

The Book of Job.

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THE editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES has kindly asked me to say a few words in the way of introducing to his readers my commentary on Job¹ which is now in the press. With this invitation I comply all the more readily because I am letting the book itself go forth without any preface.

The plan of Nowack's *Handkommentar* is well known. In the upper part of the page it gives the translation, arranged in the case of poetical passages in verses, while below this, in smaller type, comes the exposition, along with introductory remarks to each section. My translation of Job aims at combining a literal rendering with language of an elevated and poetical cast, and at reproducing, as far as possible, the cadence of the original text, as this has been handed down to us by tradition. All textual emendations are indicated, as in Kautzsch's translation of the Old Testament, by the diacritical signs ' '. The exposition leaves unnoticed, wherever that is possible, the chaotic mass of exegetical tradition, and seeks to reach, by the shortest possible path, the meaning of the text and the significance of the context. The only exceptions to this procedure are in such *loci classici* as chap. xix. 25 ff., where all the possibilities of interpretation are exhaustively discussed. The commentary further sets itself the task of noticing fully proposed alterations of the text, especially the more recent of these. This is essential, seeing that the subject-matter depends upon whether these alterations be accepted or rejected. To the English reader I have to make a confession. The amount of English literature on Job which has been utilised by me leaves a good deal to be desired. This is owing to no disposition to undervalue the important contributions made to the subject by English scholars. Nothing could be farther from my mind. The fault lies mainly with English publishers, who send us so few books of this kind for review, and is partly to be laid

at the door of the limited resources of our public libraries. Notwithstanding all this, it will be found that I cite and weigh the conclusions of quite a number of English books and articles.

The introduction consists of six sections.

§ 1. *Name, Position, Contents, and Form of the Book* (pp. iii-vii). This brings the whole subject in a very general way before the mind's eye of the reader.

§ 2. *The Material (Stoff) of the Book* (pp. vii-xiii). This section is devoted especially to the establishing of a position upon which the author lays great stress, namely, that our Book of Job was preceded by a *popular book* (referred to in Ezek. xiv. 14, 20). This lies before us essentially unaltered in the Prologue and the Epilogue. According to this book, the testing of Job yielded an unalloyed result, and the victory of God over the Satan was correspondingly complete.

§ 3. *The Work of the Poet, and the question of Later Transformation* (pp. xiii-xxi). It is first shown how the poet used the popular book in the composition of his work, and then a survey is given of the critical controversies which have been raised on many sections of the book. Most of these questions are handled in detail, and a decision sought to be reached, when the exegesis of the particular passage is in hand. The only considerable passage I conclude to be an interpolation is ch. xli. 4-26 (E.V. 12-34). In this section the Elihu-speeches (chs. xxxii.-xxxvii.) are more fully discussed in reference to certain recent criticisms.

§ 4. *The Aim of the Poet* (pp. xxi-xxix). After rejecting all other attempts to solve this problem, I endeavour to get at the meaning and purpose of the book *without taking into account the Elihu-speeches*. It is plain that the poet lays much stress upon the *sin of Job* in the argument with his friends, and further, that God has from the first had this sin in view in His counsel concerning Job. Therefore, in the mind of the poet, Jahweh's contest with the Satan, as described in the popular book, was preceded by an in-

¹ *Das Buch Eliob übersetzt u. erklärt* (Nowack's Handkommentar z. A.T., II. 1), von K. Budde, Göttingen, 1896 (liv + 256 pp.).

dependent resolution of Jahweh to send suffering upon Job in order to purify him from the latent self-righteousness and spiritual pride which were endangering his soul. The contest with the Satan is over at ch. ii. 10; the latter is completely vanquished; but in defending his integrity Job falls into grievous sin, and Jahweh's original purpose with him begins to fulfil itself. This finds its conclusion in the confession of Job (xl. 4 f., xlii. 2-6), and his intercession for his friends (xlii. 7-9). The suffering, which in the popular book has for its object to test and to evidence the integrity of Job, is thus transformed by the poet into suffering whose end is the purification and spiritual advancement of Job. While this meaning can be clearly discovered even in the rest of the book, it is expressly stated in the Elihu-speeches, and indeed precisely at the point where this explanation was needed. It is the Elihu-speeches, then, that reveal the meaning and aim of the poet. Since the other objections to these speeches are partly unfounded, and partly fall when it is noticed how the text has been worked over and suffered corruption, there remains nothing for it but to treat these speeches as a genuine constituent of the book.

§ 5. *The Date of the Poet's Work* (pp. xxxix-xlvi). The year B.C. 400 is accepted as the *terminus ad quem*.

§ 6. *The Text of the Book* (pp. xlvi-liv). First of all, those attempts are rejected which have been made to restore the text upon the basis of a metrical theory. We are not in a position to establish such a theory, whether as regards the length of the lines, the number of lines in a verse, or the strophic arrangement. After careful examination, I reject also the view of Hatch and Bickell that the original Septuagint text, which is about a fifth shorter than the Massoretic, presents the original text of the book. Only a slight value for criticism of the text is allowed to the Septuagint, and the question is even raised whether for the

Book of Job it contains the only or the oldest Greek translation dating from the pre-Christian era. The general verdict pronounced is, that in Job we have to do with a Hebrew text which is tolerably well preserved, which indeed in not a few instances shows interpolations or corruptions, but yet in the main is very near the original form.

Nothing in my commentary is likely to occasion more shaking of the head than its defence of the genuineness of the Elihu-speeches. Yet it is now twenty years since I first asserted and partly defended this position. Holding this opinion still, what could I do in my commentary but honestly avow it, even at the risk of the reactionary anti-critical school taking advantage of my conclusion to draw malicious inferences regarding the trustworthiness of any critical results? Infallibility we have never claimed; on the contrary, one may see from this work of mine that, regardless of results, we steadily pursue the truth, and that we cheerfully defend tradition against criticism whenever we feel convinced that it has right upon its side. In any case, the author trusts that the labour he has expended will not prove in vain. In the past the Elihu-speeches have, with few exceptions, suffered from friend and foe alike, having been either misunderstood or neglected. Be they genuine or not, they ought at least to have justice done to them. Even those whom my book fails to convince of their genuineness—and it may be expected that in so difficult a question these will number not a few—will yet have thoroughly to test their understanding of the rest of the Book of Job. And if they concede to me that the poet's meaning has been well understood by the author of the Elihu-speeches, that is the main point. Should even this measure of success not be reached, yet the author will rest content if his book stirs up other workers to a new and more fruitful treatment of the grand Book of Job. And of such workers, by God's help, there will be no lack.