

ON THE FORM OF THE BOOK OF JOB

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“The more *outré* and grotesque an incident is, the more carefully it deserves to be examined, and the very point which appears to complicate a case is, when duly considered and scientifically handled, the one which is most likely to elucidate it.”—Sherlock Holmes in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

The Book of Job is noted for its formidable critical problems over and above the basic question of its date and provenance. It is safe to say that none of these has been yet answered in a perfectly satisfactory way. Let us take four or five examples of problems which have always been obvious to any critical observer. What is the relationship between the apparently simple story of the Prologue and Epilogue, on the one hand, and the highly formal and stylised material in the remainder of the book, so different in manner and even in vocabulary, as is exemplified supremely in their use of the names of God? What has happened to the third cycle of speeches in chs. 22-31? Why, in what sense, and with what qualifications or condition was Job vindicated; in other words, what are we to make of the apparent implausibility of God's final judgment in view of what had been said before? Again—which may be regarded as another aspect of the previous point, or which may raise other issues—is the Job who figures as one of the three righteous men in Ezekiel 14:14 the same as the Job in the book of that name? Finally, who is Elihu and what is the function of his speeches?

These questions have been arranged in roughly increasing order of difficulty. Various answers have been given by critics and scholars to the first four, which can pass muster as solutions, although they are seldom completely satisfactory, and always controversial.¹ Even here, it is as if some important clue to the understanding of the book has still to be discovered. On the other hand, the Elihu speeches seem to have defeated all attempts to rationalise them. Any hypothesis seems sooner rather than later to collide with irreconcilable facts. The most tempting solution is to reject them as interpolations. Snaith, for example, feels that the com-

1. Dhorne, E., *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, tr. H. Knight, London, 1967; Gordes, R., “The Book of God and Man”, Chicago, 1965; Snaith, N. H., “The Book of Job”, 1968. These three books specially cited give a representative coverage.

plete lack of reference to Elihu in the Epilogue or the preceding speeches of the Lord is decisive evidence that they were composed after the Prologue and Epilogue, that is, they were the last material to be added, presumably. Also, there are a number of stylistic differences, which it would be tedious to discuss in detail here, except that they involve an unusual number of *hapax legomena* and Aramaisms, which have normally been held to suggest a late date. However, this really does not solve the problem at all. After all, if they were interpolated, then why? Budde, Gordis, and particularly Dhorme in his monumental commentary, are impressed with the positive role of Elihu and his speeches. All agree that they are not simply a repetition of the arguments of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, although Budde is generally considered to have gone too far, in contending that Elihu gives the *principal* answer to the problem of suffering, that is, as a means of discipline.² Gordis points out that the name Elihu itself suggests a positive valuation of that character, as it is simply a shortened form of Eliyahu (i.e., Elijah); if the speeches are late enough they could even be a reminiscence of Elijah as the forerunner of the Lord in the Book of Malachi (3:23 M.T. = 4:5 E.B.).³ Most significantly of all, perhaps, Dhorme considers that Elihu's arguments are complementary to those of the three interlocutors, and constitute a concise and logical summing up of the whole argument against Job's position in the heart of the book. Indeed, he goes so far as to compare the Elihu speeches with the *Reply to Objections* in scholastic theology, although this suggestion requires that Job be taken rather too unequivocally as the rejected party.⁴ The supporters of this view maintain that the stylistic differences, though considerable, are not sufficient to impugn the unity of the Book of Job and even Snaith admits that *hapax legomena* are common throughout the book, if elsewhere not as common as in the Elihu speeches; Gordis suggests that the differences are within the limits of normality as between different periods of the same man's life.⁵ May I make two further suggestions, for what they are worth? Firstly, modern scholarship is less and less inclined to consider Aramaisms as a sure sign of lateness, owing to the recent understanding of the scope of Hebrew contacts with Syria and Phoenicia under the Kingdoms. Secondly, if we take Elihu's opening words at their face value, that would itself account for many of the stylistic differences between his speeches and those of the three main interlocutors, so formal and ponderous by comparison—at any rate

2. See Gordis, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

3. *Op. cit.*, pp. 115-16.

4. Dhorme, *op. cit.*, p. xcvi ff.

5. *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

this is what Elihu says! A good case can probably be made both for and against the unity of the book of Job, with respect to the Elihu speeches. But when all is said and done, Dhorme cannot refrain from expressing his surprise "that the poet should not have found among Job's interlocutors a more prepossessing and attractive mouthpiece than the young hot-head Elihu, whose monologues show a presumption which makes even their finest passages painful reading",⁶ and, especially in view of what he has just said about the part played by these speeches in the formal structure of the book, he is puzzled by the complete disappearance of Elihu, there being no subsequent reference to him, *for good or ill*. Perhaps this is the right fate for this brash and impudent young man who presumes to address by name this middle-aged man in his sorrow, without any trace of the respect due to one's elders, especially among the Semites, and who showed no more respect to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, who were also by implication his elders and betters. But once again one remembers the other side, and continues on the sceptical merry-go-round *ad infinitum*.

Nevertheless, may I, even if it is with the recklessness of Elihu, suggest that more thorough attention to the apparently insoluble and absurd problem of the Elihu speeches will throw light on the obscurities in the book generally?*

There is one other thing which can be formally and structurally analogous to the Elihu speeches in Job, and that is the Alazōn, or, if more than one, the Alazones, of the Old Attic Comedy of Aristophanes! One must always bear in mind that it is precisely the structural problem that has proved so intractable in the former case, and for that reason it is necessary to resist the temptation to recoil from such an outrageous suggestion; one is better advised to follow the matter through and see how the Aristophanic model works when applied to the Book of Job and, if it works, see

6. *Op. cit.*, pp. cvii-cviii.

*It is with great pleasure that I can put forward this hypothesis on this occasion, sombre in its way but yet happy, because it would have been impossible to develop the suggestion, or even to envisage it in the first place, without the new insights that have come with the discovery of Ugarit, which has always been one of the keenest interests of Mr. Colin MacLaurin, who is academically and in so many other ways a distinguished member of one of Australia's most distinguished families, to whom I owe all the foundations and a great deal of the superstructure of whatever knowledge and competence I possess in Semitic studies, and whom I have always known as a most loyal friend. This essay, for what it is worth, is an attempt to repay the debts that I owe to him (and also to other members of the staff of that University to which I owe so much, and whose identity will soon be obvious, although it would be clumsy to mention them now).

if there is anything to account for the resemblance. We shall have more to say later about the Alazōn, but we can observe at once that the word originally meant vagabond; then an empty swaggerer with nothing to back up his boasting. In Aristophanes, it is applied to a character or group of characters who normally interrupt the final *Komos*, or revelry, with an extreme or impudent presentation of the case which is being rejected, or with fantastic schemes whose absurdity is obvious. For this, they are unceremoniously chucked out (the slang is deliberate). They seem to come from nowhere in particular, and nothing is heard of them afterwards. Now, it is clear that this description fits Elihu to the dot and the i, or almost. He blows in from nowhere, and if he is not actually expelled the absolute neglect that he receives after he has voluntarily departed immediately on the conclusion of his speeches is as good as an expulsion. When one has seen through, and made due allowance for, the low comedy of Aristophanes and the dignity of the Book of Job, it should be clear that Elihu has the character of an Alazōn and that the point is made far more clearly and expressly than it ever is in Aristophanes.

Right at the very beginning of his speeches, the point is made, almost as if in deliberate fulfilment of a character-type which had to be worked out later in another context by the slow and exhaustive processes of criticism, punctuated by the usual flashes of insight. Elihu is the young man, and as such without the appropriate status (ch. 32: v.6 ff.). Nevertheless, he presumes to address Job by name, and says in so many words that Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, also his elders and betters, had failed in their job, and that he had to do it for them. This is what critics and scholars have apparently missed. In one sense, it is quite true that Elihu adds nothing, or at most very little, to what has been said earlier. He is not meant to be the complement of the three main interlocutors. But neither is he, either subjectively or as a matter of literary form, simply a summator of the argument, nor does he stand in the harmonious relation to his predecessors implied by Dhorme's analogy with the Scholastic *Reply to Objections*. Elihu's wrath against Job and the three interlocutors is the most significant part of his speech. The differences in style, manner and even—for what they are—content, between Eliphaz, Bildad and Zohar, on the one hand, and Elihu on the other, are sufficiently explained by the difference in character of the men concerned—even if we accept that the latter's speeches are due to a later redactor; after all, as we have said, we cannot avoid the problem of the final form of the Book. But Elihu's repudiation of the other speakers, and his failure to say anything really new, do not contradict but rather confirm each other. After all, one cannot add new material

to a foundation without accepting it. Elihu says recklessly and arrogantly what the others said formally and politely, without maintaining even the measure of community with his afflicted fellow-man that they did. In short, he is the Alazōn, *par excellence*.

As has been suggested above, it would be normally necessary in such an instance as this to build up a conclusive case in detail before attempting to suggest a general rationale of such a conclusion. But it is one's good fortune in this case to be able to perform these operations in reverse order, because, since the memorable year of 1929, the very circumstance which formerly seemed to exclude the hypothesis which we are advancing, has now rather corroborated it. The point is, what can be the connection between the bawdiness of Aristophanes and the dignity of the Book of Job? The excavations of Ugarit have justified the possibility that the books are connected in spite of their divergences of character. They have done three things. Firstly, they have confirmed the decisive importance of nature-religion in Phoenicia and Syria, and probably in the Levant as a whole; there is certainly enough in the Old Testament to justify the conclusion that the Canaanite cults had the same character. This is now a commonplace of Old Testament study. Secondly, sexuality, to an extent that even our own generation, let alone the Victorians, would find revoltingly bawdy, was an essential part in such ritual. This is what one would expect in a cult that was really a celebration of the fertility of nature in general (and presumably by implication man in particular), but this positive association of sex and religion is something inconceivable for us today without a special effort of the understanding. Finally, a comparison with what we know of the developed form of Greek mythology, which at times is so circumstantial as to involve the names of the deities, e.g., Phoenician Ishtar = Greek Astarte, confirms what has been often previously suggested but never before with so much justification, that the Greek and Phoenician world genuinely shared a common tradition.

We must now return to the second point, and discuss it in more detail. The nature-religion in question basically concerns a dying rising god, which is patently the mythological and cultic equivalent of the dormancy of nature during a season of environmental stringency, and its reawakening at the end of this period. In the Levant, this period is, under present climatic conditions, the summer drought, and this would have been the case in varying degrees under any conditions likely during historic times (although some elevated areas, including Jerusalem, might have been cold enough for a cessation of growth in winter as well, in certain periods). In view of this, it would be the most natural thing in the world to expect sexual activity, even—or rather certainly and

emphatically—of a bawdy and “disgustingly immoral” kind, to be associated with the reawakening festival of such a cultic system. This seems to be what actually happened. And the general atmosphere of the Aristophanic comedy, especially when compared with that of Greek tragedy, is exactly what one would expect from the literary equivalent of such a cult.

Already in 1914 independently of Ugaritic discoveries, F. M. Cornford systematically developed such a hypothesis concerning the Old Attic Comedy, that is, that it was a secularised, or half-secularised, equivalent of the triumphal or reawakening phase of the nature-cult as described in the last paragraph.⁷ In doing so, he was consciously completing the suggestion of Gilbert Murray that tragedy had the same relation to the disaster phase, or phase of the dying god, a work that Gilbert Murray himself performed independently, later.⁸ Although the significance of the Ugaritic discoveries had not yet become clear, both writers had at their disposal much evidence from classical Greece itself, as well as the work of Frazer (Cornford follows Frazer in automatically accepting winter as the dormant season; Frazer’s work mostly concerned higher latitudes than that of Ugarit).⁹ The arguments of Cornford were that the plots of the comedies were of a stereotyped character, in the sense that, even though the form varied very considerably, it always had certain features that could not be accounted for by the nature of the ostensible plots in the strict sense, but rather seemed to distort or at least radically condition the action, when they were not extraneous to it; that therefore Aristophanes must have used a firmly-established form, which, though vestigial to the eyes of modern criticism, must have still represented a powerful tradition—there is no trace of a chronological development of the definitive pattern—if anything the reverse—that the only likely candidate for the source of such a pattern is a religious tradition of cultus and myth; and finally that there is sufficient evidence to suggest what this source really was. All these findings were made without the aid of the Ugaritic material.¹⁰ Ugarit would have compelled some alterations in detail, but would have strengthened the fundamental case. The thing that has prevented the recognition of this truth is that, even when they have been loud in their condemnation of the immoralities of the ancient world, scholars have remained conditioned by what is

7. “The Origin of Attic Comedy”, by F. M. Cornford. First edition, 1914. Citations from Second edition, 1934. See extended note at the end for criticism. See chap. vii for treatment of the *Alazon*.

8. “Aristophanes”, 1933. See especially pp. 1-13.

9. *Op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

10. *Op. cit.*, 1-7, 129 and elsewhere. One of the most important features is the importance of the choric parts.

now the traditional identification of religion and sexual restraint. It was the great merit of Cornford and Gilbert Murray that, even in advance of Ugarit, they saw that this attitude was very far from being the *consensus gentium*, and that, however necessary in one's own life, it is a positive impediment to the understanding of the ancient world, and that it must be ruthlessly eliminated from one's critical apparatus before one can see especially Greek culture for what it really is. Cornford actually came to the stage of, rightly, seeing the bawdiness and pornography (both in the original and the present-day sense) of the plays as yet another proof of their cultic origin, on grounds similar to those described above, that is, that it is too pervasive to have any relation to the plots, and that cultic tradition is the only sufficient cause.

From the other end, it is also a commonplace of modern scholarship that Phoenician-Canaanite traditions greatly influenced ancient Israel, even within the field of Old Testament orthodoxy. It would be surprising if there were not many substantial differences between Job and the Attic comedy, but it is already clear that the finding of important resemblances would be neither implausible nor merely coincidental, but would actually confirm a great deal of scholarly *Sententia recepta*, as well as the Cornford-Murray hypothesis, with the difference that the common ground in the latter case would be essentially Eastern Mediterranean rather than European continental. With these justifications, let us set to the examination of the form of the Book of Job in detail, in comparison with that of Aristophanes' plays.

The form of Aristophanes' comedies is varied, but there is a basic general pattern. In the Prologue, the action takes place which sets the scene for the more formal elements to follow. Then follows the Parodos, apparently the literary equivalent of the ritualistic entry of the Chorus. In the most characteristic position, the next stage is one of the most characteristic features of Old Attic comedy, the Agon or Contest. It is normally between two characters, and is somewhat formal; Cornford himself noted a resemblance to a stylised court proceeding. The first speaker is the ultimate loser. Then, when we are about half way through the play, the action is interrupted by the Parabasis, in which, as the name third of the play is in general the Komos, or revelry. In has the implicit and nearly always the explicit character of a sacrificial feast, and also of a wedding-feast, although the Gamos motive is not so often expressed. Needless to say, this stage is usually a culmination in bawdiness. The revelry is interrupted by one or more Alazones, who are unceremoniously driven out. Finally, with an expressed or implied Gamos, we have the Exodos, or triumphal farewell of the chorus.

Two points require further elucidation. Firstly, the role of the chorus, because it is virtually absent in Job (but see also below). Cornford actually makes the point of Aristophanes that the Chorus has no real function in terms of the plot, as distinct from tragedy, where it is necessary to say the things that the tragic actors cannot say.¹⁰ I am not quite happy with this, because even in comedy something may have to set the collective scene, so to speak. But it is true that in tragedy there is this element of tragic blindness and incompatibility with the world around, that has no equivalent in comedy, so that in the main Cornford's point is well made that the *constancy* and importance of the Chorus in Aristophanes is a vestigium of the essential part of the chorus in the underlying ritual. But it would need little further literary development to render the chorus completely redundant, except in so far as an anonymous mass was definitely required by the (ostensible) plot, and it would be reasonable to say that the absence of a chorus in the Book of Job simply shows that, in the course of an independent line of development from the same root, this stage had already been reached. Of course, for various reasons, notably the avoidance of scandal, such developments would go further here than in Athens.

Secondly, it is obvious that the portions of Job where the Lord speaks Himself have no analogue in Aristophanes or anywhere else. In the former case, it is the Lord Who establishes who is to win, on the basis of His whole covenant; this matter is necessarily not determined in this way elsewhere. The effect of this is to facilitate, or even to cause, a far greater unity and concentration of material. It seems to be a general rule, as such disparate traditions as Athens and Shakespeare show, that tragedy is unified on one central theme; comedy is a complex interlacing of episodes or sub-plots. One can only speculate whether this is an essential or an accidental feature of these two genres. It would be competent for a supporter of such a theory as Cornford's to suggest that it is because life itself is rich and complex; it is death that is the truly simple thing. It is only in the Bible that we find life with the same unity and simplicity, and the power that comes from these, that can overcome the power of death.

Having made these general points, let us examine the Book of Job in greater detail. In each case, the Prologue sets the scene for what follows, and its richness in narrative contrasts with the rather more stylised *Agon* that follows. The Prologue of Job is shorter, relatively 2 chapters out of 42, or a little more than 5% of the material, as against 15-20% in Aristophanes) but the con-

11. *Op. cit.*, pp. 107-9.

centration of narrative is actually far greater, not only relatively, but absolutely. In *Job*, there is, as we have said, no *Parodos* (unless the arrival of the Interlocutors in 2:11 can be said to be a remnant of this, by a fusion of the roles of chorus and individual); the *Agon* follows at once, and the dreadful silence at the end of ch. 2 not only adds solemnity to what follows, but also has the dramatic function of exemplifying the break between the narrative Prologue and the extremely formal *Agon*.

What we might call the *Agon* of the Book of Job extends from the beginning of ch. 3 to at least the end of ch. 21, and, although this is not so certain, in a less orderly way to the end of ch. 31; this amounts to anything from 47% to 70% of the material, as compared with about 15-30% in Aristophanes. But, once again, if the picture is true of Aristophanes, "that the *Agon* is a dramatised debate", this is also true several times over in Job. On the other hand, Cornford adds that, while this designation does justice to the stylisation of the Aristophanic *Agon*, it does not do justice to the way in which it advances the action of the comedy. He suggests as alternatives, a legal action, or even a duel, stylised in each case, we might add. The far greater formality and stylisation in Job would suggest that the relevant section is best described as a debate, but on further analysis, it appears that here, too, the word debate is too mild, although in a rather different way.¹² Both of Cornford's alternative suggestions would be certainly appropriate in the latter case, especially since the question of Job's guilt or innocence is never far from the surface. The issue involved is also, to put it mildly, an extremely serious one for Job, concerning his very existence itself, in a way that a mere debate can never be, and in fact one of the aims of the interlocutors, however improperly carried out, is to bring the crisis of his being home to Job. Also, what we have called the *Agon* of Job provides the indispensable dynamic link between the preceding and succeeding portions of the book as the *Agon* does in Aristophanic comedy.

However, there is one possible formal divergence that needs to be examined in detail. This section of Job consists of two complete cycle of speeches, involving alternation of Job and an interlocutor, or *vice versa*. The interlocutors speak, alternating with one another, in the order Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar. In this way, there are presumably six speeches, after which the cycle is repeated precisely. The third cycle, from chs. 22-31, appears to be a little disordered, and seems to include material characteristic of Wisdom literature, like notably ch. 28, which has affinities both to the early chapters of Proverbs and the speeches of the Lord that

12. *Op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

give the final solution in Job. It would be tedious, and, fortunately also irrelevant, to discuss this section in detail, as well as the many attempts that have been made to reconstruct a complete third cycle corresponding to the first two, but the relative disorder of the material at this point needs notice. But the important point is when the cycles really begin. Now, Cornford maintains that in the Aristophanic *Agon* it is always the ultimate loser who makes the first move or speech. As there is no real doubt that in Job it is Job himself that wins and his interlocutors that lose, formal correspondence between Job and Aristophanes would demand that Eliphaz be the first speaker. But it would appear at first sight that Job himself is the first speaker, in ch. 3. Some commentators accept that the first cycle, and by implication each cycle, begins with a speech by Job, to which Eliphaz replies, and so on. Job is regarded as exercising the right of reply at the end of the whole debate, or, with much less conviction, at the end of each cycle, as well as initiating the debate as a whole and each cycle. Other commentators maintain that, however formally true this may be in a sense, it does not represent the dramatic structure. Chapter three is regarded rather as a monologue of despair, and the first cycle proper begins with the first speech of Eliphaz in ch. 4; each cycle has the structure Eliphaz—Reply by Job—Bildad—Reply by Job—Zophar—Reply by Job. This is one of these matters on which, at first sight, there would be no possibility of judgment, so that for want of any other criterion one would have to accept that ch. 3 is the beginning of the first cycle. But closer analysis suggests that the latter interpretation is the better. In the first place, ch. 2, v. II, make it clear that, whoever seems to have spoken first, the initiative was with the interlocutors, even if they had not intended to do what they actually did in the end. This last circumstance appears to weaken this argument, but actually it supplies another argument which confirms it; on this basis, it was Job's speech in ch. 3 that gave the whole following sections their atmosphere of bitterness that they may have otherwise escaped. And, finally, ch. 3 is after all a soliloquy. Not one word is addressed to the interlocutors, or has any reference to them, or to their prospective mission, or to their presumptive views, even though they were present. This is a particularly important point, if one does justice to the way in which the following cycles of speeches are a real contest in some way or another. Thus, the real function of ch. 3, although the interlocutors are present, is to be the internal correlate of chs. 4 and 2,1 within the mind of Job. In other words, ch. 3 indicates publicly the state of mind that the interlocutors are to denounce as false, and to try to correct. Possibly, this is the very reason why it had to be delivered in their presence. Finally, treat-

ing the cycles of speeches as an *Agon* and regarding the *Agon* as a species of conflict according to the legal metaphor. ch. 3 would supply the substance of the indictment. In short, even though it comes after the arrival of the interlocutors, it really belongs to the prologue, as its culmination and internalisation, and the *Agon* proper really begins at the beginning of ch. 4, with Eliphaz as the principal speaker. This brings Job into line with Aristophanes.

The *Agon* in Aristophanes is often complex, sometimes it is duplicated; sometimes there is an *Agon* within the *Agon*. There is a complexity of motifs. Two of the most significant in Aristophanes are; that there is something unexpected about the outcome, e.g. Philocleon's acquittal of the dog Labes against all expectations and against all his normal inclinations, in *Wasps*; and the rejuvenation of an old man, or something that psychoanalytically corresponds to it, for example, in the same play, old Philocleon, though he has technically lost to his son Bdelycleon, nevertheless joins the party that he has been unable to beat as a party, and shows that he can beat them all at their own game! Strepsiades and his son Pheidippides in *Clouds* are a similar case. However, one may disagree with the importance of these two motifs and principles in Aristophanes, it is quite certain that they are both present in the outcome of the concentrated and unitary *Agon* of the Book of Job, and both present in the same event. The Lord's final judgment as between Job and the interlocutors, at the beginning of ch. 42, is a complete surprise, and it is not too much to say that even the preceding speeches of the Lord give no hint of it; and ch. 42, in the most obvious and direct way possible, is the rejuvenation of a haggard old man on the point of death.

In the ordinary sense, as we have seen, there is no Parabasis in Job, or any equivalent, since there are no choric parts. But, is it not just possible that the apparent disorder of chs. 22-32 is a remnant of it, especially as such material would have formed part of the hypothetical Middle Eastern original, just as it would have of any other original?

Now for the *Alazon* or *Alazones*, on one hand, and the *Elihu* speeches on the other. We have already discussed them fairly fully. Two further points remain. One is a divergence from Aristophanes, in that in the comedies the *Alazon* or *Alazones* interrupt the concluding rejoicings, as they are already under way. *Elihu* does not do so; the *Epilogue* has not yet begun when he arrives. On the other hand, it is at least true that Job remains obstinately unconverted by his interlocutors, and to that extent *Elihu's* speeches also fall within the concluding section. It would be also possible to interpret, say, ch. 28, which resembles ch. 38-41, as constituting

an arrangement of material which encloses the Elihu speeches in chs. 32-37; this interpretation is as plausible as the one suggested in the previous paragraph, although both interpretations cannot be simultaneously true. The other point, which is really important, concerns the problem of the apparent Divine name of Elihu, in spite of the fact that he certainly plays the role of the Alazon or scapegoat. One of the outstanding features of 20th century scholarship in the fields of the Old Testament and of Middle Eastern studies generally, is a new emphasis on the importance of Monarchy and its ideology, and it was the celebrated work of S. Mowinckel¹³ to show that the triumphal Psalms, which express the royal majesty of the Lord, in their original form referred to the majesty of an exalted or quasi-divinised earthly king, or at least had almost complete analogues in other Middle Eastern literature which did so refer; the reference was presumably changed when it was understood (perhaps after the Exile?) that such honours can only be paid to the Lord Himself. But, in any case, the original reference of this whole genre of literature and ritual was to the coronation of such an earthly king, and to the annual repetition of this ceremony at the New Year. The fact that these ceremonies were understood as guaranteeing the welfare and prosperity of the land indicates their close association with the sort of nature cult that we have been concerned with above. Now, what has happened in the most recent scholarship of all is the extension of this hypothesis to cover the other side of the matter, the Laments in the Psalter on one hand, and, on the other, an element of the monarchical cult and tradition in which the monarch, before his coming into his own, has to conquer his cosmic or other enemies even to the extent of suffering a ritual death.¹⁴ This even takes on a moral overtone, whereby the king ritually suffers for his people, the original of the Alazon. Thus the same being is both divinised king and scapegoat, in a way that would be vestigially represented by the application of the name Elihu. Again, the interesting thing is that, without the help of recent scholarship, Cornford, for better or for worse, actually reached the conclusion that such an element was necessary to the understanding of the Aristophanic Alazon, on the basis of the constancy of its occurrence in the plays.¹⁵

In case any readers are scandalised at finding a pre-testimony to Christ even in pagan mythology, it is as well to bear in mind

13. "The Psalms in Israel's Worship", S. Mowinckel, translated and revised by D. R. Ap-Thomas, 1962. Originally "Offersang og Sangoffer", Oslo, 1951.

14. See e.g., "The Son of Man in Myth and History", Borch, 1967.

15. *Op. cit.*, pp. 148-52.

the profound differences between the Hebrew-Christian tradition proper, and paganism, which are not without significance even for the matter in hand. The thing about the Hebrew-Christian tradition is not that it rises above such "primitive" things as the scapegoat or even Alazon, but that it always takes them in deadly seriousness. Moses, Job and the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah are clear examples in the Old Testament of the righteous man who suffers for the sake of the nation, and one of the most important ways in which Christians have understood the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is as the supreme and definitive fulfilment of precisely this. On the other hand, paganism either mythologises or ritualises the scapegoat, in the bad sense, or, if it still takes the principle seriously enough to keep it in relation to practice, it loses all contact with righteousness by selecting its prospective scapegoats from the lowest and most repulsive members of the community. To see this latter result, one needs to look no further than Liddell and Scott on the word Alazon and on the closely-related Pharmakos. We virtually have what might be called the Bad Scapegoat, as compared with the Good or Righteous Scapegoat. In Aristophanes, this process has gone a long way, although not quite to completion. In Job, it has not gone nearly as far, and Elihu, though essentially a Bad Scapegoat or Alazon, represents a sufficiently early stage to justify the use of his actual name, which, as we have already seen, includes the Deity. As the process went on, within the Hebrew tradition, the way was open for the hero, in this case Job, to take on the character of the Good Scapegoat, as we have termed it. In one sense, this is a misnomer, because the character concerned is not ultimately rejected, but ultimately vindicated, even if his temporary rejection is very severe, as Job's was. Apparently, this is the sort of picture behind Ezekiel 14:14, to which we referred in the opening paragraph.

In our interpretation, the Epilogue of Job corresponds, in a very foreshortened way, to the much longer *Komos* of Aristophanes, which is a long, complex revelry which celebrates the new state of affairs that has come about as the result of the *Agon*. Cornford maintains that there are two significant elements, the sacrifice or sacrificial meal, and the sacred marriage. Whether Cornford exaggerates the incidence of the former motif in Aristophanes, it certainly occurs expressly in Job, as a sacrifice, if not a sacrificial meal (42:7-8). The *Hieros Gamos*, or sacred marriage, is the aspect of Cornford's theory on which he has been most severely attacked, and I must myself admit that, in my own examination of the plots, the case for an explicit *Hieros Gamos* is weak. But the sort of bawdy revelry that can legitimately be interpreted as a general celebration of fertility is the outstanding feature

of the concluding section. The same is the case with Job (ch. 42:12-17). Strange to say, there is no actual marriage; Job presumably has his former wife again. But there is very clearly a restoration of fertility and prosperity, most decidedly the former. The emphasis on the surpassing beauty of his three new daughters is particularly noteworthy. Thus, I should diagnose Job as an allegory in the form of the triumphal ritual of the ancient Middle Eastern nature (and ?-monarchical) religion, although it uses this form to teach about the One True God.

To refer again to the geographical basis of Middle Eastern nature religion, is it accidental that the four onslaughts on the family and estate of Job (1:13-19) are: an attack by the Sabaeen Arabs; a "fire of God", most likely a lightning strike during one of the dry thunderstorms that are commonest in the desert or transitional region during late spring and early summer (in late summer and autumn the winds are more constant and the air is meteorologically more stable); an attack by the Chaldaeans; and a "wind from the wilderness", presumably the sirocco, which, while it also occurs in autumn is at its direst in spring—if the reference is to a tornado, such phenomena would actually be at their height in spring? Except in the case of the Chaldaeans, who come from the same general direction, all four represent the onslaught of the desert and its conditions on the surrounding agricultural land and its prosperity and fertility, and there is even a clear suggestion of spring as the season in some cases. This fits the hypothesis that is being supported here, especially since two of the greatest meteorological hazards to the prosperity of the land are premature cessation of the rains in spring, and a severe incidence of the the sirocco in the same season.

In short, our acceptance of the analogy between the form of the Book of Job and the comedies of Aristophanes, which suggests connection with Ugaritic material in the former case, and a form of the Murray-Cornford hypothesis in the latter, enables us to throw light on each of the five questions that we specified in the opening paragraph as the otherwise difficult and almost intractable problems of the former. Of course, in one sense, it does not solve a problem to say that we find the same thing somewhere else, but it at least helps us a little way on path, and steers us away from the lazy solution that the work under discussion is merely a patch-work without unity. To take the last question first, it suggests (what I feel is) the only satisfying explanation of the Elihu speeches, with Elihu as the (bad) Alazon, that has ever been made. On the first question, whatever view is taken of the technical problems involved, whether we decide that the book in its final form is the work of one original author or of a redactor, the

form of the whole book would appear to be a unity. Our hypothesis has even given a few suggestions concerning the state of chs. 22-31, which is the second of our difficult questions, although these suggestions all remain very tentative. But, perhaps most important of all, on the third and fourth questions, Job's vindication remains unexpected till the very end, but is absolutely real, and both the unexpectedness and the reality really belong to the story. And we can also see a ground for connecting the figure of Job, in the book of that name, with the traditional righteous man.

Are there any lessons that we can learn from this interpretation of the Book of Job, apart from the fact that, in general, the last doubt concerning its significance is removed? We shall have to reckon much more seriously than ever before with Job's vindication, and also with the fact that it takes place in spite of the apparently greater soundness of the theological position of the interlocutors. For some reason, they were on the losing side, and dangerously so, to the extent that serious measures, to wit, a sacrifice, were necessary to obviate the danger (42:7-8). This is actually the position taken by Karl Barth, in his discussion of the book with reference to the treatment of Sin in *Church Dogmatics* IV:III. Job is, in spite of all appearances, the true witness; the interlocutors, in spite of all appearances, are the false witnesses, the liars, the evaders of the issue. Barth's point is that the three interlocutors, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, in slightly but not significantly different ways, have tied up their theology in a neat packet, but completely fail to address themselves to the concrete problem of the man whom they face. One can approach this issue and reach a similar conclusion, along slightly different lines, if one starts from the apparent or genuine absurdity of Job's vindication. It appears at first sight that it is a case of what might be termed the element of virtuous absurdity in existentialism; because the world is absurd—viciously absurd, if we like—it cannot supply any system which can form the basis for man's actions; therefore, they must at least be primarily constituted by the element of sheer decision, and in this case, whatever the terminology used in any existentialist system, they must possess their own type of absurdity, although this would presumably be virtuous. Something like this is undoubtedly at the bottom of Barth's mind. Unfortunately, this immediately raises another problem. If our hypothesis are correct, we have seen that this element of absurdity, of irreducible surprise, is not only a feature of Job, but also of Aristophanes, and also by implication of the whole pagan apparatus of nature religion which would lie behind both. To put it bluntly, the pagan is desperately afraid that the rain will not

come, or the snow will not melt, or that the sun will remain eclipsed, and it is a matter of surprise for him, at one level at any rate, when these calamities pass. If one did a free association test on scholars and academics thirty or forty years ago, they would unanimously associate nature religion, Ugaritic cults, the Baalim, and other ritual or artistic phenomena actually or presumably related to them, with the cyclic regularities of nature and man's complacent trust in these. The truth, whether religious or otherwise, would not be amenable to such regularities. Now, as we have seen, the question arises whether to a certain extent the boot is not on the other foot. On this matter, there may be more in the despised "liberal" point of view, than theologians of the last fifty years would have us believe. In other words, it is the unbeliever who not only cannot trust God but also must fear the world; the believer may not only trust God but may be in harmony with the world. It is no accident that the greatest expression in the Old Testament of trust in the regularities of nature occurs in Jeremiah 31-33, at the very time when all hope has gone, and Israel can rely only on the sheer grace of God. Nevertheless, in spite of this, it remains true that we cannot push our newly-found respect for the regularities of nature to the extent of regarding them as the content and meaning of God's grace. God's grace means what it says. Not by any regular working out of mundane powers, not by any work of our own, not even by the soundness of one's theology, can one be saved. One can be saved only by the grace of God, and for salvation one is utterly dependant thereon. Bad as it is to give way to despair, such an attitude is preferable to arrogant complacency, and still more so to the patronising of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, let alone Elihu. These would have been better if they had regarded the agony of Job as no more than what would have been realistically appropriate to his dire predicament. To Job, as to the great evangelical believers in all ages, salvation could only come as something beyond belief, that could not even be worked out from any trend upwards from the abyss, for there is no such trend in the Book of Job. For him, there is only faith, hope—and, as against his friends, charity. The statement attributed to Tertullian "*Credo quia absurdum*," applies first and foremost to one's own salvation. And if one feels the call to accept universalism, one can only do so in the knowledge, that that if anything, is even more absurd.

There is one other thing that comes into sharper relief.. Without going into any false analogies based on the principle that any Middle Eastern summer must be hot, dry, and sterile, or accepting a sort of Hegelian doctrine of the identity of glory and suffering,

we can see the more clearly that suffering cannot be avoided in the earthly life of the religious man, not even to purify him of his sin, but precisely because he *is* righteous. Even the sort of repentance that the Lord received from Job at the beginning of ch. 42 is worlds apart from the sort demanded by his three friends, and the faithful reader must know the difference. It is one thing when the Lord in His mercy demands sackcloth and ashes from even the most righteous of us—with the assurance that a higher grace is to follow. But it is the cruellest thing for a man to do to a fellow-creature in the depths of his anguish, to send him on a spiritual wild goose chase after sins in his own past life to explain his misfortunes, as if such things do not come to the best of us, and especially to the best of us. For all the abstract soundness of the interlocutors' theology, it is Job who is righteous. In one sense, neither of these two great points is really novel at all. What we have done, may I submit, is to show that the Book of Job is a unity on the basis of these issues, and to eliminate any temptation to evade the issue by looking for any contradictory element.¹⁶

16. My attention has been rightly drawn to the criticisms that have been made of the Cornford-Murray theory, especially in the first edition of Pickard-Cambridge's *Dithyram, Tragedy and Comedy* (1927), where there is a special excursus on the question. See also Lesky, *History of Greek Literature*, esp. pp. 233-240, E.T. What we find here is a reaction against the tendency to form wide-ranging theories which were fashionable in the earlier years of this century. Freudian psychoanalysis was the most celebrated manifestation of this tendency, and in fact Cornford's theory shows a generic resemblance to Freudianism, and indeed almost certainly owes a great deal to it. One could go further and say that it requires Freudian-style techniques for its coherent enunciation. The opposite tendency or fashion is to reject any such recondite theorising, and to accept only what is clearly and distinctly present in the field of study. This means, for instance, that the disparate elements in the Attic comedy point to different origins. One must grant that the scepticism of contemporary scholars, besides being consonant with the tremendous modern hypertrophy of more and more detailed microscopic study, is in its own way a healthy reaction. I have already referred to the weakest link in Cornford's case, his use of the notion of the Sacred Marriage, and have shared in the criticism of it as such. But I still feel that such criticism has a great deal of its force through being directed at a form of the argument, either in what Cornford says itself or the way it is understood by his critics, that is unnecessarily rigid. He might have suggested that there existed, within the memory of Aristophanes, an extant ritual in which all the features that he described were present in detail and in full external realism. If this is so, it is far more than what is needed. In fact, it would be more correct to say that this is precisely what could *not* have happened, because the condition for the literary use of such traditions would be their elimination from that part of the popular memory where they are recognised as binding ritual, together with their survival at a lower, subconscious level. This could have happened during the fifth century

B.C. in Attica, as things were moving rapidly at that time. In fact, such authors as Lesky and even Pickard-Cambridge go close to admitting enough of what Cornford really requires, possibly as distinct from what he thinks he requires. And my own reason for bringing the matter up again is not fascination with Freudian reasoning, but that it supplies the rationale for an analogy which to me is the most enlightening commentary on a number of problems which conventional criticism has found virtually insoluble.