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***Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verità vom 14.-19. August 2005***

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This tome is a substantial collection of twenty-five essays presented at a 2005 symposium at the international conference center of ETH Zurich in Monte Verità (Switzerland), 520 pages from some of the best specialists of Job. Nine contributions in English cover 170 pages. The remaining chapters are in German, some running up to fifty pages and over, a reflection of the cycles of speeches of the book of Job where each friend tries to outdo the others.

Part 1 (“Historische Kontexte des hebräischen und des griechischen Hiobbuchs”) has six essays placing Job in the context of ancient literature. Katherine Dell’s “Job: Skeptics, Philosophers and Tragedians” is a sequel to her *The Book of Job as Skeptical Literature*. The differences between Job and pre-Hellenistic philosophic schools do not support cross-dependence. At most, there is “a spirit of skepticism and a presentation of Job’s situation as tragic insofar as the Jewish religious framework of this skeptical author would allow” (19). “The Book of Job as a Trial: A Perspective from a Comparison to Some Relevant Ancient Near Eastern Texts,” by Yair Hoffman, compares Job with *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, the Babylonian Theodicy, the Eloquent Peasant, and the Negative Confession from the point of view of the trial motif (21–31). By employing the trial as a structural device, the book of Job challenges traditional wisdom literature. Job, in contradiction to the wise man of the biblical book of Proverbs, is targeted by God because (not despite) he is wise, industrious, God-fearing, and righteous. Job’s righteousness and utter misery

challenge the conventions of traditional wisdom literature (wise = industrious = righteous = God-fearing = rich) and of psalm literature (righteous = poor = God-fearing = sufferer). Hoffman adds a third level of challenge, against the covenantal paradigm. Markus Witte's "The Greek Book of Job" is a very useful presentation of the Septuagint's Job. It is followed by "Hiob und Ipuwer," by Annette Schellenberg (55–79), who focuses the comparison mainly with Egyptian Admonitions. Then Edward Greenstein, "Features of Language in the Poetry of Job," demonstrates that the language particularities of the book result from poetic virtuosity rather than from the use of a language different from Biblical Hebrew. Closing the first section, Christoph Uehlinger's monumental "Das Hiob-Buch im Kontext der altorientalischen Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte" (97–163) offers a comprehensive attempt to place Job at the end of a broad diachronic spectrum beginning with the Instructions of Ur-Ninurta through the *Juste souffrant*, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, and the Babylonian Theodicy.

Part 2, "Das Hiobbuch in biblisch-literaturgeschichtlichem Kontext," focuses on innerbiblical relations. Jürgen van Oorschot, in "Die Entstehung des Hiobbuches" (165–84) reviews the genesis of Job and discusses current trends in research, in particular a renewed interest in the prose frame, and offers a reconstruction of the development of the frame through several redactions. Detlef Jericke, "»Wüste« (*midbār*) im Hiobbuch" (185–96) studies the desert theme in Job 38:16; 24:5; and 1:19 and considers Job as a figure of the Judean Diaspora. Leo Perdue, in "Creation in the Dialogues between Job and His Opponents" (197–216), reads Job as a response to the devastation of Judah, revealing the ideological base of its kingship and priesthood as false. In so doing, Perdue supplies provocative translations of Job's two answers to the divine speeches: "Since I am despised (by you), how shall I answer you? I place my hand on my mouth" (40:3); and "I reject you and I feel sorry for dust and ashes (= human beings)" (42:6). Neither arrogant nor blasphemous, the defiant Job continues his protest against the unjust God and is sorry for humanity that has to suffer under God's callous oppression (215). The next pages tackle the same problem. Thomas Krüger, "Did Job Repent?" (217–29) also challenges the notion that Job repented. Joachim Vette, "Hiobs Fluch als thematische Klammer" (231–40) presents Job's self-curse in chapter 3 and its revocation in 42:6 as an inner frame binding Job 3 and 38–42:6 together. Analyzing Job's references to the Torah, Prophets, and Psalms, Konrad Schmid's "Innerbiblische Schriftdiskussion im Hiobbuch" (241–61) sees Job as a kind of dialectic theology criticizing "biblical" notions while upholding their authority. Andreas Kunz-Lübcke, in "Hiob prozessiert mit Gott—und obsiegt—vorerst," presents Job 31 on the model of Egyptian negative confessions. Job's forty-two confessions correspond to the forty-two confessions in Book of the Dead 125. The essay is illustrated with Egyptian scenes. In "Eliphaz: One among the Prophets or Ironist Spokesman?" Willem Beuken rehabilitates Eliphaz's first speech (Job 4–5) as a genuine, nonironic

response to Job's complaint in the previous chapter, taking seriously God's sovereignty and the meaningfulness of an ethical life.

Gabrielle Oberhänsli-Widmer's "Hiobtraditionen im Judentum" opens part 3, which is devoted to the reception of the book of Job. Following this first essay on Jewish traditions up to Job's come-back in modern secular Judaism, Jens Herzer covers the New Testament with "Jakobus, Paulus und Hiob: Die Intertextualität der Weisheit." Then, Choon-Leong Seow, in "Job's Wife with Due Respect," recovers a minority view that dissented from the church fathers' antifeminist readings of Job's wife. Illustrated with a black and white plate and five full-page color reproductions of paintings, this essay reveals the existence of a chain of transmission of a lively tradition besides the official version. Carol Newsom's "Dramaturgy and the Book of Job" (375–93) follows the ups and downs of the notion that Job was influenced by Greek tragedy across the centuries. Johannes Anderegg, "*Hiob* und Goethes *Faust*" (395–409), and A. Bodenheimer, "Heines Hiob," close the survey with the rendering of Job by these authors.

Under the heading "Das Hiobthema als Sachproblem in Theologie, Religionswissenschaft, Philosophie und Psychologie," part 4 begins with a discussion of the relevance of Job in pastoral counseling by Manfred Oeming and Wolfgang Drechsel: "Das Buch Hiob—Ein Lehrstück der Seelsorge?" The next contribution, "Leben und Tod, Unterwelt und Welt" (441–54), by Daria Pelozzi-Olgiati, focuses on Job 3 and how Job copes with contingency. Rüdiger Bittner's "*Hiob* und Gerechtigkeit" brings out clearly how the divine display of power evades the problem of divine guilt: the boss is always right: 'Ich bin der Herr, und ob ich gerecht bin, ist deshalb egal' (460). This conclusion should be brought to bear upon a question raised by Hoffman: "Should God's response be considered a divine accusation against Job, or rather a defendant's speech by the accused judge?" (23). Does it support Hoffman's qualification of God's answer as ambivalent? Interaction with Schmid's demonstration that Job 42:8 applies the Deuteronomistic arsenal to God (251) would produce some interesting results. If YHWH, rather than Job's friends (as it is too often claimed and translated), almost committed a grievous folly against Job's friends (after the one committed against Job; see further Guillaume and Schunck, "Job's Intercession: Antidote to Divine Folly," *Bib* 88 [2007]: 457–72), the book of Job is far more daring than its interpreters in stating plainly and coherently Job's innocence and God's guilt.

Christian Frevel's "Schöpfungsglaube und Menschenwürde im Hiobbuch" (467–97) is a detailed ethical application. It raises a question that keeps cropping up in the volume and that may be one of its most significant contributions to future discussions, as it will emancipate readers from the much later claim that Job is about theodicy. Is Job not more concerned with the justification of lament and denunciation of God in the face of and

despite his height and supremacy (471): Frevel's footnotes discussing Job's "repentance" (471 n. 14, 496 n. 69) could have benefited from interaction with Krüger's essay and with Uehlinger's on theodicy. The volume contains a final contribution, by Brigitte Boothe, "Die Narrative Organisation der Hiob-Erzählung des Alten Testaments und die verdeckte Loyalitätsprobe" (499–513).

The volume closes with a cursory index of cited passages that does not account for the footnotes, although in some essays they cover half the page. Given the encyclopedic nature of several essays and the sheer amount of material in the volume, readers will lament the cruel absence of their best friend, the subject index that retrieves for them pearls of scholarship from Leviathan's jaws.

Ideally, the authors would have integrated relevant points from the other contributions into the final drafts of their articles. As in many conference proceedings, they did not, and the problem appears from the first contribution on. Dell writes that the rightness and wrongness of the different perspectives expressed in the book are left open and that Job's repentance spoils his "having 'spoken what is right,' in that he has already capitulated in the light of God's presence" (7). At this point a note thanks Ed Greenstein for challenging the supposition that Jonah "repents," and Dell refers to alternative translations in Driver and Gray's commentary (1921!), although two hundred pages later Perdue and Krüger present (both in English) a thorough refutation of this point. Although I regret Krüger's mitigation of his crucial demonstration of the absence of repentance ("Job 42:1–6 can still be read as a statement of repentance but not in the sense of what his friends expected" [226]), his conclusion has major consequences on Dell's argument. Instead of the fuzzy "academic" noncommittal claim that the text is open-ended, the recognition that Job's staunch refusal to admit guilt would make the book of Job less Pyrrhonian and more Promethean. If he does *not* repent, Job, like Prometheus, does not submit in any way, and this becomes a key factor of tragedy that Job does *not* "fail to fulfill" (13). Since the dark side of God revealed by his display of power provides no answer to Job's profound questioning, Job comes close to the identification of God as unpredictable as the dark forces of fate found in tragedy (15). Hence, the claim that the repentance spoils the tragedy (16, quote from G. Steiner, "Tragedy, Remorse and Justice," *The Listener* 102 [1979]: 508–11) does not hold if Job does not repent or if, as Jung argued in *Answer to Job*, Job's repentance is tongue in cheek. The link with tragedy is strengthened. Yet the ultimate argument against labeling Job as a tragedy is, I suggest, that the book does offer a practical solution to its readers. Job's intercession (Job 42:7–9) is presented as effectively protecting his friends from divine foolish wrath. By extension, readers are invited to place themselves under Job's intercession (see Ezek 14) to avoid the collateral damages of God's daily encounter of Leviathan. Hence Hoffman's claim (30) that the somber conclusion of Job offers no solution, since God is unable to provide sufficient answers to Job's

accusations, should be reconsidered. That Job does not repent and needs not do so, since he is granted a clear vindication of his innocence, must have pastoral consequences that one seeks in vain in the final part.

Inasmuch as this review bewails the fact that the proceedings reflect too closely the “dialogue” between Job and his friends and display no engagement of the ideas of the other participants (did they spend a week together in silence?), these remarks are a token of the value of a volume that makes the reader look forward to the integration of the insights it contains in future works on Job. Plowing through these five hundred pages is worth the effort. The editors and Theologischer Verlag Zürich are to be congratulated for producing the volume two years after the symposium.