Job

Jerome (c. AD 347–420)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Job

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF SAINT JEROME TO THE BOOK OF JOB I am forced, through each of the books of Divine Scripture, to respond to the slander of adversaries who accuse my translation of rebuking the Seventy translators, not as though among the Greeks Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion had also translated either word for word, or meaning for meaning, or by mixing both together, also a kind of translation of equal proportion, and also Origen had divided all the scrolls of the Old Instrument with obeli and asterisks which, either added by him or taken from Theodotion, he added to the ancient translation, proving what was added to have been lacking. Therefore my detractors should learn to accept in full what they have accepted in part, or to erase my translation along with their asterisks. For it should not be, that those who they accepted to have omitted many things may not be acknowledged to have certainly erred in some things, especially in Job, in which if you will have removed those things which are added under the asterisks, the greater part will be cut off. And this is only among the Greeks. Otherwise, among the Latins, before their translation which we recently edited under asterisks and obeli, almost seven hundred or eight hundred verses are (missing), so that the book, shortened and cut up and eaten away, shows its deformity publicly to readers.

And this translation follows no translator of the ancients, but will rather convey from the speech itself (which is) Hebrew and Arabic and sometimes Syrian, now words, now meanings, now both together. For even among the Hebrews the whole book is considered oblique and slippery and what the Greek rhetors call figuratively arranged (εσχηματισμενος), and while one thing is said, it does another, as if you would hold tightly an eel or a little murena fish, when you press harder, then the sooner it escapes. I remember I paid not a little money toward understanding of this scroll, for an instructor from Lydda who among the Hebrews was thought to have first rank, with whose teaching I know not whether I accomplished anything; this one thing I know: for me not to have been able to translate anything that I didn't know before.

Therefore, from the beginning to the words of Job, among the Hebrews the speech is prose. Next, from the words of Job in which he says, "May the day perish in which I was born, and the night in which it was said: A man is conceived," to that place, where it is written

before the end of the scroll: "Therefore I accuse myself and make repentance in dust and ashes," the verses are in hexameter, running in dactyl and spondee and, according to the idiom of the language, also accepting numerous other (poetic) feet not of the same (number of) syllables, but of the same intervals. Sometimes also, by breaking the law of (poetic metrical) numbers, the rhythm itself is found sweet and ringing, which is understood better by prosodists than by a simple reader. And from the verse mentioned above to the end of the book, the small section that remains continues with prose speech. If that seems unbelievable to anyone, namely that among the Hebrews there are meters, and either the Psalter or the Lamentation of Jermiah or almost all the songs of the Scriptures are to be understood in the manner of our Flaccus and the Greek Pindar and Alkaios and Sappho, let him read Philo, Josephus, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea, and by their testimony he will prove me to speak the truth.

For which reason, let my dogs therefore hear me to have labored at this scroll, not as rebuking the ancient translation, but rather so those things in it which are either obscure or missing or certainly corrupted by the error of scribes may be made more clear by our translation, who have both learned Hebrew speech in part, and also in Latin, almost from our cradle we were worn out (?) among grammarians and rhetors and philosophers. But if among the Greeks, after the edition of the Seventy, with the Gospel of Christ shining, the Jew Aquila, and Symmachus and Theodotion, judaizing heretics, are accepted, who have hidden many mysteries of the Savior by sly translation, and yet are found in the Hexapla among the churches and are explained by men of the Church, how much more should I, a Christian of Christian parents and bearing the standard of the cross on my forehead, whose study was to recover the missing, to correct the corrupted, and to open the sacraments of the Church with pure and faithful speech, not be rejected by either disdainful or by malicious readers? Let whoever will to keep the old books, either written on purple skins with gold and silver, or in uncial letters, as they commonly say, loads of writing rather than books, while they leave to me and mine to have poor little leaves and not such beautiful books as correct ones. Each edition, the Seventy according to the Greeks and mine according to the Hebrews, was translated into Latin by my labor. May each one choose what he will, and prove himself studious rather than malevolent.

END OF THE PROLOGUE

Source. English translation: an out-of-copyright translation as transcribed, or commissioned and given to the public domain, by Roger Pearse for his collection ***Early Church Fathers – Additional Texts*** (tertullian.org/fathers). SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes are left out, and Greek or Latin words, square brackets and any transcription error are as the source prints them. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

Licence. translated for the site and dedicated to the public domain (2006).