

(Hayes, 2006)

JOB

1:22 In all this Job did not sin or impute anything unsavory to God.

2:3 The Lord said to the Satan, " ... and still he *holds on to his integrity*, so you incited me to destroy him for nothing" (2:3).

2:9 His wife said to him, "Do you still *hold on to your integrity*? Curse God and die!"

2:10 In all this, Job did not sin with his lips.

9:17 " ... He wounds me much for nothing."

27:2-6 "By God who has deprived me of justice! By Shaddai who has embittered my life! As long as there is life in me, and God's breath is in my nostrils, **my lips will speak no wrong, nor my tongue utter deceit**. Far be it from me to say you are right; until I die I will *maintain my integrity*. I persist in my righteousness and will not yield; I shall be free of reproach as long as I live."

40:8 "Would you impugn my justice? Would you condemn me that you may be right?"

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The assumption of a moral order, a system of retributive divine justice, leads to one of two errors:

Error 1: that suffering is a sign of sin

OR (if it is not, then)

Error 2: God is indifferent, wicked, unjust because he allows the innocent to suffer

Job's friends make error 1 - imputing sin where they see suffering. But Job is innocent and suffering "for nothing." God affirms this when he says that the friends have lied and Job has spoken what is true.

Job makes error 2 - impugns God's character or justice because the innocent suffer and the wicked prosper. But Job is equally mistaken.

Both mistakes are avoided if the initial assumption - of a moral order, a system of retributive divine justice - is abandoned. God is not a moral accountant. If he were then it would be impossible ever to do the right thing for its own sake. Only when the hope for just desserts is dead, can one act with full integrity, maintaining one's righteousness.

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