

Relative Dating of Additions to Job

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CURRENT thinking concerning Job accepts in general two major suggestions with respect to the composition of the book. On the basis of linguistic studies (e.g., Staples in 1924)¹ it is recognized that different authorship may be seen in the Prologue, the main Cycle of Speeches, Poem of Wisdom, Elihu Speeches, the Yahweh Speeches, and the Epilogue. Second, it is increasingly being accepted that the Prologue and Epilogue were originally an old folk tale.² It has been divided and between its parts the cycle of speeches has been inserted. The Wisdom Poem (Chapter 28) is manifestly an intrusion, and the speeches by Elihu and the speeches of Yahweh are apparent appendages to the dramatic cycle of debate between Job and his three friends.

There are those who insist that the story is incomplete without a closing theophany and some exchange between Yahweh and Job. To all of this is added the theory that the first draft of the book of Job is Edomitic, or that the Book is based upon either a Mesopotamian³ or an Egyptian⁴ original. In any case the Book came to maturity within the matrix of Judaism and has become a part of the rich heritage of both Judaism and Christianity.

¹ *The Speeches of Elihu: A Study of Job XXXII-XXXVII* (1925).

² Cf. B. D. Eerdmans: *Studies in Job*, 1939, who opposes this view.

³ A. O. T. pp. 284 ff. "Ein pessimistisches Zwiegespräch zwischen einem Herrn und seinem Knecht"; Pfeiffer: "Pessimistic dialogue between master and servant" in Pritchard: *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 437-438.

⁴ A. O. T. pp. 25 ff. "Das Gedicht vom Lebensmüden"; Wilson: "A dispute over suicide" in Pritchard, pp. 405-407.

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From the religious point of view literary analysis is useful, not only to show sources and origins, but to throw light upon the development of religious insights. It is the purpose of this paper to raise some questions and suggest some answers which may lead to a better appreciation of the religious genius who produced the first edition of the Book of Job.

When Robert H. Pfeiffer⁵ in 1915 first wrote on Job he examined the book with respect to the problem of Theodicy. It was his conviction, at that time, that the Prologue and Epilogue were later in concepts than the main section of the dialogue. In his *Introduction to the Old Testament*,⁶ Professor Pfeiffer, on linguistic grounds, accepted the current theory of the old folk tale and that therefore the Prologue and Epilogue are older than the rest of the book. Several considerations would indicate that Pfeiffer was right in the first instance. Pfeiffer does, however, recognize that all references to Satan must be later additions to the folk tale.

Old Folk Tales are more often preserved in poetry than prose, and even for the sake of literary structure change from poetry to prose does not readily occur. Second, the figure of the Satan comes late into Hebrew thinking, especially in the function in which he is presented in Job 1 and 2. Third, it is strange assuming that the Prologue and Epilogue were originally a unit that no mention is made in the Epilogue of the Satan or his wager with God. Fourth, it is puzzling that neither Job nor his friends should anywhere make reference to the Satan or be aware of the existence of such a being. And finally, the Prologue was appended by someone who introduced the problem of theodicy

⁵ *Le Livre de Job*.

⁶ Pp. 660 ff.; and in his *The Books of the Old Testament*, 1957, pp. 181 ff.

in a form quite contrary to the main thesis of the book.

The main cycle of debate in Job is not primarily concerned with the problem of why man suffers, but why Job suffers. Nor is question raised concerning the fact that God has created these things and that pain and suffering do come as punishment to those who have sinned. The writer of the main dialogue presents Job as an individual who has not sinned. Yet pain and suffering were Job's new lot. Job agreed with the Deuteronomic philosophy as surely as did his friends, but his complaint was that God had violated the rules. We should differentiate between the author's viewpoint and that ascribed to Job. The Prologue differs from the main dialogue. The Satan, not God, has brought suffering to the innocent Job. Manifestly the Prologue at least in its present form, is later than the main dialogue.

Leaving the Epilogue for the moment, we turn now to the speeches of Elihu. As noted in so many commentaries, these add but little to the arguments already voiced by the three friends. Some writers would see in Elihu's arguments the addition of the idea of the providential wisdom of God and that suffering is an educative instrument.⁷ There is also re-iteration of the Deuteronomic philosophy that piety brings prosperity and sin brings suffering. It is generally assumed that this section of the book was probably the last to be added. The omission of these chapters would bring the speeches of Yahweh immediately after Job's final soliloquy.⁸

The colophon at the close of chapter 31 would appear to mark the close of the original book unless we follow the Septuagint and read "Here Job closed his speech and his three friends ceased from making further reply to him." If the original book did close at this point

then the dialogue is left without any answer. Some scholars are therefore ready to accept the immediate sequence of chapters 31 and 38. Such an arrangement, however, presents grave difficulties. The content of the Yahweh speeches is hardly apropos to the main dialogue. Job had already eloquently pleaded that should he be granted the privilege of personal interview with God, that God would refrain from overpowering Job with descriptions of his grandeur, all of which Job is ready to concede (23:6, etc.). It has also been pointed out by Hoonacker that had the words of Yahweh already been in existence, Elihu would scarcely have made the kind of speeches he did.⁹ Peake, however, assumes that 32:13 "beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom; God may vanquish him, not man'" to be evidence that the speeches of Yahweh were already a part of the book and that Elihu is arguing with the original author for introducing God into the debate. The contrary is more nearly suggested. The very words, "beware lest" imply that up to this point no word of Yahweh has been uttered. Hoonacker urges that the author of the Elihu speeches cannot have been acquainted with the speeches of Yahweh.

Staples' analysis of the speeches of Elihu and of Yahweh indicate that they were written by different authors, but this does not mean that they could not have been written in relation to each other. Is it possible that there is definite relationship, though different authorship, of these two groups of speeches? We believe that there is.

The concepts of the grandeur of God's creation and the wonders of natural phenomena dominate both the speeches of Elihu and of Yahweh. But since Elihu would have spoken differently had the speeches of Yahweh already been a part of the Book of Job, is it feasible that the speeches of Yahweh come after the speeches of Elihu and

⁷ Peake: *New Century Bible—Job*, p. 26-27.

⁸ Cf. for contra, Hertzberg: "Der Aufbau des Buches Hiob," *Festschrift A Bertholet*, pp. 233-258 (1950).

⁹ Cf. Peake, *New Century Bible: Job*, p. 29.

indeed are an answer to them? Careful examination of these chapters would appear to support this view. Certainly the speeches of Yahweh are more appropriately addressed to the bombast of Elihu than to anything that Job has said.

However, such a sequence presents a problem that we have formerly noted, namely that if the speeches of Elihu are an appendage to the original book, and if the speeches of Yahweh are an answer to those of Elihu, we are still left without an original appropriate close to the book of Job. If the book is to be complete and carry out the purpose of the original composer then two elements are needed in the climax of the book. First, it is logical to assume that some kind of answer to Job's prayers and petitions would be expected from Yahweh. Second, if the challenge of the book of Job to the philosophy of traditional Judaism is to be consummated then something like the first part of the Epilogue is demanded (42:7-9).

It can readily be conceded that the latter part of the Epilogue makes full concession to the Deuteronomic position and contradicts all that the original author has said in the main dialogue. It is possible that such an appendage was essential if the book was to be accepted into the canon of orthodoxy.

We propose, therefore, that the original climax to the book may have included a brief response from Yahweh such as may be found in 40:1-2 "Will the fault-finder argue with the Almighty? He who chides God, let him answer for it."

This in turn called for a response from Job such as one may find either in 40:3-5, or 42:2-6. These passages are in part manifestly dittographies. Job confesses, not to sin, such as the friends have demanded of him, but to his outspokenness against the Almighty. His peace with God made, it remains for the climax of the vindication of Job. This is succinctly stated in 42:7-9.

The steps in the compilation of the

Book of Job then would appear to be the writing of the main dialogue (excluding chapter 28), plus the brief speeches by Yahweh and Job and a short epilogue such as we have noted. There may well have been a brief introduction to give the setting of the story, but it is equally likely that since the traditional story of Job was already well known no formal introduction was necessary.

An ardent defender of the faith was evidently persuaded that the three friends had not adequately stated the case for orthodoxy and inserted the speeches of Elihu. Still later another writer sought to answer Elihu through an expansion of the Yahweh speeches, but with the tragic result that they came to be identified as an answer to Job rather than Elihu. The Prologue and the latter part of the Epilogue were the last additions to the book.

If our analysis and proposed reconstruction are correct, then it becomes clear that the original author's purpose was that of questioning the basic philosophy of the Deuteronomic School. To do this he portrayed a perfect individual who nevertheless suffered. In the final stages of editing, though the record still preserves the words of condemnation of the three friends and the intercessory prayer of Job on their behalf, nevertheless the last part of the Epilogue completely supports the Deuteronomic philosophy. In addition, the Prologue, though attesting the innocence of Job, nevertheless denies the basic problem and solves the problem of theodicy by making the Satan, not God, responsible for Job's suffering. The magnificence of the original writer can only be understood as the accretions are removed and the original document stands out in all its glory.

Kraeling¹⁰ has suggested that four religious developments were necessary among the Jews before the Book of Job

¹⁰ E. G. Kraeling: *The Book of the Ways of God*, 1938, pp. 15-23.

could be written: (1) the conviction that God is just, (2) a developed sense of personal moral responsibility, (3) a deepened search for righteousness, and (4) the wisdom movement. To these I would add two others: (5) the growing emphasis upon ethical conduct rather than upon ritual requirements, and (6) strong protest against the traditional teachings of Judaism which had developed during the seventh and sixth centuries under the influence of the Deuteronomic movement, namely, that piety brings health and material prosperity and sin brings adversity and suffering. The last named, in the judgment of this writer, is the major reason for the challenge presented by the Book of Job.

With the new emphasis upon the individual and his sense of moral responsibility directly to God rather than through the community, serious question is presented by the Deuteronomic formula. Here is the major question of the writer, and only indirectly is the writer concerned with the question concerning man's pain and suffering. Certainly the problem of theodicy as understood in modern theology and philosophy would have been alien to this period.

Since the major point of tension was between judgment as it pertained to

the newly discovered individual as opposed to judgment upon communities as understood in pre-exilic religion, then it would be highly probable that the original edition of Job was produced either in the late exilic period or in the early post-exilic period. We hasten to recognize that the book in its present form could not have come to completion much before the middle of the third century B. C.¹¹

A major plea of Job throughout the cycle of speeches is that he shall be judged as an individual and not prejudged simply because he belongs to the human race. In the end he is granted audience, at least he is granted a vision of God. This, together with the vindication of Job in 42:7-9 would seem to support the author's position that Job was important as an individual.

Though Job was finally granted a vision of God, he did not receive the kind of trial he had demanded. Rather he made the discovery that God is not antagonist but friend. No mention is made of condemnation or exoneration. His salvation was that he once more knew God.

¹¹ It is recognized that the main cycle of speeches has many textual difficulties, *e.g.*, the third cycle has significant omissions and intrusions.

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