

The Composition of Job 24-30

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PROFESSOR MACDONALD in his article, "The Original Form of the Legend of Job" published in vol. xiv of this JOURNAL, graphically expressed the feeling with which every attentive reader rises from a study of the book of Job. After giving an admirable statement of the growth of the soul as portrayed in the first half of the book, Macdonald says (p. 69): "But suddenly his soul's progress is cut off; there comes the great break, and the rest of the book, as we have it, is a chaos. Nor do I think it was ever anything else. So far he had left all in connected order; the rest consists of fragments dating from different periods in his development." A little later in speaking of the speech of the Lord, cc. 38-41, Macdonald says: "This speech in itself is in evident disorder, and probably we have it in two alternative forms, one of which only would eventually have been chosen. But, besides this, the tone of the speech gives great difficulty. . . . It is hard to draw any distinction between its position and that of Job's three friends. To all appearance it is by the writer of the rest of the poem, but after he had written the later speeches of Job he could never possibly have regarded this speech as an answer to them. . . . I am driven, therefore, to believe that it must have been written at an earlier point of the poet's own development, before the problem had assumed for him the complexity and difficulty which it did later. This will appear a somewhat daring assumption, but in the face of the facts none other is possible."

Professor Macdonald has in this passage eloquently set

forth the disordered state of Job from c. 23 onwards. This fact all must admit. In explaining that disorder by the supposition that the remainder of the book contains simply unfinished studies, and that the poet never really completed his poem, or even had a solution for the great problem which his genius enabled him to see so clearly, Professor Macdonald raises two important questions, to each of which a few words should be devoted.

The present writer cannot agree that the poet presents no solution of the problem of suffering. He agrees with Duhm (*Hiob*, p. 180 ff.) and Peake (*Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, p. 100, and *Job in the Century Bible*, pp. 18, 19, 343), that the poet has presented a real solution, and that the profoundest that can be given. He has pictured Job as finding the solution of his problem, not in a reasoned explanation or a theology, but in a religious experience. The poet was astute enough to understand that such mysteries as he made the Lord express so impressively are really incomprehensible to the human mind. The finite plummet cannot fathom the depths of the Infinite. His hero, Job, finds his satisfaction in a first-hand experience of God. In this experience he learned, as those who have real experience of religion always learn, to let many of his questions go unanswered, and to go on his way happy because he was travelling with an Infinite Companion who knows the answers. Our poet was profound not only as thinker and poet but also in his religion. His solution by this means is the only satisfactory one that is attainable by man.

He was too great an artist to present this solution in formal homily. Instead he portrays Job as coming to the interview with Jehovah confident and defiant. The majestic presence of God affected Job as he had little dreamed it would. Springs of feeling were touched in ways that he had not anticipated. Penitence was born, trust sprang up in his soul, and he who had longed for a theodicy in the presence of God beyond the grave, unexpectedly found the solution of his problem and his sufferings in communion with God here.

In presenting this solution the poet sets forth at once the function and the limitation of the intellect in religion. He shows that it is the function of the intellect to keep theology in touch with knowledge and experience, and to compel it to abandon dogmas which in the light of more accurate knowledge have ceased to be adequate explanations of facts. On the other hand, he pictures with equal clearness, though with an artistic touch so delicate that many have overlooked it, the fact that the mind cannot adequately explain life and suffering, and that the one way to satisfaction is in an experience of God which begets faith and trust. He shows that a second-hand religion of faith in the theology of some one else is sure to break down when most needed. The emphasis which he places on first-hand experience places this poet in the front rank of the world's religious seers.

If one recognizes the great purpose of the poet in the address of Jehovah, and removes from that address as later interpolations the description of behemoth and leviathan (40 15-41 34), and one or two other minor glosses (40 a 7 and 42 3 a, and 4), all of which many scholars have recognized as interpolations, we regain, I believe, the address of the Lord and his final colloquy with Job in the form in which the poet left it, and in a form which makes a worthy climax both to the soul-development of Job and to one of the world's greatest poems.

It is now recognized by many interpreters that the Elihu speeches, cc. 32-37, are a later interpolation. This view the present writer shares. The removal of these chapters from the poem is a long step toward the recovery of the form in which the great artist left his work. It is not the intention of this paper, however, to discuss these chapters. The writer agrees with the conclusion set forth by Dr. Helen H. Nichols, a former member of the Semitic Seminary of Bryn Mawr College, in the January number of the *American Journal of Semitic Languages* (vol. xxvii, p. 97), that the mark of two different correctors of the poem is combined in the Elihu speeches.

If we thus find it possible to trace a worthy artistic form

for the poem after c. 31, what can be said of the form of cc. 24-31? It should be noted that the problem connects itself in reality with cc. 24-30 only, for if we place 31 38-40, between vv. 34 and 35, so as to bring vv. 35-37, the splendid climax of Job's appeal, at the end, no serious problem, apart from textual corruption, presents itself in the chapter.

It has long been recognized that Job 24-30 is in an imperfect form. This imperfection is manifested (leaving textual corruption for the moment out of account) in two ways. 1. The plan followed in the poem up to this point is here lost. The poet's plan made the three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, answer Job in turn, speaking in the order mentioned. As the text stands Eliphaz has his three full speeches. Bildad has his also, though his third speech is cut down to six verses, but there is no third speech for Zophar. 2. There are in these chapters many passages which appear strange on the lips of Job — passages in which he utters sentiments the opposite of those which he had expressed in earlier passages. For example, in 24 18-21 Job portrays the hard lot of the wicked in the world in a way inconsistent with his former utterances, and with his statement in 24 23 that God gives the wicked security. Other examples will be cited presently.

Is the confusion in this part of the poem due to the fact that we have here merely a collection of uncompleted sketches by the poet? Several modern interpreters, as Grill, Kuenen, Bickell, Duhm, Peake, McFadyen, and Marshall, have taken the ground that the poet originally gave each of the friends three speeches, and that the original form of the poem can, perhaps, be restored. With this view the present writer agrees, though he thinks that the original form has never yet been successfully discovered, unless in the present paper he should be so happy as to have hit upon it. Whether this prove to be the case or not, a new discussion of the problem will do no harm.

All have noticed that Bildad's third speech in c. 25 is too short. The favorite way of lengthening this (that advocated

by Grill, Kuenen, Bickell, Duhm, McFadyen, and Peake)¹ is to attach to it c. 26 in whole or in part. Duhm and McFadyen attach the whole of it; Grill, Kuenen, and Peake, vv. 5-14; while Bickell uses only vv. 12-14 in this way, rejecting vv. 5-11 because the LXX did not contain them. Those who do not, like Bickell, reject vv. 5-11 as a later interpolation believe that the omission of the LXX at this point is a witness to the fact that the text has been disturbed here. The reasons for transferring a part or all of c. 26 to Bildad are, then: (1) that c. 26 is inappropriate in the mouth of Job at this stage of the argument; (2) that the LXX reveals a disturbance of the text here; and (3) that the speech of Bildad in c. 25 is too short. To each of these reasons a few words should be directed.

1. The feeling that c. 26 is unfitting in the mouth of Job is based on the facts that in c. 24 Job is represented as in one of his bitterest moods and there declares that the Almighty, by deferring judgment on the wicked, in reality protects them; that in 27² he declares that God has vexed his soul; and that in 31³⁵⁻³⁷ he prepares to enter God's presence in a defiant spirit. It is maintained that the calmer meditation of c. 26 on the inscrutability of God and his ways is inconsistent with Job's mood both before and afterwards. A closer examination, however, removes this objection and reveals some strong reasons for believing that the poet originally put this chapter in the mouth of Job. The poet has throughout the poem exhibited his great skill as an artist by his graphic portrayal of the way in which in illness splendid outbursts of an essentially noble nature may be mingled with wild utterances which are prompted by disordered nerves

¹ See Kuenen, *Bücher des Alten Testaments*, III (Leipzig, 1874), p. 137 ff.; Bickell, *WZKM*, 1892; and *Das Buch Job* (Vienna, 1894); Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob*; McFadyen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 287; and Peake, *Job in the Century Bible*, pp. 33 and 285 ff. Peake reserves 26¹⁻⁴ to Job. Marshall, *Book of Job*, in *An American Commentary on the Old Testament*, Philadelphia, 1904, combines 26⁵⁻¹⁴ with c. 25, but makes the improbable suggestion that it is a speech of Zophar. Marshall finds Bildad's third speech in 24¹⁵⁻²¹. I agree with him that 24¹⁵⁻²¹ belongs to Bildad, but 26⁵⁻¹⁴ is not in the rough manner of Zophar.

and the unstable feelings of an invalid. Thus in 13 *15* *1.* at the very moment that he makes Job say:

“Behold he will slay me; I may not hope,
But my ways will I maintain to his face,”

he represents Job as expressing in the same breath the innate faith of a normal nature in God, thus:

“This also shall be my salvation;
For a godless man shall not come before him.”

Similarly in 16 12-19, where Job is saying that God had delivered him to misfortune to destroy him, he suddenly bursts out with the cry:

“Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
And he that voucheth for me is on high.”

Again in 19 25-27 in the same breath in which Job states the imminence and inevitableness of his dissolution the poet makes him cry out:

“But I know that my Vindicator liveth,
And he shall arise as a last One over the dust.”

It is a part of the same graphic and artistic portrayal of the mixture of sane insight and disordered nerves in a manly invalid, which led the poet to represent his hero as ceasing for a moment to be stung by the unjust accusations of his friends, and to let his thoughts wander away for a little in a calmer mood to the mysteries of the Being who formed the world.

Two other considerations confirm this view. Job is made in cc. 7, 9, and 12, though in a different mood, to treat of the inscrutable nature of God's ways. The thought is not, accordingly, a new one for the poet to attribute to him. Again the poet throughout the poem, next to the address of the Lord, places his finest poetry in the mouth of Job. Elsewhere the allusions to the Babylonian creation poem, which afford some of the finest imagery of the book, are given to Job (see cc. 8 and 9). One feels that the splendid passage beginning in 26 12—based, as the writer pointed out years

ago (*JOS*, xv. 22), upon a passage of the Babylonian poem—was never intended by the poet for Bildad, whom he throughout represents as the commonplace repeater of old saws. The passage runs:

“He stilleth the sea by his power,
By his understanding he smiteth through Rahab.

The bars of heaven fear him²
His hand hath pierced the fierce serpent.”

2. As to the fact that the LXX omitted vv. 5-11, a study of the habits of the LXX translator (or translators) reveals the fact that what were regarded as repetitions in altered form were often omitted. Sometimes this led to the omission of a phrase, sometimes, to the second member of a parallelism, sometimes, a verse or more which restates the thought in altered form, and sometimes, quotations from other parts of the poem. Here and in 21 28-33, it appears that this habit led to the omission of several verses. It does not follow, therefore, that we have external testimony that the text here has been disturbed.

3. As to the brevity of the speech of Bildad, it will be shown presently that that can be lengthened in a more appropriate way without drawing upon c. 26.

If now we turn to c. 24, a number of difficulties present themselves. Vv. 5-8 interrupt Job's description of the doings of certain classes of violent wicked men, who kidnap children and make them slaves, by the description of some wretched outcasts who would be powerless to harm any one. The passage seems clearly out of place; it reminds one of the words of Bildad in 18 5 ff.

Again it should be noted that the LXX omitted vv. 14 c-18 a, and that vv. 17-22. 24, which describe the swift punishment of the wicked, are quite out of harmony with Job's theme in this chapter, which is that God delays the punishment of the wicked, and thus encourages wickedness. It is impossible that a sane poet should have put them in the

² Instead of the Heb. ברחו שמים שברה, I would read with **כַּלְכַּל** ברחו שמים שברה. Professor Lyon, *JBL*, xiv. 131-135, emends differently: ברחת שמים שברה.

mouth of Job here; they too are in the tone of Bildad. Once more in c. 30, vv. 3-8, similar in tone to the verses just mentioned in c. 24, form a disturbing element. Job is describing how in contrast to his former dignity men of lower station mock at him. Vv. 3-8 introduce into the midst of this the description of some outcasts from society, skulking about in holes, not near enough to mock Job, and so low that even one in his condition would not care for their scorn.

If, now, we relieve cc. 24 and 30 of these disturbing verses, it is possible to attach them to c. 25 so as to obtain a speech for Bildad of the usual length, and one which treats a favorite theme of his in his characteristic way. The order which seems most probable is: 25 1-6 24 17. 18. 5-8 30 3-8 24 21. 22. 19. 20. 24. Reconstructed thus the address falls into three parts: 1. The contrast between God's holiness and man's impurity; 2. The fate of ignoble sinners; 3. The fate of powerful sinners. The portion of it reconstructed from cc. 24 and 30 reads as follows:

- 25 4 "How much less man that is a worm,
And the son of man that is a worm.
- 24 17 For they seek for themselves the deep darkness,
But they find the terror of death-shade.
- 18 He is swift upon the face of the waters,
Their portion is cursed in the earth.
- 5 Like wild asses they go out
To their work of seeking prey;
Sweet is bread to their children.
- 6 In the fields by night they reap,
And the vintage of the rich they glean.
- 7 Naked they pass the night unclothed,
And in the cold have no covering.
- 8 With the showers of the mountains they are wet,
And without shelter hug the rock.
- 30 8 They are lifeless from want and famine,
They flee to the wilderness,
The mother of desolation.
- 4 They pluck saltwort by the shrubs,
And roots of broom are their food.

- 5 From people they are thrust out,
They cry after them as after a thief.
- 6 In most dreadful valleys they dwell,
In holes of the earth and the rocks.
- 7 Under the bushes they bray,
Under the chick-pea they couple.
- 8 Offspring of fools, yea offspring of nameless men,
They are scourged out of the land.
- 24 21 One devoureth the barren that beareth not
And doeth not good to the widow
- 22 He drags off the powerless by his strength;
He rises up and no one is sure of his life.
- 19 Drought and heat consume the snow-waters;
Sheol, sinners.
- 20 The womb shall forget him;
The worm feed sweetly on him;
No longer shall he be remembered,
For broken like a tree is unrighteousness.
- 24 His exaltation is brief and he is gone;
He is brought low and withers like saltwort,
And cut off like the top of an ear of corn.”⁸

⁸ The above translation presupposes the following emendations in the Massoretic text:

In 24 17, instead of	בָּקֶר	read	בָּקָר	with	SS.
“ “ “ “	יָדִיד	“	יָדִיד	“	SS.
“ “ “ “	בלהות	“	בלהת		
“ 24 18 omit	כרמים ררך לא יסנה	as a hopelessly corrupt gloss.			
“ 24 8, instead of	הן פראים	read	כפראים	with	ⓄⓁⓈⓂⓂⓂⓂⓂⓂ.
“ “ “ “	שרכה	“	שרכ	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.
“ 24 6, “ “	בלילו	“	בלילה	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.
“ “ “ “	רשע	“	עשיר	“	Bu, Du, Be.
“ 30 2, “ “	אמש	“	אם	“	Di, Hoff, Pe, Kl, BDB.
“ 30 8, “ “	וני	“	ני	“	Be.
“ 24 22, “ “	אכזרים	“	אכזרים	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.
“ “ “ “	בחין	“	בחיו	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.
“ 24 19, “ “	חמאי	“	חמאים		
“ 24 24, “ “	רומז	“	רומז	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.
“ “ “ “	והמכו	“	והמך	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.
“ “ “ “	ככל	“	כמלך	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.
“ “ “ “	יקמץ	“	יקמץ	“	Be.
“ “ “ “	יקלו	“	יקל	“	ⓄⓂⓂ.

By the removal of this material Job's addresses in cc. 24 and 30 become again consistent, assuming a form which one can well believe was the poet's own. The improvement in c. 30 is easily tested by reading the chapter without vv. 3-a. Job's address in c. 24 becomes as follows :

- 1 "Why are times hidden by the Almighty,
That they who know him see not his days ?
- 2 The wicked remove landmarks ;
They forcibly remove flocks and their shepherds.
- 3 Asses of the orphans they drive off ;
They take in pledge the widow's ox.
- 4 They thrust the needy from the way ;
Together the poor of the land hide.
- 5 They pluck the fatherless from the breast,
The suckling of the poor they take in pledge.
- 10 Naked, they go without clothing,
And hungry, they carry the sheaves.
- 11 Within their walls they make oil ;
They tread the winepresses and suffer thirst.
- 12 From the city and houses they groan,
The souls of children cry out,
Yet their prayer God hears not !
- 13 These are among rebels against light ;
They know not its ways ;
They walk not in its paths.
- 14 ab At darkness the murderer riseth ;
He kills his adversary and enemy.
- 15 Also the adulterer's eye awaits twilight,
Saying, No eye shall see me ;
And he puts a covering on his face.
- 14 c Also by night the thief goes forth,
15 ab In the dark he digs through houses
Which by day he had marked for himself.
- 16 c They do not know the light.
- 23 He (God) gives them security and they rest,
And his eye is on their ways.

25 If it isn't so, who will prove me a liar,
And bring my words to naught?"⁴

Passing, now, to c. 27, this chapter, although it begins appropriately as a speech of Job, contains, like c. 24, much material inconsistent with his point of view. This material is contained in vv. 7-11. 13-23. It is quite in the style of the speeches of Zophar in the earlier part of the poem, and Stuhlemann, Kuenen, Bickell, Duhm, Peake, and McFadyen have correctly attributed this portion to Zophar. Thus each of the three friends, on this view, were given three speeches by the poet, and the poem was symmetrical to the end. This speech of Zophar beginning at 27 7 originally followed c. 26. Vv. 1-4. 12 of c. 27 are to be connected with cc. 29-31 as a part of Job's last long speech.

The praise of Wisdom, c. 28, is, as most recent interpreters have recognized, a still later interpolation. It can be attributed neither to Job nor to Zophar. The reasons for this view are well known and need not be set forth here. Duhm has suggested that it was originally a complete independent work, beginning, "Whence then cometh wisdom?" and having this question as a refrain recurring at regular intervals.

Attractive as the view is, it is encountered by this difficulty. 28 14-19 was not only omitted by the LXX, but internal evidence seems to indicate that the verses are a later addition to the chapter. The theme of the chapter is

⁴ In the above rendering the following textual changes are presupposed :

v. 2	Before	נבליח insert	רשעים with	⊗⊗⊗.
" "	Instead of	ירש read	ורשו "	⊗⊗⊗.
" 9	" "	וקל "	וקל "	Kamp., Bu, Du, Be, Pa.
" 12	" "	מתים "	ובתים "	⊗⊗⊗.
" "	" "	חללים "	עללים "	⊗⊗⊗.
" "	" "	שים תפלה "	שמע תפלה "	⊗⊗.
" 13	" "	ישבו "	ילכו "	⊗⊗⊗⊗⊗.
" 14	" "	לאור "	להשך "	⊗⊗⊗.
" "	" "	עני ואביון "	צר ואיב "	Merx, Du, Be, Pa.
" "	" "	היו כנגב "	הולך נגב "	Merx, Bu, Du, Be, Pa.
" "	Transfer v. 14 c	to come after v. 16,	Bu, Marsh.	
" 16	Instead of	חמנו read	חמם with	⊗⊗.
" 26	" "	לאל "	לאן "	⊗.

"Where can wisdom be found?" Its point is that there is a source of supply for everything else but this. Vv. 14-19 enlarged at length upon the price of wisdom, a matter mentioned, indeed, in v. 13, but which when extended over several verses is irrelevant, and weakens the comparison of the whole chapter. If these verses are dropped out, the chapter seems more like a fragment than a complete work.

The final speech of Job, as already intimated, consisted of 27 1-6. 12 29 2-25 30 1. 2. 9-31 31 1-34. 38-40. 35-37. Job first makes a brief reply to Zophar's last remarks (27 1-6. 12), then plaintively recalls his past happiness before misfortunes overtook him (c. 29), contrasts with that his present forlorn condition in which he is mocked by the meanest of those who used to fawn upon him (c. 30), and reasserts his innocence and makes his final appeal to God (c. 31).

We are led, accordingly, to believe that the author of Job left his masterly poem in a fully finished form, and that the disordered condition in which the last half of our book has come down to us is not due to the poet, but to those pious, orthodox saints, who in every generation are wont to lay their hands on critics, whether "lower" or "higher," whether critics of theology or critics of society. The splendid genius of the poem did not permit them to suppress it, so they mixed and diluted the last half of it, that its blasphemous poison might be made to bear an odor of sanctity.

The writer feels sure that this general position is correct, even if his reconstruction of cc. 24 and 25 (the special contribution of this paper to the subject) should ultimately be proved to be wrong.⁵

⁵ Since the above article was in type, the writer has observed that Professor Macdonald, in the article "Job" in the *Standard Bible Dictionary*, seems inclined to the theory (although he does not fully commit himself to it) that the work of the original poet ends with ch. 31, that the Elihu author next added his orthodox corrective, and that the Yahweh speeches are by a still later writer. He remarks, "The speech of the Lord would have satisfied him [the Elihu author] so that he could not write anything further."

This view seems to the present writer to miss the deep significance of the final colloquy between Yahweh and Job. Quite apart, however, from this consideration, is it safe to dogmatize as to what would satisfy a prosaically minded defender of orthodoxy?