
JOB 26: 1 Then Job answered,

Job, perceiving that his friends could no longer support their arguments on the ground they had assumed, sharply reproves them for their want both of wisdom and feeling, Job 26:1-4; shows that the power and wisdom of God are manifest in the works of creation and providence; gives several proofs; and then adds that these are a small specimen of his infinite skill and unlimited power, Job 26:5-14.

JOB 26: 2 "How have you helped him who is without power! How have you saved the arm that has no strength!

Verse 2

How hast thou helped him - This seems a species of irony. How wonderfully hast thou counselled the unskilful and strengthened the weak! Alas for you! ye could not give what ye did not possess! In this way the Chaldee understood these verses: "Why hast thou pretended to give succor, when thou art without strength? And save, while thy arm is weak? Why hast thou given counsel, when thou art without understanding? And supposest that thou hast shown the very essence of wisdom?"

JOB 26: 3 How have you counseled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge!

JOB 26: 4 To whom have you uttered words? Whose spirit came out of you?

Verse 4

Whose spirit came from thee? - Mr. Good renders the verse thus: From whom hast thou pillaged speeches? And whose spirit hath issued forth from thee? The retort is peculiarly severe; and refers immediately to the proverbial sayings which in several of the preceding answers have been adduced against the irritated sufferer; for which see Job 8:11-19; 15:20-35, some of which he has already complained of, as in Job 12:3, and following. I concur most fully therefore with Dr. Stock in regarding the remainder of this chapter as a sample, ironically exhibited by Job, of the harangues on the power and greatness of God which he supposes his friends to have taken out of the mouths of other men, to deck their speeches with borrowed lustre. Only, in descanting on the same subject, he shows how much he himself can go beyond them in eloquence and sublimity.

Job intimates that, whatever spirit they had, it was not the Spirit of God, because in their answers falsehood was found.

JOB 26: 5 "The departed spirits tremble, those beneath the waters and all that live in them.

Verse 5

Dead things are formed from under the waters - This verse, as it stands in our version, seems to convey no meaning; and the Hebrew is obscure; הרפאים, harephaim, "the Rephaim," certainly means not dead things; nor can there be any propriety in saying that dead things, or things without life, are formed under the waters, for such things are formed everywhere in the earth, and under the earth, as well as under the waters.

The Vulgate translates: *Ecce gigantes gemunt sub aquis, et qui habitant cum eis.* "Behold the giants, and those who dwell with them, groan from under the waters."

The Septuagint: Μη γυγαντες μαωθησονται υποκατωθεν υδατος, και των γειτονων αυτου; "Are not the giants formed from under the waters, and their neighbors?"

The Chaldee: מפושר דגבריא דמתמזמזין יתברין ואנון מלרע למיא ומשריתיהון eposhar degibraiya demithmazmezin yithbareyan veinnun millera lemैया umashreiyatehon, "Can the trembling giants be regenerated, when they and their hosts are under the water?"

The Syriac and Arabic: "Behold, the giants are slain, and are drawn out of the water." None of these appear to give any sense by which the true meaning can be determined.

There is probably here an allusion to the destruction of the earth by the general deluge. Moses, speaking concerning the state of the earth before the flood, says, Gen 6:4, "There were giants נפילים nephilim, in the earth in those days." Now it is likely that Job means the same by רפאים rephaim as Moses does by the nephilim; and that both refer to the antediluvians, who were all, for their exceeding great iniquities, overwhelmed by the waters of the deluge. Can those mighty men and their neighbors, all the sinners who have been gathered to them since, be rejected from under the waters, by which they were judicially overwhelmed?

Mr. Good thinks the shades of the heroes of former times, the gigantic spectres, the mighty or enormous dead, are meant.

I greatly question whether sea-monsters be not intended, such as porpoises, sharks, narwals, grampuses, and whales. We know, however that an opinion anciently prevailed, that the Titans, a race of men of enormous stature, rebelled against the gods, and endeavored to scale heaven by placing one mountain on the top of another; and that they and their structure were cast down by the thunder of the deities, and buried under the earth and sea; and that their struggles to arise produce the earthquakes which occur in certain countries. Now although this opinion is supported by the most respectable antiquity among the heathens, it is not to be supposed that in the word of God there can be any countenance given to an opinion at once as absurd as it is monstrous. (But still the poet may use the language of the common people). I must therefore either refer the passage here to the antediluvians, or to the vast sea-monsters mentioned above.

JOB 26: 6 Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering.

Verse 6

Hell is naked before him - Sheol, the place of the dead, or of separate spirits, is always in his view. And there is no covering to Abaddon - the place of the destroyer, where destruction reigns, and where those dwell who are eternally separated from God. The ancients thought that hell or Tartarus

was a vast space in the center, or at the very bottom of the earth. So Virgil, Aen. lib. vi., ver. 577: --
Tum Tartarus ipse

Bis patet in praeceps tantum, tenditque sub umbras,

Quantus ad aethereum coeli suspectus Olympum

Hic genus antiquum terrae, Titania pubes,

Fulmine dejecti, fundo voluntur in imo. "Full twice as deep the dungeon of the fiends,

The huge Tartarean gloomy gulf, descends

Below these regions, as these regions lie

From the bright realms of yon ethereal sky.

Here roar the Titan race, th' enormous birth;

The ancient offspring of the teeming earth.

Pierced by the burning bolts of old they fell,

And still roll bellowing in the depths of hell."

Pitt.

And some have supposed that there is an allusion to this opinion in the above passage, as well as in several others in the Old Testament; but it is not likely that the sacred writers would countenance an opinion that certainly has nothing in fact or philosophy to support it. Yet still a poet may avail himself of popular opinions.

JOB 26: 7 He stretches out the north over empty space, and hangs the earth on nothing.

Verse 7

He stretcheth out the north over the empty place - על תהו al tohu, to the hollow waste. The same word as is used, Gen 1:2, The earth was without form, תהו tohu. The north must here mean the north pole, or northern hemisphere; and perhaps what is here stated may refer to the opinion that the earth was a vast extended plain, and the heavens poised upon it, resting on this plain all round the horizon. Of the south the inhabitants of Idumea knew nothing; nor could they have any notion of inhabitants in that hemisphere.

Hangeth the earth upon nothing - The Chaldee says: "He lays the earth upon the waters, nothing sustaining it."

JOB 26: 8 He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not burst under them.

Verse 8

He bindeth up the waters - Drives the aqueous particles together, which were raised by evaporation, so that, being condensed, they form clouds which float in the atmosphere, till, meeting with strong currents of wind, or by the agency of the electric fluid, they are farther condensed; and then, becoming too heavy to be sustained in the air, fall down in the form of rain, when, in this poetic language, the cloud is rent under them.

JOB 26: 9 He encloses the face of his throne, and spreads his cloud on it.

Verse 9

He holdeth back the face of his throne - Though all these are most elegant effects of an omniscient and almighty power, yet the great Agent is not personally discoverable; he dwelleth in light unapproachable, and in mercy hides himself from the view of his creatures. The words, however may refer to those obscurations of the face of heaven, and the hiding of the body of the sun, when the atmosphere is laden with dense vapours, and the rain begins to be poured down on the earth.

JOB 26: 10 He has described a boundary on the surface of the waters, and to the confines of light and darkness.

Verse 10

He hath compassed the waters with bounds - Perhaps this refers merely to the circle of the horizon, the line that terminates light and commences darkness, called here *עד תכלית אור עם חשך* ad tachlith or im chosech, "until the completion of light with darkness." Or, if we take *תכלית* tachlith here to be the same with *תכלת* techeleth, Exo 25:4, and elsewhere, which we translate blue, it may mean that sombre sky-blue appearance of the horizon at the time of twilight, i.e., between light and darkness; the line where the one is terminating and the other commencing. Or, He so circumscribes the waters, retaining them in their own place, that they shall not be able to overflow the earth until day and night, that is, time itself, come to an end.

JOB 26: 11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his rebuke.

Verse 11

The pillars of heaven tremble - This is probably a poetical description either of thunder, or of an earthquake: - "He shakes creation with his nod;

Earth, sea, and heaven, confess him God."

But there may be an allusion to the high mountains, which were anciently esteemed by the common people as the pillars on which the heavens rested; and when these were shaken with earthquakes, it might be said the pillars of heaven tremble. Mount Atlas was supposed to be one of those pillars, and this gave rise to the fable of Atlas being a man who bore the heavens on his

shoulders. The Greek and Roman poets frequently use this image. Thus Silius Italicus, lib. i., ver. 202:

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Atlas subducto tracturus vertice coelum:

Sidera nubiferum fulcit caput, aethereasque

Erigit aeternum compages ardua cervix:

Canet barba gelu, frontemque immanibus umbris

Pinea silva premit; vastant cava tempora venti

Nimboaque ruunt spumantia flumina rictu. "Atlas' broad shoulders prop th' incumbent skies:

Around his cloud-girt head the stars arise.

His towering neck supports th' ethereal way;

And o'er his brow black woods their gloom display.

Hoar is his beard; winds round his temples roar;

And from his jaws the rushing torrents pour."

J. B. C.

JOB 26: 12 He stirs up the sea with his power, and by his understanding he strikes through Rahab.

Verse 12

He divideth the sea with his power - Here is a manifest allusion to the passage of the Red Sea by the Israelites, and the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host, according to the opinion of the most eminent critics.

He smiteth through the proud - רַהַב Rahab, the very name by which Egypt is called Isa 51:9, and elsewhere. Calmet remarks: "This appears to refer only to the passage of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh. Were we not prepossessed with the opinion that Job died before Moses, every person at the first view of the subject must consider it in this light." I am not thus prepossessed. Let Job live when he might, I am satisfied the Book of Job was written long after the death of Moses, and not earlier than the days of Solomon, if not later. The farther I go in the work, the more this conviction is deepened; and the opposite sentiment appears to be perfectly gratuitous.

JOB 26: 13 By his Spirit the heavens are garnished. His hand has pierced the swift serpent.

Verse 13

By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens - See the observations below.

JOB 26: 14 Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways. How small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?"

Verse 14

Lo, these are parts of his ways - קצות ketsoth, the ends or extremities, the outlines, an indistinct sketch, of his eternal power and Godhead.

How little a portion is heard - שמש shemets, a mere whisper; admirably opposed, as Mr. Good has well observed, to רעם raam, the thunder, mentioned in the next clause. As the thunder is to a whisper, so are the tremendous and infinitely varied works of God to the faint outlines exhibited in the above discourse. Every reader will relish the dignity, propriety, and sense of these expressions. They force themselves on the observation of even the most heedless. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens - Numerous are the opinions relative to the true meaning of this verse. Some think it refers to the clearing of the sky after a storm, such as appears to be described Job 26:11, Job 26:12; and suppose his Spirit means the wind, which he directs to sweep and cleanse the face of the sky, by which the splendor of the day or the lustre of the night is restored: and by the crooked, flying, or aerial serpent, as it is variously rendered, the ecliptic is supposed to be meant, as the sun's apparent course in it appears to be serpentine, in his approach to and recession from each of the tropics. This tortuous line may be seen on any terrestrial globe. Many will object to this notion as too refined for the time of Job; but this I could easily admit, as astronomy had a very early existence among the Arabians, if not its origin. But with me the chief objection lies against the obscurity of the allusion, if it be one; for it must require no small ingenuity, and almost the spirit of divination, to find out the sun's oblique path in the zodiac in the words His hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Others have imagined that the allusion is to the lightning in that zigzag form which it assumes when discharged from one cloud into another during a thunder storm. This is at once a natural and very apparent sense. To conduct and manage the lightning is most certainly a work which requires the skill and omnipotence of God, as much as garnishing the heavens by his Spirit, dividing the sea by his power, or causing the pillars of heaven to tremble by his reproof. Others think that the act of the creation of the solar system is intended to be expressed, which is in several parts of the sacred writings attributed to the Spirit of God; (Gen 1:2; Psa 33:6); and that the crooked serpent means either Satan, who deceived our first parents, or huge aquatic animals; for in Isa 27:1, we find the leviathan and dragon of the sea called נחש ברח nachash bariach, the very terms that are used by Job in this place: "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, (נחש ברח nachash bariach), even leviathan, that crooked serpent, (נחש עקלתון nachash akallathon), and he shall slay the dragon (התנין hattannin) that is in the sea." And we know that in Gen 1:21 הגדלים התנינם הגדלים hattanninim haggedolim, which we translate great whales, includes all sea-monsters or vast aquatic animals. Calmet, who without hesitation adopts this sentiment, says: "I see no necessity to have recourse to allegory here. After having exhibited the effects of the sovereign power of God in the heavens, in the clouds, in the vast collection of waters in the sea, it was natural enough for Job to speak of the production of fishes." The intelligent Dr. Sherlock gives another interpretation. After strongly expressing his disapprobation of the opinion that Job should descend, after speaking of the creation of the heavens and their host, to the formation of snakes and adders, he supposes "that Job here intended to oppose that grand religious system of sabaeism which prevailed in his time, and to which, in other parts of this book, he alludes; a system which acknowledged two opposite independent principles by which the universe was governed, and paid

Divine adoration to the celestial luminaries. Suppose, therefore, Job to be acquainted with the fall of man, and the part ascribed to the serpent of the introduction of evil, see how aptly the parts cohere. In opposition to the idolatrous practice of the time, he asserts God to be the maker of all the host of heaven: By his Spirit he garnished the heavens. In opposition to the false notion of two independent principles, he asserts God to be the maker of him who was the author of evil: His hand hath formed the crooked serpent. You see how properly the garnishing of the heavens and the forming of the serpent are joined together. That this is the ancient traditional explication of this place, we have undeniable evidence from the translation of the Septuagint, who render the latter part of this verse, which relates to the serpent, in this manner: Προσταγματι δε εθανατωσε δρακοντα αποστατην, By a decree he destroyed the apostate dragon. The Syriac and Arabic versions are to the same effect: And his hand slew the flying serpent. "These translators apply the place to the punishment inflicted on the serpent; and it comes to the same thing, for the punishing the serpent is as clear an evidence of God's power over the author of evil as the creating him. We need not wonder to see so much concern in this book to maintain the supremacy of God, and to guard it against every false notion; for this was the theme, the business of the author." - Bp. Sherlock on Prophecy, Diss. ii.

From the contradictory opinions on this passage, the reader will no doubt feel cautious what mode of interpretation he adopts, and the absolute necessity of admitting no texts of doubtful interpretation as vouchers for the essential doctrines of Christianity. Neither metaphors, allegories, similes, nor figurative expressions of any kind, should ever be adduced or appealed to as proofs of any article in the Christian faith. We have reason to be thankful that this is at present the general opinion of the most rational divines of all sects and parties, and that the allegory and metaphor men are everywhere vanishing from the meridian and sinking under the horizon of the Church. Scriptural Christianity is prevailing with a strong hand, and going forward with a firm and steady step.