

BULLETIN NUMBER 18

THE TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING.

The twenty-first annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies was held concurrently with the fifteenth annual meeting of the Canadian Section of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, at Queen's Theological College, Kingston, Ontario, on May 21st and 22nd, 1953.

FIRST SESSION, THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 21st.

The president, Professor R. J. Williams, was in the chair, and opened the meeting with prayer. Nineteen members were present. In the absence of the Secretary-Treasurer, Professor John Macpherson, Professor R.B.Y. Scott was asked to act as Secretary pro tem. On motion by Professor Wevers, seconded by Professor Staples, the minutes of the previous annual meeting as contained in the seventeenth annual bulletin, were taken as read and approved.

The President announced that a report on a matter referred to the Executive, viz., the election of honorary members, would be given at the second session. The President further reported that an invitation to the S. B. L. E. to hold its next annual meeting in Toronto had been sent by President Sydney Smith of the University of Toronto, but had been declined with thanks.

A letter of thanks from Professor T. W. Manson was read, and also a letter from Dean Feilding resigning his position as Vice-President. The names of those who had written to express their inability to attend this meeting were also read.

Financial Report.

The President reported that no report was available from the Secretary-Treasurer, but in his absence he gave an interim Treasurer's Report for 1952-53: Receipts, \$82.01, Expenditures, \$79.36, Balance on Hand, \$2.65.

Other Business.

1. Professors Wevers and de Catanzaro were appointed auditors.
2. Professors Hay, Winnett, and Scott were elected as a Nominating Committee.
3. Nominations to Membership:
Rev. John E. Speers, Mr. George Beare, Rev. D. C. Munro, Rev. E. G. Clarke, Rabbi Erwin Schild.
4. Professor Hay reported informally on progress with plans to re-establish a Canadian Theological Quarterly.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

Professor Williams was introduced by Dr. A. H. Kent, and delivered his Presidential Address "Theodicy in the Ancient Near East".

SECOND SESSION, FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 22nd.

Professor Wevers reported on behalf of the auditors that in the absence of the Treasurer and his complete record, it was impossible to report on the records as satisfactory.

The following additional names were proposed for membership:

Professor George Johnston, Dean S. Jellicoe.

The Secretary was instructed to cast a ballot in favour of the election of those nominated.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Honorary President, C.S.B.S.:	Dr. H. A. Kent
President:	Principal R. Lennox
Vice-President:	Professor E. R. Fairweather
Secretary-Treasurer:	Professor C. J. de Catanzaro
Executive Committee, C.S.B.S.;	Professor N. H. Parker
	Professor J. W. Wevers
	Professor D. K. Andrews

Professor T. J. Meek drew attention to the desirability of circulating the programme of the meetings in advance.

It was moved by Professor Scott, seconded by Professor Hay, and agreed, that the next annual meetings be held at Toronto in the third or fourth week of May, 1954, the Executive to have power to make other arrangements, if necessary.

The President reported informally on the proposal to elect several honorary members to the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, in addition to Professor John Dow. In view of the small membership of the Society, it was decided to elect no further honorary members at present.

PAPERS READ BY MEMBERS:

Professor F. W. Beare: "Recent Trends in the Criticism of the Gospel according to S. Mark".

Professor C.J. de Catanzaro: "A Review of Sigmund Mowinckel: 'Offersang og Sangoffer'".

Professor D. W. Hay: "The Task of the Old Testament Scholar and Theologian".

Professor T. J. Meek: "Purpose and Result Clauses in Hebrew".

Professor R. B. Y. Scott: "The Work in the Book".

LUNCHEON. The members were guests of Queen's Theological College at luncheon at the Golf Club.

THIRD SESSION.

The following additional papers were read by members:

Rev. J. E. Speers: "The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Epistle to the Hebrews".

Professor J. W. Wevers: "Psalm 4 - A Reinterpretation".

Professor F. V. Winnett: "Jean Astruc, 1753, In Memoriam - a Re-examination of the Analysis of Genesis i - xi".

A vote of thanks to Queen's Theological College was responded to by Principal Gilmour. Following this, the meeting was adjourned.

THEODICY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Why do all who are treacherous thrive? 1.

These words of Jeremiah, together with their converse, the suffering of the innocent, form the theme of this paper. It was no academic question for Jeremiah; it was wrangled from him by the mental and physical anguish which was his lot as a prophet. And although sometimes it might become a subject for learned speculation by the sages, it was nevertheless occasioned by the painful experience of men.

It is our purpose to examine the attempts made in the ancient Near East to offer a solution to this perplexing problem. Long before Jeremiah directed his question to God, others had posed the same problem in the literature of Mesopotamia. Until recently, only two major works dealing with the theme of theodicy were known: the poem entitled "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom," often referred to as the Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, and the Acrostic Dialogue, known also as the Babylonian Theodicy. These, for want of more accurate information, have been regarded as dating from the period between 1200 and 800 B.C.

A welcome addition came in 1952, when Jean Nougayrol published² a tablet which had reposed in the Louvre since 1906, and which contained a poem similar in content to the two already known. This text long antedates them, however, since it may be ascribed, for a number of reasons, to the reign of the third successor of Hammurabi, Ammiditana, who reigned from 1619-1583 B.C. In this new work we have welcome confirmation of the views of W. von Soden, amongst others, who has argued that the questioning of the traditional religious concepts in Mesopotamia was a result of the catastrophe which overwhelmed the Old Babylonian dynasty and ended in the domination of the land by the Kassites, who had made their first appearance about 1675 B.C.³

Our tablet, by no means completely preserved, is clearly but a

part of a larger work, a "series" like the Righteous Sufferer which extends to four tablets. In an earlier tablet or tablets, the former prosperity and success of the sufferer would have been described, together with the disaster(s) which overtook him. The extant tablet contains nine strophes of ten lines each, separated by horizontal lines, and ends with a couplet. It opens with a friend of the sufferer interceding before his god on the latter's behalf:

His heart is inflamed, he is afflicted by his suffering . . .
He tottered, and having dropped to his knees, lay prostrate.
He rallied, and thus his suffering dissolved in tears;
Like a lost colt brays at the asses,
His head is held high before the god;
His mouth is (that of) a wild ox, his cry is (that of) a lamentation-priest.⁴

The loyal friend continues, insisting on the innocence of the sufferer:

My lord, I have considered in my mind;
I know of no [fault] intentional or unintentional which he committed . . .
Should a brother not be solicitous (?) for his brother?
Should a friend slander his friend?⁵

He goes on to describe his friend's piety, and then refers to the adversity which has befallen him. Moved by this plea, the god then proceeds to heal the sufferer, saying:

Having been obstructed, the way is (now) open to you;
The path is straight for you, and moreover mercy is granted you.
In days to come do not forget your god,
Your creator, when you are prosperous!⁶

The tablet closes with the words of the friend:

Make his way straight, open up his path!
Let thy servant's prayer descend into thy heart!⁷

It is probable that a further tablet followed in the series, in which the dénouement was related. No intellectual answer to the problem is to be found in the text as it is preserved, unless a suggestion be implicit in the words of the deity that the sufferer has forgotten his god in times of prosperity.

From other cuneiform sources of the same period, we may conclude that about the time of Hammurabi the belief had made its appearance in

Mesopotamia that sinners were punished and the righteous rewarded. It is well expressed, for example, in the following proverbial sayings culled from the literature:

Reverence for the gods begets prosperity,
Reverence for the Annunaki increases life. 8.

Reverence begets prosperity, sacrifice makes for long life, and furthermore prayer atones for sin. 9.

When you see the gain of reverencing the god, you will praise the god and bless the king.¹⁰

Soon there followed the corollary that suffering was evidence of sin. Only then do the facts of daily life which are at variance with the basic thesis lead to a questioning of its validity. This led to the conclusion that the cause for suffering may often be sins committed unwittingly, as the Babylonian penitential psalms continually aver:

The transgression which I have committed, indeed I do not know;
The sin which I have perpetrated, indeed I do not know.¹¹

In studying the literature which this problem of theodicy has created, we must bear in mind the fact that to the thought of the ancient Near East, determined as it was predominantly by motivations of religion and cult, divine justice never became a matter for philosophical speculation, but rather remained always a religious question. In contradistinction to the occidental world, the problem was stimulated, not by an abstract, speculative interest, but by the concrete circumstances of daily religious living. It was empirical observation that raised doubts as to divine justice.

The second work of Akkadian literature to be noted is the poem which the ancients knew as "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom." ¹² Cast in the form of a monologue, it runs to four tablets, and from a form-critical standpoint may be classed as a combination of personal lament and thanksgiving. The central figure, originally a man of wealth and position, appears now as does Job in the Hebrew counterpart, as a man bereft of riches and power, and afflicted with a loathsome disease. Neither prayer nor sacrifice, priest nor magician can afford him relief:

Misfortune is multiplied, I cannot find justice.
I cried to the god, but he would not look at me;
I prayed to the goddess, but she would not raise her head.
The seer could not determine (my) future by divination,
The oracle-priest could not make my case triumph through sacrifice;
I implored the necromancer, but he could not inform me, ¹³.
The incantation-priest could not loose my ban by rituals.

My ailment has eluded the incantation-priest,
And my omens have confused the seer;
The exorcist could not clarify the state of my illness,
Nor could the seer give a set time for my disease.
The god did not come to my aid nor take my hand,
My goddess had no mercy on me, nor did she assist me.¹⁴

All his past piety has counted for nought:

As one who did not establish the libation for the god,
Nor remember the goddess at meals;
Who did not avert his face, nor was filled with humility,
From whose mouth prayer and supplication were absent;
Who discarded the god's day, neglected the monthly festival,
Who became careless, ignoring their injunction;
Who did not teach his people to revere and venerate,
Not remembering his god, although eating his food,
Forsaking his goddess and not bringing a libation;
(As) one who became important and forgot his master,
Taking the weighty oath of his god lightly, I am disdained.
Yet it was I who took thought for prayer and supplication,
Supplication being my practice and sacrifice my rule;
The day of revering the gods was my delight,
The day of homage for the goddess was wealth and riches.¹⁵

He is constrained to conclude that the will of the gods is inscrutable, and that divine justice does not parallel its human counterpart:

What is acceptable to oneself is abominable to the god;
What is despicable in his mind is acceptable to his god.
Who can understand the will of the gods in heaven?
The counsel of the god is (like) deep waters; who can comprehend it?
Where has mankind (ever) understood the way of the god? ¹⁶

The remainder of the second tablet is occupied with describing the symptoms of his disease in the most vivid detail. Then, Tablet Three relates, when all hope is abandoned, the god Marduk unexpectedly intervenes and in the course of three dreams mercifully restores health to the afflicted one, to the amazement of his fellow citizens, who ask:

Who except Marduk has revived his dying condition?
What goddess save Sarpanit has restored his life?
Marduk is able to revive from the grave;
Sarpanit knows how to rescue from distress.¹⁷

The restored man now makes his way joyfully through the twelve gates of Babylon to the temple of Marduk, where he offers thanksgiving for his deliverance. Here again we have no attempt to provide a solution for the problem of the inexplicable and underserved suffering of a pious man.

The third Babylonian text is a poem of twenty-seven strophes, of eleven lines each, arranged in the form of an acrostic.¹⁸ Unlike the last work, it is a dialogue, the two participants speaking in alternate strophes. The first speaker has experienced nothing but misfortune in his life and hence denies the existence of divine justice. He describes how he was left an orphan at an early age, to which his pious friend replies that death is the common lot of all men. Piety, however, is the guarantee of a happy life:

He who looks on the face of the god possesses a guardian deity;
The anxious man, who reverences the goddess, heaps up abundance.¹⁹

He goes further, and suggests a reason for the suffering of his friend: the lack of piety as demonstrated by his denunciation of the just rule of the gods. This, however, does not satisfy the sufferer, for he sees no relationship between piety and material success. Drawing on the animal world as well as human society for his examples, he declares:

The wild ass, which has uttered [defiance(?)],
Did it give ear [to] the ancient things, the counsel of the god?
The fierce lion, which has repeatedly eaten the best of the flesh,
Did it bring [its] incense-offerings [to] appease the wrath of the goddess?
Did the possessor of riches, who has multiplied wealth, [real]ly
Allot [precious] electron to Mami?
Have [I with] held food-offerings? I pray[ed] to the god,
[I dedi]cated the offerings of the goddess; but my word [was in vain(?)]²⁰.

This, his friend asserts, is a shallow view; in the end retribution overtakes them:

Look at the [well-]formed wild ass on the [steppe(?)], him.
He who has trampled the produce of the fields! An arrow comes back to
The enemy of the beasts, the lion to which you referred, look at him now!
(Because of) the wrong which the lion has done a pit stands open for him.
As for him who is endowed with wealth, the rich man who has heaped up
possessions,
The prince burns him up in the fire before his appointed time.
Did you wish to follow the course which these have pursued?
(Rather) seek continually the gracious mercy of the god!²¹

The sufferer refuses to be convinced:

Those who do not seek the god follow the way of prosperity;
Those who are earnest intercessors of the god [dess] are cast down and afflicted.
When I was but a young sprout I str[ove] after the will of the god.
In humility and earnestness I sought [my]goddess.
A fief without revenue I bear as a yoke,
The god having established poverty instead of wealth.²²

To this his friend replies by stressing the inscrutability of divine justice:

The plans of the gods are as [inscrutable(?)] as the midst of the heavens,
The utterance of the god or goddess is not compreh[ended].
To understand truly [is denied(?)] to men;
While wrong thoughts [are appointed(?)] for people.²³

He further points out how zealously he served the gods. Now completely disillusioned, the sufferer declares that he will forsake human society and live as a vagabond and a brigand:

I will disregard the rites of the god, [tramp]ling upon the ordinances . . .
I will travel to the heights, and make my way to distant places . . .
I will enter from house to house, that I may turn away my hunger;
I will sleep out upon the meadows, and hunt along the road.²⁴

His orthodox friend is aghast at the suggestion, but the rebel continues to point out the injustices in society:

The son of the needy and naked (now) puts on [fine clothes(?)];
He who used to dine on vegetables (now) [eats] a noble's banquet;
The son of the honoured and rich (now) [feeds] on the carob;
The possessor of wealth is brought low . . .²⁵

Education--all the secret lore of the scribe to which he applied himself--was of no avail to bring prosperity to the sufferer. But his pious friend still rings the changes on his conventional belief:

As for him who bears the yoke of the god, even though scanty, his food
is sure.
Search continually for the favourable wind of the gods,
And what you have lost this year you will replace in a moment.²⁶

The sceptic turns again to the theme of the prosperity of the wicked, a subject, incidentally, which is not mentioned in either of the preceding poems:

Men extol the word of the renowned, who is experienced in mur[der],
While they despise the weakling who has done no harm;
They justify the wicked to whom [justice(?)] is taboo,
While they drive out the just man who is min[dful] of the god's will;
They fill the trea[sure-house] of the violent with costly plating,
While the storehouse of the powerless they empty of food;

They strengthen the mighty whose whole being is s[in],
While they destroy the lowly and trample down the weak. 27.

But his orthodox friend shows that conventional religion has an answer for this,
too:

The king of primeval days, Narru, the creator of mankind,
The lordly Zulummaru who pinched off their clay,
The queen, their fashioner, the lady Mami,
Having bestowed upon men complicated speech,
Bestowed upon them falsehoods and untruths for ever.
As for a rich man, one speaks glowingly of his prosperity:
"He is a king; riches accompany him!"
While one treats the weak man as though he were evil as a thief;
Conferring worthlessness upon him, one plots his murder;
Falsely teaching him every evil, because he has no guidance, 28.
One lets him perish horribly, extinguishing him like a flame.

That is to say, with the gift of the power of speech, the gods doomed man to
falsehood, to a mistaken view of life. This seems to satisfy our sceptical
friend, for at this point he is moved to accept the orthodox view, and humbling
himself before the gods, he cries:

May Ninurta who cast me off establish aid (for me)!
May the goddess who [afflicted me] have mercy (upon me)! 29.

We note that in contrast to the two other poems, there is here no intervention
by the gods. The aim of this poet is rather to effect a psychological con-
version.

When we turn to Egyptian literature, we seek in vain for any discus-
sion of theodicy. The vivid descriptions of the social revolution of the First
Intermediate Period contained in the Admonitions of Ipuwer 30. or the Suicide, 31.
contain no attack on the divine government, but rather accuse men of perverting
Ma'at, the divinely ordained order. The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant 32., also
from the same period, deals to be sure with the subject of social justice, but
no blame is attached to the gods. Most nearly akin to a discussion of the prob-
lem is the Teaching of Amenemhet 33., a piece of political propaganda composed by
the scribe Kheti for Senwosret I after the assassination of his father Amenem-
het I, the founder of the Twelfth Dynasty. In the words placed in the mouth of

the deceased king there is indeed something of a revolt against the injustice
of the suffering of a righteous man. But there is a significant difference:
the fault is man's, not God's! Even this document, therefore, cannot be
regarded in any sense as a questioning of theodicy.

Surely there must be some reason for this strange omission in the vast
body of Egyptian literary remains, especially when the theme is such a live
issue in the Akkadian and Hebrew sources. I make bold to suggest that there
are two factors which may have been responsible for this state of affairs.
First of all, we note the fact that in Western Asia, in the words of Jacobsen,
"justice as right rather than justice as favor seems to have become the general
conception." 34. It was in this area that the great law codes were produced. Now,
that Egypt had laws, indeed that written formulations of law were in existence
there, no one would deny. But these laws were secret, and access to them could
be gained only by the proper authorities. They were the will of the king, and
only as he saw fit was justice dispensed to his subjects. In Mesopotamia, on
the other hand, the laws were displayed in public, available to all men, that
they might know their rights. Even the king must conform to them; why not,
then, the gods also?

The second reason is the characteristic Egyptian belief in immortality.
When rewards and punishments could be projected into a future life, the problem
of seeming injustice in this life was not so vital a concern. Since in Mesopot-
amia and Palestine no such after-life was envisaged, the problem remained a real
one until a comparable belief arose. It is significant, for instance, that the
Wisdom of Solomon, with its developed doctrine of immortality, ignores the
problem, while Ben Sira, who emphatically repudiates any idea of immortality,
is constrained to deal with it, emphasizing either the disciplinary value of
suffering (32:14) or else affirming that the inequality is redressed at death,
or at least that the reward is to be found in one's children (11:26-28).

We turn, then to Hebrew literature. Here we find that the problem of

theodicy is relatively late. It makes its appearance first as the result of Assyrian domination and the subsequent Babylonian Exile. It gained cogency from the fact that since the eighth century, accompanying the breakdown of the social organization, the clan and family groupings, in the spheres of religion and law the individual and his life steps to the foreground. This has been well demonstrated by Causse in his monograph, Du groupe ethnique à la communauté religieuse (1937). Rewards and punishments could no longer be bestowed on the community as a whole; the consequences of piety or sin must be visited on the lives of individuals.

We can see this clearly in the prophetic literature. Here we have the doctrine of retribution for evil-doom for all, though gradually this is modified to allow the escape of a righteous remnant. Indeed, the evil may be visited upon generations yet unborn. Yahweh was a jealous God, punishing children for the sins of their fathers, to the third or fourth generation of those who hate him (Deut. 5:9). The same doctrine, coupled with its obverse, the rewarding of good, is seen in the exilic historiography, governed as it was by the Deuteronomic view that divine justice may be demonstrated in the course of the nation's history. It may be, then, that the suffering of the righteous is the result of the sin of an ancestor.

It was Ezekiel who proclaimed the doctrine that rewards and punishments are apportioned justly to the individual according as he be righteous or wicked (chapt. 18). This is in keeping with the rise of individualism to which we have already referred. Such a view now becomes axiomatic and is enshrined, as in Mesopotamia, in the popular speech, in the short, pithy sayings, many of which are preserved in the Book of Proverbs:

No harm befalls the righteous,
But the wicked are full of trouble.³⁵

Calamity dogs sinners,
But well-being rewards the righteous.³⁶

where retribution and reward are now seen to be meted out during the life of each king individually. It is most instructive to examine the parallel accounts in the earlier and later histories with this fact in mind.

Since Jeremiah's heart-rending query with which this paper began, many voices were raised in protest at the patent falsity of such an assumption. Yet champions of the orthodox position were not lacking. Three psalms are devoted to the subject. The first is Psalm 37, an alphabetic acrostic poem of twenty-two couplets. The argument is pure orthodoxy; in spite of all appearances, the wicked who in their prosperity and power have oppressed the righteous will soon be done away with, while the pious will prosper:

Fret not yourself because of evildoers,
Be not incensed because of wrongdoers,
For they will quickly wither like grass,
And fade away like the green herb.³⁷

Yet a little, and the wicked shall be no more,
Though you examine his place he shall be no more;
The meek shall possess the land,
And rejoice in abundant prosperity.³⁸

I have been young, and now am old,
But I have not seen the righteous forsaken;
For those whom he blesses shall possess the land,
But those whom he curses shall be cut off.³⁹

I saw the wicked exultant,
Towering aloft like the cedars of Lebanon;
I passed by and lo, he was no more!
When I sought him he was not to be found.⁴⁰

The same erroneous view is shared by the author of Psalm 49. This poem, consisting of three quatrains, is a scathing denunciation of the wealthy:

Hear this, all peoples!
Give heed, all inhabitants of the world!
Both low-born and high-born,
Rich and poor together!
My mouth shall speak wisdom,
My mind's musing is of understanding;
I will incline my ear to a proverb,
I will solve my riddle on the harp.

Why should I fear in days of trouble,
When the guilt of my persecutors surrounds me--
Those who trust in their wealth,
And boast of the abundance of their riches?

Alas! No man can buy himself off,
Nor pay a ransom to God,
That he may live forever and ever,
Never seeing the pit. 41.

Note the repudiation of any idea of immortality. A later glossator penned a marginal note in prose:

The ransom of his life is too costly; he must cease from that forever! 42.

The poem continues:

Truly he sees that wise men die,
The foolish alike perish;
They called their lands their own,
Yet they leave their wealth to others;
(Their) graves are their houses evermore,
Their dwellings forever and ever.
Man is (but) an unreasoning brute,
He is like the beasts that perish!

This is the fate of the self-confident,
The end of those who boast with their lips;
Like sheep they have been appointed to Sheol,
Death shepherds them and rules them,
In the grave is their resting-place,
In the midst of Sheol is their dwelling.
Fear not when a man grows rich,
When the glory of his house increases. 43.

Again a later, pious reader who was offended by this denial of immortality, and determined to proclaim his own assurance, wrote another prose note:

Yet God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will take me! 44.

And the poem concludes:

Truly when he dies he will take nothing away,
His glory will not go down after him;
Though while he lives he congratulates himself:
"Men praise you because it goes well with you,"
He will go to the generation of his fathers,
And will nevermore see light!
Man is (but) an unreasoning brute,
He is like the beasts that perish! 45.

The burden of the poet, then, is no more than that the wicked "can't take it with them!"

With Psalm 73, however, we breathe a rarer atmosphere. In this poem, of eight triads, the writer abandons the superficiality of the other poets. He is equally convinced of the justice of God, but seeks with more success to

reconcile the discordant facts of experience:

Truly God is good to the upright,
The Lord to the pure in heart!
My feet had almost given way,
My steps had well nigh slipped;
For I was incensed at <the wealth of> the boasters,
As I beheld the prosperity of the wicked.

For no bonds have they,
Sound and sleek are their bodies;
They share not in human travail,
Nor are they plagued with the rest of mankind;
Therefore pride is their necklace,
A robe of violence covers them.

From fatness comes forth their iniquity,
The schemes of their hearts pass all bounds;
Therefore are they sated with food,
And for water they have no thirst;
Lo, such are the wicked!
In perpetual ease they amass wealth.

They mock, and speak in wickedness,
Arrogantly they speak in disdain;
They have set their mouths in the heavens,
And their tongues range the earth;
They say, "How can God know?"
And, "Is there knowledge in the Most High?" 46.

He is driven to question the value of his piety:

Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure,
And washed my hands in innocence!
I have been smitten all day,
And chastening was mine every morning;
I thought, "I will thus relate,
'Thou hast been false to the generation of thy children!'"

I pondered how to understand this,
'Twas a troublesome task in my eyes;
Truly my heart was stirred up,
My feelings were aroused;
I was an ignorant brute,
A very beast was I towards thee!

I will again enter the sanctuary of God,
And understand their ultimate fate:
Surely thou settest them in slippery places,
And dost hurl them down to ruin!
How they become a desolation in an instant, 47.
Are swept away <and> finished by horrors!

At this point the poet reaches a new pinnacle of faith:

As a dream after awakening, they are no more,
 When thou arousest, thou wilt disregard their forms;
 But I, I am with thee continually,
 Thou hast grasped me by thy right hand,
 With thy counsel thou ledest me after thee,
 Taking me by the hand.

Whom have I in the heavens <but thee?>
 I have no delight on earth save thee;
 My flesh and my heart fail,
 But God is my portion eternally;
 For lo, those far from thee will perish,
 Thou destroyest all who are apostates from thee.

Nearness to God is my good,
 I have made the Lord my refuge! 48.

The minutiae of textual criticism will here be banished to the footnotes. Suffice it to say that I do not believe that the Hebrew text supports the interpretation that our writer is putting forth a doctrine of immortality. Rather do I regard him as speaking of a spiritual fellowship with God in this life that is full compensation for all the suffering he may have encountered.

We must hasten on, finally, to the greatest of all expositions of theodicy, the Book of Job. That the book as we have it is a complete unity would probably not be maintained by any amongst us. We all recognize the existence of an old prose folk-tale, preserved in the first two chapters. With this may perhaps be associated the prose epilogue (42:7-16). Whether the author of the Dialogue was himself responsible for prefacing his poem with this ancient account or not, we may rest assured that he assumed on the part of his readers a knowledge of some such story. The solution of the problem which is offered by this prose tale is, of course, that the suffering which befell Job was a test of his integrity, to demonstrate the fact of disinterested piety.

The next section which is denied to the original poetic work by the majority of scholars is that containing the Speeches of Elihu (chs. 32-37). The reasons for this are well known to all of you and need not delay us now. The same measure of agreement will not be found, however, with regard to the Yahweh Speeches (chs. 38-42:6). Here I am compelled to side with those scholars

who regard this section too as a later addition. It presents a very different Job from the figure delineated in the Dialogue. Whereas in the latter Job maintains his integrity to the bitter end, we see him in the Yahweh Speeches repenting "in dust and ashes;" while in the Dialogue Job longs to meet God face to face, when he does finally stand before his Maker in these speeches, there is not a hint of an argument. Indeed, the central problem of the Dialogue is left untouched. We are offered in these chapters nothing less than a detailed and eloquent exposition of the very point of view advanced by Job's friends: God is almighty, and puny man must humbly submit to his will. And then, when all this has been said, Yahweh turns to Eliphaz and says, "My anger is kindled against you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me as my servant Job has" (42:7). What amazing logic this is, indeed! Surely this is unworthy of so daring and so skilled a poet as the author of the Dialogue.

We are left, then, with the Dialogue itself. And even here some spurious material is to be found. Chapter 28, that magnificent hymn in praise of Wisdom, is admitted by well nigh all to be a later addition. But I submit that chapters 29-31, as more than one scholar has maintained, are likewise secondary. Here Job is not a desert sheikh, but a city-dweller of noble estate. The author has sought to make Job conform to traditional religious thinking and forsake completely his original position. Here "the keen and questioning seeker of the early chapters," as Dr. Bovey has observed,⁴⁹ "is presented to us as an unattractive snob, well satisfied with his own good works."

Turning to the Dialogue, we find Eliphaz opening the debate (ch. 4) by describing the mystical vision by which he received a special revelation of the transcendence of God. Job retorts in chapters 9 and 10 that if God be so omnipotent man is posed with a problem: "I know quite well that this is so--but how can mortal man be righteous with God?" (9:2). For Job the doctrine of God's supreme power is not an answer but a problem. If the orthodox view of the friends be right, then God is none other than omnipotent Caprice:

It is all one--therefore I say
 He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.
 If his scourge slays instantly,
 He mocks at the despair of the innocent.
 The earth is delivered into the power of the wicked;
 He covers the faces of its judges. ^{50.}

It is at this point in the argument that Job hits on the bold idea that if he could meet God face to face and argue his case with him, he might be vindicated. This forces him to the recognition of the necessity for a third party to the debate, if God's omnipotence is not to crush him:

If only there were an umpire between us,
 That he might lay his hand on us both!
 That he might turn aside his rod from upon me,
 And that fear of him might not terrify me;
 That I might speak and not fear him,
 For I am not so with myself. ^{51.}

In his following speech (chs. 12-14) Job continues to insist that God is capricious. Defiantly he hurls a challenge at God:

Only two things do not do to me--
 Then I will not hide myself from thee:
 Remove thy hand from upon me,
 And let not the dread of thee terrify me!
 Then call, and I will answer;
 Or let me speak, and do thou reply to me. ^{52.}

But he is bewildered when no reply is forthcoming. His next speech, in reply to Eliphaz (chs. 16-17), returns to the concept of a third party:

O earth, cover not my blood,
 That there be no place for my cry!
 Even now my witness is in the heavens,
 He who testifies for me is on high.
 My intermediary approaches God,
 Before him my envoy intercedes,
 That he might defend a man with God,
 Like a man for his friend. ^{53.}

How like the friend in the newly discovered Babylonian poem this is! By a natural transition the umpire or judge has become an advocate--counsel for the defence!

And so we come to the difficult passage in Job's next speech (ch. 19) in which he returns to the concept of the third party, the intermediary. Last year I ventured to suggest the original form of these verses, and since then I have been gratified to discover that I was anticipated in the main lines of this

reconstruction by none other than Sigmund Mowinckel, who also recognizes in the gō'ēl the third party of chapters 9 and 16, and not God himself. ^{54.} Job's triumphant affirmation runs:

I know that my vindicator lives,
 He who testifies for me will stand upon the dust;
 Afterwards he will raise me up as my witness,
 My emancipator will see God. ^{55.}

To Prof. W. A. Irwin must go the credit for having observed the value of the first Elihu speech (chs. 32-33) for reconstructing the mutilated conclusion of the Dialogue. ^{56.} In 33:23 we encounter the mēlīš, or intermediary, and we note how this figure is described as the superhuman agent of Job's subsequent restoration. We recall too that it is likewise a heavenly messenger despatched by the god Marduk through whom comes the restoration of the afflicted one in the Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer.

In these words of Job we have an echo of a passage from the Ugaritic Baal epic, well known to Hebrew writers:

In a dream of the gracious one, compassionate (?) El,
 In a vision of the creator of creatures,
 Let the heavens rain oil,
 The valleys run with honey;
 That I may know that triumphant Baal lives,
 That the prince, lord of the earth, exists! ^{57.}

The author of the Dialogue conceives of the ancient Baal-Hadad of earlier Canaanite religion as one of the divine or semi-divine members of the heavenly conclave or council which is mentioned in Psalm 82:1:

God, taking his stand in the divine assembly,
 Gives judgment in the midst of the gods. ^{58.}

To this august body, consisting of b'ene 'ēlohīm, "divine beings" (Job 1:6, 2:1), or q'ēdōšim, "holy ones" (Ps. 89:6,8), belonged the Satan of the Prologue, as well as the evil spirit referred to in I Kings 22:21. There is here, of course, no suggestion of polytheism. The incorporation of earlier deities into the angelic hierarchy is not without parallel elsewhere.

Who better than Baal, one who had himself suffered, but through whose

passion there came fertility and life for men, could serve as the intermediary demanded by the transcendence of God, which made him so remote from human needs and the suffering to which man was subject? It was this message which commanded such a following in the Mystery Religions of the Greco-Roman world, and which presents itself as a striking precursor of the Christian gospel of Jesus, the suffering and triumphant Saviour.

In the light of so heterodox a concept, it is not difficult to understand why the text of chapters 25-27 is in such hopeless disorder, or why the crucial passages in chapters 16 and 19 have been intentionally mutilated.

Time will not permit us to consider in detail one aspect of the problem which is well nigh peculiar to Hebrew literature. This is the concept of vicarious suffering which finds its noblest expression in the Servant Songs of the unknown prophet whose writings are preserved in the later chapters of the Book of Isaiah. That suffering is woven into the very fabric of our universe, and that it may be instrumental in bringing about God's gracious purpose for his people reaches its ultimate manifestation in the Cross of Calvary.

NOTES

- 1) Jer. 12:1.
- 2) Revue Biblique, 59 (1952), 239-250.
- 3) Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 89 [N.F. 14] (1935), 143-169.
- 4) Obv., lines 3, 5-9.
- 5) Obv., lines 13 f., 17 f.
- 6) Rev., lines 17-20.
- 7) Rev., lines 31 f.
- 8) Harper, Assyrian and Babylonian Letters, No. 614, lines 8 f.
- 9) Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc., in the British Museum, Part XIII, Pl. 30, lines 18-20.
- 10) Revue d'Assyriologie, 17 (1920), 123, lines 24-26.
- 11) Rawlinson, Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, Vol. IV, p.10, lines 26 f.
- 12) Babyloniaca, 7 (1923), 131 ff.; Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts (abv. ANET), pp. 434 ff.
- 13) Tablet ii, 3-9.
- 14) Tablet ii, 108-113.
- 15) Tablet ii, 12-26.
- 16) Tablet ii, 34-38.
- 17) Tablet iv, 35-38.
- 18) Zeitschrift für Assyriologie, 43 [N.F. 9] (1936), 32 ff.; ANET, pp. 438 ff.
- 19) Lines 21 f.
- 20) Lines 48-55.
- 21) Lines 59-66.
- 22) Lines 70-75.
- 23) Lines 82-85.
- 24) Lines 135, 137, 140 f.
- 25) Lines 182, 185-187; cf. Journal of Cuneiform Studies, 6 (1952), 3 f.
- 26) Lines 240-242.
- 27) Lines 267-274.
- 28) Lines 167-286.

- 29) Lines 295 f.
- 30) ANET, pp. 441 ff.
- 31) ANET, pp. 405 ff.
- 32) ANET, pp. 407 ff.
- 33) ANET, pp. 418 f.
- 34) Frankfort et al., The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man (Chicago, 1946), p. 208.
- 35) 12:21.
- 36) 13:21.
- 37) Vv. 1 f.
- 38) Vv. 10 f.
- 39) Vv. 25, 22; del. 25c as a gloss.
- 40) Vv. 35 f.; with Gk. rd. calliṣ, mitcallē kē'erez hal-lēpānōn and wā-'e^{ce}bor.
- 41) Vv. 2-10, omitting v. 9. In v. 9 del. pādō as dittography; for 'āh, "alas!" cf. Ezek. 8:11, 21:20.
- 42) V. 9; rd. napšō with Gk.?
- 43) Vv. 11-17, omitting v. 16 and transposing 12c after 11b. In v. 11 del. wh^cr, since "brutish" would be iṣ' ba ar; in v. 12 rd. qibrām or q^ebārīm (metathesis) with Gk., Syr. and Targ. and omit preposition in bismōthām; lit. "they proclaimed their names over their lands;" in v. 13 rd. bāqār and yābīn (so Gk.) as in v. 21; in v. 14 rd. 'ah^ar^ttām with Targ.
- 44) V. 16.
- 45) Vv. 18-21; rd. yābō and yir'è with Gk. and Syr. in v. 20.
- 46) Vv. 1-12, transposing vv. 8, 9 and 11 after v. 12. In v. 1 rd. yāsār and del. 'el (dittography); at the end rd. wd^{ny} for waⁿi (v.2). In v. 3 perhaps insert hēl after prep. (haplography). In v. 4 for l^emōtām rd. lāmō tām In v. 6 y^ctp is probably a gloss. In v. 7 rd. ca^wōnāmō with Gk. Vulg. and Syr. For the corrupted text of v. 10 perhaps rd. lākēn yisb^{ec}ū mil-lehem, ūmayim lō yism^e'ū.
- 47) Vv. 13-22, omitting v. 20 and transposing vv. 21 f. after v. 16. In v. 14 rd. w^etokahaṭ lī (haplography). In v. 15 del. 'im by dittography; it is impossible in a past unreal condition (cf. G.-K. § 159 m); rd. also bāgadtā with some Gk MSS as an intentional correction to remove a blasphemous statement; rd. k^emō-hēnnā with Gk. and Vulg.
- 48) Vv. 20, 23-28. In v. 20 for 'adōnāy rd. 'ēnām, and for bā^cīr, b^{ec}ūr^eka (Gk. and Vulg. read suffix). In v. 24 kābōd cannot mean "to glory", but only "gloriously" (as Gk. and Vulg.); however, the original text was probably 'ah^arēkā b^eyād. In v. 25 some such word as zūlāt^ekā was probably lost. In v. 26 del. sūr l^ebābī as variant or gloss, and in v. 28 del. YHWH with Gk., Syr. and Heo. MSS.

- 49) Hibbert Journal, 36 (1937/8), 360.
- 50) 9:22-24, deleting 24c as a gloss.
- 51) 9:33-35; in v. 33 for lō rd. lū with 13 MSS, Gk. and Syr.
- 52) 13:20-23.
- 53) 16:18-21; the interpretation of vv 20 f. was presented to this Society in a paper read in 1946, when some such reconstruction as the following was offered for v. 20: m^elīṣī yigga^c 'el- 'elō^{ah}, ūl^e pānaw y^epallel ṣīrī.
- 54) Beihefte zur Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 41 (1925), 207 ff.
- 55) 19:25 f. The text of these vv. was discussed in a paper read before this Society in 1952. For 'ah^arōn in v. 25 rd. sāh^adī (cf. 16:19b), and in v. 26 rd. c^edī (cf. 16: 19a) yizqop 'ōtī, ūm^esāri yeh^eze; note that Ḥk. read ūmissadday for ūmibb^esārī (Kurios is likewise a translation of sadday in 6:14, 22:3, 26), giving us the consonantal text for ūm^esārī, since d and r are identical in the early script.
- 56) Journal of Religion, 17 (1937), 37 ff.; cf. also his valuable article ibid., 13 (1933), 150 ff.
- 57) ANET, pp. 129 ff.; Gordon, Ugaritic Handbook, Vol. II, text 49, iii, 4-9.
- 58) Cf. also Ps. 89:6, Jer. 23:18; Job 15:8.