ease, and God broke me in two;
 God seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces;
 set me up as his target;
 God's archers surround me.
 God slashes open my kidneys, and shows no mercy;
 pours out my gall on the ground. . . .
 My spirit is broken, my days are extinct,
 the grave is ready for me. . . .
 My eye has grown dim from grief
 and all my members are like a shadow. . . .
 My days are past, my plans are broken off. Job 6: 12-13; 17:1; 7; 11

This lament of Job's is, of course, very like many of the Psalms. But unlike the vast majority of the Psalms, Job experiences no mercy, no relief, no redemptive or divine retribution. The mercy of love, the comfort of retribution simply do not inform Job's encounter with the experience of suffering or with the "archers" that surround him. Or, in Christological terms, Job encounters a cross with no redemptive capacity.

An analogy to Job's dark night is today's dark night of the planet. In his novel, *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy writes of the darkening night of the planet in this way:

He'd [the unnamed father, or "Job"] had this feeling before, beyond the numbness and the dull despair. The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. Drawing down like something trying to preserve heat. In time to wink out forever.²⁹

Does Cormac McCarthy write of illusion? Does Job speak of illusion? Flannery O'Connor knows of McCarthy's "drawing down like something trying to preserve heat." Diagnosed with lupus, the same degenerative disease that killed her father, O'Connor died in Georgia, the state where she was born, at the age of thirty-nine. Suffering was what she called her "true country," and as she wrote in a letter to a friend:

I have never been anywhere but sick. In a sense sickness is a place, more instructive than a long trip to Europe, and it's always a place where there's no company, where nobody can follow.³⁰

Of Course—I prayed—
And did God Care?
He cared as much as on the Air
A Bird—had stamped her foot—
And cried “Give Me”—
My Reason—Life—
I had not had—but for Yourself—
‘Twere better Charity
To leave me in the Adam’s Tomb—
Merry, and Naught and gay and numb—
Than this smart Misery.³¹

SUFFERING FAITH, SUFFERING HOPE, SUFFERING LOVE

I ran across this wonderful quotation from Cyril of Jerusalem, instructing catechumens: “The dragon is at the side of the road watching those who pass. Take care lest he devour you! You are going to the Father of souls, but it is necessary to pass by the dragon.”³² The opposite of illusion has, I believe, something to do with that dragon, necessary to pass. It is necessary because our journey to the Father of Souls takes us just there where the dragon is watching; to get there we *must* pass.

Job is set on a journey. That path, his journey, is suffering. “Love” is not mentioned in the poem of Job: the poem is not about love, it is about dragons. The book of Job is not structured according to the transformative capacities of love. The example of St. Thésèse of Lisieux comes to mind. As many suggest, St. Thésèse is a saint of transformative love. St. Thésèse is graced with the internal logic of love in a way that Job is not. This eternally young and preternaturally sage woman from France walked her own road. She did so, however, in a still very medieval culture in which suffering itself was valued as a sign of holiness. This is not so in the culture and story of Job. In fact, just the opposite is the case. For the friends, Job’s suffering is a sure and certain sign of the lack of holiness, the lack of righteousness: for the friends, Job’s suffering is only sin and unrighteousness. Job’s friends try to convince him that *he* is the dragon. Job of course will not accept this. St. Thésèse of Lisieux is on the road to the Mother of Souls where she discovers that point on the cross where suffering and love converge. It takes a saint, I suppose, to find, accept and live into this convergence. But it takes holy Job to set-up the psychic, somatic, and spiritual *necessity* for the cross in the first place; the necessity for love to converge with suffering. But for Job himself, suffering does not converge with love. In Job,

love is not illusion's opposite. Though we can say that Job points to where love *might* be, love is simply not on the road Job travels.

This may seem odd to us today. But it is only so because we insist on throwing love into the face of this dragon of suffering. But the options? For many, love is not available in the time of dragons.

What of hope? Job shows us the internal logic whereby hope is actually destroyed by this dragon and any renewal of hope becomes, ironically, simply a child of the dragon itself. As with love, we may have a hard time accepting this today. When "happiness" is a "certain unalienable right," hope, we tend to believe, is at the very least a reasonable unalienable expectation. Again, this is not the case with Job. Holy Job, upon entering the dwelling place of God and finding the dwelling place filled with suffering, must abandon hope.

What of faith, that little step-child to the "most perfect of these," Flannery O'Connor again, in her no-nonsense way, helps us into the infernal night-vision of Jobean faith. She writes:

Ivan Karamazov cannot believe, as long as one child is in torment; Camus' hero cannot accept the divinity of Christ, because of the massacre of the innocents. In this popular piety, we mark our aim in sensibility and our loss in vision. If other ages felt less, they saw more, even though they saw with the blind, prophetic, unsentimental eye of acceptance, which is to say, faith. In the absence of faith now, we govern by tenderness. [But] it is a tenderness which, long since cut off from the person of Christ, is wrapped in theory. When tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness, its logical outcome is terror.³³

Is faith then our best aim at illusion? Perhaps it is. But I would most be inclined to trust Job's aim because Job found that the dragon of sorrow is also a chameleon. Faith is blind, in the best sense. Faith of the kind O'Connor describes, nonetheless, still sees or senses the dragon. But faith cannot always detect the dragon's changing, chameleon colors, which in effect render it invisible even to the eye of faith. We can say however that while Job's faith detects illusion, it is only his suffering that most truly opposes illusion. Nothing compromises the illusion that everything is illusion like suffering. Nothing compromises Stoic opinion like suffering. Nothing compromises method opposed to truth like suffering. Nothing compromises a distant God like suffering.

NOTES

1. Translation by Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (New York & London: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Translations of book of Job, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version.
2. Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, #536, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 262.

3. Susan E. Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?: Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11.
4. This and following citation from Job 3 in *The Book of Job*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1987).
5. S. Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, Vol. III.2, 35.3.4, trans. J. Bliss (Oxford: John Henry Parker; F. and J. Rivington, London, 1850), 664.
6. Randall Jarrell, "90 North," lines 29-33 in *Randall Jarrell: The Complete Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969), 113-4.
7. Peter Kreeft, *Making Sense Out of Suffering* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1986). Cf. 141-54.
8. C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, from *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol. II, Bollingen Series XX (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 40.
9. Jung, *Answer to Job*, 45.
10. William Styron, *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness* (New York: W. W., Norton, 1983), 62.
11. St. Ambrose, "The Prayer of Job and David," Book Two, 1.2, 2.3 in *Saint Ambrose: Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. Michael P. McHugh (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1972), 353, 354.
12. St. Gregory, *Morals*, gives numerous warnings against an "inactive soul" I, 6.23.40 and "fatal tranquility," cf. III.1, 23.24.47-48; III.1, 24..9.23; III.1, 26.34.62 while God is performing "the Divine medicine", III.2, 33.19.35.
13. Carol Straw, *Gregory the Great* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 236-56.
14. The "anthropological approach" enjoys a checkered history in the on-going development of methodologies for the study of Christian spirituality: Sandra Schneiders points out the advantages of the approach in "Spirituality in the Academy." *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 684; Bernard McGinn surveys and calls the anthropological approach into question in "The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline," in Elizabeth A Dreyer & Mark S. Burrows, eds., *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 32-33; while Schneiders pulls back from "anthropology" in favor of "hermeneutics" as methodological approaches in "A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality," *Minding the Spirit*, 49-60.
15. Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach," 50.
16. Walter Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," *Sciences Religieuses* 12 (1983), 135-6.
17. Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit*, 11.
18. Cf. Mary Frohlich, R.S.C.J., "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline and Spirituality, Revisiting Questions of Spirituality and Method," in *Minding the Spirit*, 65-78; Elizabeth Liebert, "The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit*, 79-99.
19. Belden C. Lane, "Spider as Metaphor: Attending to the Symbol-Making Process in the Academic Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit*, 100-17.
20. Terrence W. Tilley, *Evils of Theodicy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 9-10.
21. John R. Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 44. Cf. W. P. Alston.
22. Tilley, *Evils of Theodicy*, 110.
23. Douglas Burton-Christie, "The Cost of Interpretation: Sacred Texts and Ascetic Practice in Desert Spirituality," 106 in *Minding the Spirit*, 100-7.
24. Robert Burns, *The Letters of Robert Burns*, vol. 1, 1780-1789 (letter 374, December 3, 1789), 2nd edition, ed. G. Ross Roy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 457.

25. Robert Ellsberg, *The Saint's Guide to Happiness* (New York: North Point Press, 2003), 104.
26. Cf. Boethius, *Consolations of Philosophy*, III.7ff. Jon Whitman notes that Boethius uses the allegory of Fortune's turning wheel as "the starting point for his own compositional design" (*Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987], 112). Cited in Ann W. Astell, *Job, Boethius, and Epic Truth* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).
27. Seneca, *L. Annaei Senecae ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales [Moral Epistles]*, Lib IX, Epistle 78.13-14, ed. Achilles Beltrami (Romae: Typis Publicae Officinae Polygraphicae, 1949), 331-2. My translation.
28. St. John of the Cross, "Prologue," *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel* in Keiran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodrigues, O.C.D., trans., *The Collected Works of John of the Cross* (Washington D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 69.
29. Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 75.
30. Flannery O'Connor, *Flannery O'Connor: Spiritual Writings*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003), 115.
31. Emily Dickinson, *Complete Poems*, #376, p. 179-80.
32. Flannery O'Connor, "Letter To A," January 1, 1956 in Flannery O'Connor, *Complete Works*, Sally Fitzgerald, ed. (New York: The Library of America, 1988), 979.
33. Flannery O'Connor, "Introduction to a *Memoir of Mary Ann*" in *Complete Works*, 830.