

Introduction

1 The Scope of the Present Volume

James Crenshaw who devoted much of his scholarly work to the problem of theodicy¹ defines the concept as follows,

Theodicy is the attempt to defend divine justice in the face of aberrant phenomena that appear to indicate the deity's indifference or hostility toward virtuous people.²

At the end of his article there is a note that

... modern calamities such as the Lisbon earthquake and, above all, the Holocaust have raised the question of theodicy to new heights. Traditional free-will defences have lost their power, partly because they are ahistorical, overly abstract, and rationalistic. Cosmic order no longer makes sense, philosophical theism reduces religion to a few ideas that are shared by many groups, and the experience of faithful believers who struggle against evil escapes notice.³

In a world full of unjust suffering the belief in a divine being which is ostensibly tolerating or even initiating suffering on such a worldwide scale creates a deep existential crisis. For modern man the inexplicability of suffering in terms of religion has been a major reason to abandon religion altogether, only to discover that any attempt to explain it in human terms is just as impossible without losing one's sanity.

Many theologians and philosophers of our time have reached the conclusion that the problem of undeserved suffering cannot be resolved. What remains is our moral obligation of solidarity with the victims in past and present. If that is true, however,

¹See D. Penchansky, P.L. Redditt (eds), *Shall not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to J.L. Crenshaw*, Winona Lake 2000.

²*AncBD*, vol. 6, 444.

³*AncBD*, vol. 6, 447.

it is part of this moral obligation to trace back the history of the problem of divine justice. To hear the cries and lamentations of righteous sufferers and to scrutinise the ways in which other people tried to uphold the righteousness of their God or gods, or found reason to abandon faith altogether.

Undeniably belief in one deity who can be held responsible for both good and evil aggravated the problem of divine justice. In a polytheistic context a certain equilibrium between 'good' and 'bad' gods could be assumed to exist. This possibility came to an end in the monotheistic faith which is the major religious heritage of ancient Israel. This faith has survived until modern times. In three of the central world religions of today – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – a profound influence of the theology of the Hebrew Bible may be discerned. Despite the virulent theodicy problem it created, this theological heritage has shown itself remarkably vital in resisting the pressures of different religions and ideologies. Different concepts of divinity as found in other religions of the ancient Near East have left their impressions in the Hebrew Bible, but in none of them the belief in one God occupies such a prominent place as in the religion of Israel which gradually came to accept the jealous God YHWH as its only God.⁴

⁴The origin of YHWH monotheism is one of the most intricate problems in Old Testament scholarship. There are significantly different hypotheses on the origin of Yahwism and Yahwistic monotheism. Note the following studies: W.F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, Baltimore 1950; O. Keel (ed), *Monotheismus im Alten Israel und seiner Umwelt* (BiBe, 14), Fribourg 1980; J. Assmann, *Re und Amun: Die Krise des polytheistischen Weltbilds im Ägypten der 18.-20. Dynastie* (OBO, 51), Freiburg 1983; Idem, *Monotheismus und Kosmotheismus: Ägyptische Formen eines 'Denkens des Einen' und ihre europäische Rezeptionsgeschichte*, Heidelberg 1993; Idem, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Cambridge 1997; B. Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology*, Sheffield 1983; L.E. Axelsson, *The Lord Rose up from Seir: Studies in the History and Traditions of the Negev and Southern Judah* (CB.OT, 25), Stockholm 1985; J.H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (HSS, 31), Atlanta 1986; M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*, London 1987; T.N.D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*, Philadelphia 1988; Idem, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (CB.OT, 42), Stockholm 1995; H. Niehr, *Der höchste Gott: Alttestamentlicher JHWH-Glaube im Kontext syrischkanaanäischer Religion des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (BZAW, 190), Berlin 1990; Idem, 'The Rise of Yhwh in Judahite and Israelite Reli-

This belief in one God has found fundamentally different expressions in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, yet all three religions still persist whereas polytheistic religious structures died away in the ancient Near East. Today we know these ancient polytheistic religions only in the ancient documents that have come to light through archaeology. The situation is strikingly different in other places of the world where a strong monotheistic tradition has not been influential as, for example, in India.⁵

Through the rise of monotheism the problem of theodicy has also become one of the central theological issues in modern western thought. In Jewish-Christian monotheistic tradition the one God is regarded basically as a loving God but at the same time He is seen as the stern Almighty who rules the world and dispenses justice autonomously as He sees fit. These theological concepts imply that undeserved suffering puts the relationship between God's love and his omnipotence under strain. As Ronald M. Green formulates it: 'theodicy in its classical sense is very much a feature of ethical monotheism.' He goes on to say that

gion', in: D.V. Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (CBET, 13), Kampen 1995, 45-72; M.S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, New York 1990; Idem, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, Oxford 2001; M. Dietrich, O. Loretz (eds), *'Jahwe und seine Aschera': Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel: Das biblische Bilderverbot*, Münster 1992; W. Dietrich, M.A. Klopfenstein (eds), *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (OBO, 139), Freiburg 1994; F. Stolz, *Einführung in den biblischen Monotheismus*, Darmstadt 1996; O. Loretz, *Des Gottes Einzigkeit: Ein altorientalisches Argumentationsmodell zum 'Schma Jisrael'*, Darmstadt 1997; H. Shanks, J. Meinhardt (eds), *Aspects of Monotheism: How God Is One*, Washington 1997; R.K. Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, Sheffield 1997; J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism*, Leuven² 1997; Idem, 'The Duality in God and Man: Gen. 1:26-27', in: J.C. de Moor (ed.), *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel* (OTS, 40), Leiden 1998, 112-25; M. Beck, *Elia und die Monolatrie: Ein Beitrag zur religionsgeschichtlichen Rückfrage nach dem vorprophetischen Jahweglauben* (BZAW, 281), Berlin 1999; J. Pakkala, *Intolerant Monolatry in the Deuteronomistic History*, Helsinki 1999; B. Becking et al., *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, London 2001; J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. Sheffield 2001; Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, London 2001.

⁵See further R. Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism*, Princeton 2001.

theodicy in this classical sense holds fundamentally on three major sets of ideas that form the theodicy problem: 'the belief in God's goodness, the belief in his power' and 'the belief in the real occurrence of suffering.'⁶

There is no need, however, to confine the term 'theodicy' to attempts to justify the ways of the one God with human beings – even though G.W. Leibniz (1646-1716) coined this term after Paul's Letter to the Romans (3:4-5) and presented it in a monotheistic Christian context. Following Max Weber we can state that the term 'theodicy' can be and has been used *for any attempt to render suffering and evil intelligible*.⁷ This is the reason why theodicy has become a key term in philosophical,⁸ religious⁹ and sociological¹⁰ discourse. When the term 'theodicy' is applied in non-monotheistic religions further philosophical and methodological discussion is needed in order to define the content of the term 'theodicy' and its aspects in such a context. For example, Gananath Obeyesekere discusses thoroughly the way how Max Weber uses the term 'theodicy' and demonstrates that the latter applies it inconsequently when attempting to describe monotheistic faiths, on one hand, and Indian religions, on the other hand. Obeyesekere notes that Weber used the term in at least three different ways: '(a) in its classical sense; (b) to refer to the existential need to explain suffering and evil; and, related to this; (c) to describe the resolution of these needs in statements of moral meaning.'¹¹ Obeyesekere gives the following broader definition of theodicy which is not restricted to monotheistic faith: '*when a religion fails logically to explain human suffering or fortune in terms of its system of beliefs, we can say that a theodicy exists*.'¹²

⁶R.M. Green, 'Theodicy', in: M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 14, New York 1987, 431.

⁷Cf. M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Bd.1, Tübingen 1920.

⁸See C.-F. Geyer, 'Theodizee VI: Philosophisch', *TRE* Bd. 33, 231-237 and literature he refers to.

⁹See, e.g., J. Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, Cambridge 1970.

¹⁰The classical study in sociology is Weber's study mentioned above. See further C.-F. Geyer, 'Theodizee VI: Philosophisch', *TRE*, Bd. 33, 236-237.

¹¹G. Obeyesekere, 'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation in a Sociology of Buddhism', in: E.R. Leach (ed.) *Dialectic in Practical Religion*, Cambridge 1968, 7-40; the quotation is from p. 11.

¹²G. Obeyesekere, 'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation', 11.

In a similar way, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty notes that 'it might appear that theodicy is a problem only in religions which presuppose a single, benevolent, omnipotent god' but then goes on to say that 'Max Weber extends the use of the term theodicy to the existential need to explain suffering and evil'. She concludes that 'not only is theodicy not confined to monotheism, but it is the touchstone of all religions, an existential rather than a theological problem.'¹³ O'Flaherty defines theodicy in the following way: 'When logic fails, and theology fails, irrational resolutions are offered by other modes of religious thought – notably mythology – and these, proving psychologically satisfactory, are acceptable to the members of that faith, however inadequate they may appear to professional philosophers.'¹⁴ This being the case, Leibniz's term 'theodicy' has been adopted to indicate different existential problems when people have to confront evil and suffering. This widening of the term is justified because Leibniz in his turn was dependent on earlier philosophical, theological and religious traditions which had dealt with the problem of evil and suffering.¹⁵

If, then, 'theodicy' is used in this wider sense, it becomes possible to trace back the theodicy problem to its earliest roots in the polytheistic religions of the ancient Near East and pursue its further development through the Bible and ancient Judaism. This is the aim of the present volume of studies. Obviously we might have included many more religions as well as other theological and philosophical schools, for example those of the Islamic tradition.¹⁶ However, we decided to keep the project manageable by concentrating on the written sources testifying to the earliest emergence of this major intellectual problem in the cradle of civilisation.

2 The Actuality of Theodicy

Since Weber widened the use of the term 'theodicy' to any attempt to find a rational explanation of suffering or evil we may

¹³W.D. O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*, Berkeley 1976, 1-2.

¹⁴O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil*, 2.

¹⁵See Sarot's contribution to this volume.

¹⁶See the good survey of theodicy in the Islamic tradition E.L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over Al-Ghazālī's 'Best of All Possible Worlds'*, Princeton 1984.

say that this concept has become an expression of actual existential problems. In modern western philosophical discourse 'theodicy' has lost its metaphysical meaning but the problem of innocent suffering continues to form a stumbling-block to all rational and moral thought.¹⁷ We are living in a world in which cruel crimes against humanity have been committed. The massacres of Armenian Christians at the turn of 1800's and 1900's; the murdering of six millions Jews and other groups (e.g. gypsies) in Europe during the World War II; atrocities against Muslims in the former Yugoslavia – to mention only a few examples.¹⁸ Terrorism has reached monstrous dimensions on September 11th 2001 and the ensuing wars in Afganistan and Iraq have shown the world the bitter consequences. So much evil defies any rational explanation, be it religious or philosophical.¹⁹ Karl Barth (1886-1968) severely criticised any attempt at theodicy and dismissed it as an inadmissible mental exercise.²⁰

Our inability to provide satisfactory answers should, however, never be used as an argument not to listen to the voices of those suffering in past and present, especially not if they accuse God of injustice or cry out to Him in utter incomprehension. It is simply not true that 'God died in Auschwitz' and this amazing fact alone calls for a radical rethinking of existing theologies.²¹ Part

¹⁷See J. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, London 1977; see further Sarot's contribution.

¹⁸See e.g. A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, Boulder 1998; G. Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford 2000.

¹⁹Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Le Mal: Un défi à la philosophie et la théologie*, Genève 1986.

²⁰*KD*, Bd. 3/1, Zürich 1945, § 42; Bd. 3/3, Zürich 1950, §§ 48, 50.

²¹A good survey is S.T. Katz, 'Holocaust, Judaic Theology and Theodicy', in: J. Neusner, A.J. Avery-Peck, W. Scott Green (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism*, Leiden 2000, 406-420. See further the following literature: R.L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, Indianapolis 1966; the edition of Rubenstein's study from 1992 (Baltimore) has a new title *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*; E. Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*, New York 1973; idem, *With God in Hell: Judaism in the Ghettos and Deathcamps*, New York 1979; E. Fleischner (ed.), *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*, New York 1977; E.L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem*, New York 1978; I. Greenberg, *Third Great Cycle of Jewish History*, New York 1981; A.A. Cohen, *The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust*, New York 1981; A.R. Eckart, *Long Night's Journey into Day: Life and Faith after*

of that process is the realisation that many aspects of theodicy, including utter frustration at the unsatisfactory nature of any attempt to vindicate God, cropped up much earlier in the history of mankind than many realise.

The problem in many contemporaneous philosophical treatments of theodicy is the lack of tradition behind the argument. Theodicy which consists of the two Greek terms *theos* ('god') and *dikè* ('justice') is discussed without any, or with only very loose connections with its long religious tradition. The 'tradition free rationality' has lead to a way of dealing with the problem of theodicy in sophisticated philosophical 'possible worlds' which hardly touches anyone who is actually suffering. The aim of this volume is to fill this vacuum by presenting available literary evidence on how the problems of theodicy have been formulated in ancient Near Eastern, biblical and Jewish texts. We will meet the testimonies of people who suffered more than two or even three millennia ago and tried to find answers in their own religious heritage. It is important to document the solutions they considered and the interpretive strategies they used to solve the problem of evil and suffering in the face of presumably benevolent deities. We hope to demonstrate that this material will prove to be all but outdated and may even contribute in a modest way to modern discussions of this unavoidable subject.

3 No Theodicy outside Philosophy?

The use of the term theodicy to describe the content of ancient texts has become controversial among philosophers. Sarot's article at the beginning of this volume signals a trend to admit the use of the term 'theodicy' only in modern thought, i.e. after the moment when Leibniz coined the term. The argument has been that Leibniz's term was the result of the critical rethinking of the role of God in our scientific and common day life. It is stated that about his time a major change in religious thinking took

the Holocaust, Detroit 1982; R.L. Rubenstein, J.K. Roth (eds), *Approaches to Auschwitz: The Legacy of the Holocaust*, London 1987, esp. 290-336; D. Cohn-Sherbok, *Holocaust Theology*, London 1989; J. Sacks, *Crisis and Covenant: Jewish Thought after the Holocaust*, Manchester 1992; O. Leaman, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy*, Cambridge 1997, 185-219. It is also worth noting to mention Elie Wiesel's romans which emphasise that Auschwitz cannot be understood without God but neither can it be understood with God.

place. Before Leibniz it was natural to think of the benevolent God as deeply involved in human life. As a result, suffering and evil forced human beings to seek the sometimes hidden motives behind the acts of God. By the time when Leibniz coined his term ‘theodicy’ this model was put into question. Instead suffering and evil began to actualise the questions concerning the existence of God. However, Sarot argues that there is no need to reserve the term ‘theodicy’ for modern thinking alone. After all Leibniz coined this term on the basis of Rom 3:4-5. It is also worth noting that all our scientific terms are more or less anachronistic. We use novel terms for phenomena which were not named, or differently named, in antiquity. Even if identical terms did exist in antiquity it is often the case that our *use* of these terms is different. Our terms may have different semantic values. Using semiotic concepts, we may say that the token, i.e. the ‘scientific or analytical term’ can be the same but this token is connected with different semiotic contexts which imply different semantic meanings of the scientific or analytical term. Therefore it is possible to state that even though the term ‘theodicy’ as such was not used by the ancient authors themselves, the problem they wrestled with is sufficiently similar to what is now commonly and conveniently described as the ‘theodicy problem’ to warrant the use of the term in this volume.

Of course we do not deny that there also exist fundamental differences between ancient and modern thinking.²² Ancient mankind mostly approached the phenomenal world as ‘you’. This mysterious ‘you’ revealed itself in natural phenomena and the only way to speak about these forces was personal. This led to the composition of myths in which different divine *personae* were identified behind natural forces. In order to understand this primitive human thinking we must distinguish between a natural phe-

²²For a good heuristic introduction to ancient reasoning see H. & H.A. Frankfort (eds), *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago 1977. Furthermore e.g. B. Landsberger, W. von Soden, *Die Eigenbegrifflichkeit der babylonischen Welt – Leistung und Grenze sumerischer und babylonischer Wissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1965; Th. Boman, *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem griechischen*, Göttingen ⁷1983 (controversial, but interesting); E. Brunner-Traut, *Frühformen des Erkennens am Beispiel Altägyptens*, Darmstadt 1990; W.W. Hallo, *Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions* (SHCANE, 6), Leiden 1996.

nomenon as a perception in the human mind and the interpretive attempts to understand this perception. Thus we have a school example of triadic semiotics²³ where a sign (e.g. lightning, clap of thunder) of the object, i.e. natural phenomenon (e.g. thunder) was connected with a certain interpretation as, for example, that the divine Baal shows his mighty power.²⁴ This kind of primitive logic testifies to ancient man's deep personal relation to nature which led him to believe that reality is explained most easily if we assume it is governed by divine powers. As Karel van der Toorn puts it in his article in this volume: 'In Mesopotamian civilisation there was no room for doubt about the existence of the gods or their rule over the human realm'. Yet this does not mean that ancient oriental man simply identified phenomena in nature with the deities and their works. Occasionally they show that they did know the difference between, for example, majestic clouds resting on Mt. Šapānu and the palace Ba'lu (Baal) built there according to the myth.²⁵ Ancient man could recognise causality which concerned cause and effect but he preferred to think that this causality was not an impersonal and mechanical force. All lawlike functioning causality based on purely mechanical laws which is so common in modern western thinking was more or less unfamiliar to ancient man. Natural phenomena and the agricultural cycle of the year were reflected in mythopoetic language and presented in the divine dramas of the ancient myths. So if Newton could explain the rotation of planets in the terms of mechanical laws ancient man thought that divine forces were behind these planetary movements, if not planets themselves were divine beings. So when ancient man was looking at the rising sun, spreading light and warm over the whole earth, it was natural for him to assume that this phenomenon must in some way be divine. For Egyptians this phenomenon was the sun-god's Re's victory over the power of chaos, Apophis. Sumerians called the sun Utu and Assyrians as well as Babylonians Shamash. They personified the

²³Concerning triadic semiotics which go back to Charles Sanders Peirce see A. Laato, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature: A Semiotic Approach to the Reconstruction of the Proclamation of the Historical Prophets* (CB.OT, 41). Stockholm 1996, 22-61, 301-340. Also Simojoki's contribution to this volume.

²⁴See De Moor's contribution to this volume.

²⁵See e.g. M.C.A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (UBL, 8), Münster 1990, 82-5, 560-9.

sun as the god of justice. Hittites and Ugaritians cherished a similar concept, but made the sun a female deity.

For Israelites the sun was not an animated being, but God's creation through which He showed his great power. Even though traces of an earlier identification of God with the sun do persist in the Hebrew Bible²⁶ the religion of ancient Israel gradually developed from a monolatric to a monotheistic faith. Celestial bodies like sun and moon became non-divine creations instead of animated creatures. Genesis 1 puts forward a creation story which was revolutionary in its time. Sun, moon and stars are no deities any more, but only lights put on their rotation paths by God.²⁷ Genesis 1 is a giant step in the direction of a non-animistic world view,²⁸ yet one cannot say that this account of creation comes anywhere close to our modern view of the cosmos. Celestial bodies are suspended from a kind of bell-jar, the earth is a flat orb resting on pillars in a subterranean ocean and the whole cosmos is still governed by an animated being (God). Originally both God and man would have been hybridic beings, both male and female.²⁹ In this sense the cosmology behind the priestly account of creation in Genesis 1 can still be called primitive.

Behind all natural phenomena were divine powers. If rains failed to come in their time the cause was not some mechanical natural phenomenon, no, their timely coming had been refused. The divine force behind rains, whether the god Baal of the Canaanites or YHWH of Israel, must be angry or, in the case of Baal, temporarily powerless, so that this blessing from heaven could not arrive when expected. Illness and death were not seen as the result of natural causes, but as acts of deities. Deities, or God, were held responsible for the occurrence of death. Even in the Hebrew Bible traces remain of a personalised representation

²⁶See e.g. H.-P. Stähli, *Solare Elemente im Jahweglauben des Alten Testaments* (OBO, 66), Freiburg 1985; J. G. Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: The Biblical and Archaeological Evidence* (JSOTS, 111), Sheffield 1990. Psalm 104 was probably borrowed from Egypt, but not from the 'normal' Re-religion, but from the monotheistic Aten-religion, cf. De Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism*², 69.

²⁷Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 170, correctly points out that the designation 'lights' in itself does not preclude personification in polytheistic thought.

²⁸Cf. J.D. Barrow, *The World within the World*, Oxford 1988, 33.

²⁹Cf. De Moor, 'The Duality in God and Man' (above, p. ix, n.4).

of death and its helpers, no doubt because it was so tempting to attribute this ultimate evil to a different being than the good God.

This view of divine rule over every aspect of life made it possible to question the justice of the gods if people seemed to suffer undeservedly. Since all suffering and evil in life was experienced against the background of a mystic personal relation to a divine 'you', it was possible to argue one's innocence. Man's problem was how to get these personal forces to act merciful toward him and be spared an untimely catastrophe. This being the case we must be careful when studying texts from antiquity not to overlook these fundamental differences in the ancient men's epistemological preconditions. We may say that every historical period has its own cultural and other codes which determine the *epistèmè* or ordering-space within living, thinking, writing, reading and knowing are possible.³⁰ Because our own *epistèmè* differs from that of ancient man it is important to recognise the problem this creates when we try to interpret their heritage. In order to understand an ancient text we should attempt to become free from our own epistemological preconditions and become aware of the preconditions of the text. This is not to say that we should accept the world view or message delivered in the ancient text uncritically but that we should first attempt to understand the text in its own conceptual framework. We, modern scholars have different starting-points and we can do our textual interpretation in different ways. We may characterise the contributions to this volume in the following way,

1. Most of the articles in this volume are descriptive. In the descriptive approach the message of the texts is respected and analysed as objectively as possible even though scholars themselves do not share some or all of the viewpoints in their reading object. A good example is Houtman's article on Pentateuch where he attempts to understand the difficult passages in the Pentateuch where YHWH is described as the initiating force behind massacres for example (e.g. Exod. 32:27-29). Houtman notes that modern readers may regard YHWH in such stories as 'a barbaric deity, lacking

³⁰Concerning this and, in particular, the term *epistèmè*, see M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London 1992.

any moral standing'. Nevertheless, Houtman does not allow this modern ideological criticism to rule his interpretation but attempts to analyse the texts of the Pentateuch on their own merits.

2. Ideological criticism is an important element in any hermeneutical approach which takes the reader's response seriously into account. A modern reader who recognises the shortcomings of the solutions presented in the old texts may well feel free to voice his criticism. Obviously the risk of such an approach is an anachronistic interpretation. But this risk is taken willingly to avoid non-commitment and to challenge anybody feeling the urge to take up the defence of the ancient writers to take a stand with regard to the objections raised. In this volume an example of this type of approach is James Crenshaw's contribution on the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. He characterises the message of the prophets from a modern ideological starting-point. For example, the author of the Book of Ezekiel presents 'a shocking revelation of sadism'. Or the religious minds behind Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah were dependent on older traditions which 'told of rash attacks for no apparent reason, monstrous tests of loyal servants, ethnic cleansing, favoritism, braggadocia, bellicosity, and other malicious traits'. While Crenshaw's way to characterise the prophetic books may be necessary from a modern point of view, it is hardly imaginable that the authors themselves intended to present God in such a negative light. Their attitude was rather to put all the blame on the Israelites themselves.

3. Finally, we can approach the ancient text from an existential³¹ viewpoint which implies that we regard the message of the ancient text as important and valuable even today. In such an approach the writer seeks a method which argues for his position. In fact, modern theories of literature give us the possibility to see how one and the same text can be interpreted in many different ways. This is not to

³¹The term 'existential' is used here in a neutral sense without any reference to a specific hermeneutic approach.

say that we must regard every interpretation as admissible, i.e. that every reader can give his own interpretation. Rather, the modern literature-theoretical approach distinguishes between *intentio auctoris*, *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris*. While we cannot any longer reconstruct *intentio auctoris* with certainty this does not mean that the reader can do what he wants with a text. As Umberto Eco has argued plausibly there are limits to interpretation.³² The work itself offers natural limits for interpretation, not least among them any misunderstandings the author tried to preclude. In the case of ancient texts these limits can to some extent be identified by studying similar texts from antiquity. If we apply the triadic semiotic model for interpretations of ancient texts mentioned above, we may say that the text is a sign of the ancient reality (= object) to which a scholar attempts to give a meaningful interpretation. By expanding his literary competence to other ancient texts similar to his reading object the scholar is in a better position to understand the text under discussion.³³ The risk in all existential approaches is that a scholar has hidden agendas behind his textual interpretations which are more or less apparent for his readers. In this volume an approach which comes closest to an existential approach is Anssi Simojoki's contribution on the Book of Revelation. Starting from literature-theoretical and semiotic viewpoints he aims to open the message of the Book of Revelation in a novel way.

We believe that the first step in every attempt to understand theodicy in ancient texts is the descriptive method. It is most fruitful because it gives readers possibility to understand the message of the text as best as we can. This must be the basis for any attempt to assess its value in a hermeneutic approach. It is only later, in the hermeneutic approach, that the interpreters' own values can play a role and may take the form of ideological criticism, or grateful adoption of the ancient tradition, or respectful existential interpretation.

³²U. Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, Bloomington 1990.

³³Cf. Laato, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament Prophetic Literature*, 301-391.

4 Typology of Theodicy

Given the fact that indignation at seemingly undeserved suffering is a universal emotion, it is only natural that attempts to justify the gods who might be held responsible for such misfortune resemble each other. This renders it possible to discern certain types of theodicy, even though it should be recognised right away that all attempts at classification have their shortcomings.

One possibility is to analyse fundamental premises of theodicy as the term was understood and defined by Leibniz. His way to understand theodicy was based on four fundamental premises: (1) There is one God. (2) This God represents goodness and justice. (3) This God has power in this world. And, (4) suffering and evil are a reality in this world. We could then deal with the solutions which refute one or some of these premises and then those which are based on these premises. In the following we shall first deal with theodicies which deny some of these four premises (A.1-4) and then different forms of theodicy which are based on these four premises (B). Our typological map of theodicy is in many points reminiscent of the one presented in R.M. Green's article 'Theodicy'. By mainly following his classification we attempt to show in which way the contributions in this volume corroborate and complete the picture given in Green's article.

A.1 The idea of one God can be refuted with the aid of a cosmic principle, as in Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Weber, the cosmic law of *karman* (or moral retribution) is the most complete solution to the problem of theodicy.³⁴ All human beings as well as all gods are regarded as being under the law of *karman*. Gods are powerless in this respect to change the distress of human beings because they themselves are subjected to suffering. In this solution the belief system of Hinduism and Buddhism has managed to solve the problem of theodicy through the fatalistic law of *karman* which simply explains why gods cannot be held responsible for human suffering. There is no room for their justification over against human suffering.³⁵ It is not difficult to see how this

³⁴It is worth noting that Max Weber's view is accepted by R.M. Green, 'Theodicy', 438-40; P. Gerlitz, 'Theodizee I: Religionsgeschichtlich', *TRE*, Bd. 33, 210-15.

³⁵Concerning theodicy and *karman* in Hinduism see W.D. O'Flaherty, *The*

solution also forms an intellectual barricade against all attempts to initiate just social reforms. Nevertheless, experts have pointed out that there is some evidence that even in Buddhism and Hinduism gods can change the fate of suffering humans.³⁶ This being the case, we must consider Max Weber's analysis, according to which the law of *karman* is the most complete and radical solution of theodicy, as too simplistic.

In ancient Near Eastern religions we find many examples of polytheistic belief systems and their ways to solve the problem of theodicy. They give us school examples of texts that try to solve the problem of theodicy by refuting the first premise: 'There is only one God.' In these religious structures it was always possible to interpret suffering as being caused by demons or evil deities, or by the supposition that deities (e.g., the personal deity) had become angry while help was awaited from other gods – if not from the same deities. A good example is the Akkadian poem *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, in which all kinds of misfortunes befall the sufferer when his personal gods leave him – which on the immanent level means that the sufferer has lost the good-will of the king. Recovery took place when the highest god Marduk decided to come to the sufferer's aid.³⁷ Egyptian texts tell about mythological battles between 'good' and 'evil', i.e., between opposing deities and demons.³⁸ The Hittite textual material also describes the forms suffering can take as the machinations of an 'evil' deity.³⁹ In the Ugaritic texts human beings are often described as victims of counteracting forces in the divine world.⁴⁰ Thus it was possible in polytheistic religions to solve the theodicy problem by

Origins of Evil; K. Meisig, 'Leiden im Hinduismus' in: P. Hünemann, A.T. Khoury (eds), *Warum Leiden? Die Antwort der Weltreligionen*, Freiburg 1987, 9-43. Concerning theodicy and *karman* in Buddhism see Obeyesekere, 'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation', 22; E. Meier, 'Die Haltung des Buddhismus zur Leidensfrage', in: P. Hünemann, A.T. Khoury (eds), *Warum Leiden?*, 44-73.

³⁶Obeyesekere notes that there are examples of theodicy in contemporary Buddhist Theravada 'whereby gods endowed with power to alter the state of human grace are allowed to exist alongside a belief in karma' (p. 23). In a similar way O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil*, 14-17, provides examples of how also Hinduism is open for the idea of intervention of gods in human suffering.

³⁷See Van der Toorn's article in this volume.

³⁸See Loprieno's article in this volume.

³⁹See Hoffner's contribution to this volume.

⁴⁰As is demonstrated in De Moor's article.

assuming different natural roles for deities. One deity is responsible for the evil and suffering and another deity will restore the sufferer. In many of these religions the deity responsible for the ultimate evil – death – is depicted in rather sympathetic colours. He or she fulfils a necessary role in maintaining the equilibrium between life and death.

In scholarly presentations of theodicy one sometimes encounters the idea that in polytheistic religious systems the problem of evil is solved in relatively simple way and that the real problem of theodicy becomes apparent only in monotheistic faiths where one omnipotent, omniscient and totally benevolent god rules the cosmos.⁴¹ However, contributions in this volume indicate that this way to characterise the solutions to the problem of theodicy in the polytheistic religions is too simplistic. In Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Hittite and Ugaritic texts theodicy was treated in much more sophisticated ways. For example, Karel van der Toorn points out that the royal focus is important to understand Babylonian theodicies. In addition, these theodicies took up the problem of unmerited suffering – a subject which plays an important role in the biblical Book of Job in a monotheistic religious context. Van der Toorn selects passages from these Babylonian wisdom texts which speak of lack of comprehension on the part of humankind, ‘the divine mind is remote like the innermost of heaven, It is very hard to understand, and people do not know it’, or ‘humans do not know the design of god’. Similar formulations are attested in Egypt, Ugarit and Israel. They come close to the idea of divine transcendence which later is fully articulated in Greek philosophy.

Loprieno singles out three important themes in Egyptian texts concerning theodicy: (1) human rebellion against the divine rule; (2) distinction between the mythological and philosophical theodicy and (3) the historical process where the focus on the cosmic and political struggle between good and evil was gradually shifted to the problems of individual religious behaviour and the

⁴¹See, for example, P. Gerlitz ‘Theodizee I’, 211 where it is noted: ‘Die neuere Religionsforschung stellt zu Recht in Frage, daß sich das Theodizee-problem in ‘polydämonistischen’ bzw. ‘polytheistischen’ Systemen nicht stellt, weil bereits die Vielzahl von guten und bösen Dämonen, Geistern und Gottheiten das problem der Herkunft des Leids und den Ursprung des Übels beantworte, die Numina hierarchisch geordnet und je nach ihrem Zuständigkeitsbereich verantwortlich oder haftbar gemacht werden.’

idea of retribution. In many contributions to this volume cases are mentioned where the divine world is defended against a sufferer's reproaches by stating that somehow the latter has earned his sorry fate because of (possibly hidden) sins he committed.

When all this literary evidence is compared to the Old Testament material it becomes clear that there are many links. In polytheistic religions solutions thought out to solve the theodicy problem can be similar to those found in monotheistic (or monolatric) religious contexts. Egyptian and Ugaritic texts provide interesting evidence of the fact that a crisis of faith could be just as deep in polytheism as in monotheism.⁴² As De Moor has shown in his contribution the problem of theodicy very much occupied the mind of a Ugaritic author called Ilimalku who lived in the turbulent period just before the definitive fall of Ugarit ca. 1185 BCE. Ilimalku composed several literary works in which he expressed his disappointment in the inability of the deities to protect their worshippers effectively. He does not shrink back from ridiculing even the most exalted deities of Ugarit and unabashedly calls their behaviour towards human beings 'vicious'. Is this an early example of intellectual criticism of polytheistic belief systems which were rooted in primitive logic? This logic rested on the assumption of a relationship between natural phenomena and balancing divine forces. In times of crisis when the evil acts of one deity seemed to annihilate the blessings of another deity this system broke down under severe intellectual criticism like that of Ilimalku. Ilimalku's critical analysis at the beginning of the 12th century BCE can be compared with the catastrophe of the exile of the Judaeon monarchy which intensified the monolatric if not monotheistic movement in Judah, and which led to the emergence of the theology in which the one God received more and more transcendental features as, for example, in the Deuteronomistic *šēm*-theology and Priestly *kābōd*-theology in contrast to early YHWH Sabaoth theology.⁴³

⁴²See also J. Assmann, *Re und Amun: Die Krise des polytheistischen Weltbilds im Ägypten der 18.-20. Dynastie* (OBO, 51), Freiburg 1983.

⁴³See for this theological shift T.N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (CB.OT, 18), Stockholm 1982. See the transcendental features (e.g., the tendency to avoid anthropomorphism in description of YHWH) in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic theology also M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972, 191-209.

A.2 The theodicy problem can also be removed by denying the justice of God. It is important to note that the justice of God is an ambiguous concept. Modern interpreters can easily be led astray by the assumption that certain ancient texts describe deities as unjust whereas in reality ancient man did not experience their behaviour as such. The concept of ‘justice’ was often defined as being the same as the will of god. For example, the biblical writers saw it as YHWH’s right to give the Holy Land to the Israelites and to destroy the Canaanites who were living there for a long time already. In the eyes of many modern observers this type of biblical story does not meet our modern ideas of human rights. Yet the Hebrew Bible clearly expresses the view that God’s justice and goodness were realised in the episode when the Israelites received their land.⁴⁴ Historically the Israelite settlement in the Holy Land seems to have been a quite peaceful process – as Albrecht Alt and many others who followed him have suggested.⁴⁵

Divine justice does not always tally with human understanding of justice and this is a corner-stone in Jewish and Christian thought about the subject. However, in both traditions the objective basis for divine justice is maintained by the complementary idea of the human free will (see further section 5 below). Some polytheistic religious documents from the ancient Near East deny the goodness or justice of certain deities *expressis verbis*, as we have seen. Yet next to these ‘evil’ deities there were often others who were regarded as good and righteous. In the famous story of the Flood (Gilgamesh Tablet XI; Atrahasis Epic) Enlil is a god who wants to destroy mankind while Ea kindly spoke to the Flood

⁴⁴It should be not overlooked, however, that the destruction of the Canaanites was sometimes felt as problematic already in antiquity. See Winston’s contribution in this volume.

⁴⁵See, e.g., I. Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, Jerusalem 1988; I. Finkelstein, N. Na’aman (eds), *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, Jerusalem 1994. Meanwhile Finkelstein’s ideas have developed into a more critical attitude, as can be seen in I. Finkelstein, N.A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*, New York 2001. The picture is no doubt more complex than scholars have anticipated, but no decisive arguments have been put forward against Alt’s hypothesis. It is worth noting that even biblical sources indicate that the Israelites did not conquer the land in a lightning military campaign. See Josh. 13:1-7; 17:12-18; Judg. 1. See also M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites*, Oxford 1993.

hero Utnapishtim (Atrahasis) and saved him from the approaching catastrophe.⁴⁶ In the Babylonian Epic of Erra the god is at first extremely cruel and malicious, wiping out countless peaceful inhabitants of the country, making no distinction between sinners and pious people. At the end of the poem, however, Erra appears to be capable of goodness and mercy.

Also outright accusations of divine maliciousness are attested. We mention here the Sumerian parallels to the biblical Book of Lamentations in which gods decide to destroy Akkad, Sumer or Ur, and are described as having no mercy.⁴⁷ Sometimes ancient Near Eastern texts contain quite radical ideas as, for example, the Babylonian *Theodicy* which states that humans cannot understand the plans of gods and that the acts of the gods can be disastrous to them, '(The gods) gave perverse speech to the human race, they endowed them for ever with lies and falsehood'.⁴⁸

These cruel descriptions of injustice on the part of deities come close to fatalistic ideas – deities make decisions and humans cannot do anything to prevent the ravages they cause. It is worth noting that this kind of 'fatalism' survived even in monotheistic tradition but in that case it was connected with the denial of the objective basis of divine justice and human free will. This can be seen in the Muslim Ash'arite theology (but not in Mu'tazilite theology) which does not allow any discussion of how events in this world are related to divine justice.⁴⁹ There is no theology comparable to that of the Book of Job in Islam because the adagium 'whatever Allah does is right' smothers all attempts to allow room for questions. The consequence of this theology is that

⁴⁶Translation of these texts are found in S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, Oxford 1992; W.W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World, Leiden 1997, and similar anthologies.

⁴⁷These texts are The Curse of Agade (*ANET*, 646-651), Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (*ANET*, 611-619), Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur (*ANET*, 455-463). See further discussion in T.F. McDaniel, 'The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations,' *VT* 18 (1968), 198-209. In his contribution to this volume Renkema denies that YHWH in the biblical Lamentations is described as a cruel deity.

⁴⁸See Van der Toorn's contribution in this volume. Similar statements of utter incomprehension when people were confronted with nefarious decisions of the gods are found in Egypt and Ugarit.

⁴⁹Cf. H. Ringgren, *Studies in Arabian Fatalism* (UUA, 1955/2), Uppsala 1955.

the human free will is refuted in the Ash'arite tradition. Calvin's clear-cut view on predestination has preserved some elements of this fatalistic tradition. Luther, on the other hand, clearly rejects this fatalistic idea by emphasising the tension between the *deus absconditus* and the divine will as revealed in the word of God (see further Section 10 below).⁵⁰

A.3 In dualism the omnipotence of God is denied. A classic example of dualism is found in the Persian religion, Zoroastrianism. In this belief system the cosmic battle is waged between Ahura Mazdā (the good deity) and Angra Mainyu (the evil antagonist).⁵¹ An established modern exegetical tradition reads Isaiah 45:7 against the background of this Persian religion. In this interpretation the verse states that YHWH is behind everything that takes place in the world: 'I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I YHWH do all these things.'⁵² However, it is worth noting that in the Old Testament and in Jewish interpretive traditions we can find traces of dual-

⁵⁰Cf. O. Kaiser, 'Deus absconditus and Deus revelatus: Three Difficult Narratives in the Pentateuch', in: Penchansky, Redditt (eds), *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?*, 73-88.

⁵¹The locus classicus for the Persian dualism is Yasna 30. See further H.S. Nyberg, *Irans forntida religioner*, Stockholm 1937, 101-120; G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (RM, 14), Stuttgart 1965, 74-78.

⁵²See for this interpretation of the verse two influential commentaries: C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (OTL), London 1969; K. Elliger, *Jesaja II* (BKAT, 11), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978. For a different view see F. Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament*, Lund 1983, 178-199. It is worth noting that in the Kabbalah tradition God and evil were related and no intellectual criticism against this relationship has been voiced. See G.G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1969; M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, New Haven 1988; I. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, 3 vols, Jerusalem 1989. With regard to the influence of Isa. 45:7 on the Kabbalah see in particular O. Betz, 'Der Einfluss von Jes 45,7 und 43,7 auf die jüdisch-christliche Kabbala,' in: W. Grimm, K. Dittert, *Deuterosejsa: Deutung, Wirkung, Gegenwart* (Calwer Bibelkommentare), Stuttgart 1990, 257-259. Note also A. Laato, *Monotheism, the Trinity and Mysticism: A Semiotic Approach to Jewish-Christian Encounter*, Frankfurt a. M. 1999, 48-50, where the Hebrew Bible's dynamic way of speaking about evil in conjunction with one God has been related to three dynamic phenomenological categories: Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness in Peirce's semiotics: '... the idea of absolute evil as quality which is embodied in the form of Secondness is unacceptable in Judaism (and Christianity). God has an absolute power over every form of evil.' Quotation is from p. 50.

istic thinking which possibly reveal influence of polytheistic or dualistic religions. Thus, for example, the Psalms contain the themes of combat between God and powers of chaos which apparently originated in or were adapted from old Canaanite myths now available to us in the Ugaritic texts. The struggle between Ba‘lu and powers of chaos (Yammu, Naharu, Motu, Lotanu) in Ugaritic texts are parallel to the divine King’s and Warrior’s struggle against evil as we find it in the Psalms. However, whereas in the Ugaritic texts Ba‘lu and Motu are described as equal in power, no similar view is presented in the Psalms when YHWH’s struggle against the powers of chaos is described. Therefore, it would be erroneous to call the theology of the Psalms dualistic.⁵³ The Psalms attribute an easy victory over the powers of chaos to YHWH. In a corresponding way the existential requests for the aid of YHWH are presented in the Book of Psalms from the viewpoint whether or not YHWH himself is present and helps, or is absent and hides his face from Israel. The possibility of a power preventing him from coming to the aid of the supplicant is never taken into serious consideration.⁵⁴

Apparently the strong theological bias of the Jerusalemite Temple theology which interpreted prosperity or misfortune as the presence or absence of YHWH prevented Jewish theology to adopt any dualistic interpretive models. When YHWH is absent evil powers can do their nefast work but when YHWH is present these powers have no real power and are unable to harm humans. If Isa. 45:7 was directed against Persian dualism this constitutes some evidence that Persian dualistic thinking has been influential in the apocalyptic thinking of the second Temple Judaism. This influence can even be seen from later biblical texts where the personified evil Satan took the role previously attributed to YHWH.⁵⁵ A good example of this is 1 Chronicles 21:1 where it

⁵³Note that in his contribution Lindström uses the term ‘dualistic’ when he describes the Jerusalemite Temple theology but puts the term in quotation-marks. He also notes *expressis verbis* that the Psalms present a ‘anti-mythical treatment of the chaotic waters’ and note his statement that ‘The Canaanite motif has been transformed to express YHWH’s eternal, not very hard-won kingship ...’

⁵⁴See Lindström’s contribution in this volume.

⁵⁵There is a long scholarly discussion of the monistic theology or demonic nature of YHWH. The basic study was P. Volz, *Das Dämonische in Jahwe* (SGV, 110), Tübingen 1924. In recent studies scholars have become more

is stated that Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census. This formulation is strikingly different from that of 2 Samuel 24:1 according to which YHWH himself incited David to take a census. This transformation from 2 Samuel 24 to 1 Chronicles 21 illustrates well the influence of the 'dualistic' thinking. There are cases where it is better to speak about Satan than about God. Nevertheless, Satan never got any central place in Hebrew/Jewish thinking. And he never was equal in power to God. Satan's power has always been presented as being totally subordinated to YHWH as can be seen from the first two chapters of the Book of Job.⁵⁶ This becomes even clearer in the early Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha as James Charlesworth puts it in his article: 'the Jews could not deny monotheism and assume, or affirm, that there are two gods, one who is responsible for good and the other for evil'. Another 'dualistic' inroad on the Jewish-Christian heritage came from Greek philosophy which was combined with certain ancient mythical motifs found in the Old Testament itself. The basic idea in ancient Greek philosophy was that the deity is absolutely good and, therefore, cannot have anything to do with death. This led to dualistic viewpoints in theology and such a theology was easy to connect with 'dualistic' features in the Old Testament. For example, David Winston has argued in his contribution that the Wisdom of Solomon contains such 'dualistic' theology even though he at the same time notes that the author of this ancient text was well aware of the monotheistic nature of his religion. In a similar way David Runia argues that Philo's monotheistic theology contains traces of 'dualism'.

cautious to speak about the demonic side of YHWH. See, e.g., F. Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament* (CB.OT 37), Lund 1983; E. Noort, 'JHWH und das Böse: Bemerkungen zu einer Verhältnisbestimmung,' in: A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *Prophets, Worship and Theodicy: Studies in Prophetism, Biblical Theology and Structural and Rhetorical Analysis and on the Place of Music in Worship* (OTS, 23), Leiden 1984, 120-136; W.H. Schmidt, 'Gott und Böses: Hinweise auf das Alte Testament,' *EvTh* 52 (1992), 7-22. Nevertheless, the fact is that we do have examples in the Old Testament where 'evil' is attributed to YHWH himself (see Illman's article on Job and Korpel's contribution on Ruth) and that these passages have been regarded as difficult interpretive problems already in ancient Judaism. Philo is a good example among early Jewish interpreters who attempted to explain such difficult Old Testament passages. See further Runia's contribution in this volume.

⁵⁶See Illman's article in this volume.

A.4 Denial of the reality of suffering is a solution which is typical of some Indian religions. For example, one Vedantic tradition emphasises that suffering is an essential aspect of *māyā*, the cosmic principle of dynamism and individuation. This *māyā* does not affect the eternal soul and, therefore, suffering has no real meaning to a human being. As far as we were able to ascertain this possibility of removing the necessity of theodicy never came up in the ancient oriental world.

B. Typologies of theodicy in monotheistic, Jewish-Christian (and Islamic) contexts can be divided in different ways. Green puts forward five different typologies which are:

1. The free-will theodicy.
2. Educative theodicy.
3. Eschatological (or recompense) theodicy.
4. Theodicy deferred: The mystery of theodicy.
5. Communion theodicy.

James Charlesworth in his contribution to this volume makes following distinction in early Jewish apocalyptic writings:

- a. Divine retribution.
- b. Cosmic destruction.
- c. Israel's unfaithfulness and the gift of Torah.
- d. Unresolved Questions and Mystery.
- e. Eschatology and apocalypticism.
- f. Proleptic fulfillment.
- g. Human free will.
- h. Human determinism.

These typologies correspond to each other. Charlesworth's categories a and g correspond to Green's first category; c is parallel to Green's second and fifth categories, whereas categories b, e and f are all included in Green's third category; finally Charlesworth's category d and Green's fourth category are identical. The last category h in Charlesworth's distinction is *sui generis* and has no clear-cut correspondence in Green's categories. Human determinism is not only typical of early Jewish writings (e.g. 4 Ezra as Charlesworth has shown in his contribution) but also of Islamic theology and even of Spinoza's philosophy. Therefore, our six main categories of theodicy in monotheistic contexts where

all four premises A.1–A.4 are accepted are the following:

- B.1 Retribution theology.
- B.2 Educative theodicy.
- B.3 Eschatological theodicy.
- B.4 The mystery of theodicy.
- B.5 Communion theodicy.
- B.6 Human determinism.

We shall deal with these six typologies of theodicy in the following sections 5–10 and shall try to indicate how the contributions to this volume are related to these typologies.

5 Retribution Theodicy in the Framework of Covenant Theology

The retribution theodicy of the Hebrew Bible is deeply rooted in the ancient Near Eastern culture. *First*, ancient law documents regularly take up the theme that deities will punish those who refuse to live according to the laws imposed by these deities. This is taken up in Hoffner's contribution in this volume and can also be recognised in Mesopotamian law documents.⁵⁷ In this connection

⁵⁷See, e.g., the following law corpora: Ur-Nammu (*ANET*, 523–525), Sumerian laws (*ANET*, 525–526), Lipit-Ishtar (*ANET*, 159–161), Eshnunna (*ANET*, 161–163), Hammurabi (*ANET*, 163–180), Middle Assyrian laws (*ANET*, 180–188), neo-Babylonian laws (*ANET*, 197–198), and the related Hittite laws (*ANET*, 188–197). See further K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study*, Assen 1985; M.T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (WAW, 6), Atlanta ²1997; H.A. Hoffner, *The Laws of the Hittites* (DMOA, 23), Leiden 1997. In particular, Mesopotamian law tradition has influenced the Old Testament. See S.M. Paul, *Studies in the Book of Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law* (VT.S, 18), Leiden 1970; E. Otto, *Wandel der Rechtsbegründungen in der Gesellschaftsgeschichte des antiken Israel: Eine Rechtsgeschichte des 'Bundesbuches' Ex 20,22–23,13* (StBib, 3), Leiden 1988; Idem, *Rechtsgeschichte der Redaktionen im Kodex Ešnunna und im Bundesbuch: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche und rechtsvergleichende Studie zu altbabylonischen und altisraelitischen Rechtsüberlieferungen* (OBO, 85), Freiburg 1989; Idem, *Körperverletzungen in den Keilschriftrechten und im Alten Testament: Studien zum Rechtstransfer im Alten Orient* (AOAT, 226), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991; Idem, *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments* (ThW, 3/2), Stuttgart 1994; Idem, *Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsform in Juda und Assyrien* (BZAW, 284), Berlin 1999; L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Das Bundesbuch (Ex 20,22–23,33): Studien zu seiner Entstehung und Theologie* (BZAW, 188), Berlin 1990; C. Houtman, *Das Bundesbuch: Ein*

it is worth noting that any rebellion against authority was seen as sin against the gods who had bestowed this authority so that even areas of life which we might regard as 'civil' fell under the law of divine retribution in antiquity.⁵⁸ *Second*, retribution ideology also plays a central role in ancient vassal treaties, especially in their section 'curses and blessings'.⁵⁹ The treaty form has no doubt influenced the covenant theology of the Old Testament.⁶⁰ *Third*, we can also point to the ancient oriental wisdom tradition. Instructions of Egyptian sages demonstrate that to them too retribution theology was a common way of explaining suffering in life.⁶¹ If humans do not live according to the divine principle of *ma'at* they will be punished.⁶² It is generally recognised that the Egyptian wisdom literature has influenced the Old Testament wisdom tradition.⁶³

Kommentar (DMOA, 24), Leiden 1997; R. Westbrook, *Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Law* (CRB, 24), Paris 1988; Idem, *Old Babylonian Marriage Law* (AfO.B, 23), Horn 1988; Idem, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law* (JSOT.S, 113), Sheffield 1991.

⁵⁸Cf. J.C. de Moor. 'The Rebel in Bible Lands', in: J.C. Exum, H.G.M. Williamson (eds), *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J.A. Clines*, Sheffield 2003, 335-52.

⁵⁹See e.g. the disadvantageous treaties the Egyptians forced on their subjects, cf. K.A. Kitchen, 'Egypt, Ugarit, Qatna and Covenant', *UF* 11 (1979), 453-64; the Hittite vassal treaties in V. Korošec, *Hethitische Staatsverträge: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer juristischen Wertung* (LRWS, 60), Leipzig 1930; G.F. del Monte, *Il trattato fra Mursili II di Ḫattuša e Niqmepa^c di Ugarit* (Orientis Antiqui Collectio, 18), Roma 1986 (and many similar treaties from Ugarit); the neo-Assyrian treaties in S. Parpola, K. Watanabe (eds), *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA, 2), Helsinki 1988.

⁶⁰See the following four key studies on this topic: M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972; D.J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (AnBib, 21A), Rome ²1978; P. Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, Rome 1982; E. Otto, *Das Deuteronomium* (BZAW, 284), Berlin 1999.

⁶¹See e.g. H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit: Lehren für das Leben*, Zürich 1988; W. McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, London 1970; M. Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context: A Study of Demotic Instructions* (OBO, 52), Freiburg 1983; N. Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature* (OBO, 130), Freiburg 1991.

⁶²Cf. J. Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*, München 1990; M. Lichtheim, *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies* (OBO, 120), Freiburg 1992.

⁶³See, e.g., E. Hornung, O. Keel (eds), *Studien zu Altägyptischen Lebens-*

This threefold ancient Near Eastern background explains at least in part why retribution is the prevailing type of theodicy in the Hebrew Scriptures. Retribution was the normal form of justice in the whole surrounding world. However, other factors must be taken into consideration too. The historical crisis of the exile, for example, gave extra support to the idea that God was justified in punishing Israel so severely. A large part of the Old Testament material was collected and edited during the time of the exile and as a result the crisis of the exile has left its traces in the final form of many Old Testament books. Theologically seen the retribution theodicy in the Hebrew Scriptures was based mainly on the belief that God has created the world as good and that evil was introduced through human acts. The Yahwistic account of creation in Genesis 2–3 presents this classic understanding of the retribution theodicy. Humankind deserves God's wrath. Most of the Old Testament textual material follows the outlines of retribution theodicy because the covenant theology is one of the constitutive elements in the faith of Israel. Covenant theology is emphasised, in particular, in Deuteronomy and in the Deuteronomistic History.⁶⁴ But the whole Pentateuch in its present form is also strongly dependent on this covenant theology.⁶⁵ Ezra/Nehemiah and Chronicles mainly follow the historical presentation of the Deuteronomistic History and accept the retribution theodicy, with the important proviso that in Ezra/Nehemiah salvation is seen as an act of grace on the part of the LORD, not the reward for meritorious acts of human

lehren (OBO, 28), Freiburg 1979; D. Römheld, *Wege der Weisheit: Die Lehren Amenemopes und Proverbien 22,17-24,22* (BZAW, 184), Berlin 1989; F.-J. Steiert, *Die Weisheit Israels – ein Fremdkörper im Alten Testament: Eine Untersuchung zum Buch der Sprüche auf dem Hintergrund der ägyptischen Weisheitslehren* (FThSt, 143), Freiburg 1990; J.G. Gammie, L.G. Perdue (eds), *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Winona Lake 1990; N. Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature* (OBO, 130), Freiburg 1991; E. Würthwein, 'Egyptian Wisdom and the Old Testament', in: F.E. Greenspahn (ed.), *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, New York 1991, 129-49; J.D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids 1997, 205-216; J.A. Emerton, 'The Teaching of Amenemope and Proverbs XXII 17 - XXIV 22: Further Reflections on a Long-Standing Problem,' *VT* 51 (2001), 431-65.

⁶⁴See Laato's contribution to this volume.

⁶⁵See Houtman's article.

beings, whereas in Chronicles righteous behaviour is usually rewarded.⁶⁶ It is precisely this combination of covenant and history which has made the retribution theodicy so central in the Old Testament. Historical events were interpreted as reflecting how well people succeeded to remain loyal to the stipulations of the covenant. If they lived according to covenantal stipulations they would prosper. In this type of theology misfortune never raises doubt as to God's justice, it immediately poses the question of possible sin on the part of the sufferer. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28–29 and the speeches of Job's friends provide important hermeneutical tools to understand the theology of retribution. This remains the case in early and rabbinic Judaism. Philo used Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 when he describes his retribution theodicy⁶⁷

The covenant theology and its idea of retribution was also central to the Old Testament prophetic literature. The prophets based their oracles of doom on the failure of their contemporaries to obey the laws of the covenant. Some prophetic texts as, for example, the Books of Hosea and Jeremiah, as well as Isaiah 40–66, contain many references to the covenant (*b^erit*) and retribution theology. In particular, the Book of Jeremiah is important because it is a part of the Deuteronomistic literature.⁶⁸ According to Lindström, retribution theology is rarely found in the Psalms, but is experienced as a problem in Psalms which have been influenced by the wisdom tradition.⁶⁹ Finally, Hebrew wisdom literature provides typical examples of retribution theodicy in the speeches of Job's friends⁷⁰ and in Proverbs.

⁶⁶As Japhet has shown in her contribution of this volume.

⁶⁷See Runia's and Neusner's contributions.

⁶⁸Concerning the Books of Hosea and Jeremiah, and their connection to the Deuteronomistic theology, see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic School*. Note also W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25* (WMANT, 41), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1973; Idem, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–45: Mit einer Gesamtbeurteilung der deuteronomistischen Redaktion des Buches Jeremia* (WMANT, 52), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981. Worth noting are also the so-called Deuteronomistic sermons in the Book of Jeremiah. See E.W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, New York 1970; H. Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches* (BZAW, 132), Berlin 1973. See on the prophetic doom oracles especially K.A. Tångberg, *Die prophetische Mahnrede* (FRLANT, 143), Göttingen 1987.

⁶⁹See Lindström's article.

⁷⁰See Illman's approach.

To some extent it may be true that the Old Testament retribution theodicy is based on the idea of human free will. Human beings can choose whether or not to follow the commandments of the covenant. This is expressed well in Deut. 30:11-20: '... the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it...' On the other hand, in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel the idea is propounded that the people cannot remain loyal to YHWH and that, therefore, YHWH himself must create a new covenant in which He gives the people a new heart and the strength to follow his commandments. This view is elaborated in Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:24-28 which both describe the establishment of this new covenant.⁷¹ However, the theological concept of human free will is not prominent in the Old Testament traditions, apparently because it did not constitute a theological problem. However, during the Second Temple period Jewish writers were compelled to take a stand with regard to free will. A common tendency in these Jewish interpretive traditions is that there is a direct line from the Old Testament covenant theology to the theological doctrine of the human free will.⁷² The Old Testament key-texts on the new covenant have also played an important role in the New Testament (e.g., Heb. 8:8-12; Rom. 11:27) and in this way formed the background for the Christian discussion of the role of human free will in salvation.⁷³

One of the essential theological points in Ben Sira's theology is the human free will. In his contribution to this volume Beentjes

⁷¹Concerning the texts in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel which stress the theocentric nature of salvation see T.M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel*, Philadelphia 1977. It has been argued that Jer. 30-31 is dependent on Ezek. 36, cf. H. Leene, 'Ezekiel and Jeremiah: Promises of Inner Renewal in Diachronic Perspective', in: J.C. de Moor, H. F. van Rooy (eds), *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets* (OTS, 44), Leiden 2000, 150-75.

⁷²Most of the Old Testament Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and the Psalms of Solomon contain this idea of retribution (see the contributions of Atkinson, Beentjes, Charlesworth and Runia) even if there are other types of theodicy attested in the same texts. See further Laato's article in this volume.

⁷³Classic discussions of this free-will doctrine can be found in Augustine (*De praedestinatione sanctorum*) and Chrysostomus (*Homilies on Romans*) as well as in later time in the work of Thomas Aquinas and in the discussion between Erasmus (*Diatribes on the free-will*) and Luther (*De servo arbitrio*). The philosophical debate on free will has occupied the mind of almost every philosopher, cf. R. Kane (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook on Free Will*, Oxford 2002.

shows that the key-passage in this theology is the Hebrew text of 39:25-27:

Good to the good he distributed from the beginning
thus to the wicked good and bad.

and further on,

All these for the good are good
thus for the wicked they will turn to evil.

However, as Beentjes shows, in the Greek translation of this passage the word 'good' was dropped resulting in a theological shift from free-will to determinism: 'From the beginning good was created for the good, and evil for sinners'.

Another Second Temple Jewish writing which emphasises that humankind has a free choice is 2 Baruch, as is shown by Charlesworth. The key-text is 2 Baruch 54 which, on the one hand, says that 'Adam sinned first' and 'brought death upon all who were not in his own time' (v. 15) but, on the other hand, holds that everyone who sins becomes like Adam (v. 19). However, 2 Baruch does not go as far as stating that man with his free-will choice can avoid death. 2 Bar. 9:1 notes that Jeremiah 'was found to be pure from sins' and therefore he was 'not captured during the seizure of the city'. However, he could not escape from death and had to die like Adam.

The human free will is important in Philo's theology too and as a consequence he clearly opts for a retribution theodicy. However, as Runia shows in his analysis, Philo had to modify retribution theodicy as compared to the Hebrew tradition because in accordance with Greek philosophy he wanted to posit the absolute goodness of God. This led to the idea that punishment was meted out by subordinates of God, not by God himself. Another modification in Philo's retribution theodicy is the emphasis on the inner life of the soul. This meant that the alienation from God is the greatest punishment humans can ever receive. Suffering in the body is not important if a human being's soul is free. In that way Philo attempted to solve the problem of theodicy. Or as Runia puts it: 'Only when the inner life of the soul and its relation to God is taken into account is it possible to understand how God brings about a merciful and just resolution'.

Even in the Wisdom of Solomon there is a tendency to transform the classic retribution theology in a more rationalistic direction. In Wis. 18-19 it is argued that the real sin of the Egyptians was that they knew their coming fate but in spite of this knowledge acted against the will of God and did not release the Israelites. This example demonstrates that the author of Wisdom of Solomon 'is simply unconcerned with wicked acts as such, but with the irrationality in which they are rooted' (so Winston).

Retribution theodicy plays a role also in the New Testament but it was reinterpreted in the strong eschatological and apocalyptic atmosphere of the time and connected with the soteriological claim that through the crucifixion of Jesus Christians had been saved from the powers of evil (see Holmén's and Simojoki's contributions).

The retribution theodicy is a self-evident starting-point in Rabbinic Judaism which 'in the first seven centuries of the Common Era constructed a coherent theology, a cogent structure and logical system, to expose the justice of God' (Neusner). Human free will and the necessity of repentance were the two cornerstones for upright human behaviour. By making the right choice between good and evil, the justice and mercy of God in the life became apparent automatically as it were.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, during the crises of the formative period of Rabbinic Judaism there was room for different accents. In his contribution Chilton describes how the Tannaitic meturgeman interpreted theodicy of the destruction of the Second Temple so that repentance was globally rejected whereas a subsequent Amoraic editor favoured the idea of individual repentance.

Medieval Jewish philosophy more or less followed the theological outlines of the Rabbinic tradition when it sought to rebut the Islamic theological (*kalām*) and philosophical (*falsafa*) arguments with regards to the problem of divine justice. The first important Jewish philosopher Saadya Gaon (882-942 CE) lived at the time when Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite theological traditions were strongly confronted in Islam. Mu'tazilites accepted the human free will and argued that there is an objective basis for divine justice since there exists an a-religious concept of rationality which can be used to bolster up the argument. Ash'arites,

⁷⁴See Neusner's contribution.

on the other hand, denied the human free will and argued that there was no room for rational arguments because Allah cannot do wrong. Saadya mainly followed the Mu'tazilite line of reasoning and like them he attributed free will to humans.⁷⁵ This is also seen in his view on theodicy. Suffering can, according to Saadya, be due to punishment (retribution theology), education and testing (see section 6). The last word is, however, that God gives retribution to everyone in this world or in the coming world (see eschatological theodicy in sect. 7). In particular, Saadya argues that testing is an important theme in the Book of Job which he calls *Kitāb al-ta'dīl*, 'The Book Confirming (divine) Justice' – in the end retribution smoothes out any remaining iniquity. The name of the Book of Job indicates for Saadya how important the theme of the divine justice (= theodicy!) was to understand suffering. According to Saadya, the friends of Job made the same decisive mistake as the Ash'arites:

What drove them to this conclusion was their rational recognition that the Creator, being just, will do no wrong. Observing that Job was a victim of torments, they argued that these must be deserved on account of some prior sin of his. In our own time there are those who hold the same doctrine. They are unaware, as Job was, of the proper position, which is the third alternative, that of Elihu, that God might bring His servant to the blessed state which He has prepared for the righteous by any of three different routes: first, through repentance of prior sins, of which he says, To remove a man from his doings . . . preserved his

⁷⁵L.E. Goodman (ed.), *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job by Saadiah Ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi*, New Haven 1988, 103-4: 'Typical of the Mu'tazilites, al-Zamaksharī rejects the thesis that there is no injustice in a prince [i.e. a prince does injustice and this injustice would be ascribed to the will of God]. And Saadiah in the same vein argues that one cannot ascribe to God actions which would be unjust by human standards. Saadiah rejects the theistic subjectivism of his Ash'arite contemporaries, which he assigns to the pre-enlightened Job. In the same way he rejects their predestinarianism and their doctrines of arbitrary election, fideistic authority, and divine domination of (rather than governance through) the things of nature. Saadiah maintains God's justice by upholding the goodness of creation as an act of pure grace rather than by attempting to redefine justice stipulatively as the arbitrary object of God's choice. Thus the moral arguments of natural theology can lead us to God's justice although they cannot render God a moral creature.'

soul from destruction, his life from passing to expulsion (33:17-18). Second, through merit which that servant has, no matter how small, of which he says, If there be an emissary to plead in his behalf, one among a thousand . . . he hath redeemed his soul from passing to destruction (33:23, 28).⁷⁶ And, third, through trial and tribulation, by which a servant is tested, and through which he steadfastly endures. This involves the greatest reward, of which he says, to return his soul from destruction, to illumine him with the light of life (33:30).⁷⁷

This being the case, the Book of Job was for Saadya proof of the divine justice which is confirmed in the retribution theodicy. Job was right when he formulated critical questions and demanded from God that He give a satisfactory explanation for undeserved suffering.⁷⁸ Saadya's commentary on the Book of Job indicates how important the objective divine justice is for the theological structure of religions.

Yet, Al-Ghazālī's criticism of Mu'tazilite theology may have left its traces in later Jewish philosophical tradition.⁷⁹ For example, Maimonides is unwilling to follow Saadya's 'simplistic' retributive model for the interpretation of suffering but argues that suffering can be seen from an exoteric and an esoteric viewpoint. From an exoteric viewpoint the traditional Jewish solution can be put forward: the one who suffers will be compensated, either in this life or in the World to Come. From an esoteric viewpoint, however, mankind cannot understand the ways of God and, therefore, the mistake of Job was that he imagined God to be like humans. Only at the end of the story Job realised that God is strikingly different and that mankind cannot understand God's thoughts and ways.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Compare m. Avot 6:9.

⁷⁷Goodman (ed), *The Book of Theodicy*, 129. The importance of this passage has rightly been stressed in O. Leaman, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy*, Cambridge 1997, 55.

⁷⁸Concerning Saadya's view on theodicy, see Leaman, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy*, 48-63.

⁷⁹On this issue see E.L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over Al-Ghazālī's 'Best of All Possible Worlds'*, Princeton 1984.

⁸⁰Cf. Goodman, *The Book of Theodicy*, 6-7; Leaman, *Evil and Suffering*, 64-101.

6 Educative Theodicy

Next to retributive theodicy we find educative theodicy in the Old Testament. It was inspired by two sources: (1) the (ancient Near Eastern) wisdom tradition, and (2) the historical crisis of the exile. The prototypes of Job in Akkadian literature indicate that here people attempted to solve the problem of innocent suffering by attributing an educative purpose to it. The sufferer gains a better understanding of his life through his personal suffering.⁸¹ In the Old Testament the best example of educative theodicy is the Book of Job itself.⁸² In particular, Job 42:1-6 indicates how Job through his suffering has learned to know God better. A good example of educative theodicy can also be found in Prov. 3:11-12 which is also quoted in Heb. 12:5-6 (see below).

As Houtman shows in his contribution to this volume, pedagogic testing by YHWH is one of the mainstays of the account of Israel's early history. It is always coupled with an affirmation of just retribution if Israel sins against God's commandments. The crisis of the exile led to a dénouement of the Deuteronomistic History which did not only underline retribution theodicy but also presented the national catastrophe as a God-given possibility to fathom the divine justice which is expressed in the covenant between YHWH and Israel.⁸³ Another important exilic source for the educative theodicy is the prophetic literature which describes the (innocent) suffering of the righteous prophets. The best examples are the so-called 'confessions' in the Book of Jeremiah (11:18-23; 12:1-5; 15:10-12, 15-21; 17:12-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). In earlier studies on Jeremiah these confessions were regarded as autobiographical, and they may still be just that, or a poetical reflection of such authentic suffering.⁸⁴ In that case they were related to the prophet's personal distress in front of his prophetic career.⁸⁵ In this interpretation his suffering learnt Jeremiah

⁸¹See Van der Toorn's article in this volume.

⁸²See Illman's contribution.

⁸³See Laato's contribution. Even Chronicles which mainly affirms retributive theodicy has retained some traces of educative testing. See Japhet's article. p. 456, n. 49.

⁸⁴Cf. C. Bultmann, 'A Prophet in Desperation? The Confessions of Jeremiah', in: J.C. de Moor (ed.), *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* (OTS, 45), Leiden 2001, 83-93.

⁸⁵See, for example, J. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life*

to understand YHWH's plans better and deeper. In many recent studies, however, the confessions of Jeremiah are regarded as an integral part of the final Book's theology. Even though the biographic interpretation is not necessarily refuted, it is emphasised that these texts from different schools and episodes all seek to explain how YHWH educated his people through suffering at the time of the exile.⁸⁶ Prophecy, both prophecy of salvation and of doom, had failed to be fulfilled and this required major hermeneutic and redactional efforts on the part of the exilic and post-exilic communities.⁸⁷ One of the problems this created for modern scholarship is that the original theodicean experience was often all but obliterated by pious later reinterpretation.⁸⁸

of *Jeremiah*, Cambridge 1948; G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Bd 2: Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels, München 1984, 209-214. 'Diese Dichtungen zeigen eine Intimität des geistigen Umgangs mit Gott, eine Mündigkeit des Sichaussprechens und eine Freiheit im Eingestehen eigenen Versagens oder widerfahrenen göttlichen Tadel, die wohl als eine Manifestation edelsten Menschentums zu gelten haben' (p. 212). 'Bei Jeremia treten Mensch und prophetischer Auftrag auseinander; ja es kommt zu schweren Spannungen, die seinen ganzen Prophetenberuf bedrohen' (p. 213).

⁸⁶See H.G. Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia*, Gütersloh 1963; F.D. Hubmann, *Untersuchungen zu den Konfessionen: Jer 11,18-12,6 und Jer 15,10-21* (fzb, 30) Würzburg 1978; R.P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, London 1981; N. Ittmann, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias: Ihre Bedeutung für die Verkündigung des Propheten* (WMANT 54) Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981; F. Ahuis, *Der klagende Gerichtsprophet: Studien zur Klage in der Überlieferung von den alttestamentlichen Gerichtspropheten* (CThM, 12), Stuttgart 1982; A.R. Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic Drama* (JSOT.S, 45) Sheffield 1987; K.-F. Pohlmann, *Die Ferne Gottes: Studien zum Jeremiabuch – Beiträge zu den 'Konfessionen' im Jeremiabuch und ein Versuch zur Frage nach den Anfängen der Jeremiatradition* (BZAW, 179), Berlin 1989; W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (Heremeneia), Philadelphia 1986, 1989; W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (ICC), 2 vols, Edinburgh 1986, 1996.

⁸⁷Cf. R.P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in Prophetic Traditions*, London 1979.

⁸⁸An example where this process is even traceable in the textual history is Mic. 7:1-13 where originally the prophet tried to exonerate God of failing to back him up in assuming that he himself must have committed some unspecified sin necessitating the postponement of the fulfilment of his prophecies of doom (retribution), but which was ultimately transformed into a confession of guilt of the post-exilic community (education). Cf. J.C. de Moor, 'Micah 7:1-13; The Lament of a Disillusioned Prophet', in: M.C.A. Korpel, J.M. Oesch (eds), *Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship*

A special case of educative theodicy is the Book of Lamentations. Education is mentioned *expressis verbis* in Lam 3:27: 'It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.' In his contribution Renkema argues that retribution theology does not fit in well with the theology of Lamentations. Rather he argues that YHWH is not regarded as being responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem. If there are educative elements in Lamentations there are also references to the mystery of theodicy (see section 8) which can be summed up in Lam 5:20: 'Why do you forget us unremittingly? Leave us alone as our days pass by?'

Other examples of educative theodicy are the Books of Ruth and Esther. The first shows that the sufferer should not conclude too soon that God has maltreated him or her, as Naomi did in Ruth 1. Being omniscient, God oversees much longer stretches of history than mortal man. His plans transcend human horizons.⁸⁹ At the end of the booklet Naomi sits contentedly with a grandson on her lap who will prove to be a forefather of king David. As Korpel suggests in her article, this theodicy is also operative on a metalevel: Naomi stands for the old Zion that should abandon her deep sorrow and Ruth stands for the new postexilic Zion which will become a haven for all nations.

At first sight it seems strange to regard the Book of Esther too as a theodicy. God is not even mentioned in the canonical Hebrew version of the book. However, the Greek versions of Esther which some scholars believe to be more original than the Hebrew text do mention God. These versions are intent on exonerating God from injustice as if He would have been responsible for putting his people in jeopardy. With regard to the Hebrew text Korpel holds that it can be regarded as a rather peculiar theodicy in that it forces the reader to conclude that it is not a viable option to abandon faith because you do not believe in a just God anymore. If she is right, the Book of Esther comes closest to modern secular thinking about theodicy.

Educative theodicy is also important in the Jewish martyr theology which we shall present in section 9. The theology of the Psalms of Solomon approaches Jewish martyr theology. In his

(Pericope, 1), Assen 2000, 149-96.

⁸⁹In their contributions Houtman and Laato signal similar theodicean arguments based on divine providence in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History.

contribution Atkinson demonstrates that the Psalms of Salomon share the main Jewish theological solution to suffering which is retributive theology. However, even though the author of these Psalms emphasises that no one is innocent there are some righteous who have to suffer undeservedly. This type of suffering the ancient author regards as educative divine chastisement: suffering keeps the righteous in a covenantal relationship with God. This being the case suffering is explained even in the terms of communion theodicy (see section 9). The sign of the right attitude of the righteous ones toward undeserved suffering is their confession: 'The Lord is just!'

The educative theodicy is also attested in the work of Philo, as shown by Runia, as well as in the New Testament writings. A classic example is presented in Heb. 12:4-6: 'In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." ' This New Testament educative theodicy resembles the idea of communion theodicy (see section 9).

The most developed system of educative theodicy can be found in Rabbinic theology. In his contribution Neusner shows how the Rabbinic literature contains 'the classification and hierarchisation of types of suffering ... Some suffering serves to rebuke a sinner and to call him to repentance; some penalizes sin in this world, leaving the sin expiated and facilitating entry into the world to come.'

7 Eschatological or Recompense Theodicy

Obviously one way to justify God was to state that later developments would prove that human suffering had not been in vain. When people started to believe that this would not happen in historical times anymore, this was a reason to postpone the solution to the riddle of suffering to the end of history. The rise of eschatological and apocalyptic theology is prominent in Old Testament writings dating from the postexilic time,⁹⁰ but

⁹⁰For an overview of the early scholarly discussion on eschatology see H.D. Preuss (ed), *Eschatologie im Alten Testament* (WdF, 480) Darmstadt 1978.

recent studies in apocalyptic have shown that it developed out of Old Testament prophecy in the 7th-2nd centuries. Old mythic elements and foreign influence from Persian religion (in particular, at Qumran) have also influenced the outcome of the apocalyptic.⁹¹ The literary roots of apocalyptic thinking can be found in the Akkadian and Egyptian pseudo-prophecies in which future events are presented according to the model of the *vaticinium ex eventu*.⁹² These pseudoprophetic texts describe from a deterministic viewpoint how the gods have led the course of history. Bad kings and their kingships will be followed by the rulership of a righteous king.⁹³

Formally these texts are reminiscent of Akkadian prophetic texts.⁹⁴ This formal connection between prophecy and pseudoprophetic texts in the ancient Near East can also be applied to the relationship between the Old Testament prophecy and Jewish apocalyptic.⁹⁵ On the other hand, the development of

⁹¹See J.J. Collins, 'Early Jewish Apocalypticism', *AncBD*, vol. 1:282-288; Idem, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London 1997; Idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, Grand Rapids 1998; J. J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity, New York 1998. The assumption of Persian influence on Jewish apocalyptic thinking is problematic on the basis of the fact that we do not know how old Persian apocalyptic documents really are. For this see A. Hultgård, 'Das Judentum in der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit und die iranische Religion – ein religionsgeschichtliche Problem', in: W. Haase, H. Temporini (eds), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Bd. II.19.1, Berlin 1979, 512-90; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 29-33.

⁹²The *vaticinium ex eventu* is an important element in the Jewish apocalyptic genre.

⁹³See Akkadian pseudoprophesies and scholarly discussion in H.S. Kvanvig, *The Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (WMANT, 61), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988; S. Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA, 9), Helsinki 1997; M. Nissinen, *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context : Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (SBL.Symposium series, 13), Atlanta 2000. See also Egyptian pseudoprophesies in W. Spiegelberg, *Die sogenannte demotische Chronik des Pap. 215 der Bibliothèque Nationale zu Paris nebst den auf der Rückseite des Papyrus stehenden Texten*, Leipzig 1914; *ANET*, 441-446; M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2: The New Kingdom, Berkeley 1976, 139-145; R.B. Parkinson, *The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems 1940-1640 BC*, Oxford 1997, 131-43.

⁹⁴See M. DeJong Ellis, 'Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations', *JCS*41 (1989), 127-186.

⁹⁵See H. Gese, 'Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik, dargestellt am Sachar-

apocalyptic has also been connected with social tensions in the Judean society during the Persian period. The Book of Isaiah, in particular the so-called Trito-Isaiah chapters 56-66, the Book of Zechariah, the Book of Malachi and the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse chapters 24-27 are examples of this development.⁹⁶ Finally, we cannot overlook the fact that apocalyptic imagination contains several mythical elements. A good example is the old 'war of YHWH' concept of the Divine Warrior (see, e.g., Judg. 5; Exod. 15; Deut. 33; Ps. 68; Hab. 3), or the elements of Canaanite Baal myths in the Book of Daniel.⁹⁷ It is no doubt prudent to speak of the origins of apocalyptic instead of a singular 'origin'.⁹⁸

The rise of eschatological and apocalyptic thinking in Israel is also reflected in the way how Old Testament texts were reinterpreted in Second Temple Judaism. A good example is the Hebrew word אַחֲרֵי־יָמִים which originally was used simply to indicate the future, as was the Ugaritic equivalent *'uhryt*. However, in later Jewish texts this word has often been reinterpreted as referring to the eschatological end time.⁹⁹ This short survey of the rise of apocalyptic indicates that eschatological theodicy can be expected only in postexilic texts and that many parts of the Old Testament have been reinterpreted later on in the apocalyptic and eschatological milieu. The best example of the genuine apocalyptic thinking and eschatological theodicy in the Old Testament is the Book

jabuch', *TuK* 70 (1973), 20-49; J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 19-29.

⁹⁶See O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, Oxford 1968; P.D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*, Philadelphia 1989; E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of Watchers and Apocalyptic* (OTS, 35), Leiden 1996; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 23-25.

⁹⁷See F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, Cambridge 1973, 343-6; Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*; J.J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 1993; Idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 20.

⁹⁸Cf. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old*, esp. 1-15.

⁹⁹Good examples are 4QPatr, the Testament of Judah 22:2-3; 24:1-6 and Targumim on Gen. 49:8-12 which interpret Gen. 49:8-12 in the terms of the Messiah and apparently understood the word אַחֲרֵי־יָמִים in Gen. 49:1 as referring to the eschatological time. Cf. M. Aberbach, B. Grossfeld, *Targum Onqelos on Genesis 49: Translation and Analytical Commentary* (SBL Aramaic Studies, 1), Missoula 1976; A. Diez Macho (ed.), *Targum Palaestinense in Pentateuchum, Additur Targum Pseudojonatan ejusque hispanica versio* (Biblia Polyglotta Matritensis, IV), t. 1: Genesis, Matriti 1988, 376-7.

of Daniel. Its famous passage on the resurrection, Dan. 12:1-3, is one of the earliest examples of the eschatological theodicy in Israel and it evidently elaborates Deutero-Isaiah's theory of the vicarious redemptive value of innocent suffering.¹⁰⁰ Eschatological theodicy was easy to combine with other forms of theodicy. For example, the Book of Daniel also presents the eschatological theodicy in conjunction of the communion theodicy (see Section 9).

Eschatological or recompense theodicy is the usual way to comfort and exhort the righteous ones to live according to the will of God in the Second Temple Judaism and this form of theodicy is regarded as self-evident in the New Testament writings. The textual evidence for this form of theodicy has been presented in many contributions of this volume and there is no need to repeat the arguments and contents in Charlesworth's, Atkinson's, Winston's, Runia's, Holmén's, Simojoki's, Chilton's and Neusner's contributions. However, not all Jewish circles in the Second Temple period accepted the eschatological and apocalyptic view. Ben Sira's theology¹⁰¹ and the disagreement between Pharisees and Sadducees about the resurrection documented in the New Testament are evidence for this dichotomy. It is likely that apocalyptic thinking was *en vogue* in the circles which were forced more and more into the periphery of Jewish society by the Temple aristocracy of Jerusalem.¹⁰² This theory could easily explain why apocalyptic does not play any significant role in the Book of Ben Sira which seems to be related to Temple aristocracy in some way. At least the High Priest Simon is praised in this book (Ben Sira 50). In a corresponding way this theory could explain why apocalyptic thinking is so central in the writings of Qumran which was also forced into the periphery by the Temple aristocracy.

¹⁰⁰See below.

¹⁰¹On which see Beentjes's contribution.

¹⁰²This is suggested by O. Plöger in his study *Theocracy and Eschatology*. Plöger's view was followed by P. Vielhauer, G. Strecker, 'Apocalypses and Related Subjects', in: E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher, R. McWilson (eds), *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, Louisville 1991, 542-68, esp. 558; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 22, 38. See also J.C. de Moor, 'The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1-12: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants', *JSJ* 29 (1998), 63-80.

8 Theodicy Deferred: The Mystery of Theodicy

In several ancient Near Eastern literary traditions we encounter the idea that people cannot make the deities responsible for unmerited suffering because the human mind is unable to fathom the mysterious working of the divine mind. In Egyptian wisdom literature the impossibility to know what the totally hidden deity will regard as wrong behaviour is stressed. Only in the afterlife the full truth will be revealed and deified man will be able to address the sun-god directly.¹⁰³ In Babylonia the scepticism about the model of retributive theodicy gave rise to the emergence of a theology of revelation mediated by religious specialists.¹⁰⁴

In the Old Testament the mystery of theodicy is presented mainly in two theological traditions: (1) the wisdom tradition, and (2) the theology of the Psalms. The Book of Job and Qohelet provide theodicies which emphasise that human beings cannot hope to always understand the meaning of suffering. In the Book of Job this can be seen, in particular, in chapter 28 which emphasises that humans cannot know the way to the place where wisdom dwells: 'Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of air ... God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells' (Job 28:20-21, 23). The aim of this chapter in the Book of Job is apparently to explain the mystery of theodicy. The content of Job 28 is parallel to the Babylonian Theodicy lines 256-264¹⁰⁵ and both are impressed by mankind's inability to understand the mysterious plans of the divine mind.¹⁰⁶ In his contribution Antoon Schoors has demonstrated that theodicy in the Book of Ecclesiastes is non-committal: 'Qohelet does not accuse God, neither does he defend him'. The reason for this attitude is that 'the solution of the theodicy problem is concealed in the unfathomable mystery of God'. Schoors emphasises that God 'is the maker of a problematic world, a *Deus absconditus*'. It is worth noting that this tradition of a *deus absconditus* is rooted in the ancient Near Eastern literature.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³See Loprieno's contribution.

¹⁰⁴See Van der Toorn's article.

¹⁰⁵Quoted in Van der Toorn's article.

¹⁰⁶See also Illman's contribution to this volume.

¹⁰⁷See Van der Toorn's contribution as well as De Moor, *The Rise of Yah-*

Another traditio-historical background to the mystery of theodicy in the Old Testament is found in the Book of Psalms. The Psalms contain old Jerusalemite temple theology where the central theme is the belief that the King YHWH Sebaoth is ruling in Zion and will provide protection against the powers of chaos, evil and death. Suffering was interpreted in this belief system as an indication of the absence of YHWH – something the supplicant does not always understand.¹⁰⁸ In some Psalms this absence of YHWH is explained as a consequence of sin committed by the person(s) praying. According to Lindström this idea is the result of redactional work or reflects late influences of the wisdom tradition, but in traditional Jerusalemite Temple theology this absence remains mysterious.

The mystery of theodicy becomes an acute problem in times of distress. In his contribution Laato emphasises that the fate of Josiah was difficult to understand in the categories of the covenantal theology of Deuteronomy. According to the Deuteronomistic History, Josiah fulfilled the Deuteronomic programme but, nevertheless, was killed in the battle of Megiddo – something which was impossible to explain on the basis of the theology of Deuteronomy. According to Laato, the death of Josiah remained mystery for the Deuteronomistic circle. Another time of the crisis was the exile. The Book of Lamentations is an example of the mystery of theodicy. Renkema has argued that the author of Lamentations ‘did not consider Yhwh to be responsible for the disaster facing the people’. The final analysis of the catastrophe taken place at Jerusalem remains mysterious. The Wisdom of Solomon too contains indications that people felt that the traditional retribution theology did not always solve the problem of theodicy. Winston singles out two problems which are dealt with in the Wisdom of Solomon: sterility and premature death.¹⁰⁹ Finally we should mention the theodicy in the Book of 4 Ezra which was written after the destruction of the Second Temple. As Charlesworth has demonstrated in his article this book presents an analysis of the events which indicates that they remained a mystery to the author. Charlesworth assigns 4 Ezra to the category ‘Unresolved Question or Mystery’. The mystery is formulated in

*wism*², 53-6, 62.

¹⁰⁸See Lindström’s contribution.

¹⁰⁹See his contribution to this volume.

4 Ezra 4:52 so that not even the archangel Uriel can give Ezra the reason for the destruction of Jerusalem because *he does not know*.

Initially the death of Jesus may have been regarded as belonging in the category of the mystery of theodicy. Quite soon, however, other ways to understand the meaning of the death of Jesus began to dominate. In the present form of the New Testament the death of Jesus is already interpreted in soteriological terms, as Tom Holmén shows in his contribution.

9 Communion Theodicy

The fundamental idea behind this theodicy is that suffering can bring human beings closer to God. There are three important traditions of communion theodicy in the Old Testament, two of which have been dealt with in the contributions of this volume. *First*, Lindström has shown that the Book of the Psalms gives an important theological background to this form of theodicy. For example, in Psalm 6 ‘suffering is ... a sign of acceptance by God, rather than God’s rejection or punishment’. Especially in the Wisdom Psalms this type of theodicy appears to be a source of consolation. *Second*, the Book of Job, in particular the closing chapter of the poetic part, shows how Job has come closer to God through his suffering: ‘Through ear’s hearing I hear you and now my eye sees you’ (Job 42:5).

The *third* approach based on communion theodicy can be found in the Old Testament prophetic literature. In 1936 Abraham Joshua Heschel published his important contribution on Old Testament prophecy in which he introduced the concept of ‘divine pathos’.¹¹⁰ This term means for Heschel that God is ready to suffer for his people, and even to partake in its sufferings.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ A.J. Heschel, *Die Prophetie* (Mémoires de la Commission orientaliste Kraków, 22), Kraków 1936 (Eng. tr., *The Prophets*, Philadelphia 1962). Note J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1963, 339, n. 100a: ‘This emphasis on the divine pathos is of course fully justified, particularly as a reaction against a one-sided intellectualist view.’ A good survey of Heschel’s theological ideas on ‘divine pathos’ can be found in: F.A. Rotschild (ed.), *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism from the Writings of Abraham J. Heschel*, London 1965, 91-126.

¹¹¹ Heschel writes about the divine pathos: ‘It finds its deepest expression in the fact that God can actually suffer.’ Cf. F.A. Rotschild (ed.), *Between God and Man*, 120.

Divine pathos is a functional reality; it is directed outward and it expresses a relation to man.¹¹² Heschel deals with the pre-exilic prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and demonstrates how they explained 'divine pathos' to the people of YHWH.¹¹³ In particular, Jeremiah plays an important role in Heschel's view.¹¹⁴ According to Heschel, this theological concept defines something essential to the Jewish religion,

A purely ethical monotheism in which God, the guardian of the moral order, keeps the world subject to the law, would restrict the scope of God's knowledge and concern to what is of ethical significance. God's relation to man would, in general, run along the lines of a universal principle. The divine pathos alone is able to break through this rigidity and create new dimensions for the unique, the specific, and the particular.¹¹⁵

Heschel's study is a fine analysis of one dimension of the Old Testament prophetic literature which emphasises that God does not remain distant from the suffering of mankind. Through suffering humans have the possibility to come closer to God. Therefore, it is no wonder that Heschel's study has inspired scholars interpreting the Old Testament prophetic literature. A good example is the article W. Harrelson contributed to James Crenshaw's *Festschrift*. Harrelson dealt with the relevant passages in Isa. 63–64 and, in particular, Jes. 63:9 where the original Hebrew text presents the deep existential truth: 'In their suffering, God also suffered ...'¹¹⁶ Yet it is proper to add that divine suffering in the Old Testament differs in significant respects from the anthropopathic descriptions of suffering Ugaritic deities.¹¹⁷

The meaning of innocent suffering inflicted by God is the subject of one of the most controversial passages in the Bible,

¹¹²See Heschel in: F.A. Rotschild (ed.), *Between God and Man*, 117–8.

¹¹³A.J. Heschel, *Die Prophetie*, 56–97, 127–83.

¹¹⁴'Niemand hat tiefere Einblicke in das Verhältnis Gottes zum Volk gewonnen als Jeremia. In seinen Worten enthüllt sich der Pathoscharakter vollständiger, reiner und reicher als in den Reden der anderen Propheten.' Heschel, *Die Prophetie*, 65.

¹¹⁵Heschel in: F.A. Rotschild (ed.), *Between God and Man*, 120.

¹¹⁶See the interpretation of this verse in W. Harrelson, '“Why, O Lord, Do You Harden Our Heart?” A Plea for Help from a Hiding God', in: Penchansky, Redditt (eds), *Shall not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right?*, 163–74.

¹¹⁷See Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds*, 122, 165–85, as well as De Moor's contribution to this volume.

Isa. 52:13–53:12.¹¹⁸ There are many exegetical problems in Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the identity of the servant is a notorious problem, and scholars do not agree whether or not the passage describes the vicarious suffering of the servant, or his real death and resurrection.¹¹⁹ As a consequence, it is also difficult to classify the type of theodicy involved: is it a special variant of the retribution theodicy dealt with above? Or is it a communion theodicy?

The traditio-historical background of Isaiah 53 is also problematic. In his contribution to this volume Laato has suggested that Josiah's dramatic death at Megiddo formed the traditio-historical background of Isaiah 53 (even though the passage in its present form does not refer to him). The dramatic death of Josiah which was difficult to understand in the light of the Deuteronomistic covenant theology may have induced people to abandon a rigorous retribution theodicy and to consider the possibility of a communion theodicy. Josiah's fate became a paradigm in lamentations which were generally known yet in the time of the Chronicler (2 Chron. 35:25). The themes of these lamentations might have been used then in texts which tried to explain the suffering of the righteous during the exile. Such a royal theodicy can be detected behind Ps. 89; Zech. 12:10–13:1 and, ac-

¹¹⁸See, e.g., Chr. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study*, London 1963; H. Haag, *Der Gottesknecht bei Deuterjesaja* (EdF 233), Darmstadt 1985; B. Janowski, P. Stuhlmacher (eds), *Der leidende Gottesknecht: Jesaja 53 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte mit einer Bibliographie zu Jes 53* (FAT, 14), Tübingen 1996; W.H. Bellinger, W.R. Farmer, *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, Harrisburg 1998.

¹¹⁹The vicarious interpretation is rejected by, e.g., H.M. Orlinsky, 'The So-Called "Servant of the Lord" and "Suffering Servant" in Second Isaiah', *VT.S* 14 (1967), 1–133, esp. 51–66; G.R. Driver, 'Isaiah 52:13–53:12: The Servant of the Lord', in: M. Black, G. Fohrer (eds), *In Memoriam Paul Kahle* (BZAW, 103), Berlin 1968, 90–105, esp. 104–5; J.A. Soggin, 'Tod und Auferstehung des leidenden Gottesknechtes Jesaja 53,8–10', *ZAW* 87 (1975), 346–55; R.N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet: An Interpretation of Isaiah Chapter 53* (JSOT.S, 4), Sheffield 1978, 29–106. See criticism of this view, A. Laato, *The Servant of YHWH and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40–55* (CB.OT 35), Stockholm 1992, 138–50; B.S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL), Louisville 2001, 418; A. Schenker, *Knecht und Lamm Gottes (Jesaja 53): Übernahme von Schuld im Horizont der Gottesknechtlieder* (SBS, 190), Stuttgart 2001, and for fresh textual and philological evidence supporting the vicarious interpretation, M.C.A. Korpel, J.C. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40–55* (OTS, 41), Leiden 1998, 545–75.

cording to Laato, Isaiah 53. We readily recognise, however, that other traditio-historical paradigms have been offered for the latter chapter.¹²⁰

Despite all these problems the thrust of the message of this famous passage seems clear. Through his suffering the servant becomes a mediator between YHWH and the people and can introduce a new era of salvation history for Israel – something many expressions in Isaiah 53 as well as in 42:1-9 and 49:1-12 indicate.¹²¹ The servant of Isaiah 53 is described in terminology reminiscent of the depiction of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16.¹²² *First*, the expression עֹן וְנֶשֶׂא in Lev. 16:22 indicates that the scapegoat is sent to the place of chaos and destruction (= desert) in order to carry away the sins of society. In a similar way the servant of Isaiah 53 is described as bearing the sins of the people and removing them through his own suffering and death. The verb נֶשֶׂא is used twice in Isaiah 53 in a manner which emphasises the vicarious suffering of the servant,

Isaiah 53:4

אֲכֵן חֲלִינוּ הוּא נֶשֶׂא 4aA Yet it was he who has borne our illnesses,
וּמִכְאֲבֵינוּ סָבַלָם 4aB and carried our sorrows;

Isaiah 53:12

וְהוּא חֲטֵא־רַבִּים נֶשֶׂא 12bC and it was he who has borne the sins of
many,
וְלִפְשָׁעִים יִפְגֵּעַ 12bD and will continue to intercede for
transgressors.

Isa. 53:10 indicates that YHWH is willing to accept the life of the servant as the guilt-offering which was required to expiate the sins of Israel.¹²³ This takes away some of the harshness of Isa. 53:10 ‘YHWH *wanted* to crush him’.

¹²⁰For example, dependence on the traditions about Moses, cf. K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 2001, 387–463.

¹²¹One relevant interpretive model is that Isaiah 53 in its Deutero-Isaian context refers to sufferings of the righteous Israelites which would benefit the whole people. See for this interpretation in A. Laato, *The Servant of Yhwh and Cyrus*, 130–165.

¹²²See T.N.D. Mettinger, *A Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axiom* (SMHVL, 1982–1983:3), Lund 1983, 42. See also Laato, *The Servant of Yhwh and Cyrus*, 144.

¹²³Lev. 5:5–7, 15, 17–18; 19:22. Cf. Korpel, De Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40–55*, 548.

Second, the expression אֶל-אֶרֶץ נִזְרָה in Lev. 16:22 runs parallel to כִּי נִזְרָה מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים in Isa. 53:8. The verbal root נִזַּר is used in both passages and the expression in Isa. 53:8 presupposes the presence of the notion of the ‘world of the death’ to which אֶרֶץ in Lev. 16:22 refers.

Although the idea of vicarious suffering and sacrifice is not specifically Israelite,¹²⁴ it became one of the most effective possibilities to make the suffering of innocent people, especially children, more or less acceptable to the exilic and post-exilic Jewish communities. It forms the basis for the theology of martyrdom which rose to prominence in Jewish thinking from the time of Maccabees onwards.¹²⁵ This theology emphasises the communion theodicy even though it also contains educative and eschatological elements. One of the earliest interpretations of Isaiah 53 can be found in the Book of Daniel which glorifies the resistance of pious martyrs who were willing to die for the Torah of YHWH. According to Dan. 11:33-35 the military victories of the Maccabees enjoyed only limited success.¹²⁶ The final and decisive victory will come from YHWH alone. The willingness of Jewish martyrs to die will ultimately provoke YHWH to take action and destroy the wicked enemy (see, e.g., Dan. 7 and 11–12). The im-

¹²⁴ Especially in Mesopotamian and Hittite rituals substitution was an accepted practice to pacify the deity, cf. e.g. J. Bottéro, ‘Le substitut royal et son sort en Mésopotamie ancienne’, *Akkadica* 9 (1978), 2-24; J.N. Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Šimtu* (Orientalia Biblica et Christiana, 7), Wiesbaden 1994; S.M. Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: Eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale* (Namburbi) (Baghdader Forschungen, 18), Mainz 1994; M. Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources* (SAAS, 7), Helsinki 1998. For the Hittites: Hoffner’s article in this volume, p. 102; H.M. Kümmel, *Ersatzrituale für den hethitischen König* (StBT, 3), Wiesbaden 1967; Idem, ‘Ersatzkönig und Sündenbock’, *ZAW* 80 (1968), 289-318; P. Taracha, *Ersetzen und Entsühnen: Das mittelhethitische Ersatzritual für den Großkönig Tuthaliya (CTH *448.4) und verwandte Texte* (CHANE, 5), Leiden 2000.

¹²⁵ Cf. E. Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühntod Jesu Christi*, Göttingen 1955, 66-72; J.W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, Leiden 1997, esp. 160-3.

¹²⁶ J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees* (AncB, 41), Garden City 1976, 64-5; Idem, ‘How the Authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees Treated the “Messianic” Promises’, in: J. Neusner *et al.* (eds), *Judaism and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, Cambridge 1987, 69-96, esp. 74-5.

portant role played by martyrs in the Book of Daniel is apparent from the fact that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is alluded to in Dan. 11:33–12:10. The expression מְצַדִּיק הָרַבִּים ‘those who justify the many’ in Dan. 12:3 is an echo of יְצַדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים ‘my servant (a righteous one) will justify many’ in Isa. 53:11; הַמְשַׁכְּלִים ‘those who are succesful’ in Dan. 12:3 reflects the verb יִשְׁכִּיל ‘he will be succesful’ in Isa 52:13. The word הַדַּעַת ‘the knowledge’ in Dan. 12:4 is probably derived from Isa. 53:11 יִשְׁבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ ‘he will be satisfied by his knowledge’.¹²⁷

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 remained influential in later Jewish thinking about undeserved suffering, but it would take us too far afield if we were to pursue this matter any further here.¹²⁸ Suffice it to say that the martyrdom of many of the prophets – including Isaiah the supposed author of Isa. 53 – who spoke up against the injustice committed in their times was a source of inspiration to all those who pondered the problem of divine justice.¹²⁹ Needless to say, however, that in Judaism – except for certain Jewish-Christian groups – the theology of martyrdom did not develop into views closely resembling the New Testament idea that sins could be totally removed by the death of the martyr(s). In the New Testament the death of Jesus was understood as vicarious and its theological consequences have been analysed in Tom Holmén’s contribution to this volume.

¹²⁷See H.L. Ginsberg, ‘The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant’, *VT* 3 (1953), 400–404; J. Day, ‘DA‘AT ‘Humiliation’ in Isaiah LIII 11 in the Light of Isaiah LIII 3 and Daniel XII 4, and the Oldest Known Interpretation of the Suffering Servant’, *VT* 30 (1980), 97–103; K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT, 219), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986, 338–43. It is also worth noting that the 6 translations of Dan. 11:35 and 12:3 are reminiscent of the 6 of Isa. 52:13–53:12. Cf. P. Grelot, *Les Poèmes du Serviteur: De la lecture critique à l’herméneutique* (LeDiv, 103), Paris 1981, 121–5.

¹²⁸In addition to the literature cited in the preceding notes see S. R. Driver, A. Neubauer (eds), *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters*, 2 vols, New York repr. 1969 (also 1999). For the Targum on this chapter see Chilton’s contribution to this volume.

¹²⁹Cf. B. Halpern Amaru, ‘The Killing of the Prophets: Unraveling a Midrash’, *HUCA* 54 (1983), 153–80; A.M. Schwemer, *Vitae prophetarum* (JSRZ, 7), Gütersloh 1997; De Moor, ‘The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1–12’, 63–80; A. Laato, ‘The Idea of *kipper* in the Judaism of Late Antiquity’, *Khristianskij Vostok* 1 (1999), 155–93.

10 Theodicy Based on Human Determinism

Theodicy based on human determinism is a rather drastic way to solve the problem of suffering. The basic idea is that humans cannot escape their fate. Loprieno shows that this view is sometimes expressed in Egyptian wisdom and De Moor emphasises that in Ugaritic literature humankind is powerless against the evil machinations of certain deities. In the Old Testament Qohelet comes closest to a deterministic point of view, as Schoors writes: 'In my opinion, Qohelet is pretty much a determinist, convinced that God "determines" everything on earth.' Charlesworth shows how this kind of deterministic view is also visible in 4 Ezra, but that this form of theodicy is not the only approach of the problem in 4 Ezra. Its determinism is based on the theological statement that Adam's sin has radically changed the fate of the humankind (4 Ezra 7:48) and is reminiscent of the argumentation of Paul in Romans 5. A full-fledged deterministic solution to the problem of theodicy can be found in the Islamic Ash'arite tradition where the human free-will was contrasted with divine predestination.¹³⁰

Epilogue

It is our hope that this volume will help to elucidate the multifaceted historical origins of the theodicy problem. From antiquity on, the same disquieting questions and tentative answers appear to have been formulated over and over again. Often one finds different and sometimes even conflicting approaches in one and the same work, illustrating how people were groping for answers when they tried to understand the dark side of divinity. Perhaps it is even wrong to try, as Karl Barth stated so emphatically. Or is it wiser to refrain from questioning divine justice altogether? As an Egyptian sage remarked poignantly about 2400 years ago,

*He who spits his saliva heavenwards, will get it in his face.*¹³¹

¹³⁰ As discussed *in extenso* above. See further on this contrast W. Montgomery Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam*, London 1948.

¹³¹ Wisdom of Onkhsheshonqy, 123, cf. H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Weisheit: Lehren für das Leben*, Zürich 1988, 273.