

Job as Paradigm for the Eschaton

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The fourteenth chapter of the Apocalypse describes a company standing on Mount Zion bearing on their consciousness the permanent stamp of deity (Rev 14:1-5; cf. Ezek 9:4; Eph 4:30). The group's members are remarkable for chastity of conduct (v. 4) and blamelessness of speech (v. 5). Their purity provides the ultimate testimony to the justice of God and the efficacy of Christ's grace. This memorable apocalyptic picture of heaven's prize purchase from the human race (v. 4) sounds a distinct echo of that Old Testament depiction of saintliness first encountered in the character of Job, perfect, upright, God fearing, and eschewing evil (1:1). The present essay reflects upon a possible relationship between several themes of the book of Job: Job's integrity, Eliphaz' revelation, Yahweh's appearance, the character of Leviathan, Job's recantation, and the virginal company of Rev 14. The themes I mention from the book of Job are not conventionally discussed in the context of last things. Their analysis will not include attempts to resolve all questions on the manner and time of the parousia, the character and schedule of the Antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, or the final judgment. However, their study does attempt to stimulate discussion on whether a paradigmatic reading of Job's character might properly be viewed as typical of the 144,000 of the Apocalypse. I raise the question because what is said of that company is first said of Job, that at the end of their trial they are of blameless lips, that in a unique way they are God's exemplary representatives (Job 1:22; 2:10; 42:7-9; Rev 14:5).

Character Portrayal in Job

The book of Job offers commentary on a series of contrasts: between integrity and cowardice (compromise, incompetence), between justice and power, between independence and submissiveness, between wisdom and tradition (knowledge), between loyalty and self-preservation, between honesty (candor) and rationalization. The speakers preoccupy themselves with these dichotomies,

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define themselves, and are defined, by their attitude to these values and their antitheses.¹ Paramount among the values considered in the book is the virtue of integrity. It is the basis, first of all, for introduction of the book's principal human interlocutor (1:1). Later, in conjunction with other virtues, it justifies repeated divine celebration of his character (v. 8; 2:3). It inspires adversarial abuse and spousal insult, and, in the end, draws forth resounding vindication. Extraction of the book's definitive statements on this value is, simultaneously, extraction of the author's characterization of Job, after whom the book is named. Integrity both describes his conduct and constitutes the foundation of his structure of understanding. For reasons yet to be cited, the book's characters may all be seen to be defined by their relation to him as the paradoxical personification of this virtue.

Job & Integrity

Job, the book's paragon, perfect and upright (1:1, 8; 2:3), according to God and narrator, is to be known, if nothing else, as a man of integrity (*tummâ*—2:3, 9; 27:5; 31:6). The author presents him as the book's only man of integrity, one who displays "in a vivid and unforgettable form what it is to be a man of integrity."² Robert W. E. Forrest considers that the word also refers to Job's "physical wholeness, or bodily integrity, which Satan continually assaults."³ Given this view, the goal of the adversary would appear to be to undermine Job's moral integrity through the violation of his physical integrity. Albert Cook views this integrity, and specifically, Job's moral wholeness, as "Of common concern to both prose tale and verse drama in their juxtaposed unity, and central to [Job] the man at the center of both . . ."⁴

In contrast with Cook, Paul Weiss insists that in the exchange with the Satan and the trial that follows "God does not want to show that Job will stand firm in goodness, virtue, or decency. All that He wants to show is that if Job is cut off from the fat of existence he will not blaspheme in the face of God."⁵ But accepting Weiss' explanation requires either a denial or a disemboweling of the import of the Hebrew term *tām*. Derived from a verbal root *tmm*, used in more than two hundred forms and functions in the Old Testament, the adjective speaks of "that which is complete, blameless, just, honest, perfect, peaceful,

¹Conspicuous for its absence is any explicit debate on love, though Job does lament the treachery of friends and experience the abandonment of spousal support.

²Albert Hofstadter, "That Man May Not Be Lost," (unpublished manuscript), quoted in Albert Cook, *The Root of the Thing*, (Bloomington & London: Indiana UP, 1968), 14.

³Robert W. E. Forrest, "The Two Faces of Job: Imagery and Integrity in the Prologue," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, JSOTSup 67, Lyle Eslinger & Glen Taylor, eds. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 385-98, 389.

⁴Cook, *ibid.*

⁵Paul Weiss, "God, Job, and Evil;" in Nahum Glatzer, ed., *The Dimensions of Job: A Study & Selected Readings*, (New York: Schocken, 1969), 181-93; 182-83.

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etc.; hence an attribute or an attitude that reflects genuineness and reliability.”⁶ The manipulative insincerity implicit in Weiss’ explanation is incompatible with this understanding.⁷

The term *tām*, descriptive, from the outset, of Job’s perfection, is of limited biblical usage but of ample range of meaning. Seven of its fifteen biblical occurrences appear in Job.⁸ Various understood to mean blameless, innocent, sincere, quiet, peaceful, pious, pure, or healthy,⁹ its contrasting applications include Solomon’s lover, his “perfect one” in Cant 5:2, and 6:9, and Jacob, “a plain man, dwelling in tents” (Gen 25:27).¹⁰

Jacob, the last of these examples, may pique our interest most, for Jacob we remember as the quintessential deceiver. How could he be *tām*, if *tām* is explicative of Job’s perfection? Or is it the other way around? And are we to remember Job, too, as a deceiver? The answer to this double query, seems to lie in a comparison of at least three environments in which the term is used, viz., 1) generally, 2) with regard to Jacob, and 3) with regard to Job.

Tām: Three Meanings

Tām: General Usage. Two aspects of general usage cast significant light on the proper understanding of *yāšār*. One of these, already noted, concerns Solomon’s idealistic portrait of a woman whom he contemplates through the rose tinted eyes of love. She is, of course, perfect, as the encomiums of Cant 4:1-5, 12-15, and 7:1-9 make clear, a usage which relates to Forrest’s application of *tām* as signifying physical wholeness.¹¹

The frequent combination of the adjective *tām* with a second, *yāšār*, must also be instructive as a general rule for interpreting the first of these. Fully one-third of the fifteen uses of *tām* find it accompanied by *yāšār* (Job 1:1; 1:8; 2:3; Ps 37:37; Prov 29:10). And interpretation of *yāšār* is not exposed to the potential ambiguity of the more broadly applied term *tām*. *Yāšār* means “straight,

⁶J. J. Olivier, “*tmm*,” *NIDOTTE* 4:306-308; 306.

⁷David Penchansky’s feminist treatment, “Job’s Wife--The Satan’s Handmaid” (National SBL, Fall 1989), offers a variant yet vigorous representation of Job’s *tām*. For Penchansky Job’s integrity is finally established through the power of his wife’s character. Her challenge (“Curse God and die!”) forces him to “face the precariousness of being human . . . robbed of everything . . . tasting the absence at the heart of things and the utter fragility of all human knowledge.” She frees him to blaspheme: And not die. In this triumph over tradition, docility, and fear is his integrity. This view of integrity, more resilient than that of Paul Weiss, nevertheless disagrees with the divine portrayal of Job as speaking soundly (*n’cônâ*) about Him (42:7, 8). Neither servility nor blasphemy is included in God’s understanding of Job as *tām*.

⁸The 15 occurrences are as follows: Gen 25:27; Exod 26:24, 29; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; 8:20; 9:20, 21, 22; Cant 5:2; 6:9. Ps 37:37; 64:4; Prov 29:10.

⁹Olivier, *ibid*.

¹⁰The related *tāmîm* describes Noah (Gen 6:9; v. 10 in Gk). LXX translates *teleios*, “without blemish”.

¹¹See n. 3.

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level, right, just, righteous.”¹² God created man “*yāšār*” (Eccl 7:29); He Himself is “*yāšār*,” since, in the explanation of the antithetically parallel line, “there is no unrighteousness in Him” (Ps 92:15). Especially because *tām* is not used of God, this elaboration, which comments upon its occurrences in parallel with *yāšār*, assumes greater interpretive significance.¹³

***Tām*: Applied to Jacob.** With regard to Jacob, the modification *tām* contrasts with the description of Esau, Jacob’s brother. In Gen 25:27 the phrase “the cunning hunter,” as applied to Esau, evokes the compelling image of one of humanity’s earliest great rebels against God, Nimrod, “a mighty hunter” before the Lord (Gen 10:9). As the temperamental and spiritual opposite of his first-born twin Esau, Jacob, dwelling in tents, develops and exhibits kinship with the feminine, whereas Esau, macho man of the field, develops kinship with the masculine (v. 28); Esau is recognizable as the moral descendant of Nimrod. Jacob is *tām*. I shall return for greater elaboration on this second usage of the term after some comment on the third.

***Tām*: Applied to Job.** The third area of analysis, which concerns usage of the term in relation to Job, leaves little room for dispute. Three of the combinations of *tām* and *yāšār* describe him (1:1, 8; 2:3). Two of these occur as expressions of divine pride in God’s own servant (1:8; 2:3), suggesting that *tm* may stand for virtue such as deity treasures, virtue deemed so commendable that God here dares to confidently exhibit its possessor before his adversary. Apart from the narratorial voice (1:1) it is the deity himself who first expresses then repeats his conviction that Job is *tām* (1:8; 2:3). Again, whereas Job’s wife plays no conspicuous role in the drama, it should not be overlooked that it is she, his most intimate human acquaintance, who follows God in confirming this testimony about Job’s character (2:9). Admittedly, Job’s goodness is for her a significant irritant. Even as she attests it, she can be heard simultaneously venting rage at him, in her own confusion at his suffering, for continuing to be so, for continuing to hold fast to his integrity (2:9).¹⁴ But Job will not be shaken. He

¹²Hannes Olivier, “*yāšār*,” *NIDOTTE* 2:563-568, 563.

¹³The LXX *amemptos* (*yāšār*) is evidently synonymous with *amōmos*, the term describing the 144,000 as blameless in Rev 14:5. The Philippians are encouraged to prove that God has transformed their lives by being “*amemptoi*,” which would show them to be irreproachable or blameless (*amōmoi*) among the Gentiles (2:15). In 2 Pet 3:14, the saints are urged to be diligent that they may be found “*amōmētoi*” (a variant) at the parousia. Because the same root (*amōmos*) describes Christ as the spotless lamb whose blood purchases our redemption (1 Pet 1:19), we may acknowledge connections between the perfection of Job (*tām w’ yāšār*), of the paschal lamb (*tāmim*—Exod 12:5), of Christ’s sacrificial body symbolized by that perfect lamb (*amōmos*—1 Pet 1:19), and of the eschatological company of Rev 14:5 (*amōmoi*).

¹⁴Her quarrel with his faithfulness confirms that faithfulness. Thus she serves a significant purpose identified by Uriel Simon for minor characters who often function “as a means for the moral evaluation of the main character.” Uriel Simon, “Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative,” *JSOT* 46 (1990): 11-19, 16. Beyond furthering the plot, these characters “have a definite expressive role—the indirect characterization of the protagonist and the implied evaluation of his deeds.”

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avers in reply that he will never let go of his integrity (27:5) and concludes by insisting that God knows him to be a man of integrity (31:6).

The term *tām* is not otherwise used in Job. By God, by his frustrated wife, by himself (including under oath—chap. 31), Job is established as *tām*. None of the foregoing characters ever questions this fact. When Bildad much later also affirms it (8:20), he effectively strengthens his own credibility.

Integrity as Perfectible

The foregoing elaborations on *tām* invite a major caveat on the issue of Job's integrity. The concert of narratorial prose, divine acclaim, spousal affirmation, and personal conviction may seem to support the conclusion that *tām* in Job is synonymous with absolute or infinite virtue. This is not, however, the case. The plaudits of which he is recipient do not amount to a depiction of the Joban character as idealized deity. Job's final statement on repentance does not allow this (42:6). This statement has been the focus of considerable controversy. Interpretations range from an expression of repentance "in dust and ashes" (42:6), to the cry of outrage which John Briggs Curtis hears as "I am sorry for frail man!"¹⁵ Similar to Curtis is Marvin Pope's rendering, "Therefore I despise my words, and recant concerning humanity."¹⁶ Pope translates this way ("I recant") because for him the verb *m's* is not used for self-loathing, and could not therefore signify "abhor myself," as rendered by the Authorized Version.¹⁷ William L. Holladay's similar understanding produces "disavowal (thus rejection) of earlier words." Holladay does include the sense "despise" in his definition of *m's*, but so does Francis Brown.¹⁸ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner accept "despise" as one sense of the verb, though 42:6 is explained as "reject" or "retract."¹⁹

¹⁵John Briggs Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," *JBL* 98 (1979): 497-511, 505.

¹⁶Marvin Pope, *Job*, Anchor Bible, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 348.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), s.v. *m's*, I; also Francis Brown, ed., *The New Brown, Driver, & Briggs Hebrew & English Lexicon* [BDB], (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), s.v. ???, I.

¹⁹Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* [KBL], (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), s.v. *m's*. So also ["reject oneself"] H. van Dyke Parunak, "A Semantic Survey of *rhm*," *Bib* 56 (1975): 512-32, 519; and ["reject"] Lester J. Kuypers, "The Repentance of Job," *VT* 9 (1959): 91-94, 94. Samuel Terrien, "Exegesis of the Book of Job," *IB*, 3:875-1198, 1193, translates "abhor," but explains that *m's* is here equivalent to the parallel verb *mss*, "to flow," "melt;" (see BDB, KBL, Holladay, s.v. *m's*, II; Kember Fullerton, "The Original Conclusion to the Book of Job," *ZAW* 42 (1924): 116-36, 125, believes that Job was in "a melting mood." Gustav Holscher, *Das Buch Hiob*, HZAT 17, ed. Otto Eissfeldt, (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1952), 98, similarly renders "dissolve into tears," (*zerfliesse ich in Tränen*), equivalent to the understanding (melt) he attaches to *m's* at 7:5 [see *ibid.*, 24]; Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament Using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text*, (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1985), here followed, finds only one *m's*, explained as *bz*, *Pršhw* in the qal, and *nt'b*, *hyhlzr'* in the niphil.

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This survey of the variety of opinions on the appropriate translation of Job 42:6 supplies effective demonstration of Job's growth from prologue through to epilogue. The contrasting interpretations of rage at divine callousness and humble submission before a wise omnipotence both show Job as yielding a position he has vigorously maintained through most of the dialogue. James Crenshaw refers to the concession of 42:6 as "the drowning of doubting questions in a rushing crescendo of praise," a "masochistic response . . . so prevalent in the Judeo-Christian world" which confirms, for him, the disjuncture between the poetry and the frame story of the book of Job.²⁰ The fact that the consensus of Job scholarship now accepts the book as a unified whole²¹ does not diminish the validity of Crenshaw's insight that the words of 42:6 express a prostration before the deity which radically differs from what has gone before. Job is no divinity, and he is clearly perfectible. Whether the language of repentance is employed or not, commentators concede that the drama has been, for Job, a major learning experience. As Matitiah Tsevat points out, "the hero, precisely because of his ignorance [of the celestial dialogue], will experience problems and gain insights before which our superior knowledge pales."²² R. A. F. MacKenzie, in "The Transformation of Job,"²³ speaks similarly: "it is not correct to say that the hero is put through a severe test, which he passes successfully and after which he finds himself just as before. . . . He is not the same man at the end of the book as at the beginning."²⁴

The preceding quotations indicate that if Job is *tām*, it is not because there is no room left for him to grow. On the other hand, no putative connection need be made between the *tām* of Jacob's adolescence and the deceptions of his later years. More probably, Gen 25:27, 28 provides the reader with an explanation of why or how the birthright quarrel becomes such a *cause célèbre*. Elaboration upon that passage in the light of *tām* as applied to Job permits us to recognize, in Jacob's unaffected innocence,²⁵ the timidity of the wimp before the force of Esau's aggressions; Jacob's *tām* is the unknowingness of an *ingénu* before the astuteness of Esau the hunter; it is the humility of a shepherd instead of the

²⁰James L. Crenshaw, "The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage," in James L. Crenshaw, ed., *Theodicy in the Old Testament, Issues in Religion and Theology*, 4 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 119-140, 129, 128.

²¹See particularly Willem A. M. Beuken, ed., *The Book of Job* (Leuven, 1994); also Walter L. Michel, *Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1987); Norman Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1985).

²²Matitiah Tsevat, *The Meaning of the Book of Job, and other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible*, (New York: Ktav, Dallas, TX: Institute for Jewish Studies, 1980), 3.

²³R. A. F. MacKenzie, "The Transformation of Job," *BTB* 9 (1979): 51-57.

²⁴MacKenzie, *ibid.*, 51, 52. MacKenzie's language is more grandiose at times: "He has become Man, in a way that he was not before." (*ibid.*, 52). But Job is not transformed into a new order of being. The lessons of his experience make no less or more palpable or accessible, the virtue or humanity he exhibits in the epilogue.

²⁵The literal meaning of *aplastos*, the LXX word for *tām* in Gen 25:27, is "unaffected."

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excitement of the chase; the vulnerability of a mother's boy before the mean caprice of a bully. Esau's contempt of Jacob may well include contempt for his gentleness, the very virtue which, in itself and by its consequences, endears him to the woman who is his mother. She can see, in his traits, that the oracle was right to prefer him (as she understands it, Gen 25:23). Her instincts awakened, she becomes a holy warrior, determined, against all the odds, to secure the future of her meek and quiet son.

Integrity as Radical Commitment to Goodness

To be *tām* then, is not to be flawless. For Jacob, with or without Rebekah, displays gross flaws. But these do not discount the truth of Gen 25:27. They do underline the complex tissue of reality which is human character. And integrity in Jacob, read as desirable character traits, enables us to appreciate the finite but still more admirable portrait of integrity that is Job. To be *tām*, as Job is, is to singlemindedly commit to goodness, come what may. Apart from Job, the word *tām* is never applied in the book to anyone else, or for any other reason. And there is good reason why it should not be. For no one else exhibits the unmodified spiritual commitment to which this term may point.

And yet, integrity notwithstanding, a question remains to be answered: How does the recanting Job relate to the redeemed company of Rev 14? And what does his retraction mean for integrity? The answers to these queries are all directly related to the theophany, the immediate context of Job's dramatic surrender.

The Role of the Theophany in Job

Confrontation in Job in the Light of the Theophany. According to John Day, Job's repentance results from coming to recognize that God alone owns and wields mastery over the might of Behemoth and Leviathan:²⁶ "The conflict between the dragon and God provided an apt parallel to the book's theme of Job's conflict with God."²⁷ Day's remark, presenting God as Job's nemesis, contrasts with the alternative view as expressed by Edwin and Margaret Thiele and John C. L. Gibson. These interpreters relate the climax of Yahweh's second speech to the story's opening salvos where Job's trial is initiated through a confrontation between Yahweh and the adversary of the prologue. They see a specific structural and rhetorical purpose in the description of Leviathan (40:25-41:26) as the climax of the final divine speech. "There is none like him on earth" states Yahweh (41:25), a terror to all, afraid of none, "king over all the sons of pride" (v. 26). Thiele, Thiele, and Gibson accept this description as a further reference to the Satan, the great adversary of the prologue, whose con-

²⁶John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, (Cambridge, London, NY, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge UP, 1985), 181.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 49.

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quest prophet and psalmist celebrate in such passages as Isa 27:1, and Ps 74:13, 14.²⁸ Gibson finds allusion to this link between Leviathan and the adversary of the prologue in the great reformation hymn “A Mighty Fortress.” Note the following lines:

That ancient prince of hell
Hath risen with purpose fell;
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour;
On earth is not his fellow.

Gibson laments that no Luther scholar has been able to confirm that his [Gibson’s] understanding was Luther’s intention.²⁹

Day believes the dominating imagery of God’s second speech is what brings about Job’s capitulation. But this is because he considers the book to be a battle between God and Job, a position the prologue shows to be doubly mistaken: First, Job is clearly God’s friend and hero. Job habitually lives out his faith in and fear of God, who in turn makes his boast on Job. Second, the adversary is the source of open repudiation of God’s verdict on Job. As such, the equation of Leviathan with the adversary shows not only the height of his power, but also why he, and not Job, should be seen as God’s true antithesis. In this view, the divine speeches aim to enlighten Job rather than to break him; to expose him to his error, rather than to humiliate him; to mark his finitude, rather than to condemn him.

The Supernatural in Job in the Light of the Theophany. The notion that God does not intend to break Job by the theophany may appear difficult to accept because Job is rebuked by God and does seem to experience and accept abject humiliation. The theophany also seems somewhat atypical of wisdom literature, as well as of human experience, because neither of these realms usually features divine visitations which conveniently dissolve the cruxes of human frustration. We are, however, aware that the irregularity of supernatural intrusion does not first occur at the climax of the book. The early scenes of the divine council do remain hidden from human eye. But the supernatural invades the human plane right from the onset of the dialogue, through a vision or dream experience related in Eliphaz’ opening speech.³⁰

Taken back to that experience, the reader now recognizes it as foreshadowing the climactic self-presentation of God at the end of the book’s speeches. James E. Miller’s comparison of these two supernatural visitations reveals a number of contrasting features: The first is characterized by hiddenness, night,

²⁸Edwin & Margaret Thiele, *Job and the Devil*, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 124-129; John C. L. Gibson, “On Evil in the Book of Job,” in Lyle Eslinger & Glen Taylor, eds., *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical & Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, JSOTSup 67, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 399-419; 415.

²⁹Gibson, *ibid.*, n. 12.

³⁰Whether vision or dream remains unclear.

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fearful stillness, exclusiveness, and privacy. The second, the theophany, is a public fury, a storm from which God addresses not only Job, but later, and in harsh condemnation, Eliphaz himself (42:7-9).³¹ In Eliphaz' private experience he is not addressed, but struggles to hear what is being said. So that, as Miller wryly observes, "Even Eliphaz receives more personal attention in Job's theophany than he did in his own vision."³²

Despite its general indeterminacy, Eliphaz' vision plays a pivotal role in Job's story. Its content becomes determinative for all three of his speeches. By the end of the dialogue with Job, it has become the definitive position of the three friends. The perspective of this vision is so peculiar as to be unmistakable: Briefly summarized, it represents humanity as an untrustworthy object of no esteem before God: "Can mere humans be justified before God (*m'lwh*), or even a mighty man before his Maker (*m'shw*)? Behold he trusts not even his servants, and charges his angels with error" (4:17, 18).

Though the LXX reads *apo tōn ergōn autou* ("in regard to his works") for *m'shw* ("than his maker"), Eliphaz' general import is not in dispute.³³ The preposition *min* here stands for "in the presence of."³⁴ Eliphaz doubts that "mortal man [can] be just before God,"³⁵ as Job has striven to be and even to have his children be (1:1, 5). His cynical view influences Zophar's first speech (9:7-10), and he himself so insists upon it in subsequent speeches (15:14-16; 22:2) that the orthodox Bildad finally surrenders to the same despairing pessimism (25:4).

This opinion that God despises humanity both illustrates and explains the difference in spirit between the two stories of supernatural revelation in Job: Eliphaz' uncomplimentary view of all God's human creation appears to contradict everything God shows himself to be from beginning to end of the book: There is never any doubt that He is proud of at least one member of his creation. He is pleased with Job (1:8; 2:3; 42:7-9). This patent contradiction between the views of God and Eliphaz sharpens the significance of the latter's visitation for interpretation of the book's dénouement. It now appears that Eliphaz' mysteri-

³¹James E. Miller, "The Vision of Eliphaz as Foreshadowing in the Book of Job," *PEGLMBS* 9 (1989): 98-112, 102, 103.

³²*Ibid.*, 107.

³³The preposition *min*, read as comparative (AV, NIV, TOB [La Bible, traduction oecuménique]), produces sarcasm too harsh for its inconsequential import: "Can mortal man be more just than God?" Job has not sought to best God in goodness.

³⁴Num 32:22; Jer 51:5.

³⁵Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, 1974), 114; David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, 1989), 107; Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. H. H. Rowley, with a preface by Francis I. Andersen (Nashville, 1984), 52; Moses Bottenweiser, *The Book of Job* (New York, 1922), 95, 162; so also LXX, NASB, NRSV. We may also safely reject the reading of *min* in *m'shw* as "from his maker," where Eliphaz might be considering God as the source of his creatures' justification. Creaturely justification is just what Eliphaz so firmly denies.

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ous account functions as fundamental justification for the theophany: His supernatural revelation informs the thinking and shapes the conviction of those who stand for God against Job throughout the dialogue. K. Fullerton describes Eliphaz as “a certain kind of dogmatic theologian whose presuppositions are supposed to be divine revelation . . . and whose eyes are therefore blind to all that does not fit into the preconceived pattern.”³⁶ Given the source of his position, his battle with God’s servant Job appears as but an expression, on the natural plane, of the prologue’s supernatural confrontation between God and the adversary.

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Because of Eliphaz and his “inspired” lie, God must come, though when he does it is still a surprise. Biblical justifications for the parousia are very much a part of the Joban theophany: It is tempting but unnecessary to convert the prologue’s personalized havoc into a type of the end time chaos of wars and rumors of wars. But the apparent ascendancy of evil, the flawed representations of the divine character, the persecution of the saintly Job, his longing for vindication, the supernatural support of Eliphaz’ falsehood, *inter alia*, all find meaningful parallels in Christ’s predictions in Matt 24 and 25, Luke 21, Paul’s warning on the man of sin in 2 Thess 2:1-12, and the descriptions of souls under the altar in the fifth seal who cry “How long O Lord?” (Rev 6:9-11). So God must come to vindicate his servant and clear his own name.

His Joban parousia brings executive judgment upon the debate’s participants. Eliphaz’ vision and the arguments it inspires receive their ultimate condemnation, while God’s servant and God’s own character receive their ultimate vindication. God’s position and clarification, at the end, support this essay’s earlier claim that every character in the drama is defined in accordance with his relationship to Job, the personification of the virtue of integrity.

The theophany is the immediate context of Job’s recantation. But it is also the means of his vindication and restoration. Our review of the context for the theophany has prepared us to expand upon a question posed earlier. We have asked how the recanting Job relates to the redeemed of Rev 14. But the question may with good reason be put in different terms: What of the seemingly strange coincidence of humiliation and vindication, prostration and triumph which Job experiences in the theophany? And what does this paradox suggest for end time saints?

These expansions of our earlier question open the way for an answer which is basic to both Testaments, consistent throughout Scripture. Moreover, this answer, to be noted shortly, points out that the reaction of Job, the man of in-

³⁶K. Fullerton, “Double Entendre in the first Speech of Eliphaz,” *JBL* 49 (1930): 320-74, 336-337.

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tegrity, to the revelation of divine glory, constitutes nothing exceptional in the biblical record. I quote at length from John R. W. Stott:

All those men of God in the Bible who have caught a glimpse of God's glory have shrunk from the sight in an overwhelming consciousness of their own sins. *Moses*, to whom God appeared in the bush that burned but was not consumed, 'hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.' *Job*, to whom God spoke 'out of the whirlwind' in words which exalted his transcendent majesty, cried out, 'I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' *Isaiah*, a young man at the threshold of his career, had a vision of God as the King of Israel 'sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up', surrounded by worshiping angels who sang of his holiness and glory, and said, 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!' When *Ezekiel* received his strange vision of living winged creatures and whirling wheels, and above them a throne, and on the throne One like a man, enveloped in the brightness of fire and of the rainbow, he recognized it as 'the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord', and he added, 'When I saw it, I fell upon my face.' *Saul of Tarsus*, traveling to Damascus, mad with rage against the Christians, was struck to the ground and blinded by a brilliant light which flashed from heaven more brightly than the noonday sun, and wrote later of his vision of the risen Christ, 'He appeared also to me.' The aged *John*, exiled on the island of Patmos, describes in detail his vision of the risen and glorified Jesus, whose 'eyes were like a flame of fire' and whose 'face was like the sun shining in full strength', and he tells us, 'When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.' [emphasis original]³⁷

And Stott summarizes: "If the curtain which veils the unspeakable majesty of God could be drawn aside but for a moment, we too should not be able to bear the sight."³⁸

In the light of the foregoing quotation, Job's integrity may be less than full warrant for peculiar status. Yahweh's rebuke and Job's prostration may no longer be characterized as inexplicable in a person of integrity. Rather they are the measure of his integrity and fear of God. As Moses must obey when commanded "Take your sandals off" (Exod 3:5), so too, it seems, must Job the god-fearing bow when reminded, "You are but human, Job. I am Yahweh." And as glorified beings veil their faces to yield in total deference before the presence of the Almighty God, so Job and humanity must bow in prostration in the presence of divine glory. Read in the light of *tota scriptura*, Job's character now appears exceptional only insofar as it reveals the same miracle which grace desires to accomplish in the redeemed of all ages.

³⁷John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 72.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 73.

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While the book of Job may be *sui generis*, Job's character, perfect and upright, godfearing and evil avoiding, is not. It is typical of the saved, of those who know God. It is typical not only of their integrity, but also of their fear of God, a parallel theme of high relevance to both Job and Revelation. Beside four references to the fear of God or Shaddai (6:14; 15:4; 28:28; 37:24), divine awe is four times paired with integrity in Job (1:1, 8-10; 2:3; 4:6). And its defining relevance for the saints in Revelation (11:18; 14:7) is indisputable (see also 15:4; 19:5). Further elaboration may take us beyond the scope of this article. But the coexistence and mutuality of these terms suggest that the revelator's depiction in Rev 14:1-5 relates to his consciousness of the Old Testament portrayal of Job's character. Evidently, it is his desire to indicate that that same balanced perfection of character long ago displayed by the patriarch Job, will be reproduced at the end in a host who wait for God, longing for deliverance, and hide their faces when he appears to vindicate them.

Summary & Discussion

The intellectual power, artistic appeal, and philological fascination of the book of Job have been the object of millennia of celebration. In this essay we connect the Old Testament narrative to the end time picture of the 144,000 who stand perfected on Matt. Zion. To judge by the Old Testament type, theirs is a perfection which, despite their guilelessness, is yet perfectible. Their guilelessness is their faultlessness. As Job illustrates, faultlessness is not omniscience. The theophany is for him a learning experience, as he freely acknowledges. Even by such acknowledgment he demonstrates the thoroughgoing integrity which is his hallmark throughout the drama.

In the study of last things the themes of divine judgement and human integrity are inextricably joined. As grace would have it, God's decision on those who compose the company of the redeemed is consistently associated with acknowledgment of their faithfulness (Matt 25:14-30, esp. vv. 21, 23; Rev 2:8-11; 3:9-11; 6:9-17; 7:1-3, 13, 14, etc.). Divine judgment and human integrity are also very present in the book of Job. Indeed, the book is at least as concerned with human integrity as it is with any of the major issues generally associated with it, such as the suffering of the innocent, theodicy, or the character of God in general. Andrew E. Steinmann may overstate the case in his essay on "The Structure & Message of the Book of Job."³⁹ Steinman's interpretation departs from the norm in several ways. First he downplays the issue of suffering in a work remembered by most for its holocaustic pain. Second, he dismisses the question of theodicy in the book considered by most as the Old Testament's supreme discussion on theodicy. This interpretation constitutes an even more radical departure from convention. Finally, having discarded these prominent options, Steinmann chooses to represent the book of Job as a work on integrity.

³⁹Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Structure & Message of the Book of Job", *VT* (46): 85-100.

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Rather than dismiss the element of God's fairness as Steinmann does, I view theodicy as directly related to the issue which he correctly highlights, viz., integrity. For it is the issue of integrity, whether human or divine, which serves as the vital germ of the book's dialogues, as well as the *casus belli* of the book's supernatural debate, the very issue highlighted in the characterization of the redeemed in Rev 14.⁴⁰ It is God's pride in Job's integrity which provokes the horrors of the prologue, as well as all the commiserations, lamentations, harangues, oaths, humiliations, and vindications of the book. God and Job, divine and human integrity, stand or fall together at the end of this story.

We do not violate caution by saying Job's faithfulness will prove God right. Nor do we impugn omniscience by granting that if God is mistaken we shall know because Job fails. Therefore theodicy, God's fair resolution of the confrontation with the adversary, relates directly to the confrontation between Job and his friends. By the same token, one aspect of God's final disposition of rewards, rendering to every one according to what she has done (Rev 22:12), involves discrimination between committed theological camps. For some, as for Job, vindication waits. But not for all. Many New Testament passages confirm this argument, including Matt 7:21-23; Eph 6:12; and 2 Thess 2:1-12.

John A. T. Robinson has said that "Every truth about eschatology is *ipso facto* a truth about God."⁴¹ Robinson also correctly points out that "all statements about the End . . . are fundamentally affirmations about God, and *vice versa*."⁴² In Job, Eliphaz' supernatural visitation mounts a significant assault upon the divine integrity by the statement it makes about God's role in the world, his attitude to sin and sinners, the manner of his judgments, and the nature of his justice. The debate becomes as much a conflict about the character of God as it is about Job's integrity. The friends' assault on Job revolves around their understanding of God, based not merely on tradition, as universally affirmed, but upon special revelation as communicated by their leader, the dialogue's first contributor, Eliphaz. And Job's opposition to the friends revolves around his understanding of the divine character. His recantation is surely not designed to prove that he should have acquiesced in their distorted views of God. God's own anger at their misrepresentation of him makes this much clear (42:7-9). Nor is Job's recantation in the epilogue the first time he gives in.

When in agony Job proclaims surrender to capricious destruction (9:22, "It is all the same thing: That's why I say he destroys both perfect and wicked"), he does not surrender because he is wrong. His proof that God is capricious is his rightness—He is incensed that he is badgered into surrender to God although he

⁴⁰On integrity as the question at issue in Job, see Lael O. Caesar, "Job: Another Thesis," *IT* (49): 435-447.

⁴¹John A. T. Robinson, *In the End God*, Religious Perspectives, ed., Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York, Evanston, & London: Harper & Row, 1968), 47.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 22.

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is right (9:21).⁴³ Thrice in three verses he uses the term *tām*. Twice he hypothesizes (“If I were righteous, . . . if I were perfect . . .”), anxious yet hesitant, caught between truth and fear. But then he boldly declares himself a perfect man. And, because he knows he is upright and yet undone, he holds that he can prove it, and so insists that God equally destroys both good and bad.

These terms of perfection (*tām*, *tummā*) in Job, when specifically applied, refer only to the character of Job, to whose mind the antithesis of this condition of uprightness is wickedness (*rāšāʿ*). Hence the cry of 9:22. Unlike Job’s word choice, the biblical antithesis of *rāšāʿ* is not *tām* but *šaddīq* (righteous). And since Job is the only one who is *tām*, his cry against indiscriminate destruction is exceptionally personal. Because he is the only *tām* of the book, 9:22 should not be taken as axiomatic. Job here argues that *he*, *tām* or *šaddīq*, and the wicked, both suffer destruction from God. It is a more particular insight than Job is sometimes allowed, sharpening the reader’s sense of Job’s guiltlessness in any particular. It teaches the text’s idealization of Job’s uncompromised rightness and his unflinching insistence upon it. Job asserts his rightness so adamantly that by implication he chooses to stand in judgment on deity rather than concede personal fault; he will impugn deity (27:4, 5; 22:13, 14) rather than alter his own conduct. Because the text leaves us no alternative, no dissenting voice, no comparable character, and because the concert of so many voices attests it, we are obliged to accept this definition of *tām* even when it issues from Job’s own lips. For him the man who is *tām* consistently maintains that the God of a fair universe would know he did not deserve punishment. The God he worships would not inflict upon him his present wretchedness. For though no one in this book may say as much, Job still knows that the God whom he knows is a God of love.

The theophany shows that Job’s insight into the divine character is correct. That the friends’ direct temporal correspondence between suffering and guilt is untenable. God himself is as outraged as is Job at the friends’ gross distortion of his character. And because of God’s actions at the climax of the book, the reader may better understand why Job may be both adamant and yielding, daring and godfearing, recognizing his finitude and still *tām*. Job may be adamant because his principle is correct. God’s coming confirms this. And yet, Job may yield before the lesson of the theophany because he respects God. The theophany is a learning experience. So will the parousia be for godfearing people, however much their integrity, at the end of history. Judging from Job, the climax of the end may feature a far more intriguing complex of emotions than might at first appear: The coming of God with devouring fire (Ps 50:3; Heb 12:29; Rev 19:11ff). The ecstasy of saints who have overcome the world, the flesh, and the

⁴³H. H. Rowley, “The Book of Job and Its Meaning,” *BJRL* 41 (1958-59): “It is . . . more likely that in his thought Job was supremely honoured [sic] by God, in that God had staked Himself on his unflinching integrity. Nor did Job let God down. For despite all his complaint, Job never for one moment regrets his integrity of character” (175).

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devil, who have waited long for deliverance and vindication, ecstasy mingled with cries of dismay, “the great day of the Lord has come. Who shall be able to stand?” (Rev 6:17). The glorious, awesome roar of a voice like mighty seas that reverberates to eternity, “My grace is all you ever needed” (2 Cor 12:9).

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