

[*MJTM* 15 (2013–2014)]

#### BOOK REVIEW

David J. A. Clines. *Job 38–42*. WBC 18B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011. xxv + 500 pp. Hbk. ISBN 0785252673.

This volume by Clines marks not only the completion of this encyclopedic commentary, but the completion of the Old Testament portion of the series. The series began in 1977 under the general editorship of Bruce Metzger; the Old Testament editors were D. W. Watts and James W. Watts. The series represents the elite of evangelical scholarship and has been a standard resource since its first volumes appeared. The volume on *Psalms 1–50* by Peter Craigie, published in 1983, remains one of the most creative and informative on that portion of the psalter, one of the legacies left by a brilliant scholar whose career was tragically cut short.

This third volume of the commentary includes the indices for all chapters in volumes 17 (published in 1989) and 18A (published in 2006). The orientation to books about Job in volume one (lxiii–cxv) was intended to be a “reasonably comprehensive bibliography” (17: lxiii), including, but not limited to, everything in the libraries of Sheffield and the British Museum. That bibliography included bibliographies of works on Job, patristic commentaries and translations, Jewish and Christian commentaries from the medieval period to the present, works on philology and all the ancient versions, and other specialized studies (Job in other religions, art, music, dance, and film). The concluding bibliography of the current volume (1243–1472) incorporates all of the original bibliography but expands it in every section. It begins with supplements to the bibliographic introductions of each chapter in all three volumes (1243–57). The General Bibliography (1258–1472) then includes and expands on each of the sections in the original volume. It very helpfully includes indices;

the index to the commentaries of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries (listing just the last name of the author and date of publication, arranged in three columns per page) itself constitutes three full pages, as do other indices, such as the index to works on the book of Job as a whole. There are three additional indices. A classified index of the book of Job is divided into three sections (1481–89): the supernatural world; the natural world; the human world. Each of these has multiple sub-topics with Scripture references. The first section begins with God as the first sub-topic, then within this Almighty, Destroyer, Eloah, Holy One, King, Lord (Yahweh), Maker, Man-Watcher, Righteous One, Shaddai, Watcher, and Yahweh. There is an index of Hebrew words (1490–1503) and an index of authors (1504–39). The index of 1,445 Hebrew words includes three categories: words whose meaning receives a substantial discussion in the commentary; words used in Job in a special or unusual sense; and 852 new words not included in BDB, but registered in *The Classical Hebrew Dictionary* completed under the direction of Clines.

The size of the bibliography and indices is a tribute to how the majestic composition of Job has inspired readers since its composition, generally thought to be some time in the Persian period. For all the erudition of this bibliography, individuals looking for particular items may find they are not there. Any scholarly bibliography must make decisions about what fits that category, which is somewhat arbitrary. While the bibliography is a vast and enormous resource, which in itself is worth the price of the book, it should never be considered exhaustive. It is not only limited by date (a number of exceptional commentaries have already appeared since the publication of this volume) but also by necessary choices of what published works should be included. Anyone doing research on any aspect of Job would be well advised to begin with this resource, but not to consider it so inclusive of the periods covered that no further bibliographic research is necessary. Bibliographic compilations necessarily rely on reviews circulated in the guild, which are limited to the objectives of the journals concerned.

The actual commentary on chapters 38–42 (the God speeches

and the epilogue) is the smaller portion of the volume (1041–1242). This again includes extensive bibliographic introductions to each of the units and sub-units considered. The first speech of Yahweh (38:1—40:2) begins with a bibliography on Yahweh's speeches (38:1—40:2; 40:6—41:34) of over three full pages; there are an additional two pages of bibliography on Yahweh's first speech and the rhetorical questions, and two more pages of bibliography on particular topics in the speeches: earth, sea, light, rain, astronomy, clouds, lion, raven, mountain goats, wild ass, wild ox, ostrich, horse, hawk and eagle. For all this the reader and researcher must be most grateful. It is not only the foundation for all the textual and philological notes that follow, but a resource for any particular aspect of these chapters that one may wish to pursue.

It is safe to say that the philological and textual work on the book of Job has been done for the next generation of scholars. All of the available data may be found in this commentary; there will be new and creative assessments of this data with potential implications for meaning, but this commentary is the place to begin in evaluating the possible philological conclusions of this very challenging text. As might be expected, notes to the text constitute a very significant portion of the commentary. For many readers this will be the most valuable part of the commentary, since it explains the translation and is the basis of the exegesis to follow.

An example of the value of the translation notes is the comments on the word *ʿl* in Job's response to the second speech of God in Job 42:6. Clines translates this as "I accept consolation for my dust and ashes." He has a detailed note on the possibility that the preposition he has translated "for" might actually be a noun meaning child, vocalized as *ʿul*, a use that is found in Job in 24:9 (contrary to the vocalization of the Masoretic text, but found in *BHS* notes). Clines accepts *ʿul* as child in 24:9 (18A, 585), a point he observes in his note to this verse. The meaning of *ʿul* as child is attractive in the concluding confession of Job. The God speeches have brought Job to accept God's governance as a human; the world was not created for Job or his comfort. He must submit himself to God (the translation Clines uses for the

first part of the verse), a child of dust and ashes. Job has come to terms with his mortality and his suffering; it is part of the way God rules his world. Clines rejects this interpretation, but discusses the evidence clearly, including the Targum, which says “I comfort myself for my children.” Clines makes two points in this regard: the Targum translation does not indicate that *l* is read as child; the word *wl* refers to a nursing child, a sense that belongs to 24:9. He then provides evidence for the preposition *al* used in connection with the verb *nhm* to mean “be comforted for.” It may be that the God speeches comfort Job, though comfort is hardly the emotion evoked in reading them, nor does that seem to be the divine goal in the way Job is addressed. Perhaps Job is comforted, but perhaps Job realizes better the relationships of God, mortals and the world. The poet may well have intended this as an ambiguity. But the information of the commentary gives the reader all the information available on this particular crux.

The translation is elegant and about the best English representation of the text that is possible. There is something to be said for the flair of a translation like that of Mitchell (1987) in terms of the emotive expression of the poetry of Job, but this is not the purpose of a commentary. A couple of lines from the poem on *Behemoth* (Job 40:16–17) will illustrate the point. The translation of Mitchell makes the eyes pop: “Look: the power in his thighs, the pulsing sinews of his belly. His penis stiffens like a pine; his testicles bulge with vigor.” Clines renders these words much more serenely: “What strength it has in its loins, what vigor in the muscles of its belly! It stiffens its tail like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are intertwined.” Clines is well aware of the philological data used by Mitchell, which he documents in the notes, and in the comments allows it as one of the interpretations. He does point out that while the tail of the hippopotamus (the almost universally accepted referent of *Behemoth*) is not significant for its size, it is very powerful, used to scatter its excrement by way of aggression or advertising its territory. The difference of translation does not affect the function of the hippopotamus in the poem. “When, then, this indolent beast is called God’s ‘masterpiece’ (v 19a) it is hard to be sure the poet is

being serious; or at least we suspect that there is a deeply playful seriousness at hand” (1184). The wonder is that God would have bothered to create such a useless creature.

The commentary follows the series in having five sections in each unit of comment: bibliography, notes, form/structure/setting, comment, and explanation. Of these, the most brief is the last, constituting a mere 8 pages of the entire commentary. This may well be justified. By the time one gets to the last section, the impact of the passage for the author is pretty clear. Of course one may disagree with the interpretive decisions and come to a different conclusion, but then readers will create their own explanation. The sections on form, structure, and setting are also brief, and what is there reviews the opinions of other commentators that differ from Clines. Again this is adequate for the reader, as the basic structure of these chapters is self-evident, and the setting is limited to their place in the composition. Questions of function are a matter of interpretation, and are properly taken up in the comments made on the text.

This is not a commentary for the faint-hearted nor for most pastors, who will hardly want to follow through on the philological detail (though it is quite comprehensible) or most of the bibliography, which are the distinguishing features of this commentary. Other commentators have distilled the conclusions of Clines and are much more manageable in following the thought development of Job. It will not be possible for the next generation of commentaries on Job to ignore the work that Clines has done, and it would be foolish to think that there is some advantage in beginning again as if this work had not been done. This is an encyclopedia more than a commentary, though it is written in the genre of commentary. It is indispensable to scholarly work on Job and any topic to which the book of Job is relevant.

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