

SEEK GOD

By Alden Truesdell

IT IS GOOD to know that God is willing to help us. It is also good to realize God's ability to do so. For there would be little point in our setting aside our desires and our responsibilities in order to worship some incompetent agency that might or might not hear our petitions and bless us.

There are now many teachers and preachers who are eager to give pilgrims assistance in the way they believe to be the right way to God. A safe test of the capacity of the teacher to instruct or of the preacher to expound is the effect that the teaching and the preaching has on his adherents. If the people are being divested of their ills and woes and tribulations, this is a good sign. If they are being instructed in a God closer than breathing and nearer than hands or feet, a God who is "a very present help in trouble"; and if false notions about God are breaking up and the limited margins are giving way to expanding horizons, then are the seekers being supplied with good instructions.

No better teaching will be found than that incorporated in the words of Jesus Christ. His words give definite instruction as to how to proceed in the way to find God. They are all that we need.

If you are fortunate enough to subscribe to the actual Teaching of Jesus Christ, His words will save you from a lot of haphazard seeking and unlearned questions. You will know within yourself that you are on the right track, because you will be - in a sense - the individual student of that One Original Teacher and Miracle-worker - the One who spoke with authority. You will know that the words He spoke were spoken for you, and that the works He worked were worked for you. You will know His Way to be the only way because He said it is and He said it because it is true. "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers. . . . I am come that they might have life. . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life."

At present there is a return to prayer because of the fear of the unstable conditions in the world. While it is true that "man's extremity is God's opportunity," we may remember that there are some worshipers who have so loved God that they have praised Him in the days of prosperity, as well as having prayed through emergency after emergency. Seek God, and you will find such companions.

Today many seek peace of mind or health or prosperity or success or happiness. Who seeks God?

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number."

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THE MAN-GOD RELATION IN JOB

By Robert Applegate, Jr.

IF the Book of Job says anything about the man-God relation, it is (1) that it is possible for man to "see" God and (2) that the way to this attainment is through the abnegation - the crucifixion - of the self.

The whole book should be considered as a unit; it is a whole. But the introduction is mostly stage-setting, and I believe that the first readers of the work would understand this. It was necessary to present the picture of Job suddenly stripped of everything, and in one day, removed from the height of prosperity to the depth of misery. The prologue accomplishes this by means of the story of the heavenly wager. I cannot believe that this was ever meant to be taken as more than a story or that the picture of God as a capricious, spoiled tyrant was meant to be taken seriously.

The dialogue between Job and his three so-called friends is mainly negative. It shows conclusively, and even tediously, that the accepted idea that the "righteous" flourish and the "wicked" suffer is ludicrous. It also foreshadows the conclusion. But it offers no definite answer to the question "What is God, anyway?"

On linguistic grounds the speech of Elihu seems to be a later addition to the completed work, and linguistic grounds are the only objective criterion for eliminating any of the work. (See Terrien, Samuel, in *The Interpreter's Bible*, III, 890.) If any of it should be left out of consideration it is this speech. And it is unessential. It serves mainly to summarize the arguments of the three friends and to foreshadow the answer of God. Perhaps it was added for this reason.

If there is any conclusion, or resolution, to Job, it must be contained in Chapters 38 to 42 - in the two speeches of Yahweh, Job's two replies, and the epilogue. Particularly the answer should be sought in the concluding verses of the poem (Job's final reply) and to a secondary degree in the prose epilogue. After all, whoever put the work into its final form considered these to be its rightful conclusion, to which all else leads up. When the resolution is found in these sections, it is seen foreshadowed throughout the work and the whole becomes a unit.

The most obvious thing that the Book of Job says about God is: whatever happens God is responsible for it. This runs throughout. The author could not ascribe some things to Nature or to Necessity or to Time and Chance (as Ecclesiastes does). Whatever happens in the world God does it. "Which among all of them does not know that the hand of Yahweh has done this?" This is the crux of the problem. If one accepts the idea of the governance of God and then looks out at the world, it is obvious that something is wrong. This is the problem with which Job and his friends wrestle, or rather about which they shout and vituperate without reaching any conclusion.

There would seem to be but three possible solutions to the problem of obvious wrong in a universe governed by God:

1) To shut the eyes to the facts and desperately affirm that all suffering is the result of "sin." This is the answer of Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad.

Job's refusal to accept this pat answer leads them to ever more violent assertions of it. This is the position of the Pharisees of all ages, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others. It is an easy position to maintain as long as one is relatively at ease and comfortable - provided one does not examine it closely.

2) To declare that the world and all its seeming pain is unreal; that it exists only in man's consciousness; that it is the nightmare from which man is called to awake to the Reality of the All-ness of God, who is Spirit. This, in some degree, is the answer of all of the mystics, and of some of our modern physicists, who are the present-day philosophers. (1. Cf. Eddington, Sir Arthur: *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 332: "Recognizing that the physical world is entirely abstract and without 'actuality' apart from its linkage to consciousness, we restore consciousness to the fundamental position instead of representing it as an inessential complication occasionally found in the midst of inorganic nature at a late state of evolutionary history"; p. 276: "The stuff of the world is mind-stuff." Cf. also Jeans, Sir James: *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 203: "The cumulative evidence of various pieces of probable reasoning makes it seem more and more likely that reality is better described as mental rather than material.")

3) To confess that one does not know and cannot know what is; to acknowledge that the finite mind cannot begin to comprehend Infinity; to realize that claiming to understand the Almighty is the worst possible mistake, for it cuts one off from communion with the Living God by putting the intellect in the place of God. (Cf. Romans 1:22: "Claiming to be wise, they became foolish.") The claim to understand the ways of God (made by the friends and by Job) is the most destructive form of idolatry, a worship of the human intellect. (Cf. Toynbee, A. J.: *A Study of History*, IV, 261: "Idolatry may be defined as an intellectually and morally purblind worship of the part instead of the whole, of the creature instead of the Creator, of Time instead of Eternity." Cf. also *Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 131: "In any living creature, the worst of all sins is the idolization of itself, . . . because it is the greatest moral and intellectual rebellion that a creature can make against its true state of subordination to God the Absolute Reality.") So Jesus said to the Pharisees: "If you were blind you would have no error; but now that you say, 'We see,' your error remains." Job, at the end of the poem, is finally brought to the surrender of his idolatrous self-confidence. It is this surrender with which, in the epilogue, God is said to be pleased.

At first sight the speeches of God from the whirlwind offer very little except poetry. God does not comfort or console Job; He does not offer any explanations. What His speeches boil down to is: "You think you know something, Bud; but where were you when I created the Universe?" Under the circumstances this seems cruel, pointless, and ironical. And yet it is precisely the answer called for. It is the medicine that Job needed and that we all need. "If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know as he ought to know." (I Corinthians 8:2) The God that Job meets is not a soft God or a religious God.

Our ignorance, our nothingness, is eminently unsatisfying as a theological conception: experienced as an overwhelming truth, it seems to be the precondition to any awareness of the reality of Divinity. (So Socrates gave his life to trying to show his countrymen that the things they supposed they knew were false opinions. He knew that only when men recognize their own ignorance can they be led to Something higher.) So it is that the motif of a man stripped

of everything including self-importance and self-justification appears again and again throughout our Scripture.

Abraham was forced to leave his homeland and then to be willing to offer up his son, his only hope for the future, before he received the fulfillment of the promise to him. Joseph was reduced from being a favorite son to being a slave, then from being a trusted servant to being an abandoned prisoner, before he was lifted to power. Moses was transformed overnight from a prince in Egypt to a fugitive in the desert and then was forced to spend forty years in the lonely business of keeping sheep before he got his commission. Elijah was a run-away asking for death before he perceived God in the still, small voice. Israel was an exiled nation before it produced Second Isaiah and a subjugated nation before it produced Christianity. Paul was a fugitive in Arabia before he got his understanding of the Teaching of his Master and started his own teaching career. (Galatians 1:17: "When He who called me by His Love was pleased to reveal His Son in me, I did not join myself to any human being, . . . but I went away into Arabia.") It seems that there is a truth in Arnold Toynbee's thesis of "Withdrawal and Return"; and the withdrawal is not just a "coming apart to rest awhile" (valuable though that is); it is often a being stripped of everything. It is only when one stands naked before God that he can become aware of God as a Living Reality. Always with that realization comes power.

(To be continued)

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HELPFUL WORDS

By H. B. Jeffery

EVERYONE of us has a ministry. Our work, whatever it is (whether it is expression in the arts, in science, in commerce, or in domestic relations), is a ministry. As we see and feel the mystery of our work, we do it with ease and grace. We find that we do our work without labor or effort. "Blessed are the dead (to self-importance) which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

When you consciously talk with the Divine and your ear is open and sensitive to the words of the Divine, then you find that you are doing your work without labor. It does itself under your attention. You see and realize new and better ways of doing things; you are taught of the Divine ways that you had never been taught before.

I was asked once to spend the night with the superintendent of the Richland Railroad, a line-railroad in New York City. In the morning we sat on his porch where we could look over the freight yard and the docks, and see what was going on. As we sat there looking over the docks it suddenly came to my thoughts that they were wasting time and energy in the way they were moving the freight.

I said to him, "Why do you do that?"

He said, "We've always done it; why not?"

I said, "Why don't you do this instead?" and I outlined a new method of handling the freight. It was a shock to him. Here was a man who had been brought up in the railroad business from boyhood, who had worked up from a trackman to superintendent, but he had never seen the waste of effort.

He said, "Would you mind telling the foreman there down in the yard what you've just told me."

I said, "No."

So he telephoned down and called him up. I spoke to him about my idea, and he also was surprised. Here were two railroad men who had worked all their lives handling freight, but they found a new way of moving all the freight in New York Harbor. They found a shorter, quicker, safer way. And it all came as a shot out of the blue, as we say. Yet I was not a railroad man and had not done any railroad work.

The Divine gives words of helpfulness and healing and instruction for those roundabout, who are plodding along in the ordinary way of doing things, thinking that they are governed by certain laws and have to do things in certain ways. God knows ways of doing things of which the natural man is not aware. If you hearken, if you walk with Him consciously, if your ears are open, you will catch words of helpfulness and instruction for your fellow man.

When I was in high school there was a system of drawing that I didn't like. I would not conform to it, and so I was chastised several times and finally I was sent to the principal. He was not there when I went in, but he soon came. He had great big eyes and when he saw me he opened them wide.

He said, "What are you in here for?" (He was the father of three boys and so he knew boys pretty well.)

I said, "The drawing teacher sent me here."

"Why did she send you up?"

"I disobeyed her. I wouldn't do what she wanted me to and I had a reason."

"Oh, you did! Aren't you a little presumptuous for a student?"

I said, "No, I'm not. The system is wrong, and I will not participate. I will not do it."

He said, "I think we'll have to have a session, the three of us together."

We had it and I spoke out about the way that things were being done in the art department.

The principal said, "Let Jeffery alone; let him do his work."

So he went his way. But in the fall the teacher was replaced by a new one from Boston, who was awake to new principles of art and to new ways of teaching. The whole system of art education was changed in our school.

When the word of Truth comes to us it comes positively. It comes charged with a power and an assertiveness. So we speak boldly; we are unafraid; we do

not care. The whole world may disagree with us; but if we have caught a bolt from heaven we need not fear the world, because Truth is mighty and the Truth will prevail. God governs His Universe in Truth and Righteousness. God is Truth. As you catch the word of Truth there will be a confidence and assurance come with it. You may then speak with authority.

When you hear the Voice of the Spirit, your eye will be opened and you will see the utter negativeness of the outer world and the thoughts of the natural man. This will clarify the mind. It will uncover to you a New World of Activity. You will speak words of Truth as they come to you. Your neighbor will rise up and do things in ways he never did before. He will prosper. His work will lose its sense of labor and sense of duty. He will rest from his labors.

When you speak the word of Truth - when you see and know what it is - that word will go out into Eternity. It will ever abide in the Realm of Truth, doing its constructive and reconstructive work in the world of mankind. Men may not realize it. That does not concern you. You are concerned only with hearkening, hearing, responding, and speaking the word of Truth.

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SPIRITICITY, February 1965

NEW BIRTH

By Nell Truesdell

WHEN JESUS TALKED to Nicodemus, He used the weather to illustrate His point: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

In this day men who predict the weather conditions admit there are rivers of wind they cannot chart. They know that the weather follows a design. They cannot see the design with their eyes, but they can perceive a part of it by their science.

A man's spiritual birth follows an unseen design in much the same way that weather conditions do. Just as meteorologists study the atmosphere and its phenomena, so we may trace some of the events that we experience in our effort to know God.

When we have an inner confidence in God, our life and affairs then reflect our serenity. We rejoice that conditions do not disturb our spirit of assurance that all is well. All of us, however, have experienced the turbulence that suddenly arises from the depths of our consciousness. Then we are dismayed. We are at a loss as to how to deal with these tumultuous thoughts and feelings.

When inner storms arise, we must realize that we have come to the point of contact between the Holy Spirit of God and the spirit of man. There a veil hides from our view the secrets hidden in the Sanctuary of God, which is in the chamber of our heart. The veil prevents our being admitted into the sacred precincts, and this infuriates us.

Just as we pray for peace during a thunderstorm, so we must during an inner storm. But it is at this point that we often fail. We become frantic and so waste energy that would draw us up into a new state of spiritual consciousness. Peace is what we need. And peace comes from reverence, which our Scripture calls the "fear of the Lord." This reverence, during a change in consciousness, prevents waste of the energy that we need to sustain us in the spiritual environment into which we are moving.

Our realization of God's Love overpowers us, but it does not submerge us in a sea of negation, as human love often does. But do we dare attempt to analyze God's Love? Rather why cannot we accept His Love in the same way that we accept the blowing winds?

The new life that comes with our spiritual birth cannot be charted or measured (this is one reason for our distress). But the end is sure: we shall arrive at a new consciousness of God through our belief in Jesus Christ. He has penetrated the veil and proved to us that human experiences do not limit the God-Activity. "We have a strong consolation . . . to lay hold on the hope set before us."

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
for every Week Day of the Month

FEBRUARY, 1965

1. Our God whom we serve is ABLE to deliver us.
2. BEHOLD, I have put My Words in thy mouth.
3. I, the Lord, have CALLED thee.
4. He that DOETH Truth cometh to the Light.
5. His Truth ENDURETH to all generations.
6. Truly, our FELLOWSHIP is with the Father.
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8. He that GLORIETH, let him GLORY in the Lord.
9. Teach me, and I will HOLD my tongue.
10. The SPIRIT maketh INTERCESSION for us.
11. JUSTICE and JUDGMENT are the habitation of Thy Throne.
12. KNOW ye that the KINGDOM of God is nigh.
13. God is the LORD, which hath showed us LIGHT.
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15. Thou, O Lord, art in the MIDST of us.
16. But one thing is NEEDFUL.
17. This ONE thing I do.
18. Thou art my PORTION, O Lord.
19. QUICKEN me with Thy righteousness.
20. In RETURNING and REST shall ye be saved.
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22. I have SET the Lord always before me.
23. TURN to the Lord.
24. Good UNDERSTANDING giveth favour.
25. Walk worthy of the VOCATION wherewith ye are called.
26. WALK in His WAYS.
27. Let not YOUR hands be weak.

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle,
So Spiriticity is the working Power of the Spiritual Principle.

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