

*LINES OF DEFENCE OF THE BIBLICAL  
REVELATION.*

III. UNITY AGAINST PLURALITY.

B. JOB (*continued*).

THE Arabs were great astronomers, and the references to Arabic astronomy in the book of Job are very curious. Very early poets<sup>1</sup> show themselves acquainted with the elaborate system of star-naming which the writers on astronomy explain to us. In Job xxxviii. 31 the sufferer is asked if he can (or did) tie the bonds of the Pleiads, and in the following verse if he can console<sup>2</sup> the Great Bear over her children? These questions would be easily understood by an Arab. To him the Pleiads are typical of union, the stars of the Great Bear of separation. A writer begins a letter:<sup>3</sup> "I am to-night united with my companions like the Pleiads, but if you do not encourage our union by a present of wine we shall separate again like the daughters of Na'sh (the stars of the Great Bear)." "I pray God," says an elegant writer,<sup>4</sup> "that we may meet in a way that will resemble the union of the Pleiads in constancy." The same author says in a poem,<sup>5</sup> "The Pleiads have stretched westwards a hand in whose fingers the wager is locked," on which we are told that according to the Arabs the Pleiads consist of two hands, called respectively the Painted Hand and the Amputated Hand, the former appearing to be spread out, and the latter closed. In Job iv. 9 it is said of mankind that they dwell in houses of clay, and are destroyed "before the Great Bear"—a phrase which the next verse shows to be equivalent to "constantly," "incessantly." This reminds us of another verse of the same

<sup>1</sup> *Jamharah* of Abu Zaid, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> I assume in these articles that the Massoretic pointing is of little authority.

<sup>3</sup> *Matali' al-budūr*, i. 158.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters* of Abu 'l-'Ala, p. 54, 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Sakt al-zand* (Cairo, 1286 A.H.), i. 50.

poet,<sup>1</sup> where he complains "Thou hast left me, albeit I am constant like the Great Bear"; and our commentator tells us that this constellation does not rise and set like the others, but "merely revolves round the North Pole without crossing the sky." Hence the qualities of constancy and stationariness are attributed to it, as when a poet says (in illustration of the fact that a large family hinders promotion), "See the sun who is solitary can cross the height of heaven, whereas the father of the 'daughters of Na'sh' remains low down." Of the stars which constitute the constellation three were called Na'sh and four Na'sh's sons.<sup>2</sup> A German scholar has rightly remarked that the name Na'sh is the same as the word in Job with the article prefixed.

In xxxviii. 15 among the effects of the dawn we read that "the wicked are precluded from their light, and the lofty arm is broken." The second clause is easily intelligible. There is a constellation called "the Arm," *i.e.* the Lion's Arm.<sup>3</sup> The word "broken" for "dulled" is chosen in order to suit the subject. "The wicked" must of course mean some stars or constellations; the text indicates that both here and in verse 13, "and the wicked are shaken thereat," the first letter of the word for "wicked" is either corrupt or misplaced. Perhaps therefore we should read the '*Arshes*, *i.e.* two constellations called '*Arsh* or "the Throne." The verb "to be shaken" is perhaps as natural with this name as "to be broken" with the "Arm." There is a famous line in which a poet declares that the Throne of God shook the day his uncle died.<sup>4</sup>

With the style of the above verses we may compare some lines<sup>5</sup> of a poet who has already been cited. "The country," he says, "has been watered by the Lion's Arm

<sup>1</sup> *Sakt al-zand* (Cairo, 1286 A.H.), ii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> So in old poetry; the alteration of "sons" to "daughters" is due to a grammatical theory.

<sup>3</sup> Kazwini, *Wonders of Creation* (Cairo, 1309 A.H.), i. 78.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters of Abu 'l-Ala*, p. 92, 10. <sup>5</sup> *Sakt al-zand*, ii. 106.

with all his might, till not one finger's breadth is left. The *Simak* ('Spica') has thrust it through with its javelin, and the ropes that hold the Watering-pot have been cut over the country whereon the Pleiads shed copious tears." The old theory is said to have been that rain was due to the "Mansions of the Moon."

Job xxxviii. 31 *b*: "Canst thou undo the ropes of K'sil?" is in the same style. There is a constellation called "the Holder of the reins,"<sup>1</sup> and the author of the verse in Job seems to count on his readers being familiar with this appellation. The next question, "Canst thou bring out Mazaroth at his time?" must imply some similar knowledge; the name that resembles this most is the Arabic *Majarrat*, ordinarily used for the Milky Way. There is an old proverb, "Take the middle, O Majarrah, and the dates of Hajar will ripen."<sup>2</sup> The time then at which Mazaroth should come out was probably an important epoch of this sort. The dates of Hajar were famous throughout Arabia. Perhaps, then, the time referred to in this verse is the time when they should ripen.

In vii. 12 Job asks of God, "Am I a sea or a sea-monster that Thou dost set a guard upon me?" Certain stars or constellations were regarded as the *watchers* of others;<sup>3</sup> the theory appears not only in the Arabic astrology, but also in Homer. The "Sea-monster" is actually the name of a constellation; and in the case of one called "the Sea-monster's belly" we are told the name of its "watcher."<sup>4</sup> The "Sea" is probably the constellation called by the Arabs "the River."

The same source illustrates some mythological allusions in the book. In xxvi. 12 and 13, some of the deeds of God are enumerated: "By His wisdom He crushed Rahab, by

<sup>1</sup> *Wonders of Creation*, i. 57. It is not certain that this name is old.

<sup>2</sup> *Lisan al-Arab*, s.v. "majarrah."

<sup>3</sup> *Wonders of Creation*, passim.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* i. 87.

His breath the heavens are cleared, and His hand transfixed *Nachash Bariach*." These words are often rendered "crooked serpent"; but it is more likely that they are to be regarded as proper names, taken from the old mythology. Indeed they seem fairly easy to identify. The term *nahs* (the equivalent of the Hebrew *nachash*) is applied to two planets, both supposed to bring ill luck, Saturn and Mars; and the latter of these is called in Arabic *Mirrikh*, which, by the alteration of the first letter to B (a change noticed above in the case of Bildad) becomes *Bariach*. The word *nahs* is said to mean darkness, and especially that caused by particles of dust in the air. The brightness of the heavens is therefore in this myth attributed to a wound dealt to *Nahs Mirrikh*, who would have darkened them. Those who curse the day, according to Job iii. 8, do it by rousing Leviathan, whom Isaiah (xxvii. 1) identifies with *Nachash Bariach*. The prefixing of the name *Nachash* to the proper name of the planet is precisely similar to the prefixing of the word *Sa'd* (which means "of good omen") to a number of other stars.<sup>1</sup> The identity of the names *Nahs Mirrikh* and *Nachash Bariach*, together with the ascription of darkness to the influence of the latter, seems sufficient to justify us in thinking we have here the solution of the difficulty. Hence it is an admissible conjecture that *Rahab* signifies the other *Nahs*, *i.e.* Saturn; and indeed the Arabic name for Saturn (*Zuhal*) seems to mean the same as *Rahab*.

Among the primitive superstitions of the Arabs were those connected with the Jinn, whose name implies that they were hidden from mortal view. To them both poets and prophets owed their information. Apparently the same Jinn ordinarily inspired the same individual throughout his life, and at the death of one favourite migrated into another. To those favourites they sometimes appeared in dreams.

<sup>1</sup> *Wonders of Creation*, Index.

Their information was not always trustworthy, and it was obtained in a dishonourable way. "Certain persons," we read in Surah lxxvii. of the Koran, "used to rely on certain Jinn," who, however, only increased their uncertainty with regard to God's purposes. They used to station themselves somewhere whence they could listen to the divine councils; but in future, according to the Surah, any Jinn who tried to do this would find a shooting-star on the look out for him. This strange theory is represented by Eliphaz in the book of Job. "Hast thou listened in the council of God, and got thyself wisdom?" he asks of Job in xv. 8. This would be the natural way of acquiring knowledge of God's plans according to him, and indeed he owed his own acquaintance with them to a similar operation. "Unto me was a word *stolen*," he boasts in iv. 12, "and my ear took in a rumour<sup>1</sup> thereof." Doubtless a Jinn had stolen it, and indeed this Jinn communicated it to Eliphaz in the visions of the night. Eliphaz was unable to scan the features of the Jinn closely; one who appeared to Ibn Duraid<sup>2</sup> (according to his statement) and communicated some verses, was "tall, yellow-faced, and grey-haired"; another, who communicated certain poems and tunes to Ibrahim of Mausil, took the form of a richly clad sheikh, but afterwards became invisible.<sup>3</sup> It would seem that part of Elihu's polemic is directed against Eliphaz's theory of inspiration by Jinn. Job, he says, speaks not truly when he says God is too proud to communicate with man (xxxiii. 12). It is God Himself (not the Jinn) who speaks in the dream when he opens man's ear and fills it up with instruction.

To the same class of notions belongs the idea of the dead man's ghost watching over his grave, to which there is an allusion in xxi. 32: "And he is brought to the burial place, and watches over a grave." The Arabic name for the ghost

<sup>1</sup> שמת=שמע.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khallikan (Cairo 1299), i. 631.

<sup>3</sup> *Aghani*, v. 37.

is *hamah*, and the soul was "supposed to be a bird which escaped from the body when a man died or was slain, and cried over his grave."<sup>1</sup> One theory was that in the case of a murdered man it cried over his grave "give me drink" till the slayer was slain. The meaning of the next words (rendered "the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him") is exceedingly obscure. It is very remarkable that the words for "clods of the valley" in *Arabic* signify a particular sort of date-tree or date.<sup>2</sup> The exact process implied by the first word was a matter of dispute among the old grammarians; "it means," says a good authority,<sup>3</sup> "supporting a valuable date tree with an erection of stone or wood, if there is any danger of it falling owing to its height or the weight of its fruit." Another suggestion is that it means "hedging it round to prevent access to it." This is, I think, what the passage originally signified: the date tree to which he no longer has access is sweet to him: he would fain return to the world, but cannot get back.

It is probable that the accounts of the *Parias* which are to be found in chapters xxiv. and xxx. can be best illustrated from Arabia. Von Maltzan, in his *Travels*,<sup>4</sup> tells us of two sorts of *Parias* existing in Yemen; and there are reasons for thinking this institution a part of early Arabian culture. Those to whom reference is made in chapter xxiv. perform a variety of menial duties, including forms of agricultural labour, which an Israelite would certainly not have thought degrading. With the Arabs apparently it was otherwise. The poet Farazdak, who is one of our best representatives of early Arabian ideas, taunts one of his enemies<sup>5</sup> with the fact that his *relations press oil in the Hawran*. This is also regarded by the speaker in Job xxiv. 11 as a humiliating

<sup>1</sup> *Taj al-arus*, s.v. I think a line of Farazdak (p. 39, 1) must refer to this.

<sup>2</sup> *Rujabiyyu 'l-nakhlī*. *Lisān al-Arab*, i. 397.

<sup>3</sup> *Nihāyah* of Ibn Al-Athir.

<sup>4</sup> *Reisen in Arabien*, i. 182-192.

<sup>5</sup> Page 74.

labour, which, owing to injustice, certain persons have to perform. To the humbler class of Paria, described by Von Maltzan the account given in chapter xxx. almost exactly corresponds. These persons are not allowed to dwell near the rest of the nation; they are driven from the public places, and howled after like thieves.

If we look at Al-'Iss on the map, and see how vast a desert separates it from Palestine, surely we shall be inclined to wonder whether any Israelite could have interested himself in this locality sufficiently to produce such a work as the book of Job. Much of it, from the scanty information preserved by Arabic archæologists and poets, would, we see, have been intelligible to an Arab, without, so far as we know, being intelligible to a Canaanite. If any Israelite had taken the trouble to study Arabic in such a way as to enable him to create an Eliphaz, it is at least probable that his name would not have been forgotten by his countrymen.

Hence it was long ago suggested that the book must originally have been written in Arabic. The earliest Arabic which we possess is of about the year 600 A.D. It is, however, a canon of science that nature never deceives. That Hebrew, or Canaanitish, is a vulgar dialect of Arabic is as certain as if the best Canaanite writers themselves had told us so. And it is also certain that the Arabic whence Canaanitish was derived must have been a literary language, for the *orthography of Hebrew is etymological*. That fact postulates the existence of an Arabic literature earlier than the beginnings of Canaanitish. How long an interval elapsed between its decay and the renaissance of Arabic under the auspices of Mohammedanism is at present unknown. But the fact that the early Arabs wrote on stone gives us good hope that, sooner or later, their literature may be restored to us, just as those of ancient Egypt and Assyria have been restored.

This then gives us a likely clue to the difficulties of Job. The work is probably a translation, and translators are irresponsible. The original language was not the Sabæan, which we can now trace back to an early period, because Saba was a power hostile to the nation to which Job belonged. The character of the names of the speakers, no less than that of many of the institutions, makes it likely that it was classical Arabic. By following the clue, we may possibly recover in time the meaning of many passages in which the Hebrew conceals it; and even if the process be slow, and more accurate *thesauri* of the Arabic language required than those which we now possess, it will be something to be on the right track. And it will also be evident that the process of dissection is excessively premature.

One or two fairly clear cases of mistranslation may be noticed here.

In xxxvii. 7 it is said of the snow that "it places an obstruction before every man" (or, "ties the hand of every man") "that all the men of his work may know," or "to know all the men of his work." Neither of these expressions seems intelligible, or to represent a possible effect of a snowstorm. The verb which in Hebrew means "know," in Arabic means "abandon" or "neglect." The sense required by the passage, which is surely "so that every man must neglect his work"<sup>1</sup> (where work is in the open air this is the certain result of a snowstorm) suits the Arabic meaning of the verb, and also suits the peculiarities of Arabic orthography. A suggestion that this could be a trace of the older sense of the verb "to know" in *Hebrew* would have no probability; and even so, only half the difficulties would be solved.

<sup>1</sup> In Arabic حتى يلع كل وجل عمله. The *elif* of prolongation was unknown in ancient Arabic.

xxxiii. 6, "Behold I am according to thy mouth unto God" is unlikely to be correct. The word "according to thy mouth" in Arabic letters would mean either "according to thy mouth" or "thy peer," "thy match." The same ambiguity would not, so far as we know, be found in Canaanitish. Yet it is evident that the sense "thy peer" is what is required. In an early chapter of Islamic history some champions refuse to fight with any but their "peers"; and the same word is used of equality for the purpose of marriage. "I am thy peer in God's eyes," is said by Elihu to Job, by way of affirming his claim to dispute with Job.

xv. 24, "Trouble and anguish shall suddenly overtake him; they shall prevail against him as a king ready to the battle," shows signs of mistranslation in the second clause. The word rendered "battle" is unknown. The figure of a king ready for battle seems inappropriate here, whether we think of the king as the attacking party or the attacked. The Arabic word for "ready"<sup>1</sup> (to the antiquity of which the Hebrew word is witness) is identical in form with the proper name Ma'add, an early name for a nation in Arabia, often used as equivalent to "Arab." Hence the words rendered "a king ready" are likely to have meant "the king of Ma'add." The word Kidur ("battle") would in that case be also a proper name; and, indeed, there are not a few proper names which resemble it, *e.g.* Kaudur, king of the Himyarites.<sup>2</sup> The allusion will then be to some sudden onslaught made by the king of Ma'add, which became typical of sudden and successful attacks. If we could imagine any ground for calling Abram "king of Ma'add," we might suppose his onslaught on Kudur-Laghomer the event to which reference is made.

In some other cases it is not clear whether we have a mistranslation from Arabic, or a unique employment of a

<sup>1</sup> See Abu 'l-Walid's *Dictionary* (ed. Neubauer), col. 555.

<sup>2</sup> *Taj al-arus*, s.v.

Hebrew root. In xxi. 28, "Behold, I know your thoughts and your imaginations which ye *mutter* against me," it is possible that the Hebrew root (ordinarily "to do violence") may have had the sense "mutter," but it seems more probable that we have a case of an Arabic word<sup>1</sup> represented by the Hebrew word that seemed to resemble it most. The Arabic verb is used of people saying something to themselves, because they are afraid to say it out aloud. "When I say what is absurd," says a poet, "I raise my voice; but when I speak the truth, I *mutter* it long, *i.e.* "I say it under my breath long before I venture to say it out loud." "Do you not see that the days of youth give warning in a *whisper*, or something gentler still?" the same poet asks in another place; the young would resent anything louder. "Our age cries aloud what the ages that only *muttered* concealed from us" gives a third illustration of this word.<sup>2</sup> In Syriac the word means simply "to think." It is clear that the verse of Job preserves an early example of this word, for which, had it been Hebrew in this sense, we should at least have been likely to find some parallels in the Bible.

It is not necessary to pursue this subject any further in this place. It has, I think, been shown that the probability is in favour of Job having been originally in the language spoken in the heart of Arabia: and this gives us the prospect of solving many difficulties which are at present unsolved, and, perhaps, of defining the place of Elihu in the dialogue better than it has hitherto been defined. There are, moreover, some other conclusions which are by no means devoid of interest. We have seen that the myth of Nahs Mirrikh is in Job part of a system of astronomy which belongs to Arabia; and the myth of Rahab is similar. But elsewhere in the Bible we find these powers

<sup>1</sup> דמם.

<sup>2</sup> *Luzumiyat* of Al-Ma'arri (Cairo, 1895), ii. 6, 25, 36.

identified with Egypt. This being so, it would appear that Isaiah must have consciously adapted the myths of Job to Israelitish history. The wounds inflicted on Nahs Mirrikh and Zuhah had no meaning when the old mythology had been forgotten or abandoned; what they must represent, it was now thought, must be the great exploits of which the Israelites cherished the memory; and the defeat of Egypt being the chief of these, Egypt is identified with Nahs Mirrikh. It follows thence that the translation of Job was classical in Isaiah's time, and must have been made at a very early period of Israelitish history. Where, therefore, we find in Isaiah parallels to Job (and these are very frequent), this must be explained by Isaiah's style being modelled on this old classic.

In the literatures of which the growth can most easily be traced one generation is constantly found to instruct the next. The earliest Greek writers imitate Homer, the next generation imitates *them*, and presently the earliest Latin writers translate Greek works before they are able to produce works of their own. Ennius serves as a model to Lucretius, Lucretius to Vergil, Vergil to all that follow. Since then it is certain that the literature of Canaan was preceded by a literature in the language known to us as classical Arabic, it would be natural if Canaanitish literature commenced with translations from those old classics into the vernacular which now aspired to become a literary language.

The other possibility is that the translation of Job was made at the suggestion of some literary king, who may have played in Canaan the part afterwards played by Al-Ma'mun in the Mohammedan Empire. Since the difficulty of Job does not seem due to archaism so much as to mistranslation and, possibly, corruption, this latter hypothesis is the more probable; and it is confirmed by the fact that in xxxiv. 15 there appears to be a reference to the text of

Genesis. When Israelitish writers speak with respect of the wisdom of the "Children of the East," they most likely refer to the book of Job. That in the course of time the character of many of the speeches contained in it became modified is exceedingly likely; thus it seems clear that Job's answer in chapter xxvi. is by no means justified by the address of Bildad in chapter xxv. Since Bildad's speech is, moreover, abnormally short, it is probable that a considerable amount of objectionable matter has been omitted. In the case of a translation, where the work was originally non-Israelitish in character, such omissions are easily explicable; those of us who have to translate from the Sanskrit or Arabic, or even from the Greek or Latin, have constantly to omit matter which our taste rejects: and repeated handling of a book often reveals violations of taste which escape the notice of the first student. But that its general import was sufficiently profound and prophetic to justify its admission into the canon has, I hope, been shown—by no means for the first time.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.