

# **THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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The problem of suffering in the Old Testament by Arthur S. Peake

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**ARTHUR S. PEAKE**

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# The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament.

BY

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Dieu, c'est le mot de l'énigme du monde :  
Jésus-Christ, c'est le mot de l'énigme de Dieu.

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DEDICATED TO

**My friend and Teacher,**

THE REV. A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D.D., LL.D., D.LITT.,

PRINCIPAL OF MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD,

IN LOVE, REVERENCE, AND GRATITUDE.

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## PREFACE.

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WHEN I accepted the invitation to deliver the Hartley Lecture, I selected *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament* as my subject, for reasons that will be plain to all who read the last chapter of this book. I am only one of many, for whom the problem of pain constitutes the most powerful objection to a Theism, adequate to our deepest needs. I am well aware that to some I shall seem to drug my doubt with the anodyne of the Gospel. Yet I shall be more than content if by my witness-bearing I help some souls, to whom the world's misery is a nightmare, to escape beyond it into untroubled peace.

I am only too conscious how far the book is from what I had wished to make it. A serious operation, in November, 1902, has dislocated all my work, and the addition of new claims and duties to an already crowded life has made some of my plans impracticable. I had intended to give a full summary of the discussions in Germany and elsewhere, that for the last thirteen years have raged about the figure of the Servant of Yahweh; to compile a critical bibliography; to complete my commentary on Job; to deal much more thoroughly with the subjects treated in the last chapter. But half the book had to be written in a month, with College and Review work, Committees and Meetings, absorbing most of my time and strength. I trust, however, that I have said the essential things,

and though I might have read more, had leisure been granted me, I do not think the views I have formed would have undergone any substantial modification.

Perhaps I owe some explanation to my old pupils of the change in my views with reference to the Servant of Yahweh. I have never wavered in my belief that the Servant should be identified with Israel, and have not suffered myself to be fascinated by Duhm's powerful plea for an individual identification. But in common with several scholars, the view that the Servant is the historical Israel seemed to me exposed to fatal objections, so I gave my adhesion to the theory that the Servant is the ideal Israel, as it has been expounded, among others, especially by Professor Skinner in his valuable commentary on Isaiah 40—66 in the *Cambridge Bible*. But I was all the while acutely conscious of its difficulties, and held it only for want of a better. The most natural view seemed to be that the historical Israel was intended throughout, and I was fully prepared to move to this more consistent position, if the objections to it could be taken out of the way. It is to Giesebrecht above all that I owe the removal of these difficulties, though in this connexion I have also to mention Budde and Marti.

The critical problems of Habakkuk cost me a great deal of trouble, which led to an unexpected result. I have for several years hoped that a solution might be reached, if not in the form proposed by Budde, at any rate along his lines. But repeated study has driven me to the conclusion that neither Budde's solution, nor those of G. A. Smith, Peiser, or Betteridge are really tenable, and I had perforce to accept, with



Wellhausen and Nowack, the view first propounded by Giesebrecht. Not a little to my surprise I have also had to desert the usual view of the date, and place the prophecy in the exile. I much regret that the second part of Marti's commentary on the Minor Prophets has not yet been published, so that I have not been able to avail myself of his discussion of this and some other dark problems of the prophetic literature.

Many may be astonished that I should have thought it necessary to include a summary of the proofs that Isaiah 40—66 is not the work of the prophet Isaiah. I need hardly explain that this was due to no feeling that the question was any longer in dispute. But we need to remind ourselves how slowly the most certain results make their way, and I anticipate that I may have many readers to whom the tritest commonplaces of criticism will come with freshness. It is also striking that those who get hold of results, often get hold of them so imperfectly, so that we still hear people speaking of "two Isaiahs," unaware that if the book is not a unity, it must be highly complex in its structure. I have referred very little to literature earlier than 1892, when the publication of Duhm's Commentary on Isaiah opened a new era in the criticism and interpretation of the book.

I regret that it has been necessary to add so many footnotes. But for the most part they touch questions of textual criticism, and since the text seemed so often to need emendation, a detailed statement of reasons was necessary. Those who are alive to the difficulties of the received text will not, I believe, charge me with wanton criticism. While we ought

to be done with superstitious illusions as to the soundness of the Massoretic text, the textual critic always needs to be on his guard against subjectivity, arbitrariness and violence. And lest any one should imagine that emendations are put forward as anything more than tentative suggestions as to what the author may have written, it may be said explicitly that though in many cases it may be tolerably plain that the text is corrupt, it is only a few corrections that are fairly certain, while all degrees of probability, or plausibility, attach to the rest.

My debt to other scholars will be evident to those who are familiar with the subject. But I wish specially to acknowledge the kindness of two friends. My colleague, Professor Hope W. Hogg, Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature in the University of Manchester, has made time, amid a pressure of other work, that doubles my obligation, to read my proofs. He is in no way responsible for what I have written, but it has reassured me to have my work read by so competent and accurate a scholar. My friend, Miss Mabel Frith, has read my proofs and made suggestions which I have been glad to adopt. I have to thank her not only for this and for the keen interest she has taken in the book, but for the quotation from Raymond Brucker, that I have placed on the title page.

ARTHUR S. PEAKE.

MANCHESTER,  
*May 28th, 1904.*

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