

Job and the Spirituality of the Reformation*

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In the introduction to his excellent anthology of writings on the book of Job, Nahum N. Glatzer comments that, with some notable exceptions, 'Jewish interpreters in the premodern period Judaized Job and Christian expositors Christianized him'.¹ Even in the modern period, he observes, 'the interpreter's intellectual preoccupation still tends to determine his reading of the book and causes an adaptation of Job to his own thinking or needs'.² For Glatzer, as for many scholars, such interpretations 'advance our understanding of the book very little' and invite merely the condemnation or the scorn of readers at the ingenuity of older interpreters in 'bypassing the stubborn soil of the book and in fashioning its hero in their own image'. In these postmodern days, however, rather than patronizing our predecessors we might do well to regard it as a tribute to the richness of the book of Job that it is amenable to so many varying readings that have engaged the sympathies and commitments of readers across many cultural divides. It is in that spirit that the present study of Job and the spirituality of the Reformation (by which I mean just Luther and Calvin) is undertaken.

The term 'spirituality', as I am using it in this chapter, can be defined as 'the forms that holiness takes in the concrete life of the

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1. Nahum N. Glatzer, *The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 11.

². Glatzer, *The Dimensions of Job*, p. 12.

believer',³ or as 'the attitude faith should take as it is exercised in the unceasing conflict and contradiction in which a Christian is involved in daily life in the service of Christ'.⁴ It is not a term that has always been used in studies of the Reformers, partly because some other term, such as 'the Christian life', has been substituted for it, but partly also because the Reformers' concern with spirituality has often been obscured by an exclusive concentration on their theology. It is nonetheless increasingly being urged today that casting their whole intellectual activity as a quest for a spirituality, for a religious way of being in the world, may in fact be a legitimate way of understanding them. Timothy George, for example, argues that 'Calvin's life's work can be interpreted as an effort to formulate an authentic spirituality, that is to say, a *modus vivendi* of life in the Spirit'.⁵

However that may be, my specific concern here is with the question how Luther and Calvin invoked the person of Job to express their own perception of spirituality, that is, their understanding of the nature of the believing life. By way of preface to a study of their representations of Job, I shall try to establish some context for their outlooks, both in the exegetical tradition they inherited and in the spirituality of their own time.

1. The Figure of Job in Pre-Reformation Spirituality

What is the earliest extant interpretation of the figure of Job? We cannot be sure. It may that of the epistle of James, or that of the *Testament of Job*, a work variously ascribed to the last pre-Christian century or to the early Christian period.⁶ In the

³. So Lucien Joseph Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), p. 1.

⁴. Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), p. vii, who does not however use the term 'spirituality'.

⁵. Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), p. 224.

⁶. See *Studies on the Testament of Job* (ed. Michael A. Knibb and Pieter van der Horst; Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 66; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. pp. 27-32 (in Russell P. Spittler's 'The Testament of Job: A History of Research and Interpretation', pp. 7-32).

epistle of James, Job is known solely as an embodiment of 'patience' or 'steadfastness' (ὑπομονή), and his experience of God is characterized as that of a 'compassionate and merciful' (πολύσπλαγχνος ...καὶ οἰκτίρμων) Lord:

Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful (5.11).

In the *Testament of Job* also, where there is a more developed portrait of Job, Job's perseverance in the sufferings inflicted on him by the Satan is one of its principal themes.⁷ Here the patience of Job is expressed with three distinct terms: ὑπομονή, 'standing firm', καρτερία, 'stubbornness, toughness', and μακροψυμία, 'patience' (by which one perseveres and endures).⁸

Few modern readers, left to their own devices, would fix upon 'patience' as the most outstanding characteristic of the biblical Job's personality, or, at least, if they recognize in chs. 1–2 the 'patient' Job who accedes to the divine will, they would soon want to contrast this image with that of the 'impatient' Job in the remainder of the book.⁹ No doubt the author of James had no intention of subsuming all the virtues of Job under this single heading, or of headlining the narrative of the whole book with the term. But the mere accident that this is the sole reference to Job within the New Testament ensured that in the history of interpretation this construction of the character of Job remained prominent.¹⁰

James was not of course the only interpreter of the character of Job available to the Reformers. Among the Christian writers on Job most influential upon them must be counted Gregory the Great, with his *Morals on the Book of Job*, and Thomas Aquinas, with his *The Literal Exposition on Job*.

⁷. Cees Haas, 'Job's Perseverance in the Testament of Job', in *Studies on the Testament of Job*, pp. 117-54 (117).

⁸. Haas, 'Job's Perseverance', pp. 117-54.

⁹. Cf. H.L. Ginsberg, 'Job the Patient and Job the Impatient', *Conservative Judaism* 21 (1967), pp. 12-28.

¹⁰. I cite only, by way of example, one of Gregory's first sentences about Job, as a man 'who in a word, we know, received from the Judge of that which is within the reward of the virtue of patience' (*Moralia*, Epistle, 3 [= *Morals*, I, p. 8] [see note 11 below]).

The *Moralia* of Gregory¹¹ is of course one of the classic works of mediaeval exegesis, expounding the threefold sense of the book,¹² a literal sense (Job is afflicted by God in order to increase his merit¹³), an allegorical sense (Job is the suffering Redeemer¹⁴ and the church in its earthly sufferings¹⁵) and a moral sense (Job transcends the temporal realm and ascends to the eternal¹⁶). But, as befits a course of sermons more than a work of academic theology, the issue of the spirituality of the book of Job arises early on in his work when Gregory compares his own physical suffer-

¹¹. Gregory I (the Great), *Libri XXXV Moraliū, Patrologia Latina* (henceforth *PL*), LXXV, pp. 509-1162; LXXVI, pp. 9-782; *S. Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob* (ed. M. Adriaen; Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 143, 143A, 143B; Turnhout: Brepols, 1979-85); *Grégoire le Grand: Morales sur Job* (Première partie, Livres I-II, ed. Robert Gillet, trans. André de Gaudemaris [2nd edn]; Troisième partie, Livres XI-XVI, ed. Aristide Bocognano [2 vols.]; Sources Chrétiennes, 32 bis, 212, 221; Paris: Cerf, 1975, 1974, 1975); *Morals on the Book of Job, by S. Gregory the Great* (A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, 18-20; Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844) (cited below as *Morals*). References below are made to the Sources Chrétiennes edition and to the Parker edition when available, and otherwise to the *Patrologia*.

On Gregory's commentary on Job, see Bertrand de Margerie, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse. IV. L'occident latin de Léon le Grand à Bernard de Clairvaux* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), pp. 171-81 (I am grateful to Dr Jennifer Dines of Heythrop College for lending me this book); P. Catry, 'Epreuves du juste et mystère de Dieu. Le commentaire littéral du livre de Job par Saint Grégoire', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 18 (1972), pp. 124-44. The pages on Gregory's exposition of Job in Glatzer's handbook (*The Dimensions of Job*, pp. 27-32) unfortunately do not extend beyond a collection of typological and allegorical identifications.

¹². The threefold sense is, in Gregory's words, to 'unravel the words of the history in allegorical senses' and 'to give to the allegorical senses the turn of a moral exercise' (*Moralia*, Epistle, 1 [= *Morals*, I, p. 5]).

¹³. 'While the innocent person is bruised by the blow, his patience may serve to increase the gain of his merits' (*Moralia*, Preface, 5.12 [= *Morals*, I, p. 24]).

¹⁴. '[T]he blessed Job conveys a type of the Redeemer... For there never was any Saint who did not appear as His herald in figure' (*Moralia*, Preface, 6.14 [= *Morals*, I, pp. 27, 26]).

¹⁵. On Job 19.6 (= *Moralia* 14.31.38-32.39 [*PL*, LXXV, pp. 1059-60]).

¹⁶. On Job 7.15 'My soul chooseth hanging', Gregory writes: '[I]n... quitting earthly objects of desire, they raise the mind on high' (*Moralia* 8.25.44 [= *Morals*, I, p. 450]). Cf. also 5.40.72; 7.12.27.

ings with those of Job. He himself, afflicted by 'frequent pains in the bowels' and 'under the influence of fevers... draw[ing] [his] breath with difficulty', thinks that perhaps 'Divine Providence designed, that I a stricken one, should set forth Job stricken, and that by these scourges I should the more perfectly enter into the feelings of one that was scourged'.¹⁷ In so saying, he announces a self-identification with the Job of the book who 'bore the strife of the spiritual conflict'¹⁸ and revealed his virtue and fortitude by his reaction to suffering.¹⁹ '[E]very good man, so long as he is not smitten, is regarded as insipid, and of slight account',²⁰ Gregory writes, revealing as he does so, no doubt, how he construes his own state of health. Suffering for Job, and hence for himself, is character-forming, but it also brings the sufferer to public attention. '[H]ad [Job] not been stricken he would never have been the least known to us';²¹ and Gregory himself, as supreme pontiff, cannot be blind to the analogy between Job and himself.

More important, perhaps, is what is generally acknowledged as a key concept in Gregory's spirituality: that of his antithesis of interiority and exteriority.²² In the Preface to the *Moralia* he tellingly evokes the tension in his own life between the contemplative and the active life, lamenting that 'now that the end of the world is at hand...we ourselves, who are supposed to be devoted to the inner mysteries, are...become involved in outward cares (*curis exterioribus*)'.²³ But more broadly, and beyond his own personal experience, humanity itself, which was destined for interiority, is imprisoned and exiled in exteriority:

¹⁷. *Moralia*, Epistle, 5 (= *Morals*, I, p. 10).

¹⁸. *Moralia*, Preface, 1.3 (= *Morals*, I, p. 15).

¹⁹. '[I]t was by strokes that the report of his virtue was stirred up to fragrance...[W]hen disturbed [he] did scatter abroad the odour of his fortitude...For as unguents, unless they be stirred, are never smelt far off...so the Saints in their tribulations make known all the sweetness that they have of their virtues' (*Moralia*, Preface, 2.6 [= *Morals*, I, p. 18]).

²⁰. *Moralia*, Preface, 2.6 (= *Morals*, I, p. 18).

²¹. *Moralia*, Preface, 2.6 (= *Morals*, I, p. 18).

²². See especially Claude Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand: Culture et expérience chrétiennes* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1977), pp. 133-244.

²³. *Moralia*, Epistle, 1 (= *Morals*, I, p. 4).

For man, being created for the contemplation of his Maker, but banished from the interior (*internis*) joys in justice to his deserts... undergoing the darkness of his exile, was at once subject to the punishment of his sin, and knew it not; so that he imagined his place of exile to be his home... But He Whom man had forsaken within (*intus*), having assumed a fleshly nature, came forth God without (*foris*); and when he presented Himself outwardly (*exterius*), he restored man, who was cast forth without (*foras*), to the interior life (*ad interiora*), that [h]e might henceforth perceive his losses.²⁴

The spiritual life is therefore for Gregory a retreat from the external to the interior. How does the figure of Job sustain this position? Not very well, it must be said, and one misses in Gregory a close and systematic parallel of the history of the man Job with the spiritual experience. But in one respect Job plays out a key phase in the journey inwards and upwards: suffering, temptation, testing—which Job embodies—are the *flagella Dei*, which purify the soul and stimulate its desire to arise to God.²⁵ ‘The soul [= “the interior man”] that lifts itself up toward Him he both lets loose to wars without, and endues with strength within.’²⁶ And ‘the more the soul of the just suffers adversity in this world, the more thirst it has to contemplate the face of its Creator’.²⁷ Job as sufferer is thus the model of the believing soul

²⁴. On Job 6.2-3 (*Moralia* 7.1.2 [= *Morals*, I, p. 366, incorrectly capitalizing the last ‘he’ in the quoted text]).

²⁵. ‘Les *flagella Dei*, les souffrances, les malheurs de tout genre sont donc destinés à opérer au cœur de l’homme une sorte de résurrection: la prospérité extérieure dissimule un effondrement intérieur; ce sont les épreuves qui, en troublant cette prospérité, inciteront l’homme à se ressaisir, en vue d’un redressement intérieur. Cette correspondance entre l’affaiblissement physique et le progrès spirituel est une des lois de la vie chrétienne: c’est ainsi que «par un grand principe d’équilibre, nous comprenons que nous recevons de Dieu à l’occasion de nos progrès intérieurs, et ce que nous sommes à l’occasion de nos défaillances extérieures»’ (Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, p. 188, quoting *Moralia* 19.6.12).

²⁶. On Job 10.10-11 (*Moralia* 9.53.80 [= *Morals*, I, p. 552]). The translation in the Parker edition misleadingly has ‘the soul that is lifted up’; for the translation above, cf. Dagens, *Saint Grégoire*, p. 187.

²⁷. *Moralia* 16.27.32.

who is driven by suffering towards the divine.²⁸

A final note in the spirituality of Gregory is his extreme denigration of human worth. Confronted with Job's affirmation of his innocence, 'I know that I shall be found to be just' (13.18), and his apparent acknowledgment of sins (13.15, 26; 14.17),²⁹ Gregory concludes that 'in attributing to himself iniquity and to the omnipotent Lord his justification, he recognizes himself as a sinner on his own account (*ex se*) and acknowledges that it is as a divine gift that he has been made just'.³⁰ This severe disjunction of human sinfulness and divine merit takes rather unattractive form when he comments on Job's final confession of his ignorance: 'All human wisdom, no matter how great its acuity, is folly when compared with the divine wisdom. All things that are humanly just and beautiful, if they are compared with the justice and beauty of God, are neither just nor beautiful—nor are they anything at all (*nec omnino sunt*).'³¹ Job becomes here a vehicle for a rather totalitarian impulse that is to be found also in some other forms of spirituality besides Gregory's.

Thomas Aquinas³² set out, in his commentary on Job, on a path distinct from that of Gregory. 'Blessed Pope Gregory', he wrote, 'has already disclosed to us its mysteries [that is, its mystical senses] so subtly and clearly that there seems no need to add

²⁸. Cf. Calvin, *CO* (see note 78 below), XXXV, p. 511: 'When we are struck down we are the better disposed to aspire to the heavenly life'.

²⁹. Gregory takes *vias meas in conspectu eius arguam* in 13.15 as 'I will criticize my ways in his sight' (cf. *Moralia* 11.35.48) whereas the Vulgate may simply mean 'I will defend my ways'—which is what the Hebrew surely means.

³⁰. *Moralia* 11.38.51.

³¹. *Moralia* 35.2.3 (*PL*, LXXVI, p. 751).

³². Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Job ad litteram* (Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Opera Omnia*, iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita, 26; Rome: ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1965). The most recent English translation is: *Thomas Aquinas. The Literal Exposition of Job: A Scriptural Commentary concerning Providence* (ed. and trans. Anthony Damico [translator] and Martin D. Yaffe [Interpretive Essays and Notes]; The American Academy of Religion, *Classics in Religious Studies*, 7; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). I found useful some comments on Aquinas's treatment of Job by Susan E. Schreiner, "'Through a Mirror Dimly": Calvin's Sermons on Job', *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986), pp. 175-93 (178-79).

anything further to them.³³ In fulfilling his own goal, however, to explain merely the literal sense of the book, the sense 'primarily intended by the words, whether they are used properly or figuratively',³⁴ he does not fail to leave some hints of his estimation of Job and of the role Job played in his image of the spiritual life.

For Thomas, Job is a pious man; indeed, it is fundamental to his understanding of the book that Job is 'perfect in every virtue'. For the book of Job, being intended, as he believes, to show that 'human affairs are ruled by divine providence',³⁵ must deal satisfactorily with the problem of undeserved suffering, which is 'what most seems to exclude divine providence from human affairs'.³⁶ Job represents such a case. The only fault that can be ascribed to Job is that in speaking immoderately he provokes scandal in the minds of his interlocutors,³⁷ and in speaking so strenuously of his own innocence he gives the impression of pride and of doubting the divine judgment.³⁸ Even Job's curse on the day of his birth (ch. 3) is nothing more than a natural 'sadness' proceeding from the 'lower part of the soul', the upper part of the soul being rationally convinced that some good must rightly be expected from his misfortunes.³⁹

Job is then, for Thomas, an exemplar of the pious soul, afflicted by external troubles, including the intellectual challenges of his friends, but free of internal turmoil or doubt of God's benevolence. Even when the Hebrew text seems to have Job directly accusing God of injustice, Thomas interprets the sentence as a mere hypothetical, for it is not possible that a man of Job's piety could utter an accusation against God. Thus at 19.6, for instance, 'God has afflicted me with an inequitable judgment', Thomas's comment is that '[i]f adversities come about only in return for

³³. *Expositio*, Prologue, 99-102 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, p. 69).

³⁴. *Expositio*, 1.6.233 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, p. 76).

³⁵. *Expositio*, Prologue, 57 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, p. 68).

³⁶. *Expositio*, 1.1.6-8 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, p. 71).

³⁷. *Expositio*, 38.1.10-13 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, p. 415).

³⁸. *Expositio*, 42.1.1-5 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, pp. 469-70).

³⁹. *Expositio*, 3.4.98-99 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, p. 101).

sins, God's judgment...is inequitable'⁴⁰—but of course they do not, he means, and so God is by no means unjust. Other readers may of course find Thomas's reading too bland, and may discern a much sharper conflict within Job's own spiritual experience; Job, they may well feel, both believes, on the one hand, that adversities do only come about in return for sins and that God's judgment is inequitable, and on the other, maintains that he is a pious man nevertheless.

2. *The Spirituality of the Late Middle Ages*

The exegetical tradition that is exemplified by Gregory and Thomas and that was inherited by the Reformers is not the whole background to their readings of the figure of Job. Inasmuch as Job was for them a model of Christian spirituality, their construction of the figure of Job has also to be set against prevailing themes in late mediaeval piety in order to be best appreciated. In some respects, of course, their Job marks out new ground in a depiction of Christian holiness, but in others they are conforming their Job to the expectations of a Christian society with its own long history of spirituality. The old conundrum about the Reformation's periodization, whether it belongs best with the mediaeval period or with the modern,⁴¹ though it is generally thought to have been satisfactorily disposed of in favour of linking together Reformation, Renaissance and Enlightenment, comes back into play when we consider the Reformers' spirituality rather than their academic theology.

Among leading themes in the spirituality of the pre-Reformation period, François Vandenbroucke has identified pessimism, 'satanic fever' and popular piety.⁴² There was a far-reaching

⁴⁰. *Expositio*, 19.6.45-48 (= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, p. 264).

⁴¹. See Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: Williams & Norgate, 1912). See further, George, *Theology of the Reformers*, pp. 15-16.

⁴². In Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke and Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* (A History of Christian Spirituality, 2; London: Burns & Oates, 1968 [French original, 1961], Part 2, Chapter 9 ('Lay Spirituality from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century'), pp. 481-505.

pessimism, he suggests, about the state of the church, the morals of the clergy and the capacity of the church to meet the needs of the new nationalisms. The gloomiest manifestation of pessimism was to be found in the 'macabre sensibility' of the fifteenth century⁴³ that gave rise to numerous treatises on the art of dying and to the literature of the *danses macabres*. By 'satanic fever' he means the powerful fascination of the concept of the devil and his works that gripped the popular imagination from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries,⁴⁴ and that left a permanent mark in the art of Dürer, Bosch and Brueghel. To the repression of satanism the Inquisition turned its attention, while the treatise *Malleus maleficarum*, 'The Hammer of Witches' (c. 1487), sanctioned the persecution of suspected witches and cast women generally in the role of seductresses and potential agents of the devil. Popular piety gave an outlet for the 'subjective and psychological aspects of the Christian life',⁴⁵ which was losing touch with the formal Divine Office and developing instead, in the spirit of the *devotio moderna*, its own prayerbooks (*preces devotae*) and Books of Hours. The cult of the Virgin, the rosary and the angelus, together with the rise of charismatic preachers addressing the consciences of their listeners, contributed to what Vandenbroucke calls the 'individualistic tendency' in spirituality.⁴⁶ Finally, he finds prominent a pietistic notion of the individual's relationship with God, 'an ear for the psychological overtones of the Christian mysteries' experienced as a 'source of lively emotions'.⁴⁷

Such generalizations cannot of course encompass the whole of Christian spirituality of the period and other, detailed, studies indicate that the 'individualistic tendency' Vandenbroucke has isolated was only one strand. A.N. Galpern, for example, has graphically illustrated, admittedly for one small segment of the Christian world in the sixteenth century, more community-

⁴³. Vandenbroucke, *Spirituality*, p. 485.

⁴⁴. Cf. Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation: The Emergence of a New Intellectual Climate in Europe* (trans. Dennis Martin; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 158-83.

⁴⁵. Vandenbroucke, *Spirituality*, p. 484.

⁴⁶. Vandenbroucke, *Spirituality*, p. 497.

⁴⁷. Vandenbroucke, *Spirituality*, p. 498.

oriented forms of spirituality: the importance of prayer as a social activity, and of commitment to religious solidarity with other Christians in the developing system of confraternities under the aegis of a saint.⁴⁸ Marvin B. Becker has similarly analysed for early Renaissance Florence the importance of *caritas* in the sense of civic charity that created hospitals, hospices and orphanages, the role of the confraternities as embodying charity as a collective enterprise, and of a conception of human *dignitas* that did not reside 'in solitary experience or in strategic personal relationships' but in a sense of human solidarity in general.⁴⁹

Against such a background, the present study shows that for both Luther and Calvin the figure of Job models the psychologically oriented, individualistic, pietistic tendencies in their contemporary spirituality. For both of them, Job is a lone hero of faith, valiantly wrestling with doubt, the devil and uncertainty. It is easy to see how their own psychological proclivities contributed to the fashioning of that image, but harder perhaps to admit that it was their tradition, their personalities and the spirit of their age, rather than the text of the book of Job, that determined their configuration of Job. For the biblical Job could just as well have been constructed, for example, as the symbol of human solidarity, as the paterfamilias who gives meaning to his family, as the just magistrate who brings order and security to his society, as the man who himself is formed and sustained by his familial and social relationships, as the representative of human dignity, as the suffering man who is restored not by having his intellectual problems solved or by experiencing a religious conversion—or even by having his medical condition healed—but by seeing his family renewed and all his acquaintances accepting of him. Those were possible constructions of Job in the Reformers' age, but their reading of him did not take up such possibilities.

⁴⁸. A.N. Galpern, 'The Legacy of Late Medieval Religion in Sixteenth Century Champagne', in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion* (ed. Charles Trinkaus with Heiko A. Oberman; Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Thought, 10; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 141-76.

⁴⁹. Marvin B. Becker, 'Aspects of Lay Piety in Early Renaissance Florence', in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, pp. 177-99 (196).

3. *Job in the Spirituality of Luther*

Luther never wrote or lectured systematically on Job, and so his construction of the character of Job has to be gleaned piecemeal from the corpus of his writings.⁵⁰ But it is not difficult to discern the main outlines of his view of Job, for there are a few distinctive themes that are constantly recurring. Luther's exegesis in general may well have been, as Jaroslav Pelikan remarks,⁵¹ little more than a product of the exegetical tradition that preceded him, but his Job is different: in many ways Luther's Job is a Luther clone, a model of the Reformer's own self-image.⁵²

For Luther, Job is the site of an inner conflict: though he is a saint, he is also a sinner. Sometimes Luther expresses this conflict in objective, externalized language, as when he writes:

God, who cannot lie, pronounces [Job] a righteous and innocent man in the first chapter (Job 1:8). Yet later on Job confesses in various passages that he is a sinner, especially in the ninth and seventh chapters...(9:20; 7:21). But Job must be speaking the truth, because if he were lying in the presence of God, then God would not pronounce him righteous. Accordingly, Job is both righteous and a sinner (*simul justus, simul peccator*).⁵³

But more often Luther is himself identifying with the conflict that Job must feel, caught in this paradox of piety and guilt. How does Job handle this situation?, Luther is asking himself. It is of the utmost importance that Job does not repress the knowledge of the conflict; indeed, his very saintliness consists, in some measure, in his recognition of his own sinfulness and lack of self-

⁵⁰. See *Luther's Works* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan; St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957-76), 54 vols. (henceforth abbreviated as *LW*).

⁵¹. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Luther's Works. Companion Volume. Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer's Exegetical Writings* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 38.

⁵². On the spirituality of Luther, see in general A. Skevington Wood, 'Spirit and Sprirituality in Luther', *Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (1989), pp. 311-33.

⁵³. On Gal. 2.18 (*LW*, XXVII, pp. 230-31 = *WA*, II, p. 497). The parallel with Gregory's language, quoted above (cf. note 31) is striking. (The Weimar edition of Luther's works is abbreviated *WA* from this footnote onward.)

worth:

[N]o one blesses the Lord except the one who is displeased with himself and curses himself and to whom alone God is pleasing. So Job cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:1). He who regards himself as anything but completely detestable clearly has praise of himself in his mouth...[W]e never praise God correctly unless we first disparage ourselves.⁵⁴

And he has no confidence in his own merits:

[O]ur total concern must be to magnify and aggravate our sins and thus always to accuse them more and more...The more deeply a person has condemned himself and magnified his sins, the more he is fit for the mercy and grace of God...[W]e should above all and in all things be displeased [with ourselves] and thus with Job fear all our works (Job 9:28).⁵⁵

This last text (Job 9.28) is an especially powerful one for Luther. The Hebrew had read simply 'I fear all my pains', that is, no doubt, in the context, pains yet to come;⁵⁶ but the Vulgate has *verebar omnia opera mea*, 'I feared all my works'—which Luther evidently revelled in as an expression of the dangers of works-righteousness, and quoted it over and over again.⁵⁷

⁵⁴. On Psalm 34 (*LW*, X, p. 162 = *WA*, III, p. 191).

⁵⁵. On Ps. 69.16 (*LW*, X, p. 368 = *WA*, III, p. 429).

⁵⁶. I have translated 9.27-28 thus: 'If I say, I will forget my moaning, I will lay aside my sadness and be cheerful, I become afraid of all I must suffer, for I know you do not hold me innocent' (*Job 1-20* [Word Biblical Commentary, 17; Dallas: Word Books, 1989], p. 214).

⁵⁷. For example: '[O]ut of a contrite and troubled heart...[Abimelech, the Canaanite king of Gerar] is complaining in utmost humility about such a great misfortune. He is one of those who say with Job (23:15): "I took fright at all my deeds"' (on Gen. 20.9 [*LW*, III, p. 348 = *WA*, XLIII, p. 125]); 'The godly, like Job, fear for all their works. They trust in no righteousness of theirs and consider their sanctity as dung' (on Ps. 1.1; *LW*, XIV, p. 292 = *WA*, V, pp. 30-31). Gregory found Job's fear to be of what his inner motives for his good works might have been (*Moralia* 9.34.53 [= *Morals*, I, p. 535]). Another text Luther uses against works-righteousness is Job's denial that he has 'kissed his hand' (31.27-28); that would be the act of a 'man who trusts in his own works and glories in a righteousness that does not come from Christ but is produced through his own strength' (on Ps. 2.12 [*LW*, XIV, p. 348 = *WA*, V, p. 73]).

Job reflects a deep strain in Luther of self-negation:

Do not permit me to regard anything carnal as pleasing to Thee...
Thus in Job 3:1f. the flesh is cursed, and Job prays that it may not
be numbered with his senses, so that the spirit may be saved.⁵⁸

This self-negation goes much deeper than a conventional acknowledgment that no human being is perfect. Luther indeed refers to such statements in the book of Job: ‘So Job says [it is Eliphaz and Bildad, actually], “The heavens are unclean in his sight” (Job 15:15) and “the stars are unclean before Him, and the moon does not shine”, that is, the saints are not saints before Him (Job 25:5)’.⁵⁹ But these are no more than conventional statements of the perfect holiness of God, and Luther’s exposition of the self-consciousness of the pious man derives not from such rhetorical generalizations but from the narrative itself. For Luther, Job is not someone who is almost perfect, or one who to some degree falls short of true piety; he is, through and through, a saint—who is at the same time also a sinner:

[E]veryone can be bewitched by Satan. None of us is so vigorous that he can resist Satan...Job was a blameless and upright man...But what could he do against the devil when God withdrew his hand? Did not that holy man fall horribly?⁶⁰

Job suffers from the vices of his virtue; the conflict within himself is specific to his saintliness:

[J]ust as sexual desire is powerful in the body of the young man... so in the saintly man impatience, grumbling, hate, and blasphemy against God are powerful.⁶¹

Sometimes the inner conflict that Job, as the model of the godly man, endures has external causes—for example, the temptations of the devil:

[O]ne must be carefully fortified and strengthened against the displeasure of the flesh, which fights against faith and the spirit..., as that murmuring is described in the examples of two wives: the wife

⁵⁸. On Ps. 69.27 (*LW*, X, p. 381 = *WA*, III, p. 439).

⁵⁹. On Ps. 51.4 (*LW*, X, p. 239 = *WA*, III, p. 290).

⁶⁰. On Gal. 3.1 (*LW*, XXVI, pp. 193-94 = *WA*, XL, p. 318).

⁶¹. On Gal. 3.23 (*LW*, XXVI, pp. 340-41 = *WA*, XL, p. 524).

of Tobias and the wife of Job...These are the flaming darts of the devil with which he tries to overthrow us in order that we may despair and fall away from God.⁶²

There is indeed some uncertainty in Luther over the question of the cause of his sufferings. At times, it seems that they are simply to be ascribed directly to the devil—and not to God:

God does not afflict the godly; he permits the devil to do this, as we see in the case of Job, whose children are killed by fire and his cattle by storms, not because God was angry with him, but because Satan was.⁶³

But at other times, the devil is no more than an agent of the divine intentions:

The devil at first takes all his property from him with his children and leaves him a peevish, irksome, and abusive wife...[E]xamples of this kind teach us that all the malice and vexation of the devil is only instruction and chastisement, by which we are aroused so that we do not snore and become listless.⁶⁴

The good God permits such small evils to befall us merely in order to arouse us snorers from our deep sleep and to make us recognize, on the other hand, the incomparable and innumerable benefits we still have. He wants us to consider what would happen if he were to withdraw His goodness from us completely. In that spirit Job said (2:10): 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?'... [H]e did not simply look at the evil, as we would-be saints do; he kept in sight the goodness and grace of the Lord. With this he comforted himself and overcame evil with patience.⁶⁵

⁶². On Gen. 28.10-11 (*LW*, V, p. 203 = *WA*, XLIII, p. 568). Elsewhere, however, Job's wife, like Isaac's wife Rebekah, is a saintly woman, though 'not without trials' (on Gen. 26.1; *LW*, V, p. 14 = *WA*, XLIII, p. 438). Similarly *LW*, V, p. 30 = *WA*, XLIII, p. 449 on Gen. 26.8. On the ambivalence of Luther's attitude to women, see Jonathan W. Zophy, 'We Must Have the Dear Ladies: Martin Luther and Women', in *Pietas et Societas: New Trends in Reformation Social History: Essays in Memory of Harold J. Grimm* (ed. Kyle C. Sessions and Phillip N. Bebb; Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1985), pp. 41-50.

⁶³. On Gen. 19.10-11 (*LW*, III, p. 264 = *WA*, LXIII, p. 64).

⁶⁴. On Gen. 32.3-5 (*LW*, VI, p. 95 = *WA*, XLIV, p. 70). For Job's sufferings as a trial by God pure and simple, see also *LW*, X, p. 159 (= *WA*, III, p. 189).

⁶⁵. On Ps. 118.1 (*LW*, XIV, pp. 49-50 = *WA*, XXXI, p. 74).

The same adversity can then function both as an instance of satanic temptation to despair and loss of faith and as an example of divine testing:

Sometimes God sends punishments, not because he finds in the man a sin that deserves such a punishment but because he wants to test his faith and patience. Job did not deserve such punishments... It tends to instruct and comfort us when we learn that God often causes even the innocent to experience the most serious misfortunes and punishments, merely in order to test them.⁶⁶

But most often, in Luther's expositions, it is the devil with whom Job has to do—and, in so saying, we cannot help but observe how Luther is addressing a fundamental concern of the spirituality of his own time. Luther's Job is at his most Luther-like when he experiences the assaults of the devil. Every protestation he makes against his trials is the language of the man of faith confronted by satanic persecution. What is more, the book of Job constitutes for Luther an unparalleled sourcebook for language about the devil, being pictured as Behemoth in ch. 40 and as Leviathan in ch. 41.⁶⁷ Luther turned to the book of Job more often to read about the devil than about any other topic, it seems: one quarter of his citations from Job in the first volume of his First Lectures on the Psalms, for example, are to these chapters. Here Luther reads that

[T]he devil ridicules the preachers of the Word, as it is written in Job 41:20 [Vulgate, *Quasi stipulam aestimabit malleum, et deridebit vibrantem hastam*, 'He will think a hammer a reed, and will mock at him who shakes the spear']. But if you take sword in hand, he will see that the matter is serious.⁶⁸

⁶⁶. On Gen. 12.18-19 (*LW*, II, p. 319 = *WA*, XLII, p. 490).

⁶⁷. Aquinas had indeed seen in these chapters a description of the devil by analogy with Behemoth and Leviathan, but his primary interest was in the identification of them with the elephant and the whale, quoting Aristotle, Albertus Magnus, Pliny and Isidore on their natural history (*Expositio*, 40.10.221–41.25.457 [= Damico and Yaffe, *Aquinas...Job*, pp. 447-68]); Luther has no interest in anything but their symbolic values.

⁶⁸. On Ps. 40.2 (*LW*, X, p. 189 = *WA*, III, p. 228).

'He [namely the devil or a stubborn Jew] will ridicule him who shakes the spear' [Job 41.20], that is, the threatening Word of God.⁶⁹

Job embodies all the virtues of the pious person. His reaction to adversity is exemplary: 'Hope is easier in good times but more difficult in bad times. Therefore only a saint always hopes, always blesses, like Job.'⁷⁰ His suffering results from his identification with the sufferings of Christ, for which, incidentally, he is scorned by the Jews. The Christians are the

wounded of Christ...because they carry His cross. Tropologically, they have been wounded by the word of the Gospel and smitten by the Lord (as their head) according to the flesh. For they mortify themselves, they chastise and afflict themselves perpetually...The Jews, however, not only had no pity on such as were in this way the afflicted, humbled and wounded of Christ...but they persecuted them in addition, adding furthermore that God was persecuting them. So Job says: 'Have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord has touched me. Why do you, like God, persecute me...?' (Job 19:21-22).⁷¹

Job's piety is not simply that of the person who is justified by faith without works. For Job is an exemplar of the doer of good deeds. And 'those who are Jobs, that is, truly good and active people, who busy themselves with good works, are wiser than the devil. For works bear a true witness of the presence of the Holy Spirit.'⁷² The prince of Tyre, who is the devil, may be wiser than Daniel (Ezek. 28.3), and he certainly 'knows all mysteries... and he is more brilliant than we'.⁷³ But he is not more wise than Job; for Job's wisdom consists in his good works.

And because Job is a saint, even expressions of his that we might regard as world-weary or bitter become models for the pious life. Thus Job's 'empty months' and 'wearisome nights', of which he complains in 7.3, are entirely appropriate for the pious man, for his days have not been fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and his nights have been wearisome because 'they have been

⁶⁹. On Ps. 35.2 (*LW*, X, p. 165 = *WA*, III, p. 195). The reference is to Leviathan.

⁷⁰. On Ps. 71.14 (*LW*, X, p. 398 = *WA*, III, p. 455).

⁷¹. On Ps. 69.26 (*LW*, X, p. 380 = *WA*, III, p. 437).

⁷². On Ps. 68.35 (*LW*, X, p. 348 = *WA*, III, p. 408).

⁷³. On Ps. 68.35 (*LW*, X, p. 347 = *WA*, III, p. 408).

occupied with the exercise of the spirit'.⁷⁴ Even Job's wish to be dead is, spiritually speaking, a yearning only to be free of earthly constraints. So when he says, 'My soul chooses hanging' (7.15), he is crying out for 'evangelical teaching' which 'does not rest on the earth or on human wisdom, but it arches overhead and takes every understanding captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)'.⁷⁵ 'Hanging' in fact means being lifted up from the earth and not resting on earthly things, that is to say, 'hanging' is the spiritual language for 'faith in Christ and contempt for visible things'.⁷⁶

For Luther, then, Job is nothing other than a representative believer, justified in the sight of God while still conscious of his own ineradicable sinfulness, perpetually subject to onslaughts of the devil that nevertheless in some way serve the purposes of God, and prey to temptations of impatience and self-righteousness. As the site of inner conflict, Job models Luther's own experience of tension and paradox.

4. *Job in the Spirituality of Calvin*

Calvin has left a very much more considerable legacy of writing on Job than has Luther, namely his 159 sermons on Job preached in Geneva in 1554–1555,⁷⁷ and now to be found in their original French in the corpus of his works.⁷⁸ Only a selection has

⁷⁴. On Ps. 73.10 (*LW*, X, pp. 426-27 = *WA*, III, pp. 484-85).

⁷⁵. On Ps. 42.7 (*LW*, X, pp. 201-202 = *WA* III, p. 240). This is the exegesis of Gregory, as has been noted above (note 16).

⁷⁶. On Ps. 36.5 (*LW*, X, p. 170 = *WA*, III, p. 201).

⁷⁷. For a vivid account of the transformation of the oral sermons into print, see T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), pp. 9-12. The earliest publication of the sermons on Job was entitled *Sermons de M. Jean Calvin sur le livre de Job, recueillis fidelement de sa bouche selon qu'il les preschoit* (Geneva, 1563). See, on this edition, T.D. Smid, 'Some Bibliographical Observations on Calvin's Sermons sur le livre de Job', *Free University Quarterly* 7 (1960–61), pp. 51-56.

⁷⁸. *Joannis Calvinii opera quae supersunt omnia* (*Corpus reformationum*, 61-63; ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz and E. Reuss; Braunschweig: C.A. Schwetschke, 1887), XXXIII-XXXV (abbreviated below as *CO*; the translations are my own). On Calvin as an Old Testament commentator, see Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*; John Walchenbach, *John Calvin as Biblical Com-*

ever been translated into English.⁷⁹

The difference in the personality—and so, to a large degree, in the spirituality—of Luther and Calvin is well illustrated in a pair of quotations Suzanne Selinger has illuminatingly set side by side.⁸⁰ Luther: ‘It is by living—no, rather, by dying and being damned—that a theologian is made, not by understanding, reading, or speculating’.⁸¹ Calvin: ‘I count myself one of the number of those who write as they learn and learn as they write’.⁸²

If for Luther the man Job is the site of conflict between Satan and God, between self-disgust and a consciousness of innocence, for Calvin Job seems rather to exemplify humanity in its ‘perceptual agony’, to use Susan Schreiner’s term, its incapacity to fathom the workings of providence and the pattern in human affairs.

Central to [Calvin’s] exegesis is the recognition of the noetic or perceptual limitations of the human mind trapped in the disorder of human history. Calvin’s constant concern with the failure of the mind to know God, which dominates the first book of the *Institutes*, permeates his sermons on Job. Confronted with the disorder of

mentator: An Investigation into Calvin’s Use of J. Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor (PhD Pittsburgh, 1974); Anthony G. Baxter, *John Calvin’s Use and Hermeneutics of the Old Testament* (PhD Sheffield, 1987); J. Haroutunian, ‘Calvin as Biblical Commentator’, in *Calvin: Commentaries* (Library of Christian Classics, 23; trans. and ed. J. Haroutunian; London: SCM Press, 1958), pp. 15-50; Hans-Joachim Kraus, ‘Calvin’s Exegetical Principles’, *Interpretation* 31 (1977), pp. 8-18.

⁷⁹. But I have been unable to trace the volume edited by Leroy Nixon and entitled *Sermons from Job* (1952). Nor have I seen the volume, *Sermons upon the booke of Job, translated out of French* (trans. A. Golding; London, 1584), and so cannot tell if it was a complete translation.

⁸⁰. Suzanne Selinger, *Calvin against Himself: An Inquiry in Intellectual History* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984), p. 16. Cf. George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 204: ‘If Luther was preoccupied with the anxiety of guilt... Calvin was haunted by the specter of the apparently haphazard and meaningless course of existence’.

⁸¹. WA, V, p. 163.

⁸². John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Library of Christian Classics, 20; ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 5. Calvin is citing Augustine, as it happens (*Letters* 143.2 [= *PL*, XXXIII, p. 585]).

history, the mind's eye squints and strains to see divine justice but cannot penetrate or transcend the present confusion which hides providence from its limited and fallen view. Calvin finds the heuristic key to the book of Job in 1 Corinthians 13:12 ['Now we see in a mirror, dimly']. He repeatedly cites this verse to describe the difficulty of perceiving providence in the midst of history...Caught within the turmoil of earthly events, the believer now sees God's providence only as through a mirror dimly...⁸³

For the spirituality of Calvin,⁸⁴ then, Job represents the believer's recognition of incapacity to comprehend the divine. The crisis of Calvin's Job is an intellectual crisis; experientially, the crisis is known as a sense of confusion and as a commitment to living in a state of uncertainty, with only a hope, and not an assurance, that the uncertainty will some day be dispelled. Knowing that God has his purposes, though they have not been disclosed, may prevent the experience being one of complete *anomie*. But the experience itself is of the provisionality of human existence, and of the recognition that humans are not in control of their universe. The crisis of knowing is a theme announced early in the *Sermons*:

[Job] knows that God does not always afflict men according to the measure of their sins, but that he has his secret judgments, of which he gives no account to us, and, nevertheless, that we must wait until he reveals to us why he does this or that.⁸⁵

True knowledge of God for Calvin is not simply an intellectual virtue; it is of the essence of piety itself:

[W]hoever have been endowed with this [true] piety dare not fashion out of their own rashness any God for themselves. Rather, they seek from Him the knowledge of the true God, and conceive

⁸³. Schreiner, "'Through a Mirror Dimly'", p. 179.

⁸⁴. See especially Ford Lewis Battles (translator and editor), *The Piety of John Calvin: An Anthology Illustrative of the Spirituality of the Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), especially 'Introduction: True Piety according to Calvin', pp. 13-26, and 'Calvin on the Christian Life', pp. 51-89. See also Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), and Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*, esp. pp. 116-29 ('*Pietas* as the Essential Expression of Calvin's Spirituality').

⁸⁵. On Job 1.1 (CO, XXXIII, p. 23).

Him just as He shows and declares Himself to be.⁸⁶

There is another conflict also in the person of Job: it is between the 'good cause' and the 'bad consequences'.⁸⁷ For Calvin, Job is essentially in the right; he does not deserve what is happening to him:

Here is a cause that is good and true, though it is badly handled (*deduite*), for Job here loses his temper (*se iette ici hors des gonds*, lit. here throws himself off his hinges) and employs such excessive and terrible speeches that he shows himself in many places to be a man in despair. He even becomes so excited (*s'eschauffe*) that he seems to be wishing to resist God. So this a good cause that is badly handled (*conduite*).⁸⁸

The friends, on the other hand, are in the wrong about the reasons for Job's suffering, and so they have a 'bad cause', even though they speak in fine and holy sentences and 'there is nothing in their speeches that we may not receive as if the Holy Spirit had spoken it'.⁸⁹ Job is in the right, but his experience of righteousness is of an unsettling and anxiety-inducing state of being. His experience is thus a revealing expression of Calvin's own personal spirituality.

Job furthermore represents the tension between pious convictions and human weakness. For Calvin, the Old Testament in general serves as a mirror of Christian life and experience, and Job in particular mirrors 'how (good) men often act under severe trials. He desires to obey God but his emotions and sufferings get the better of him...Job, under Calvin's hand, becomes a mirror of our own weakness.'⁹⁰ When he curses the day of his

⁸⁶. John Calvin, *First Catechism* (ed. Ford Lewis Battles; Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1972), p. 2; cf. Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*, p. 119: 'The whole notion of *pietas* is dominated by the reality of the knowledge of God'.

⁸⁷. Cf. David F. Wright's characterization of Calvin's key distinction between 'laudable ends and reprehensible means' ('The Ethical Use of the Old Testament in Luther and Calvin: A Comparison', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 [1983], pp. 463-85 [466]).

⁸⁸. On Job 1.1 (CO, XXXIII, p. 23). Similar language is used on Job 32.1 (CO, XXXV, p. 7).

⁸⁹. On Job 1.1 (CO, XXXIII, p. 23).

birth, Calvin writes,⁹⁰

There is a conflict here, in which on one side the weakness of the man is revealed, and on the other we see that he still has some strength to resist temptation... Job has no longer the same complete perfection as before... he has wished to obey God; but nevertheless he has not accomplished the good that he desired.⁹¹

Nevertheless, Job is also for Calvin, as for his exegetical predecessors *en masse*, the embodiment of piety, and not simply the believer under stress. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find in the *Sermons* some very conventional moral exhortations being drawn from the character of Job. For example, on Job 1.2:

We see here the praises that the Holy Spirit gives Job, not so much for his own sake as for our instruction, so that we may know how we are to govern our lives, that is, that we should walk in frankness (*rondeur*) of heart, that there should be no falseness (*fiction*) in us, but that our lives should give testimony of such simplicity.⁹²

Or, on the wealth of Job reported in 1.3:

We see the character of Job's virtue in that riches have not blinded him with pride, and have not made him too much attached to the world or led him to abandon the service of God... By his example the rich of this world are admonished in their duty.⁹³

Likewise, anger at suffering is bad: it shows lack of gratitude for God's mercies.⁹⁴ Praying for your enemies is good, as Job did in ch. 42.⁹⁵ And so on.

But the virtue of Job that strikes one most forcibly in Calvin is his obedience and acceptance of the divine will:

⁹⁰. Baxter, *Calvin's Use and Hermeneutics*, p. 42. On the image of the 'mirror', see Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament* (trans. Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). See also Schreiner on the contrast with the concept of nature as a mirror of the providence and control of God ('Calvin's Sermons on Job', esp. pp. 181-89).

⁹¹. On Job 3.1-10 (CO, XXXIII, pp. 140, 142).

⁹². On Job 1.2 (CO, XXXIII, p. 33).

⁹³. On Job 1.2 (CO, XXXIII, p. 34).

⁹⁴. On Job 29.1-7 (CO, XXXIV, p. 534): 'We are ungrateful to God, if the memory of his benefits does not soften all our angers (*fascheries*), when it pleases him to exercise us and to humble us'.

⁹⁵. On Job 42.10 (CO, XXXV, p. 507).

The history written here shows us how we are in the hands of God, and that it is for him to order our life, and to dispose of it according to his good pleasure, and that our duty is to make ourselves subject to him in all humility and obedience; that it is right that we are entirely his, whether to live or to die; and that, even when it pleases him to lift his hand against us, even when we do not understand for what reason he does so, nevertheless we should glorify him always, confessing that he is just and fair; and that we should not murmur against him, that we should not enter into dispute with him, knowing that we would always be overcome in any contest with him.⁹⁶

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

5. Conclusion

It is nothing surprising, and no criticism of the interpreters of Job, that they have made him to some degree or other in their own image. While characters in literature are inevitably paper-thin when compared even with the dullest of real-life humans, a characterization like that of Job has a huge potential for readers of different centuries to discern divergent and distinctive elements. The question that in most cases needs to be addressed to

⁹⁶. On Job 1.1 (CO, XXXIII, p. 21). God, after all, is a patriarch: he 'knows what is proper for each one, and we should be willing to receive whatever portion he pleases to allot to us, just as a *paterfamilias* knows well what is useful for his household' (on Job 42.12 [CO, XXXV, p. 510]).

interpreters of the past, as well as to those of our own age, is not so much whether they have mistaken or misread their text, but how far their own creative engagement with the text has ignored or marginalized other elements or other readers.

So the question I would address to the Reformers and their forebears is not whether their depiction of Job as a pious man or as the site of spiritual conflict is in order, but what dimensions of the book are being ignored by the inherited framework within which they read the book. I identify two primary arenas in which a reader of today might take issue with them.

a. The first is the way in which the speeches of the friends are treated. The tendency, not only among the Reformers, but generally in the history of exegesis, has been to disregard the radical conflict between Job and the friends. True, the 'friends' are always seen as hostile to Job and as contributory to his suffering, as Thomas says; and Gregory finds in them a figure of the heretics, who 'mix good and evil'.⁹⁷ But their arguments and aphorisms are regularly treated as if they were on the same level of authority (religious or literary) as the speeches of Job or the depictions of the narrator; and the book as a whole—not just the speeches of Job or of God—is regarded as a repository of wisdom. Luther, for example, not infrequently quotes sentences of the friends as sayings of Job.⁹⁸ The commentators occasionally show an awareness of how odd their own approach is, treating as wisdom both Job's words and his opponents' words; but Gregory, for example, argues that since Paul quotes Eliphaz⁹⁹ 'some things contained in their sayings were right', and 'many things that they say are admirable, were they not spoken against the afflicted condition of the holy man'.¹⁰⁰ Calvin, as we have seen, has recourse to the distinction between their 'bad cause' and their 'fine and holy sentences'—a doubtful one, for though 'fine' sentences may be used in a 'bad cause', could 'holy' ones be so used and still remain 'holy'?¹⁰¹

As against the praxis of the Reformed commentators, however,

⁹⁷. *Moralia* 5.11.28 (= *Morals*, I, p. 262).

⁹⁸. See, for example, note 59 above.

⁹⁹. 1 Cor. 3.19, citing Job 5.13.

¹⁰⁰. *Moralia* 5.11.27 (= *Morals*, I, p. 261).

¹⁰¹. See note 89 above.

I would argue that the dynamics of the book require us to do more than read each sentence atomistically. For the book itself offers us several totalizing perspectives, and from each of them the friends' positions are in the wrong. If it is Job's perspective that we adopt, the friends' speeches are entirely misconceived. If it is the Lord's perspective in the final chapter that we adopt, the unambiguous judgment upon the friends' arguments is that they 'have not spoken of me what is right' (42.7).¹⁰² And if it is the narrator's perspective that we adopt, then everyone is in the wrong, for Job as much as the friends has been labouring under the illusion that his sufferings must have something to do with his sinfulness, real or alleged—whereas the prologue to the book has made it clear that it is solely for his piety, and not for any wrongdoing, that Job is suffering.

In short, the narrative of the book represents the friends as Job's enemies and wrongful accusers; but the Reformers, like most traditional commentators, were unable to jettison the speeches of the friends—as the narrative logic demands—because they found too much congenial and conventional 'wisdom' in them.

b. It has proved exceedingly hard for exegetes to take the ending of the book and therewith Job's restoration to wealth and influence, seriously—principally, I suppose, because the ending so evidently seems to undermine the thrust of all that precedes. According to the first 41 chapters, that is to say, wealth and poverty have nothing to do with innocence and piety, and according to ch. 42 they have.¹⁰³ In other words, in the bulk of the book the rich man, who is also the impoverished man, is consistently righteous; his wealth neither brings about nor sabo-

¹⁰². Gregory's explanation, that the following words, 'as my servant Job has spoken', prove that some things they said were right but 'they are overcome by comparison with one who was better', will not convince (*Moralia* 5.11.27 [= *Morals*, I, p. 261]).

¹⁰³. On the 'deconstruction' of the book by its last chapter, cf. my essay, 'Deconstructing the Book of Job', in *What Does Eve Do to Help? and Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 94; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 106-23 (previously published in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility* [ed. Martin Warner; Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature; London: Routledge, 1990], pp. 65-80).

tages his piety. And that has been the very point that the narrative has been set up to solve: the original question that set the whole story in train was, 'Does Job serve God for nothing?' (1.9). And yet in the last chapter his restored wealth is evidently a reward for his piety, and the result of his maintaining his integrity.

Luther, not having written a commentary on Job, is under no obligation to deal with the ending of the book, and it is not surprising that he completely ignores it. Calvin, on the other hand, preaching his way systematically through the book, is under some compulsion to treat it—and treat it in conformity with his theology and his spirituality. His intention, it must be said, seems to be to deflect the implication of the final chapter—which can only be that suffering saints may expect to regain their wealth or health—by claiming (though not from the text) that the doubling of Job's goods does not always happen to saints, 'for God does not treat us with an equal measure; he knows what is proper to each one'.¹⁰⁴ And as for 'temporal blessings', says Calvin, by all means let us seize them if God sends them, but let us recognize that the main thing, and the real profit, is that we have been delivered and our faith has been strengthened.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, he argues, material prosperity was the only way God could reward a saint of Old Testament times, for 'then there was no such revelation of the heavenly life as there is today in the Gospel'.¹⁰⁶ Job may have lived a long life, but longevity is a mixed blessing since there are many unbelievers who live long, and in any case the shorter life span today is more than compensated for by the afterlife that New Testament believers, unlike Job, have to look forward to. And what is more, God had to prolong the life of the ancients in order to give them more opportunity to experience his goodness; for us, three days in this world would be enough to experience the goodness of God.¹⁰⁷

The very multiplicity of Calvin's arguments warns us that something is amiss. He needs to convince himself that the text does not carry the implications it seems to. It is especially revealing that throughout the *Sermons*, so long as Job has been suffer-

¹⁰⁴. On Job 42.12 (CO, XXXV, p. 510).

¹⁰⁵. On Job 42.12 (CO, XXXV, pp. 510-11).

¹⁰⁶. On Job 42.15 (CO, XXXV, p. 512).

¹⁰⁷. On Job 42.16-17 (CO, XXXV, pp. 512-13).

ing, he has been 'we'; the moment he is prosperous again he is not 'we'. Of his restoration Calvin says calmly, *Cela donc ne se verra tousiours*, 'But that will not always happen'.¹⁰⁸ There is something a little disingenuous here. And the issue is by no means a marginal one. For if Job in his restoration is not the image and model of the saint, by what reckoning is the suffering and maltreated Job a mirror of Christian spirituality? To view the Job of conflict as the model of Christian spirituality, but not the Job of success, is perhaps to cast spirituality in too negative a mode—or perhaps even to call into question the validity of the whole idea of Job as a model.

There are loose ends in the Reformers' readings of Job, loose ends perhaps that threaten to trip them up quite disastrously. But that is not the sum and substance of their engagement with the figure of Job, nor even its end result. Creatures of their time, and creating a Job in their own image, the Reformers nevertheless honoured the biblical Job by pressing him into the service of their own distinctive spirituality.

¹⁰⁸. On Job 42.10 (CO, XXXV, p. 510). There may be a parallel to the exegetical move of Calvin that William McKane has commented upon, that 'Calvin has a general principle of interpretation that the content of weal or bliss in these [Davidic and Messianic] oracles can never be satisfied by referring them to historical kings of David's line or to any this-worldly polity' ('Calvin as an Old Testament Commentator', *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Theologiese Tydskrif* 25 [1984], pp. 250-59; I am grateful to Professor McKane for letting me have a copy of his paper).