



## **The Church Trauma of Stifled Grief: A Reflection and Analysis from an Old Testament Perspective**

Author(s): *Michael Chris Ndele, Academic Researcher, Department of Biblical Studies, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium*

Corresponding email: [ndelemichael@yahoo.com](mailto:ndelemichael@yahoo.com).

### **Abstract**

The Church spans a community of relationship between people and God. As an organization, the Church can induce trauma among individual members and at the same time undergo it. The present paper investigates the question of the role of the Church in trauma creation and management. Traumatic incidence particularly clergy sexual misconduct disrupts harmonious relationship and puts the Church at the crossroads of a difficult decision and action. Drawing upon a narrative analysis with the story of Job in the Old Testament, it is observed that the Church trauma of stifled grief parallels Job's traumatic experiences among his friends in his community. While individuals who suffer trauma in the Church have much in common with Job as a victim of trauma, it is evident that both trauma victims in the Church and the Church as a whole may find valuable lessons in Job's trauma episode for mutual healing and restoration of peace and well-being.

**Keywords:** Trauma, Church, Stifled Grief, Agent, Victim, Clergy, Sexual Abuse, Job

### **Introduction**

The experience of trauma may underscore a situation in which a person is at the receiving end of the traumatic incidence. For this reason, I was puzzled by the topic for this paper concerning how one may understand the phrase 'the Church Trauma of Stifled Grief'. Questions that one is inclined to ask include (1) does it mean the Church suffers from trauma of stifled grief? And (2) does it connote the Church and trauma of stifled grief? After a brief brainstorming, I deduced two levels of understanding namely 'the Church Trauma of Stifled Grief' implies, in my view, the Church, on the one hand, as an agent of trauma of stifled grief and on the other hand, the Church also as a victim of trauma of stifled grief. By this distinction, I seek to address two

questions: first, how does the Church become both an agent and victim of trauma of stifled grief? And second, what lessons can be learned from an Old Testament's evidence in respect of this situation in the Church?

The Church may be described as a community of believers who aspire to reach one goal of serving God in order to enter into eternal life in Heaven.<sup>i</sup> The Church is considered to be both human and divine as an institution. In her earthly or human institutional posture, the Church spans her own systems of governance which Bovis encapsulates in the following, "she has her own tribunals, her own special code of law and her own systems of jurisprudence".<sup>ii</sup> The human dimension of the Church intertwines with the divine through the leaders acting to represent

God on earth in the Church. This distinguishes the leaders from the other members and consequently, creates power dynamics where priests and bishops, i.e. the hierarchy, exercise power to rule and govern and to sanction behaviours and actions in the name of God which the other members must follow. The Church, then, appears to be in an unequal relationship with her members through her established hierarchy even though both leaders and members together form the one body of Christ.<sup>iii</sup> The Church can become a source of suffering for her members and at the same time, she can magnify their pain when she acts in a ‘subtle way<sup>iv</sup> to offer relief to the suffering members through the overlapping relationship between the human and the divine aspects of the Church.

In this sense, it is plausible to hold that the Church Trauma of Stifled Grief connotes both the Church as an agent and victim of trauma.<sup>v</sup> The Church in her complex hierarchical arrangements and governance policies maintains a culture that lends itself to the perpetuation of evil behaviours. Arbuckle seems to argue that such evil behaviours as corruption, abuse of power, cover-ups as well as stifling grief are culturally oriented in the Church.<sup>vi</sup> In the Church just like in other societies, cultures are difficult to change and until appropriate measures are put in place, such culturally-motivated menaces will continue in the Church.<sup>vii</sup> In this article, my methodology revolves around a narrative critical approach to address the trauma question in relation to the Church and the Old Testament in a four-topical composition. This includes what is trauma?, an Old Testament perspective on traumatic experiences among God’s people,

exposed trauma as authenticity of life and worship rather than shame and disbelief, and dangers of repressed trauma: effects, solution and recommendation.

Trauma is a thorny issue in human existence which probably defies history and historical records. It is an unpleasant condition in a person but which can also take a collective or communal shape beyond the individual level of the traumatic experience.<sup>viii</sup> The understanding of trauma has passed through several phases between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In these eras, trauma was construed to be both physiological and psychological consequences which a person suffers from the traumatic event. Trauma theorists, the British physician, John Erichsen and the German neurologist, Paul Oppenheim, tied the notion of trauma to a physiological condition describing it as “undetectable changes in the brain”<sup>ix</sup> whereas the psychological character of trauma was theorized by Sigmund Freud and other turn-of-the-century psychoanalysts who studied trauma as “the wounding of the mind brought about by sudden, unexpected, emotional shock”.<sup>x</sup> These discoveries were deemed to be basic at this time in the knowledge and understanding of trauma since its complex nature could not be fully exhausted only on physiological and psychological planes.<sup>xi</sup>

Both World Wars one and two generated interest in trauma but it did not become an official subject of study until after the Vietnam war in the context of what became known as the “shell shock”.<sup>xii</sup> The ‘shell shock’ incident led to the general adoption of the acronym PTSD, i.e. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, to describe the aftermath of a traumatic event. PTSD was

officially accepted by the American Psychiatric Association in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1980.<sup>xiii</sup> All these stages of ramifications in the conceptualization of trauma point to the fact that trauma is a serious issue and deserves serious attention since for Leys, “The experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present”.<sup>xiv</sup> Thus, PTSD is evidence and witness to trauma among people. People know and feel the hurt even if it cannot be expressed verbally.<sup>xv</sup>

Considering the social, political, cultural and religious avenues for both individual and group's approaches to trauma, Yansen argues that “Trauma is a process; it is created—shaped in the intersection of the extreme events, the individual/group identities, and the social contexts in which trauma arises—the trauma matrix”.<sup>xvi</sup> He further underscores the trauma matrix as the embodiment of “the beliefs systems, social networks, available economic and institutional resources, and other factors that can shape perceptions and experiences of trauma”.<sup>xvii</sup> Such a view rather tends to trivialize the experience of trauma and its management by leaving them in the hands of things external to the traumatic experience. Yansen also warns that “the academic field of trauma studies is a twentieth century Western invention” which, in my view, makes the hysteria about trauma a kind of advertisement that sells for the agenda and interests of certain agencies and institutions.<sup>xviii</sup>

In this vein, Allan Young observes that “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is not timeless, nor does it possess an intrinsic unity. Rather, it is glued together by the practices, technologies,

and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied, treated, and represented and by the various interests, institutions, and moral arguments that mobilized these efforts and resources”.<sup>xix</sup> This seems to give the impression that one should probably see the incidence of trauma along with its excruciating effects as something mechanical and unrealistic. However, actual traumatic events that occur to individuals do leave their effects with them and such accounts of individual experiences cannot be simply written off by an institutional judgement. Laura Brown sheds light on this contending that, “Each experience of an encounter with a traumatic stressor is unique and is given unique meaning by the life history of the person (or collectivity) to whom it occurs”.<sup>xx</sup>

Against this backdrop, trauma as a process and creation in the so-called trauma matrix provides grounds to discern the trauma of stifled grief in the context of the Church. The process and creation of trauma of stifled grief manifest in the consistent systematic attempts by the Church to cover up cases of abuse, shield perpetrators and silence serious victims who may dare to go public about the evil incident. The Church is reluctant to deal with such evils that make newspaper and television headlines because the intervention may bring her reputation to question. The resultant attitude of indifference towards evidence-based trauma cases does not mean she does not hear and see the awful plight of people in trauma. Rather, it is a deliberate choice; a selective move to prefer to do everything possible to safeguard her image against any potential threats. I define ‘trauma of stifled grief’ as a type of trauma in which the traumatized subject or individual or group is

denied the freedom to express the pain of the traumatic effects for public attention. I demonstrate in the remainder of the paper whether the Church has consciously or unconsciously caused this type of trauma to some individual members by employing narrative analysis to assess episodes of trauma in the Old Testament to address our primary questions.

There are several indications in church settings where cases of sexual abuse and abuse of clerical power were concealed to cause the affected parties who wanted to openly express their grief to be silent.<sup>xxi</sup> In the Old Testament, traumatic situations and their outright expression by the victims may be seen to form the core basis of certain prophetic messages and divine interventions in the victims' lives showing that God does not silence the mouths that cry and He does not turn His ears against the hearts that groan and grieve in moments of trauma.<sup>xxii</sup> Though other examples can be found in different portions of the Old Testament including the Psalms and Lamentations, I focus my analysis on the book of Job to address the issue of trauma of stifled grief in the Church. This is because Job seems to represent a Church that is an agent and victim of trauma in the various ways the characters play their roles.

### What is trauma?

Trauma as a subject of study in relation to human suffering may cover a range of meaning. The word trauma is derived from the Greek *τραυμα* (*trauma*) meaning 'wound' or 'hurt'.<sup>xxiii</sup> It conveys a sense of something negative usually an unpleasant event that occurs to a person. In Hebrew, trauma originates from the verb *הָלָם*

(*helem*) which implies to 'hammer', 'strike down' or 'crush'. With its use in Judges 5:26, it is compared to what a workman's instrument does, i.e. to strike, crush, and shatter.<sup>xxiv</sup> In this sense, the Hebrew *הָלָם* for trauma may connote something that incapacitates a person whether physically, emotionally or mentally. Both Greek and Hebrew connotations suggest that trauma usually is about something unpleasant that alters the emotional, physiological, psychological and mental well-being of a person or group. From these etymological insights, I define trauma as any unpleasant event that has the capacity to perplex the mind, body and spirit of a person or group.<sup>xxv</sup>

Events that result in trauma for individuals and communities include genocide; one can talk of the brutal massacre of people by the Boko Haram group in Nigeria, natural disasters, for example, earthquakes such as the 2004 India Ocean earthquake and tsunami, the January 2010 Haiti earthquake, the 2024 tragic flooding in Spain as well as the January 2025 Los Angeles fires that destroyed several homes, killed many people and displaced those who survived. Trauma can also manifest in human or man-made activities such as war, for instance, the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war; rape, sexual abuse, paedophilia and domestic violence, just to mention a few, which usually distort the peace and psychological well-being of people and leave them helpless.<sup>xxvi</sup> People who have undergone such negative and unpleasant situations experience one or several of the symptoms and characteristics of PTSD. These include "flashbacks, nightmares, and other reexperiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt, autonomic arousal, explosive violence or

tendency to hypervigilance ....”<sup>xxvii</sup> As people struggle with symptoms of PTSD, they are also incapacitated to do anything for themselves due to the overwhelming psychological weight of the trauma on them. In cases of rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence, sometimes, victims wish they could speak, but they cannot. The Church can become an agent of trauma of stifled grief in cases where some of her own leaders are the perpetrators of the evils committed against some church members, for example, sexual misconduct of the clergy. The Church is also a victim when her members suffer these evils at the hands of her minister-perpetrators. In these situations, there is a trauma that generates the tendency for the Church to stifle grief of trauma victims in order to save her image. Thus, clergy sexual abuse is a common case study for grief of victims to be stifled.

With particular focus on clergy sexual abuse, the Church may function in both agent and victim modes which allow trauma of stifled grief to be orchestrated through cover-ups by church officials as well as by some other members against victims of abuse. In this dual functional mode, we see a Church that causes suffering to her members and at the same time, does everything possible to suppress victims who may want to express grief to seek redress. Arbuckle relates several factors including the power culture and system of organization that foment and foster abuse and cover-ups in the Church.<sup>xxviii</sup> In the case of clergy sexual misconduct, the supposed idealization of the priesthood, i.e. clericalism, by its very nature suppresses victims with fear to openly express their grief. Citing authors like John Kenneth Galbraith, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault,

he makes us understand that clerical power in the face of abuse renders victims powerless and helpless to do what ought to be done.<sup>xxix</sup> In the words of Foucault, “coercive power seductively infuses every aspect of a culture and is psychologically invasive and oppressive.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Cover-ups aim to repress grief through such other factors as bullying tactics of offender-superior against victim-subordinate, the desire to protect the perceived ‘perfect’ image of the Church, fearful threats, secrecy procedures, avoidance of shame and the maintenance of a rigid hierarchical system of governance. All these work in the interest of the Church against victim’s welfare since the leadership or church officials have the power to control and subvert communication.<sup>xxxi</sup> It is no wonder that in the wake of sex scandals in the Irish Catholic Church in 1997, the apostolic nuncio sternly reminded and cautioned the Irish bishops that “if they adopted the policy of automatically reporting pederasts to the police, they would be breaking canon law.”<sup>xxxii</sup> It is easy, then, for a corrupt culture in the Church to cover up cases of abuse to shield perpetrators while vulnerable victims wallow in their grief and internal shame that rob them of self-worth.

Trauma of stifled grief leaves the Church to be greatly wounded and crippled since victims are still part and parcel of the Church. Grief or the act of grieving may be defined as “the internal experience of sadness, sorrow, anger, loneliness, anguish, confusion, shame, guilt, and fear, in individuals and cultures as a consequence of experiencing loss.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> When people cannot express grief, the ‘loss’ they experience may relate to their faith in God and man as questions they cannot find answers to arise regarding the

whereabouts of God in moments of trauma. It may also constitute constant torture and torment which perplex body, mind and spirit of people undergoing trauma of stifled grief in the Church.

In this regard, the Church as a whole also finds herself in an ambiguous position marked by a dilemma of blocking the same way she is supposed to lead. In other words, the evil of sexual misconduct of clergy is an overwhelming adversity for the Church to handle and at the same time function properly in her role and mission as a Church. This situation of trauma of stifled grief in the life of some church members (victim-church) and church leaders (agent-church) probably can be compared with the story of the trauma of Job in the Old Testament as illustrated in the analysis of the following section.

### **A Narrative Analysis of the Story of Job within the Context of the Church Trauma of Stifled Grief**

The book of Job is a narrative piece which depicts the distressing adversities of a man reputed for his upright life before God and man. The book bears the name of its hero, Job, who is reported to come from the land of Uz. Within its narrative framework, the hero is the main character around whom every detail of the story revolves.<sup>xxxiv</sup> From the outset, the story shows how Job is blessed with everything and even more than what any person could wish for in life stemming from physical, psychological, material, spiritual, emotional and social well-being.<sup>xxxv</sup>

However, all his possessions and abundant blessing consisting of family; wife and children, friends, properties, farms, animals, status and relevance all vanished at once during a time of

unprecedented catastrophes in his life. The narrator—in his role as an omniscient—lets his readers know that Job's trauma is occasioned by God's betting enterprises with Satan in a heavenly assembly concerning the life of Job.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Job, then, is the unfortunate victim of this wager between God and Satan which eventually reduces him to nothing less than human; a man afflicted with miseries, sorrows, pain and mockery.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

To begin with, a trauma narrative analysis of Job involves characterizing Job as a man of affliction: a symbol of an afflicted or traumatized person or community. Job's trauma, the interactions during the encounter with his friends and God's long waiting may be seen to mirror the trauma of stifled grief in the Church where in the case of clergy sexual abuse, victims who want to grieve are made to feel they should rather blame themselves.<sup>xxxviii</sup> There appears to be a connection between the way the friends of Job reacted to his trauma and how sometimes the prevailing church culture makes some church members behave towards the victims of abuse. A narrative analysis which illustrates this posture between Job's trauma and trauma of stifled grief in the Church may be carried out as follows.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The book of Job covers forty-two chapters comprising such characters as Job, his three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, the wife of Job and children, Elihu, God and Satan. All forty-two chapters may be summarized into four segments namely (i) chs 1-3: Job and his trauma, (ii) chs 4-26; 32-37: Job and his friends in a back-and-forth conversation regarding his trauma, (iii) chs 27-31; 40-41: Job and God discourses/disputations and (iv) ch. 42:

Justification and Restoration by God. Our analysis of these parts is conducted based on a threefold narrative trauma analysis: a. before trauma analysis, b. during trauma analysis and c. after trauma analysis.

### **a. Before Trauma Analysis: Job: Person and Character**

This part involves a description of the person of Job, his life and character. In the opening lines of the story, we read about Job's life as blameless and upright; a man who fears God and avoids evil (Job 1:1b). Besides his impeccable moral life, Job is also blessed with a family of seven sons and three daughters (Job 1:2). The ten children born to him with seven being male children and three as females suggest that Job as a man was complete and full.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps, it is this special blessing that enabled him to attract respect and recognition among people in his vicinity.

In addition, the narrator also describes his material riches symbolized in his possession of "seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yokes of oxen, five hundred donkeys and very many servants" (Job 1:3a). Job is also lauded as "the greatest of all the people in the east" (Job 1:3c). The stocks of animals may indicate both Job's economic and financial standing in the community. The animals numbering in thousands and hundreds rather reflect the abundance of Job's material riches. He had uncountable servants who attend to him and serve him; something that portrays Job in a narratological way as probably a really rich man beyond compare in his community.

Moreover, the inclusion of the sons feasting with friends and their sisters (cf. Job 1:4) probably reveals the narrator's intention to emphasize the

emotional, psychological and social well-being of Job and his family. Job fulfills his spiritual duties for his children by offering sacrifices to God to sanctify them and to atone for any sins they might have committed. In all, Job is a full-fledged man: holy, prosperous and wealthy. He wields not only moral integrity, but he is also spiritually staunch with abundant blessing. Job is a healthy and successful individual on all grounds as manifested in his physical, psychological, material, spiritual, emotional and social resources.

This state of Job may be compared to a robust community of believers, i.e. the Church that lives to relate to one another with respect and love. Just as Job's person and character are wholesome and complete in terms of wellness prior to his trauma, so also is a Church and her members in the absence of any traumatic turmoil, for instance, clergy sexual abuse, inflicted on some members to ruin her peace.

### **b. During Trauma Analysis: A Description of Job's Trauma, his Friends and their Interactions**

The analysis, here, concerns Job's trauma, his encounter with his friends and their various discourses about his trauma. It covers Job 1:6 through to Job 37 which describes the circumstances surrounding Job's trauma, the series of the traumatic events, the visit of his friends and their individual reactions about his trauma, Job's responses to his friends as well as his own discourses and disputations with God.

In Job 1:6-12, a meeting is convened in heaven in which God and Satan bet on Job. Job is put into Satan's hands to deal with him. His trauma begins in Job 1:13 where Job loses all his

possessions including his children. In Job 2:1-6, there is another meeting between God and Satan where God gives Satan permission to intensify Job's trauma. This time, in Job 2:7, Satan attacks Job's body and inflicts wounds and sores on him. In v. 8, the story reads, "Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes." What could Job's sitting in ashes mean? Could it mean he performed a ritual of repentance to appease God to come to his aid?<sup>xlii</sup>

The symbolism of the 'ashes' reminisces Jonah 3:6 where the people of Nineveh sat in ashes to show repentance for their sins. Was this seemingly act of repentance, i.e. Job drawing to God despite his terrible condition, the reason why the wife had to attack his integrity? She might have thought: if God were who she knew, could He not have prevented this trauma from befalling Job? She says "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God and die." She probably could not understand why Job should continue to cling to God.

Job responded to his wife in v. 10 by reprimanding her for her utterance. Job's response suggests that God is capable of giving both good and bad things to His children. The narrator's comments add that "In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10), thus emphasizing Job's blameless character as confirmed early on (cf. Job 1:1). This attitude of Job rather tends to be ambiguous because one wonders whether he totally accepts the trauma as his fate or denies it.<sup>xlii</sup> I think, however, that Job faces a dilemma of confusion which hinders him to think and decide clearly where and how to apportion the blame.

This behaviour of Job probably reflects the attitude of some victims of clergy sexual abuse in the Church. Sometimes, they are also influenced by their traditional knowledge concerning a 'perfect' priesthood to display the attitude of double standards in moments of trauma. They tend to battle between accepting and denying the veracity of the trauma inflicted on them by the clergy which consequently, leads to stifling their grief. It can be observed that PTSDs are evident in the emotional, psychological, physical and mental breakdown of victims of trauma: both Job and member-victims in the Church. This may be assessed on the personal level through the overwhelming capacity of trauma to perplex mind, body and spirit of the victims and shape their behaviour in ambiguous ways.<sup>xliii</sup>

The communal aspect of the trauma in the narrative can be seen in the interactions between Job and his friends. All Job's friends speak to him concerning his traumatic situation. Eliphaz's interactions with Job are reported in Job 4-5, 15 and 22. In a threefold speech and conversation with Job, Eliphaz's introduction, in Job 4:1-6, seems to praise Job's philanthropy towards all people and points to his firm trust and hope in God. However, from v. 5 onwards, he invoked what Houck-Loomis terms as the Deuteronomic covenant, i.e. God gives reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience, and in vv. 3-8 he appears to argue that perhaps Job being pure and blameless is far-fetched.<sup>xliv</sup> He states "think now, who that was innocent ever perished? or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." As a result, he advanced arguments

to suggest that Job's trauma stems from the direct consequences of his sins.

Throughout his argumentation, he emphasized that Job was in the wrong, i.e. a sinner as a human being. In Job 15:15, he says "God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not clean in his sight." In v. 16, he points the accusing fingers by saying "how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, one who drinks iniquity like water!" He also accuses Job of committing serious evils, i.e. "Is not your wickedness so great? There is no end to your iniquities" (Job 22:5). In other verses, one also sees in him the trait of a liar who falsely blames Job for the trauma.<sup>xlv</sup> Eliphaz, then, was a friend who appeared more in robes of an accuser, a stern critic and an inconsiderate adviser to Job in his time of trauma.

In his turn, Bildad reacts to Job's trauma in Job 8, 18 and 25. Like Eliphaz, Bildad follows the trail of blaming Job for the trauma. His words and admonitions take recourse to some traditional knowledge of God enshrined in the doctrine of reward and punishment. For him, Job probably deserves the trauma because of his children's sins. In 8:3-4, he states "Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? If your children sinned against him, he delivered them into the power of their transgression" (cf. also vv. 5-6). However, oblivious of the clandestine wager between God and Satan, he ignorantly presses every charge against Job for the calamity. He seems to suggest that Job is a sinner who suffers the lot of sinners in his adversities (cf. 18:5-9).

Moreover, in Job 25:4, Bildad also alludes to the doctrine of original sin by which Job is liable to

sin, and that he suffers because of some possible sins he has committed.<sup>xlvi</sup> Bildad, in my view, is a symbol of a Church that will activate traditional teachings about man's fall to defend herself in the face of a serious issue like trauma of sexual abuse by the clergy. In this sense, for Bildad and the Church, the condition of a trauma victim does not matter more than the content of the theology concerning the sin of the trauma. For instance, the Church, often times, weaponizes her faith against victim's capacity to express grief which leads to stifling it.

After Bildad, Zophar takes the stage to give his reactions in Job 11 and 20. He speaks as if he knew a particular evil Job has committed to deserve the trauma (cf. Job 11:6). Just like the other friends, he is also insistent on blaming Job for the catastrophe. He seems convinced that perhaps retributive justice runs its course with Job (cf. Job 20:4-5). With his twofold speech, he confirmed what his colleagues have said, i.e. Job probably has sinned for such disasters to befall him.

From the analysis, it can be observed that all three friends sought to blame Job as the cause of his own suffering leaving out completely God and the role, He has played to cause Job this trauma. They were convinced that their strongly-held traditional knowledge and understanding about God's ways regarding the theology of reward and retribution must stand against all odds.<sup>xlvii</sup> Such entrenched position made it possible for them to apportion the blame to Job. A similar situation may also be seen within church settings where because of the highly perceived image of priests as 'alter Christus (another Christ)' or direct representatives of God, victims of clergy sexual abuse are

sometimes made to bear the blame leaving out the priests' culprits.<sup>xlviii</sup> Just as Job's friends defended their traditional beliefs against Job in his trauma, so the Church, sometimes, prefers to save her 'good' image rather than to allow victims to express their grief.

Nevertheless, Job did not allow himself to be silenced. He responds to his friends in Job 6-7, 9-10, 12-14, 16-17, 19, 21, 23-24 and 26. Job's reactions reveal his frustrations and disappointments with his friends who came to condemn rather than to comfort him in his moments of suffering. He says, "how long will you torment me and break me into pieces with words?" (Job 19:2, see also 16:20; 17:2). Job challenges their long-held understanding regarding God's ways and his situation. He continued to declare his innocence and insisted he had committed no iniquity to deserve the trauma (cf. Job 6:24-25). Throughout chapter seven, Job vividly relates the intense experience of his trauma to show how his friends' betrayal of trust and loyalty has doubled his agony and pain. In Job 7:13-16, such serious agonizing moments are reflected in some symptoms of PTSD which Job seems to be undergoing with scary dreams and visions. His constant nightmares and psychological and physical pains make him wish he were dead rather than alive.<sup>xlix</sup> Job's suffering perplexes his mind, body and spirit. He says, "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 7:11; 17:1). He also engages God as his pain increases on questions about being a human being and why he must suffer this trauma under God's constant watch.

In chapters nine and ten, Job continues to complain against God pointing out his

innocence. He charges God as being the invisible hand plaguing his life with the trauma. For him, if it were not so, why does God look on for the innocent one to suffer? (cf. Job 9:22-24; 16:7-11). While his torment and agony make him want to take God to court, he is also led to re-assess the traditional knowledge about God which Habel describes as the Covenant God. Habel argues that "If their God has indeed broken the covenant, the narrator has Job seeking to confront their God: elusive, angry adversary they once knew as their compassionate God."<sup>l</sup> Job's reactions and argumentations offer a new way to review such ideology.

Through the actions of Job's friends, one observes in Job a person of intense trauma or a traumatized community that is bereft of genuine care and concern by people dear to them. Similarly, systematic cover-ups in the Church against victims of clergy sexual abuse also drift them like Job to be thought of as guilty and condemned instead of being shown pity and listened to, and rather than being comforted and offered relief from their psychological pain, they are mocked, bombarded and overwhelmed with theologies that are inconsistent with their traumatic conditions and which intensify the victim's pain and agony.<sup>li</sup> The friends of Job just like the Church in matters of sexual abuse, turn the blind eye to the victim's trauma and prioritize focus on archaic doctrines and theologies which do not address the core issue of the trauma.

Knowing his friends have shifted focus, Job did not allow their schemes to stifle him, he rather exploded in complaining and grieving to the hearing of both his friends and God. Unlike Job, some victims of clergy sexual abuse cannot express their grief because they probably lack the

enabling atmosphere that was available to Job. Church influence in people's lives and the power dynamics that control church members can become pervasive in that people are afraid to come out of hiding to speak and grieve about their trauma. As Maris points out, the question of safety and protection, invariably, arises for the victim who wants to speak out.<sup>lii</sup>

Ostensibly, with the help of advocacy groups, victims nowadays, to some extent, can express themselves like Job about their trauma.<sup>liii</sup> Job, then, is a model for victims to challenge what wounds the Church from within, i.e. clergy sexual abuse along with its associated effects of stifled grief through cover-up tactics.

The narrator also features Job in lengthy discourses where Job recounts his own understanding as well as how he reckons God's ways and dealings concerning his situation. Other discourses including Elihu's speech and God's discourses can be seen to expand the narrative in a way that highlights God's mysterious ways in creation among human beings.<sup>liv</sup> Nonetheless, in the Job-God disputation, one also finds it difficult to understand why God after the long duration Job has had to undergo these bitter adversities, He still should interrogate him on such unrelated subjects (cf. Job 38-41).<sup>lv</sup> God questioning Job in these areas does not address the trauma directly, but it tends to make God appear justified while Job is supposed to realize his limits when it comes to the ineffable nature of the Divine. Does this still justify God?

In these God's engagements with Job, I think God rather doesn't play it fairly with Job who is overwhelmed with trauma He himself has

caused. Balentine's pressing question needs answering, "Does the formative logic of the covenant, by which God promises reward and threatens punishment, effectively use law to legitimate divine violence?"<sup>lvii</sup> Though on occasions, Job has blamed God for the trauma, yet in this encounter, God does not let him know the truth about the trauma. The narrator's display of God's power and ineffable wisdom makes Job submit to God and accept his lot which probably leads to the final section regarding God restoring Job.<sup>lviii</sup>

This I call the 'God-factor strategy'<sup>lviii</sup> which reflects in the Church's handling of sexual abuse cases where in the presence of an authority figure, especially a priest or bishop, who is perceived to represent God himself, a victim in deference accepts his or her condition as probably God's will for her or him. In the case of Job and victim-church members, this 'God-factor strategy' is top-down display of power over the vulnerable; it is intimidating and psychologically coercive.<sup>lix</sup>

### **c. After Trauma Analysis: Justification and Restoration by God**

This section deals with God's intervention in the crisis that confronts Job, His faithful servant. In ch. 42:10, the narrator reports, "And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." Job is also justified for his complaints and claims against the false allegations of his friends. God vindicates Job while his friends are shamed with their mischievous schemes to convict Job of non-existent offenses. Their so-called ideologies and logic of understanding of God's ways are

rendered invalid and baseless. This is reported in Job 42:7 when God addresses Eliphaz, "... My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (se also v. 8).

Job is blessed by God who elevates him to a position of an intercessor for his friends.<sup>lx</sup> He is charged with the role of praying and offering sacrifices to appease God on behalf of his friends (cf. Job 42:8-9). He is relieved of his trauma as God has heard his outcry and grief. He is fully and completely reinstated as he receives far more than he has lost (cf. Job 42:11-13). In v. 11, the narrator explicates the restoration by stating that family members and relatives, and all Job's friends and acquaintances came to him to comfort and offer him gifts. The question is, why must all these individuals show up at this time but not during his time of distress and misery. Ironically, they vanished from him when he needed their presence, comfort and sympathy, but they rather draw near to him at a time when he probably does not need such gestures since he is now healed from his trauma. The irony reminds us of the saying of Jesus, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mtt. 9:12). Similarly, it is the miserable, traumatized Job who needed to be surrounded by comforters of this sort, but not the restored and healthy Job.

In the paradoxical attitude of Job's family members and friends, we can draw lessons from his before, during and after trauma experiences. First, human beings tend to have innate inclinations to associate with those they perceive to be well and successful rather than with people in trouble. Second, they may speak well of people in their good times but ill and even point

accusing fingers at them during their bad times. Third, Job's perseverance against all attempts to stifle him in his deep grief has revealed the true colours of his friends and acquaintances. Finally, though Job's trauma may be seen as unfair, yet it can also be interpreted as the ultimate test for his resilience and commitment to remain faithful in righteousness even if all, including God and friends, should abandon him.

### **Exposed Trauma as Authenticity of Life and Worship rather than Shame and Disbelief**

Trauma that is revealed through complaining and grieving can sometimes be seen as the traumatized person's sign of weakness and lack of faith in God. People tend to perceive strength to come from the ability to keep silent about one's problems. In cases of clergy sexual abuse, a silent atmosphere in the Church can psychologically coerce victims to stifle their grief about the trauma. From the example of Ruth's case, it is observed that clergy sexual abuse victims may have common tendencies to not want to speak about the trauma thus preferring to psychologically stifle their grief rather than to express it in public.<sup>lx</sup> In the case of Ruth, Maris reveals that her long-kept silence about her abuse was based on her own beliefs and perception about the Church which caused her to avoid the shame of disclosure.

Using the story of a stained-glass window, he argues that "In the image of glass that is so easily shattered into a hundred or a thousand pieces, we find the initial breakage in a person wounded by clergy abuse and exploitation. The world of the person who has suffered the ultimate betrayal by a trusted adult who also at some level embodies the divine falls into a million pieces. It

is when the person is able to pick up those pieces and begin to place them side by side in some recognizable form that there will be hope of restoration and wholeness—holiness.”<sup>lxii</sup> Many victims like Ruth may have fallen into the silence trap either self-induced or through the pervasive Church influence in their lives.

On the contrary, Job’s attitude towards his traumatic experiences offers new insights into dealing with grief regarding trauma of any sort especially clergy sexual abuse. Job could have kept the stifling silence, but he resisted every attempt from his friends and community to stifle his grief and blame himself for the trauma. He spoke boldly about his trauma and openly grieved about it disregarding the fear and the opinions of other people. Through his utter complaining and grieving about his trauma, Job revealed his authentic self as a person who lives by the truth. In Job’s example, it can be realized that stifling grief about trauma does not pay because in the end it is truth that prevails.

Moreover, Job’s complaining and grieving did not manifest his lack of faith in God and bring him up for shame, but it vindicated him to be the person he was: a man of integrity before God and man. A Job’s attitude during trauma can be emulated by both the traumatizing Church and the traumatized Church in moments of serious crises like clergy sexual abuse since a shared problem lends itself for a plausible solution.

### **Dangers of Repressed Trauma: Effects, Solution and Recommendation**

Trauma of stifled grief, by definition, denies victims the freedom to express deep feelings about their traumatic experiences for public attention. People who undergo trauma of stifled

grief, invariably, cannot escape the dangers associated with repressed trauma. As Leys observes, trauma always leaves the imprints of its effects with victims no matter how hard a person tries to hide from it. It lives on as an ever-present reality in a person.<sup>lxiii</sup> A repressed trauma is trauma which the victim does not want to expose. Sometimes, he or she thinks he or she can deal with it alone to avoid the shame of exposure to the public.

The attitude of suppressing trauma cannot solve the problem of trauma because trauma implies a negative event with the capacity to perplex mind, body and spirit of a person. Until appropriate measures are taken to deal with trauma, a person can never be free from the dangers of repressed trauma. The Church trauma of stifled grief which by means of Church cover-ups suppresses victim’s ability to expose trauma breeds such effects of repressed trauma as depression, anxiety, isolation, diminished faith in God and man, and loss of self-worth.

First and foremost, repressed trauma causes a victim’s life to become shattered and confused. He or she is psychologically and emotionally turned upside down through depression. A depressed victim of trauma tends to experience light as darkness because his or her whole frame of mind is disrupted and distorted by the trauma. The next effect of repressed trauma is anxiety which makes a victim feel restless and at war with him or herself. A victim may feel inadequate and never enough with him or herself because anxious victim seems to be looking almost everywhere for a lost self that cannot be found.

Moreover, the state of anxiety drifts a person whose grief has been stifled into isolation from

other people. The overwhelming effects of the grief tends to engulf a victim so much so that he or she withdraws from association with people in order to fully concentrate on the grief alone. This isolation may lead a person to become suicidal, anti-social and probably anti-human. With the Church being the context for the trauma of stifled grief, a victim's faith in God and man also decreases. The grief-stricken victim may be skeptical about believing in God and trusting people. Once a person whose view about life and the world was formed by religion and God has been traumatized by people who represent God, the frustration and disappointment from the trauma result in radical skepticism concerning faith in God and people.

In addition, a person undergoing trauma of stifled grief may also experience a sense of loss of self-worth. Since trauma shatters a person into pieces and he or she cannot hold the pieces together into a unity, a victim may feel lost and wallow in guilt and self-pity. A traumatized person in the state of brokenness may feel no longer worthy of dignity and respect as a person. The erosion of self-worth intensifies when, on account of the trauma, a victim loses friendship with people who raise the accusing fingers.

In order to combat the dangers of repressed trauma, the Church may need, like in Job's community, to cultivate a deeper sense of friendship and community among her members and leaders. This atmosphere will enable the victim-church to feel welcome and listened to in times of crisis. Friendship among church members must promote a safe environment where transparency and trust prevail to foster free communication by victim-members of a pertinent crisis like clergy sexual abuse.

Authority and power in the Church should be exercised in the context of service rather than control and bullying. A friendly atmosphere in the Church should also inspire genuine concern and care for one another so that a member's problem is considered to be the whole Church's crisis that must be dealt with fully and completely but not to be neglected through cover-ups.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, the Church trauma of stifled grief revolves around the Church as an agent and victim of trauma. By the complex hierarchical networks in the Church, there appears to be a culture that perpetuates trauma among some vulnerable members. Focusing on clergy sexual abuse, we ascertained that trauma in the Church may be engineered through the power dynamics existing between the victim-church and the agent-church by means of systematic cover-ups, secrecy procedures and rigid hierarchical structures regarding cases of clergy sexual abuse.

Trauma signifies an unpleasant event that has the capacity to perplex the mind, body and spirit of a person or group. Effects of trauma include nightmares, emotional numbing, reexperiences and hypervigilance. Trauma of stifled grief disallows a victim to express the symptoms of PTSD for redress through the power culture in an institution. The Church suffocates grieving among trauma victims through coercive and psychological silencing in the Church.

The story of Job's trauma has provided an avenue to analyze the situation of trauma and trauma victims in the Church. In his moments of intense traumatic experiences, Job's circle of

friends and acquaintances sought to persuade him to yield to their false accusations to blame himself, be silent and wallow in guilt and shame, but he refused to succumb to their trap because he was an innocent victim. He spoke and grieved boldly about his trauma to the point of wanting to seek justice and vindication against God in a divine tribunal.

Job's attitude towards his trauma which enabled him to defy the opinions and persuasions from others to stifle his grief differs probably from that of victims of clergy sexual abuse in the Church. While victims of the Church trauma of stifled grief cannot communicate openly about the bad incident because the rigid hierarchical structures and secrecy procedures bar it, Job's attitude makes it evident that stifling grief does not eradicate trauma but rather aggravates it.

More so, Job's dispositions in the face of his trauma in a narrative-critical analysis also offers new insights regarding how both the Church and victims of trauma of stifled grief may evaluate their responses to trauma. Trauma of stifled grief, invariably, brings about adverse effects including depression, anxiety, diminished faith in God and man as well as loss of self-worth on victims, and must be dealt with constructively for a more robust, loving, respectful, transparent and peaceful Church.

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Eddie Cloer, *What is the Church? Identifying the Nature and Design of the New Testament Church* (Searcy, AR: Resource, 1993), 14, 17-18, 20; see also André de Bovis, *What is the Church?* (Trans. R. F. Trevett; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1961), 10-11, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 206-211.

<sup>1</sup> Bovis, *What is the Church*, 11.

<sup>1</sup> See Bovis, *What is the Church*, 15-16. Although the author does not aim to give an ecclesiological treatise on the Church in this paper, yet highlighting this dual character of the Church helps to further the discussion herein. For this domain, cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

<sup>1</sup> The Church does not always want to solve problems she herself has committed even though she may appear to do so.

<sup>1</sup> In their work to address the wounds inflicted on certain members of the Church through clergy sexual misconduct, Hopkins and Laaser verify the assertion, see various surveys and research articles in Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1995); see also Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up: Refounding the Church in Trauma* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up*, xxi, xxv.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up*, 1-14.

<sup>1</sup> See Laura S. Brown, *Cultural Competence in Trauma Therapy: Beyond the Flashback* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 3-4; Danilo Verde, *The*

*Language of Trauma in the Psalms* (Pennsylvania: Eisenbrauns, 2024), 3; James W. S. Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma: Trauma Informed Reading of Lamentations* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2019), 6-7.

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>1</sup> Leys, *Trauma*, 4.

<sup>1</sup> Bassel A. van der Kolk shifts focus from mind to body by analysing trauma in neurobiological terms, cf. Leys, *Trauma*, 6; see also Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1996), 62, 133 and 141.

<sup>1</sup> This is the situation whereby soldiers suffering from the traumatic experience of the war began to show lukewarm attitudes towards duties.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Leys, *Trauma*, 5.

<sup>1</sup> Leys, *Trauma*, 2.

<sup>1</sup> There abound scholarly debates regarding whether trauma is speakable or unspeakable, see Leys, *Trauma*, 234; Verde, *The Language of Trauma in the Psalms*, 6; Joshua Pederson, "Speak Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory," *Narrative* 22 (2014), 334; Richard J. McNally, *Remembering Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 182; Geoffrey Hartman, "Trauma within the Limits of Literature," *European Journal of English Studies*, 7 (2003), 259.

<sup>1</sup> Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 8; see also Jeffery C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2012), 6-30

<sup>1</sup> Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 8-9; see also Jack Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 8.

<sup>1</sup> Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 9.

<sup>1</sup> Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 5; see also Leys, *Trauma*, 5-7.

<sup>1</sup> Brown, *Cultural Competence in Trauma Therapy*, 4.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up*, 4-6; see also Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, 234-236.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isaiah 40:1-2, 27-29; Ps. 34:6, 15, 17-18; Jer. 20; the books of Job and Lamentations typify extreme situations of trauma which were publicly expressed. All biblical quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Takamitsu Muraoka, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint Chiefly of the Pentateuch and the twelve Prophets* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 685; see also Warren C. Trenchard, *A Concise Dictionary of the New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159.

<sup>1</sup> David A. J. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, vol. II* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 563.

<sup>1</sup> Other definitions of trauma include “a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively”, by Kai T. Erikson, “Notes on Trauma and Community,” *American Imago* 48 (1991), :455-472; “a life-altering rupture resulting from

individual and group experience of extreme or overwhelming violence”, Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 5; refer also to psychological and physiological definitions, p. 2. The key element emphasized in our definition of trauma and in these other definitions concerns the distortion of a person’s wellbeing.

<sup>1</sup> For other list of traumatic events, see Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 6.

<sup>1</sup> Leys, *Trauma*, 2.

<sup>1</sup> Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 21-22.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and cover-Up in the Church*, 21-22; John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Anatomy of Power* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984); Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (St. Albans: Paladin, 1973); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

<sup>1</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*; see also Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 22.

<sup>1</sup> See Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 21-41.

<sup>1</sup> Roy Hattersley, *The Church and Its People in Britain and Ireland, from Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2017), 542, see also Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 26.

<sup>1</sup> Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 30.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Trans. Ineke Smit; Louisville, KY: Knox, 1999), 77-78; All biblical quotations are based on the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Job 1:1-5.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Job 1:7-12; 2:1-7; A narrator's omniscience allows him to be a privy to God's thoughts which he can share with readers even before they are made manifest, cf. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 130-131.

<sup>1</sup> The current author does not aim to address the difficult issues which have concerned other scholars such as the date of the book of Job, authorship, its similarities with other biblical and non-biblical literature/stories, though occasionally some references will be made where necessary. Rather, his primary focus is to draw on the trauma of Job in a narrative-analytical fashion to address the issue of trauma of stifled grief in the Church. For questions on these exegetical issues, see Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books, Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2010); John E. Hartley, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Job* (Grand rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988); Jan P. Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, 9-10; Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 27-28.

<sup>1</sup> This undertaking, in line with Fokkelman's paradigm, involves breaking down the story of Job into smaller segments for better analysis and understanding, cf. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 97.

<sup>1</sup> See William D. Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 727; James Barr,

*The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 97.

<sup>1</sup> See also Job 42:6.

<sup>1</sup> Habel argues for the latter implying that Job's attitude was a denial of his trauma while he commends the wife as an honest wife, cf. Norman Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy: A Commentary on Job* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2024), 8-9.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Job 1:21-22, he still blessed God for his suffering and failed to charge God with the responsibility for his trauma; see also Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, where some victims want to join in the cover-up because they do not want the image of the Church to be tarnished.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tiffany Houck-Loomis, *History Through Trauma: History and Counter-History in the Hebrew Bible* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 195; see also Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 28.

<sup>1</sup> He seems to contradict his earlier accolades (cf. Job 4:3-4) concerning Job with the wicked and mean personality traits in Job 22:6-7.

<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of original sin assumes that all humanity inherited the sin of Adam, and therefore by descent from Adam, every human being has evil inclinations to sin, *CCC*, 102.

<sup>1</sup> See Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 27.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 23.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 35-36.

<sup>1</sup> Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 50, for him also the covenant God is the god the Community Job represents has prior to his adversities known as the God who rewards obedience and punishes disobedience to the covenant.

<sup>1</sup> See Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 84: He suggests that the community of believers, i.e. the Church including her priests, prophets and some leaders may leave the victims abandoned and helpless.

<sup>1</sup> Margo Maris, “that which is hidden will be revealed (Luke 12:2)” in Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, 3.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Maris, “that which is hidden will be revealed (Luke 12:2),” 3.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, Job’s discourses, Elihu’s speech as well as God’s discourses from chapters 27 through to 41 have been intentionally left out of the analysis under this section because they have little or no significant effects on the responses to our questions in this discussion.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 30.

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Balentine, “Traumatising Job,” *Rev Exp* 105 (2008), 216.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Job 42:6 where Job declares “therefore, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes”; see also Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 50.

<sup>1</sup> The use of God as a technique to determine the outcome in any situation without regard for rational thinking and other odds. It is psychologically manipulative.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 21-22.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 167.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Maris, “... that which is hidden will be revealed,” 5, For a detailed account of Ruth’s story, see pp. 6-22.

<sup>1</sup> Maris, “... that which is hidden will be revealed,” 5.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Leys, *Trauma*, 2.

<sup>i</sup>Cf. Eddie Cloer, *What is the Church? Identifying the Nature and Design of the New Testament Church* (Searcy, AR: Resource, 1993), 14, 17-18, 20; see also André de Bovis, *What is the Church?* (Trans. R. F. Trevett; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1961), 10-11, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 206-211.

<sup>ii</sup> Bovis, *What is the Church*, 11.

<sup>iii</sup> See Bovis, *What is the Church*, 15-16. Although the author does not aim to give an ecclesiological treatise on the Church in this paper, yet highlighting this dual character of the Church helps to further the discussion herein. For this domain, cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

<sup>iv</sup> The Church does not always want to solve problems she herself has committed even though she may appear to do so.

<sup>v</sup> In their work to address the wounds inflicted on certain members of the Church through clergy sexual misconduct, Hopkins and Laaser verify the assertion, see various surveys and research articles in Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1995); see also Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up: Refounding the Church in Trauma* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019).

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up*, xxi, xxv.

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up*, 1-14.

<sup>viii</sup> See Laura S. Brown, *Cultural Competence in Trauma Therapy: Beyond the Flashback* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 3-4; Danilo Verde, *The Language of Trauma in the Psalms* (Pennsylvania: Eisenbrauns, 2024), 3; James W. S. Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma: Trauma Informed Reading of Lamentations* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2019), 6-7.

<sup>ix</sup> Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>x</sup> Leys, *Trauma*, 4.

<sup>xi</sup> Bassel A. van der Kolk shifts focus from mind to body by analysing trauma in neurobiological terms, cf. Leys, *Trauma*, 6; see also Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*:

*Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1996), 62, 133 and 141.

<sup>xii</sup> This is the situation whereby soldiers suffering from the traumatic experience of the war began to show lukewarm attitudes towards duties.

<sup>xiii</sup> Cf. Leys, *Trauma*, 5.

<sup>xiv</sup> Leys, *Trauma*, 2.

<sup>xv</sup> There abound scholarly debates regarding whether trauma is speakable or unspeakable, see Leys, *Trauma*, 234; Verde, *The Language of Trauma in the Psalms*, 6; Joshua Pederson, "Speak Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory," *Narrative* 22 (2014), 334; Richard J. McNally, *Remembering Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 182; Geoffrey Hartman, "Trauma within the Limits of Literature," *European Journal of English Studies*, 7 (2003), 259.

<sup>xvi</sup> Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 8; see also Jeffery C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2012), 6-30

<sup>xvii</sup> Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 8-9; see also Jack Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 8.

<sup>xviii</sup> Yansen, *Daughter Zion's Trauma*, 9.

<sup>xix</sup> Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 5; see also Leys, *Trauma*, 5-7.

<sup>xx</sup> Brown, *Cultural Competence in Trauma Therapy*, 4.

<sup>xxi</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up*, 4-6; see also Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, 234-236.

<sup>xxii</sup> Cf. Isaiah 40:1-2, 27-29; Ps. 34:6, 15, 17-18; Jer. 20; the books of Job and Lamentations typify extreme situations of trauma which were publicly expressed. All biblical quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Cf. Takamitsu Muraoka, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint Chiefly of the Pentateuch and the twelve Prophets* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 685; see also Warren C.

Trenchard, *A Concise Dictionary of the New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159.

<sup>xxiv</sup> David A. J. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, vol. II* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 563.

<sup>xxv</sup> Other definitions of trauma include “a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively”, by Kai T. Erikson, “Notes on Trauma and Community,” *American Imago* 48 (1991), :455-472; “a life-altering rupture resulting from individual and group experience of extreme or overwhelming violence”, Yansen, *Daughter Zion’s Trauma*, 5; refer also to psychological and physiological definitions, p. 2. The key element emphasized in our definition of trauma and in these other definitions concerns the distortion of a person’s wellbeing.

<sup>xxvi</sup> For other list of traumatic events, see Yansen, *Daughter Zion’s Trauma*, 6.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Leys, *Trauma*, 2.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 21-22.

<sup>xxix</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and cover-Up in the Church*, 21-22; John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Anatomy of Power* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984); Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (St. Albans: Paladin, 1973); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

<sup>xxx</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*; see also Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 22.

<sup>xxxi</sup> See Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 21-41.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Roy Hattersley, *The Church and Its People in Britain and Ireland, from Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2017), 542, see also Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 26.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 30.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Cf. Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Trans. Ineke Smit; Louisville, KY: Knox, 1999), 77-78; All biblical quotations are based on the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Cf. Job 1:1-5.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Cf. Job 1:7-12; 2:1-7;

A narrator’s omniscience allows him to be a privy to God’s thoughts which he can share with readers even before they are made manifest, cf. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 130-131.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> The current author does not aim to address the difficult issues which have concerned other scholars such as the date of the book of Job, authorship, its similarities with other biblical and non-biblical literature/stories, though occasionally some references will be made where necessary. Rather, his primary focus is to draw on the trauma of Job in a narrative-analytical fashion to address the issue of trauma of stifled grief in the Church. For questions on these exegetical issues, see Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books, Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2010); John E. Hartley, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Job* (Grand rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988); Jan P. Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Cf. Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, 9-10; Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 27-28.

<sup>xxxix</sup> This undertaking, in line with Fokkelman’s paradigm, involves breaking down the story of Job into smaller segments for better analysis and understanding, cf. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 97.

<sup>xl</sup> See William D. Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 727; James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 97.

<sup>xli</sup> See also Job 42:6.

<sup>xlii</sup> Habel argues for the latter implying that Job’s attitude was a denial of his trauma while he commends the wife as an honest wife, cf. Norman Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy: A Commentary on Job* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2024), 8-9.

<sup>xliii</sup> Cf. Job 1:21-22, he still blessed God for his suffering and failed to charge God with the responsibility for his trauma; see also Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, where some victims want to join in the cover-up because they do not want the image of the Church to be tarnished.

<sup>xliv</sup> Cf. Tiffany Houck-Loomis, *History Through Trauma: History and Counter-History in the Hebrew Bible* (Eugene, OR: Wipf

and Stock, 2018), 195; see also Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 28.

<sup>xlv</sup> He seems to contradict his earlier accolades (cf. Job 4:3-4) concerning Job with the wicked and mean personality traits in Job 22:6-7.

<sup>xlvii</sup> The doctrine of original sin assumes that all humanity inherited the sin of Adam, and therefore by descent from Adam, every human being has evil inclinations to sin, CCC, 102.

<sup>xlviii</sup> See Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 27.

<sup>xlviiii</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 23.

<sup>xlii</sup> Cf. Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 35-36.

<sup>1</sup> Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 50, for him also the covenant God is the god the Community Job represents has prior to his adversities known as the God who rewards obedience and punishes disobedience to the covenant.

<sup>li</sup> See Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 84: He suggests that the community of believers, i.e. the Church including her priests, prophets and some leaders may leave the victims abandoned and helpless.

<sup>lii</sup> Margo Maris, “that which is hidden will be revealed (Luke 12:2)” in Hopkins and Laaser, *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, 3.

<sup>liii</sup> Cf. Maris, “that which is hidden will be revealed (Luke 12:2),” 3.

<sup>liv</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, Job’s discourses, Elihu’s speech as well as God’s discourses from chapters 27 through to 41 have been intentionally left out of the analysis under this section because they have little or no significant effects on the responses to our questions in this discussion.

<sup>lv</sup> Cf. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 30.

<sup>lvi</sup> Samuel Balentine, “Traumatising Job,” *Rev Exp* 105 (2008), 216.

<sup>lvii</sup> Cf. Job 42:6 where Job declares “therefore, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes”; see also Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 50.

<sup>lviii</sup> The use of God as a technique to determine the outcome in any situation without regard for rational thinking and other odds. It is psychologically manipulative.

<sup>lix</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, *Abuse and Cover-Up in the Church*, 21-22.

<sup>lx</sup> Cf. Habel, *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy*, 167.

<sup>lxi</sup> Cf. Maris, “... that which is hidden will be revealed,” 5, For a detailed account of Ruth’s story, see pp. 6-22.

<sup>lxii</sup> Maris, “... that which is hidden will be revealed,” 5.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Cf. Leys, *Trauma*, 2.