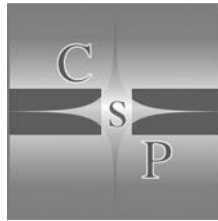


The Books of Job

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By

Maurice J. O'Sullivan



CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

The Books of Job, by Maurice J. O'Sullivan

This book first published 2007 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN 1-84718-120-1; ISBN 13: 9781847181206

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INTRODUCTION

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercies.

The General Epistle of James, 5:11

During the spring and summer of 2003, Jerome Saibil and Eli Batalion toured the American and Canadian fringe theater circuit with *JOB: The Hip-Hop Musical*. Performing as MC Abel and MC Cain, the two young Canadian composer/performers presented their experimental rap story of the trials of a successful young professional couple. This surprisingly effective contemporary interpretation of *The Book of Job* is simply one of the most recent attempts to reinterpret one of our culture's most enduring stories for a new audience.

A generation earlier, the opening scene of *Tender Mercies*, Bruce Beresford's 1983 film about loss and redemption, had Robert Duvall first appear on screen as a shadowy figure fighting an unidentified roommate for a last drink. Living frugally in a run-down motel on the edge of a nondescript Texas town, this broke and broken Country and Western singer and composer must cautiously piece together relationships with his family, his community, and his God as he confronts the Lord's tender mercies.

With his country gentleness and puzzled patience, Duvall's character differs radically from Muriel Spark's elegantly ineffective Harvey Gotham, the wealthy reclusive protagonist of her 1984 novel *The Only Problem*. In this sparely witty comedy of morals, the urbane Gotham has withdrawn to France to prepare a monograph examining how God could inflict so much suffering on Job, the only problem which he finds worth contemplating and the one which permeates his conversation and correspondence. Like *JOB: The Hip-Hop Musical*, the appearance of these two works in consecutive years, especially during a decade often dismissed for its emphasis on material values, reflects our continuing fascination with the story of Job.

That fascination can be traced throughout the literature of the last century. Just as H.G. Wells turned to Job as he puzzled over the legacy of the Great War in *The Undying Fire* (1919), Archibald MacLeish found him the perfect model for questioning the heritage of its successor in his Pulitzer Prize winning *J.B.* (1958). Where Robert Frost found a parallel to his own bleak, spare vision in *A Masque of Reason* (1945), Richard Wright could discover a prototype for his confused

rebel Bigger Thomas in *Native Son* (1940) and Robert Heinlein a model for his comic science fiction voyager in *Job, A Comedy of Justice* (1984). *Job* has spoken equally effectively outside fiction. William Safire, the *New York Times*' resident iconoclast and language czar, sees its hero as an early pattern for Richard Nixon and other political outsiders in *The First Dissident: The Book of Job in Today's Politics* (1992), while David Penchansky imagines a neo-Marxist, postmodernist Job inspired by Frederic Jameson in *The Betrayal of God* (1990). Of course, this has not been an uniquely Anglo-American phenomenon during the twentieth century. Franz Kafka recreated Job's *Trial* in 1914; Oskar Kokoschka provided an expressionist vision of his crisis in his 1917 *Job*; Carl Jung offered his own *Answer to Job* in 1952; Elie Wiesel imagined the story in Eastern Europe as *The Trial of God* in 1979; and the noted Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez found the book a source for liberation theology in *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (1986).

This instinct not only to read *Job* but to re-imagine it echoes throughout Western history. Geoffrey Chaucer and Henry Fielding explored the book's comic possibilities; John Milton and Alexander Pope attempted to emulate it; and John Donne and Thomas Carlyle found it a rich mine for moral and aesthetic reflection. Its many translators have shared this imaginative process, engaging, as in all translations, in a dialogue of homage, commentary, and critique with the original. Each new reader has reinscribed *Job*; each new translator recreated it; and each new poet, novelist, or playwright reimagined it. The history of *Job* explains the title of this work, for there is no single *Book of Job*, rather a series of books of Job.

My purpose in the following sections is to concentrate on one aspect of one component of that history: English translations of *Job* through the end of the nineteenth century. I have chosen to focus on the period from Aelfric through 1900 for one major reason. For over two and a half centuries--from the middle of the seventeenth until the end of the nineteenth--a single work, the King James Bible, has shaped not only all English translations but the very ways in which English speakers conceived of Scripture and, arguably, of their very language. When the complete Revised Version appeared in 1885 and the American Standard Version in 1901, however, that hegemony collapsed. Despite the continuing popularity of the King James, it no longer occupies quite the same role. In all honesty, it could not. With an increasing interest in alternative versions legitimated by revisions of the King James and fueled by the improved global access to original texts, with the geometric growth of research universities, with an anomalous increase in both skepticism and fundamentalism, and with the great migrations which brought a rich tradition of Eastern European Jewish scholarship into more direct contact with England and the United States as their communities fled west,

new translations inevitably arose to challenge the elegantly archaic language and occasionally questionable interpretations of the Authorized Version.

The twentieth century may well prove the most fertile and exciting period for biblical translation since the Renaissance. In addition to the American Standard Version in 1901, the *Twentieth Century New Testament: A New Translation into Modern English from the Original Greek*, Richard Francis Weymouth's *The New Testament in Modern Speech*, and Farrar Fenton's *Holy Bible in English* appeared soon after. During the Twenties versions by James Moffatt¹ in England and Edgar J. Goodspeed in America continued the movement to provide contemporary voices for scripture. Ronald Knox's Roman Catholic translations in 1944 and 1949 effectively replaced the Douai-Rheims Version, while the *Revised Standard Version* (1952) and *The Jerusalem Bible* (1966) achieved broad popularity. During the 1970s the *New English Bible*, the *New American Bible*, the *New American Standard Bible*, and the complete version of the *Living Bible* appeared, although the last work encountered broad scholarly opposition for its extensive paraphrasing before going on to sell some forty million copies in next quarter century. Other popular versions have been the *Anchor Bible* (1966-), the *Good News Bible* (1976), the *New International Version* (1978), the *New King James* (1982), and the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh* (1985).

By the end of the century, most of these works had appeared in revised editions: *The New International Version* (1985); *The New Jerusalem Bible* (1985); *The New Revised Standard Version* (1990, 1995); *The New Revised Standard Version* (1990); *The Revised English Bible* (1989), a revision of the *New English Bible* (1962, 70); *The New American Standard Bible* (1995); and *Tanakh* (1999). In addition, the *New Living Translation* appeared in 1996, along with revised editions of the individual books in works like the *Anchor Bible*. The last decade of the millennium also witnessed a series of fresh approaches to individual books and sections, most notably Everett Fox's *The Five Books of Moses* (1995), Ariel and Chana Bloch's *Song of Songs* (1995), and David Rosenberg's *The Book of J* (1990). Rosenberg had already published a number of translations, including his impressive *Job Speaks* (1977).

Ironically, this vast explosion of editions and translations has occurred as secular influences on culture have expanded with the Bible playing a decreasing role in shaping society. What for centuries had been a great dialogue centering on the King James became a series of parallel conversations whose center has shifted to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. This shift makes such a clear line of demarcation at the beginning of the twentieth century that any study of the translations of the past hundred years requires an entirely different frame of reference from those which preceded it. On a purely practical level, access

to twentieth-century works is widely available, unlike many of the translations discussed in this work.

In *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (1963-70), C.F. Evans and his fellow editors offer a wide ranging history of attempts to translate the entire Bible into English. Peter J. Thuesen traces the doctrinal motives and responses to the major translations, especially the King James and its revisions, in his *In Discordance with the Scriptures* (1999), while Willis Barnstone provides an impressionistic account of the King James as a paradigm of the intersection between translation theory and practice in *The Poetics of Translation* (1993). And in two impressively detailed volumes David Norton's *A History of the Bible as Literature* (1993) examines the growth of the Western, especially British and American, awareness of the Bible as a literary text susceptible to both literary appreciation and analysis. This study of *Job* is a reflection of that tradition. Norton inevitably focused on the New Testament and the Psalms in his highly readable, comprehensive discussion. My goal is far narrower. As both St. Jerome and Martin Luther pointed out, the unique stylistic, linguistic, and theological qualities of *Job* have made it a special challenge for translators, a challenge that has fascinated a surprisingly large number of men and women. This work is a study of that fascination.

Job's appeal to translators has covered a broad spectrum, from lords spiritual to lords temporal, from scholars seeking accuracy to men of leisure seeking applause. They range from a member of parliament to a beggar, from a Kentish wool merchant to the Earl of Winchilsea, from the first woman to translate a book of the Bible to the Metropolitan of Canada, from a chronologer of the City of London to the secretary for the American Continental Congress, and from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Philadelphia to a British officer of the Raj. And these men and women have used their translations for everything from royalist apologetics to dissenting polemics, from orthodox endorsements of traditional beliefs to highly heterodox speculations, and from idiosyncratic metrical theories to curious experiments in spelling and syntax. Few, however, have taken so light a view as the dairy firm of H.A. Job which named its in-house journal *The Book of Job*.²

From a homily by Aelfric, the scholarly abbot of Eynsham whose work began defining the English language near the end of the first Christian millennium, to the translation of the dissenting scholar Hugh Broughton in 1610, much of the first stage of bringing the *Book of Job* into English represents a single movement in the larger pattern of translating the entire Bible, an effort which culminated in the King James and Douai-Rheims versions. Like a benevolent but forbidding parent, the King James or Authorized Version³ would profoundly affect all future attempts at translation. At the very least, all translators would recognize that their work would be measured against it and, to a great extent, judged by that

competition.

The King James would prove so dominant that it shaped even Roman Catholic and Jewish translations. Richard Challoner, the Bishop of Debra who would revise the Douai-Rheims translation in 1750, was himself a convert to Roman Catholicism. Raised on the King James as a Presbyterian, he relied heavily on its stately rhythms and accessible phrases in his revision. And when Jewish scholars in Britain prepared an English translation during the Victorian era for their rapidly assimilating communities, they largely reprinted the King James.

During the religious and political struggles to determine the future of the Stuart monarchy in the century which followed the translation inspired by the first of that dynasty, King James I, Job became a popular symbol for all sides. Dissenters appealed to broad audiences with paraphrases which envisioned him, like John Bunyan's Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, as a man zealously loyal to his God, struggling constantly to make sense of the relationship between them. Royalists, on the other hand, responded with versions that emphasized patience and reason while depicting Job as a graceful prince, noble in suffering and glorious in restoration.

By the eighteenth century, Job had metamorphosed into a philosopher king, capable of both elegantly neoclassical discourse and sublime flights of poetry. At the same time, his story became an essential part of the theological debate over the limits of reason and God's providential intervention in the world. While the rise of biblical scholarship introduced new texts and new ways of envisioning those texts, cultural tides like the emergence of women's voices, the migration of Jewish scholars, England's fascination with the orient, the secularization of culture, and the growth of romanticism all offered new opportunities for reinventing the text. By the end of the nineteenth century, Job had become even more polymorphic, with translators depicting him as an exotic Arabic prince, a skeptical modernist, a classical tragic hero, a sublime poet, and a divinely mad Romantic rebel, kin of Shelley and Prometheus.

The first part of this work examines the colloquy from which these versions emerged. Translating secular texts has always involved a complex interplay of knowledge and art, sources and commentary. Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, for example, "the texts most frequently translated into English" (Steiner, *Homer* xv), suggest this historical pattern. In an anthology of those translations, George Steiner has pointed out that, from George Chapman, Alexander Pope, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson to T.E. Shaw, Robert Fagles, and Derek Walcott, all translators have engaged "more or less openly" in a triangular competition with their originals and their immediate predecessors (xxvi). Like other biblical books, *Job*, of course, adds an additional dimension. Until the beginning of the

twentieth century, translators had to respond not only to the original texts and their immediate predecessors, but to the King James Version as well.

Those responses clearly reflect a wide variety of motives. Some translators of *Job* were attempting merely to improve or clarify the Authorized Version; others sought to reconceive it, to orientalize it, to versify it, to modernize it, or simply to encounter it. For many, clarification and improvement meant ensuring that the English version provided the correct (i.e., their) theological, political, or literary values. After all, as William Warburton, the iconoclastic eighteenth-century bishop whose interpretation unleashed a torrent of invective, observed, "Orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is someone else's doxy."

My goal in tracing the history of these translations is to celebrate their diversity, while placing them in particular moments of British political history or within particular stylistic moments of literary history. I have discussed the chief theological issues implicit in the translations because those issues often profoundly shape what finally results. What emerges from all of these translations is not any single movement but a wide and fascinating conversation on all aspects of the *Book of Job*, and, to some extent, on the King James Version.

In Part Two I have combined over fifty of these versions into a composite translation. The first ten chapters trace the movement from the early Wycliffe Bible to the King James. From Chapter 11 through the end, including material from the Coptic addendum and the *Testament of Job*, I have included as wide a variety of voices and styles as possible. Most of these are unknown today, even though they include such extraordinary versions as those by Thomas Heath (1756), Elizabeth Smith (1810), and Rabbi Isaac Leeser (1853). While such a collective *Job* might never serve for simple devotional purposes, its very eclecticism and creativity show how complex, compelling, and paradoxical the colloquy on *Job* has been.

For those interested in comparing the same text in different hands, Part Three, which consists of a bibliography of translations into English through 1900, includes each translator's interpretation of 20:22, an unremarkable but ambiguous verse. Although the goal of the bibliography is to provide all of the major translations of at least a full chapter, including such noteworthy and idiosyncratic editions of those translations as Noah Webster's and Joseph Smith's editions of the King James, the evidence of those translators' practice demonstrates that, however broadly they reconceived *Job*'s form, most willingly accepted the guidance of the King James Version in its meaning. I have also included a few English versions and variants like William Caxton's *Golden Legend* and the *Testament of Job*, works which have proven influential in the ways people view *Job*.

For people like myself who have come to the Bible fairly late in life and are still puzzling through two millennia of biblical scholarship, interpretation, and polemics, I have added to the introduction a *Job* primer to outline some of the

background which many of the translators brought to the text. My only *caveat* about that primer is to remember that every assumption about *Job* has been questioned and every assertion challenged.

Although all of the following questionable assumptions and challengeable assertions are my responsibility, I am profoundly grateful to those who have sparked my interest in *Job* and to those who have encouraged me to pursue that interest. Aubrey Williams introduced me to the providentialist debate almost two decades ago, and his extraordinary knowledge and careful scholarship have continued to offer a model few could hope to rival. Equally impressive have been my colleagues at Rollins who have always proven far better comforters than Job's. Karen Slater, the English Department's Administrative Assistant, has always found time for helping with the details that both research and manuscripts demand. Rollins College has provided financial support through its Ashforth and Critchfield funds, and creative librarians like Lynne Phillips and Dianne Walton have proven brilliant at uncovering the most deeply buried sources. And Linda M. Watson has been invaluable in helping to tame and edit material I have gathered over almost three decades. My students have consistently brought that quality of skepticism to their discussions which has made me constantly reexamine my views. My family, especially my son, Quinn, have indulged my whims with far more than Job's patience, for which I am, as always, indebted.

I read *Job* for the first time only after I had become a college professor. During that reading, I realized how much his comments echoed those of a group of insomniac inmates I had spent one college summer listening to as a jail guard working the late shift. All of them--from the most sociopathic to the most remorseful--had a deeply abiding sense of their own fundamental goodness and the essential injustice of life. As I found those same words and dilemmas reoccurring among my friends, my students, and in my own life, I came to realize how truly challenging and comforting this remarkable book can be.

When my marvelous younger son, Brendan, died less than a month after graduating as valedictorian at the University of Florida and only three months before he was scheduled to enroll in graduate school at Oxford, *Job* echoed even more profoundly in my life. Unlike *Job*, however, I found many true comforters among friends like Larry and Margaret DeVaro, Barry and Marilyn Lundin, and Marvin and Myrna Newman, along with my neighbors and colleagues, especially Rita Bornstein. While mourning Brendan, I realized that, like all who feel they and their loved ones suffer far out of proportion to any evil they may have committed, I am *Job*. Although I have not yet found the comfort in his book, I often turn to it for its truth.

And so I dedicate this work to my beloved Brendan Aren Micah O'Sullivan (1977-1999). May he rest in soft peace.

Maurice J. O'Sullivan
Winter Park, Florida

A JOB PRIMER

[As] no History is more various, then *Iobs fortune*, so is no phrase, no style, more ambiguous, then that in which *Iobs history* is written; very many words so expressed, very many phrases so conceived, as that they admit a diverse, a *contrary* sense.

John Donne, Sermons III, 189.

January 7, 1621

There is little about the *Book of Job* on which scholars and critics have agreed. They have dated it everywhere from the Age of the Patriarchs (2100-1800 B.C.) when the story apparently occurs to the Hasmonean dynasty of the second century B.C.⁴ They have found parallels to its form in everything from epic and Greek tragedy to lyrics and Platonic dialogues. And they have discovered analogues in Babylonian, Sumerian, and Egyptian texts. This primer, which outlines a number of issues to which various translators allude, offers a fairly simple introduction to the complex of issues surrounding this diverse, contrary book.

Language and Vocabulary

While all the books of the Hebrew Bible provide textual challenges, *Job* has proven the most challenging of all. The problems begin with the text. Of all the biblical books, *Job* has the largest number of *hapax legomena* (i.e., words used only once) and rare words. Because so many of these words appear to be a version of Hebrew strongly influenced by other Semitic languages, scholars and translators have made a linguistic act of faith in building interpretations based on cognate words or forms. Its distinctive language has even encouraged speculation from the medieval Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra through Thomas Carlyle to the contemporary Israeli scholar Naphthali Tur Sinai that *Job* may have been translated--or partly translated--into Hebrew from one of those other languages.

Usually alternative early versions of the Bible can help sort out such difficulties. In the case of *Job*, however, those versions simply provide additional challenges. The Greek Septuagint translation, for example, often provides a way of clarifying the Hebrew text. But the Septuagint, almost 400 lines shorter than the Hebrew, is less helpful than for other biblical books. Moreover, the uncertainty about the date of composition of the work's various sections profoundly affects the way even fairly common words might have been used.

A very simple example of the problems with *Job's* language occurs in 1:5 when *Job* sacrifices for his children. The Hebrew explains that he does so because they might have "blessed God in their hearts." But this literal reading makes little

sense. Most translators assume that the “bless” should actually be “curse,” with the author--or a copyist--using either an idiomatic expression or a euphemism to avoid placing a word like “curse” next to a word for God. Moreover, in the Hebrew Bible the heart normally represents the source of ideas rather than emotions. Thus, Marvin Pope interprets this expression in the Anchor Bible as “cursed God in their minds” and a Jewish Publication Society translation offers “blasphemed God in their thoughts” (Greenberg, 3). Such linguistic cunundra led John Edwards in 1694 to conclude, with a playful turn on the nature of Hebrew, that in *Job* “the Sense sometimes as well as the Letters must be read backwards” (II, 343).

Perhaps the most dramatic textual issue revolves around one of the most important verses in literary and doctrinal terms. Because the received Hebrew text had only consonants and because Hebrew words change meaning with a change of vowels, between 500 and 1000 A.D. a group of rabbinic scholars, scribes, and editors created a system of vowel signs and accent markings to create a standard pronunciation and intonation. Known as the Masoretes (from *masora*, the word for tradition), these scholars worked not only to ensure a standard text but also to help preserve traditional pronunciations for reciting and singing the text during the diaspora. Most of the translations discussed in *The Books of Job* relied on the cumulative product of their scholarship, the Masoretic edition. That editing, however, affects a number of interpretations, most notably 13:15. The King James translation of this verse, arguably the most famous line in *Job*, became for Christians both an emblem of his patience and a motto for his faith: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” But the Masoretes only created their text by mistaking a negative particle for a preposition. Once scholars reestablished the original text, the result, like the interpretation in the Revised Version of 1885, reflected a less patient, more rebellious figure as in the Revised Standard Version’s translation: “Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope.”

Organization

Obvious differences in language, form, and philosophy have long made scholars question the relationship of the prose frame of the prologue and epilogue with the verse body. Over time this discussion broadened to debate the relationship of sections within dialogues to each other. Although positions have become extremely complex, ranging from those who argue for a single author similar to Homer or the Beowulf poet creating a unified work of art out of multiple sources to those with various interpretations about how a composite text might have been compiled by different hands, almost all scholars recognize significant differences among various sections.

1. The Prologue (1-2) and Epilogue (42:7-17): Generally regarded as the oldest part of *Job*, these prose sections provide a fairly simple story of an

idealized man heroically and patiently enduring a profound test of his faith, reveal a belief in terrestrial justice, emphasize the importance of sacrifice, and use the names Yahweh and Elohim for God. Believed by many interpreters to have their roots in an ancient folk tale, these sections appear to represent the Job known to Ezekiel (14:14, 20) and celebrated by James (5:11). If the prose version existed before the Babylonian exile, Satan (the Adversary) may well be a later addition, a product of some interaction with Zoroastrian beliefs during the post-exilic Persian period sometime after 538 B.C.E.

2. The Dialogue (3-31): The consistency of tone and language in Job's monologue (3) and the three cycles of speeches in which his friends challenge Job's innocence while he defends himself suggests a single author for this section. Even here, however, some structural problems exist. In the first two cycles (4-14 and 15-21), the book has each friend present an argument followed by a response from Job. In the third cycle (22-31), on the other hand, Bildad's third speech is abbreviated and Zophar's is missing. Moreover, during this cycle Job presents his friends' arguments in a way which suggests some confusion in editing the material.

3. The Hymn to Wisdom (28): Although similar in style and language to the dialogue, this poem, admitting that man cannot fathom divine wisdom, scarcely seems consistent with Job's arguments through the dialogues. Some critics suggest it comes from a different section of the book; others argue that it may be a separate poem by the same author which became folded into *Job*.

4. The Elihu Speeches (32-37): Elihu's abrupt appearance, his apparent knowledge of the older friends' arguments, the failure to mention him in either the prologue or epilogue, Job's lack of a response, and God's lack of either a commendation or a condemnation for his argument all suggest that this section may be a later addition.

5. The Theophany (38-42:6): Critics have seen God's appearance and two speeches both as the artistic and thematic climax of the book and as an inferior afterthought or addition. Although most readers admire the first speech (38-39), some judge the second, with its emphasis on Behemoth and Leviathan followed by Job's abject submission, as unnecessarily cruel and redundant. And some passages seem to need editing. In Job's final submission (42:1-6), for example, the first part of verse three and all of verse four are taken from God's speech. Either they were accidentally included here or they indicate that Job has paid close attention and now demonstrates his obedience by quoting from God's speech

Genre

Finding that *Job* did not fit neatly into any single genre and not content with regarding it as *sui generis*, critics have struggled to work it into most traditional

forms while rationalizing its idiosyncracies. As with so much of the writing about *Job*, most of these attempts reflect assumptions about the age, culture, and author based on possibilities within the text. Among English commentators and translators, four main traditions exist. The oldest, part of the tradition in which early Church Fathers saw much of the Hebrew Bible as a typological foreshadowing of Christ and the Christian Church, views it as an allegory. Reading *Job* allegorically, a practice which parallels the third-century C.E. Palestinian amora Rabbi Simeon ben-Lakish's argument that the work should be read as a parable, would later evolve into Bishop William Warburton's detailed providentialist allegory and such other emblematic, allegorical readings as that of Thomas Dowglass in 1853 who saw the entire book as an allegorical history of the Christian Church with Job's boils representing the condition of the faithful when the Church is torn by heresy and schism and his three friends the Roman, Greek, and Protestant churches.

John Milton's assumption that *Job* offered "a brief model of the epic" (*Reason of Church Government*, 813) carried significant weight for the following two centuries in works ranging from Sir Richard Blackmore's heroic version in 1700 to the Earl of Winchilsea's romantic interpretation in 1860. As an equally classical alternative to the epic, numerous critics and translators from many of the seventeenth-century Stuart supporters to H.M. Kallen's *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy Restored* (1918) have followed the fourth century Theodore of Mopsuestia in regarding *Job* as a drama, most often as a tragedy. Other forms of drama have been suggested from John Dennis who suggested that the work resembles "Poesy in which Persons are introduc'd who are talking in Dialogue" ("Preface," n.p.) and John Garnett who concluded that "it is a drama of a single act" (300) to Robert Frost who presented it as a masque.

By linking dramatic elements with an emphasis on *Job*'s poetic quality, Dennis points the way to the fourth tradition, while suggesting that these traditions need not be mutually exclusive. Regarding *Job* as first and foremost a poem, translators often adapted it to their preferred forms, as Milton had with the epic. St. Jerome and Thomas Aquinas, clearly influenced by Greek and Roman models, concluded that the original was in hexameters, just as many of those influenced by Milton and the neoclassicists opted for blank verse or heroic couplets. But a number of translators, believing the poem essentially a lyric or a series of related lyrics, experimented with other forms, as in the elegiacs of Thomas Wemyss (1839) or the odes of Arthur Brett (1661) and Henry John Marten (1869).

Many have tried to merge categories, as when John F. Genung suggested similarities to everything from Robert Browning's monologues to epic, classical tragedy, legend, saga, debate, and lyric. The twentieth century has provided even better analogues, especially, for me, in the highly Joban plays of Samuel Beckett.

Meaning

Much of *Job's* appeal lies in its essential ambiguity. It has provided a text both for those who would argue for a divinely providential vision of life as well as for those who would challenge Albert Einstein's oft quoted comment that God does not play dice with the universe. At the heart of the difficulty is the essential question of *Job*: during the eighteenth century Bishop Francis Hare defined it as "cur malis bene, et bonis male" (Spence I, 389). If the universe is essentially moral, why do bad things happen to good people? And why do the evil seem to prosper? (In our less classical age, Rabbi Harold Kushner captured this most frustrating of human problems in the rather more pragmatic and temporal title of his bestselling meditation *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* [1981].)

From the very opening of the *Book of Job*, there is little doubt that its hero is a good man. Even God singles him out for admiration. But why would a benevolent, omnipotent deity allow such an emblematic moral human being to suffer so much physical, emotional, and psychological pain? And why does God seem to provoke Satan into initiating the suffering? The various characters in *Job* appear to offer at least five very different responses to this dilemma:

1. Satan, literally translated as the Adversary, views the suffering as both a test of Job's loyalty and a challenge to the God who boasts so broadly about his servant's admirable qualities.
2. Job's three older friends--Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar--argue for a terrestrial eschatology, a kind of poetic justice in which happiness and suffering come to us in direct proportion to our goodness and sinfulness ("Remember. I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" [4:7]). Because they also believe the corollary (i.e., a person's goodness or sinfulness can be inferred from his or her physical and material condition), they conclude that Job must be sinful ("If thou *wert* pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous" [8:6]). And so they beg him to repent ("If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles" [22:23]) and receive his reward from a just God.

Although all three of his older friends present the same argument, some readers see differences among their approaches. Eliphaz, perhaps the eldest because he speaks first, seems the most sympathetic and often draws on experience to make his case. Bildad, the second speaker and perhaps next oldest, believes in traditional authority. In contrast, Zophar appears the least sympathetic and most absolute in his theology. As their dialogue continues, all become markedly less sympathetic. Eliphaz even cites Job's sins (22:5-9), including dishonesty, cruelty, and lack of charity

(e.g., “Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken” [22:9]). One highly regarded critic, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, summarized his impressions of this curious trinity in an essay in *On the Art of Reading*: “I find Eliphaz more of a personage than the other two; grander in the volume of the mind, securer in wisdom; as I find Zophar rather a mean-minded greybeard, and Bildad a man of the stand-no-nonsense kind” (204).

3. Rejecting his friends’ arguments and charges (“God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me” [27:5]), Job assumes that God has abandoned him (“Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there*; and backward but I cannot perceive him” [23:8]). He can only conclude that God does play dice with mankind and, therefore, cannot be just: “Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but *there* is no judgment” (19:7). He supports his position by pointing out that, contrary to his friends’ argument, the wicked are not always punished and, indeed, occasionally prosper (“Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea are mighty in power?” [21:7])

4. Elihu, while repeating many of the other friends’ arguments, also makes a case that suffering may be both disciplinary and cautionary. It is not necessarily a response to our actions but a lesson to help us towards greater self-awareness (“To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living” [33:30]).

5. The theophany presents Job with a series of unanswerable questions which imply that human suffering, like so many of the mysteries of the universe, is an enigma which man cannot comprehend. God offers a final irony in this ambiguous conclusion by condemning the three older friends for their argument of terrestrial justice (“Ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is right*” [42:7]) before offering rich earthly rewards to Job, apparently for his goodness. What seems to be God’s insistence on faith in the presence of the unknowable inspired the remarkably powerful conclusion to Alexander Pope’s first *Essay on Man* (1733), a poem which, in turn, inspired William Warburton’s extraordinarily controversial and highly idiosyncratic reading of *Job*:

Cease then, nor ORDER *Imperfection* name:
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
Know thy own *point*: This kind, this due degree
Of blindness, weakness, Heav’n bestows on thee.
Submit--in this, or any other sphere,
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:
Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow’r,

Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And spight of pride, in erring reason's spight,
One truth is clear; "Whatever *Is*, is RIGHT."

(I, 273-86)

**PART ONE:
TRANSLATION AS COLLOQUY**

CHAPTER ONE

Oh That My Words Were Now Written! Oh That They Were Printed In A Book! (19:23)

Thei wil saye [the Bible] can not be translated into our tonge,
it is so rude. It is not so rude as thei are false lyers.
William Tyndale, *The Obedience*
of a *Christian Man* (1528)

Tyndale's thunderous denunciation of all who opposed an English translation of the Bible epitomizes both the spirit and the substance of that epic process. Although the evolution of an English Bible often appears an arc from John Wycliffe to King James, it more clearly reflects a dialectic with the established English Church slowly but methodically appropriating work from those either on its fringes or in formal doctrinal opposition. Eventually, translations by Lollards and Calvinists, moderate dissenters and clerics burnt for heresy would shape the rhetoric and vision of what was to become known as the Authorized Version. The very nature of this dialectical process encouraged polemical commentaries rather than systematic discussions of literary technique. Caught in a web of ideological, doctrinal, and personal battles, translators invariably focused less on defining their methodology than on disparaging their foes.

Any discussion of the process of Englishing the *Book of Job* must reflect this larger dialectic in which authorized translations mediated among competing interpretations. But the very ambiguities in *Job* which had encouraged a tradition of typological and symbolic interpretation among theologians offered an additional set of perspectives not only on the way the Bible became translated but also on the ways those translations reflected political, religious, and cultural assumptions, assumptions which influenced and were, in turn, influenced by each new translation of this richly complex book. The first stages of this process began with the earliest attempts to provide English versions of the Bible and concluded at the end of the seventeenth century as the religious wars subsided with the defeat of the Catholic James II at the Battle of the Boyne and the broad acceptance of an

Act of Settlement ensuring a Protestant succession to the throne.¹

During this first stage, as the King James Version not only emerged but achieved hegemony among its many rivals, translators, whatever their actual practice, publicly adhered to a set of common principles. But the *Book of Job*, widely recognized as the most ambiguous and the most difficult to translate of all the biblical texts, offered a significant challenge to theory as well as practice. Even as the King James became the Established or Authorized Version during the seventeenth century, its supporters and opponents found it necessary to qualify its version of *Job*. Debates over the language and meaning of this knotty, complex book allowed it to assume a distinctive role in the political and religious struggles of the century, a role that built upon much earlier traditions.

I

This blessid man Job thankyd God of His excellence
 That yt pleasid His incomprehensible deite
 So to indwe hym with the spyrite of recistence
 In pacience to withstonde the devell his iniquyte.
 And of his restoracion proude was never he,
 But ever thankyd God in well and in sorowe,
 For to-day a man may be and none in morowe.

Life of Job (c.1473)

Despite occasional distinctions between secular and religious works, translators of both shared a common heritage in a loosely accepted set of assumptions about the nature and practice of translation, assumptions which gained authority from the two leading Roman arbiters of literary style and St. Jerome (c347-419), author of the Vulgate, the canonically mandated Latin version of the Bible.² Both Cicero's *De optimo genere oratorum* ("non verbum pro verbo")³ and Horace's *Ars Poetica* ("nec verbo verbum")⁴ warned against literal translations, counseling instead a creative role for the translator in capturing the spirit or sense of a work rather than providing a simple word-for-word version.⁵ For those who sought guidance from religious rather than secular authority, the writings of Jerome, a man well versed in both Cicero and Horace, offered an extensive, scholarly commentary on the philosophy and practice of translation.

Jerome's most famous discussion of translation occurs in a letter to Pammachius, a Roman senator who had renounced the world to become a monk. "Epistola LVII," a curious blend of scholarship and paranoia--Jerome in a remarkably bitter outburst attacks a colleague who had copied one of his translations as a false monk and second Judas--cites Cicero and Horace as models and "freely confesses that in translating from the Greek (except in cases of the holy scriptures where

even the order of words is a mystery) I express sense for sense and not word for word” (*Lettres*, III, 59).⁶ Despite this exclusion of scripture, Jerome eventually turns to the practice of New Testament writers to justify the classical tradition of preserving the sense rather than the words:

There is clear evidence that the apostles and evangelists, in translating the old testament scriptures, have sought to preserve the sense not the words, and that they have not taken great care to preserve the original forms or constructions, so long as the point was clear to the understanding.

Lettres, III, 69.⁷

In the preface to his Vulgate *Job*, Jerome acknowledged the distinctive literary qualities and linguistic challenges that encouraged a similar approach in mazing through the difficulties of this particular text:

The present translation follows no ancient translator, but will be found to reproduce now the exact words, now the meaning, now both together of the original Hebrew, Arabic, and occasionally the Syriac. For an indirectness and a slipperiness attaches to the whole book, even in the Hebrew; and, as orators say in Greek, it is tricked out with figures of speech, and while it says one thing, it does another; just as if you close your hand to hold an eel or a little muraenam [i.e., a small fish] the more you squeeze it, the sooner it escapes.

(491)

Following the tradition of the third-century Alexandrian biblical scholar Origen, St. Jerome identified those passages missing or mangled in the earlier Latin translations with asterisks, a practice similar to the italics which would mark those words added to the King James Version to complete the sense of a thought or phrase. Earlier, in his “Preface” to the *Chronicle of Eusebius* (c382), after praising the poetry of *Job*, he pointed out how awkward and incoherent these early Latin translations seem:

When we read [Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Ecclesiastes, or Job] in Greek, they have some meaning; when in Latin they are utterly incoherent. But if any one thinks that the grace of language does not suffer through translation, let him render Homer word for word into Latin. I will go farther and say that, if he will translate this author into the prose of his own language, the order of the words will seem ridiculous, and the most eloquent of poets almost dumb.

(484)

Even though, from most modern perspectives, Jerome advised more latitude than he took--and he may have, in his usual defensive mode, simply

been preparing himself for attacks--his validation of the classical latitudinarian philosophy established a basis for connecting the practice of biblical translation with the traditions of secular translation. Following in this spirit, Martin Luther, whose German translations proved both an inspiration and a model for the British reformers, defined his own goal in terms of audience and language: "I have constantly tried, in translating, to produce a pure and clear German, and it has often happened that for two or three or four weeks we have searched and inquired for a single word and sometimes not found it even then. In translating Job . . . I labored so, that sometimes we scarcely handled three lines in four days" ("On Translating," 188).⁸ Later, in an addition to his "Preface to the Book of Job," Luther makes his case for *sententia* even more explicit, although he apparently cannot help himself from slipping into the anti-Semitism that so often pervades his polemics:

The language of [*The Book of Job*] is more vigorous and splendid than that of any other book in all the Scriptures. Yet if it were translated everywhere word for word--as the Jews and foolish translators would have it done--and not for the most part according to the sense, no one would understand it.

(252)

In England, the secular rejection of word-for-word translation, even among those engaged in providing English versions of prose works, suggests a broad agreement in viewing translation as an art rather than a craft and relying on inspiration more than rules.

Although a sophisticated, detailed discussion of secular translation would not appear in England until John Dryden's prefaces at the end of the seventeenth century,⁹ the rare and unsystematic discussions of translation--as opposed to the frequent debates over the need for and propriety of translation--reflect a rough consensus. Within this fairly informal dialogue, the two most influential commentators, George Chapman (?1559-?1634) and Sir John Denham (1615-1669), described a set of values that helped shape British attitudes toward translations in general and literary, poetic translation in particular. The essential harmony between their views testifies to the continuity at the core of British translation through the end of the eighteenth century. Both poets fall into the tradition of privileging the sense over the word. In discussing his popular and highly influential translation of Homer--the complete *Iliad* appeared in the same year as the King James Version--Chapman's fairly abstract and highly metaphorical comments emphasize not technique but empathy. In his *Euthymiae; or the Teares of Peace* (1609), for example, Homer's ghost speaks of a mystical communion between his soul and his translator's

. . . a sweet gale
 Brought me upon thee; and thou didst inherit
 My true sense (for the time then) in my spirit;
 And I, invisiblie, went prompting thee
 To those fayre Greenes where thou didst english me.

ll. 82-86

This emphasis on both sense and spirit, as well as Chapman's note that literalism "hath made even th' ablest Agents erre" ("To the Reader," 1.94), prepared the way for the profoundly individual and literary tradition of classical translation that would flourish in England after the Restoration of 1660.

Well known for imitating portions of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Sir John Denham's greatest influence on English translation occurred in commendatory verses for Sir Richard Fanshawe's version of Baptista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1648). In emphasizing both the novelty and achievement of his friend's work, Denham's poem, one of the most cited documents in discussions of English translation, echoes and extends the language of Horace and Cicero:

That servile path thou nobly dost decline
 Of tracing word by word, and line by line.
 Those are the labour'd births of slavish brains,
 Not the effects of Poetry, but pains;
 Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords
 No flight for thoughts, but poorly sticks at words.
 A new and nobler way thou dost pursue
 To make Translations and Translators too.
 They but preserve the Ashes, thou the Flame,
 True to his sense, but truer to his fame.

(143-44)

In much the same metaphoric tradition as Chapman, Denham's emphasis on this "new and nobler way" actually continues the literary argument for avoiding simple literal translations. Denham appears, however, to go beyond even Chapman by preferring an author's fame to his sense, suggesting that the translator's primary responsibility lies in discovering a way to recreate within the language of the translator analogues to the original work's distinctive style rather than in preserving its ideas. This point reappears in a passage which Dryden would cite from the "Preface" to Denham's *The Destruction of Troy* (1656), a passage whose language explicitly acknowledges the authority of both Horace and Chapman:

It [is] a vulgar error in translating Poets, to affect being a *Fides Interpres*; let that care be with them who deal in matters of Fact, or matters of Faith: but whosoever

aims at it in Poetry, as he attempts what is not required, so he shall never perform what he attempts; for it is not his busines alone to translate Language into Language, but Poesie into Poesie; & Poesie is of so subtle a spirit, that in pouring out of one Language into another, it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *Caput Mortuum*.

(159)

Just as Jerome had not always followed his own principles, Stuart translators of *Job* would not always abide by Denham's distinction between works of poetry and works of faith. Like the faithful royalist Fanshawe, secretary of war to Prince Charles, and Denham himself, famous for his fiercely satiric verses against Presbyterians and parliamentarians, they often emphasized the poetic qualities of the book and the regal attributes of its hero. Puritans, on the other hand, tended to envision both a text and hero of simple, sincere, abiding faith, expanding it through paraphrase only to make it accessible as broad an audience as possible.

II

The Scripture is the Paradise, the garden of God upon earth: and these Poetical Books are (as I may say) as so many goodly knots in the midst of that garden.

Arthur Jackson, "Dedication,"

Annotations upon the Five Books

Immediately Following the Historical

Part of the Old Testament (1658), n.p.

While British translators inherited a set of common assumptions about the nature and practice of translation that stretched from the classical world through the end of English neoclassicism, the Christian vision of *Job* had not been so simple, coherent, or consistent. Judaism had had a long and rich tradition of analysis, debate, and dialogue, but Christianity, for the most part, had largely ignored Jewish scholarship as its view evolved from allegorical exposition to doctrinal debates.¹⁰ Working from the allusion in the Epistle of James, the Christian *Job* became an exemplary saint and type of Christ. Because the prologue and epilogue were far easier to reconcile with this view than the dialogues, the prose sections helped to establish the popular image of a patiently suffering and richly rewarded *exemplum*. Until the Bible became widely available in England, even the clergy tended to view *Job* through a set of prisms created by the prose sections, by apocryphal traditions like the pseudipigraphal Greek *Testament of Job*,¹¹ by liturgical uses, and by the commentaries of his most influential interpreters like St. Jerome, Pope Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin.¹²