

THE MAN-GOD RELATION IN JOB

By Robert Applegate, Jr.

(Continued from last month)

(THE BOOK of Job is composed of five parts:

- 1) prologue
- 2) dialogue between Job and his three friends
- 3) two speeches of Elihu
- 4) two speeches of Yahweh and two short answers of Job
- 5) epilogue

The prologue and epilogue are in prose; the other parts comprise the "poem.")

The idea of the Transcendence of God and the nothingness of man is adumbrated throughout the dialogue. In the mouth of the three friends it is a hollow, religious pronouncement. If they knew it, or even believed it, they could not have castigated Job as being a "sinner." The spectacle of Job has shaken their religious belief and their very emotional violence testifies to their insecurity. Like all fundamentalists, they shout to convince themselves.

In the speeches of Yahweh there is no condemnation, there is no delineation of man as "hateful and corrupt," there is no hint even that "in His angels He does not trust, and the heavens are not clean in His sight" (as Eliphaz says). God's speeches are made up of rhetorical questions. Their implication is not that man is a sinner or that man is evil, but that in the perspective of Infinity man is nothing. This is very different. In the words of Maister Eckhart: "Creatures of themselves are nothings."

The dialogue between Job and his three friends foreshadows the two answers of Yahweh to Job. But this is not its main purpose. The purpose of the dialogue is to lay bare the hollowness of the silly mechanical view of God into which religion always degenerates and which periodically calls forth such outbursts as those of Job and Jeremiah. The prologue also fits in with this purpose. In the first two verses Job is declared to be "perfect and upright" (an opinion which he maintains until his encounter with Yahweh). Yet Job's righteousness is portrayed only as a religious uprightness. In the first speech of Eliphaz, it is merely hinted that it also included helping others. But if God is God, then not only cult but also ethics is secondary. And nowhere is it hinted that Job (like Moses and Elijah) has stood before God mute and at attention, knowing that the ground whereon he stood was holy ground. This is the only uprightness that is worth considering. (This presupposes that God is and that it is possible to come into direct contact with Him.) But Job is portrayed as a Pharisee. It is to lay bare the idiocy of this Pharisaic notion of a God who mechanically rewards some actions and punishes others that the dialogue is drawn out at such length. This God must die. This is the meaning of Job 19:25: "I know that my Avenger lives." The old God has punished Job; the new God will avenge him of his enemy.

The dialogue shows the depths to which Job has been brought. It starts right off with his wish to die. This wish and the statement of Job's aloneness and misery are repeated again and again. The two speeches of Yahweh push the

agony to its limit by depriving Job of the comfort of thinking that he knows the cause of his condition. So they deprive him of his last support; he is left with nothing.

It is to this state of helplessness and longing for death that a man is often brought before he confronts the Creator (as is told of Elijah and often of Moses). Not that God withholds Himself until His worshiper is in the depths of misery, but that it is in such depths that a man truly turns and becomes as a little child before the Almighty. This theme is repeated over and over throughout the Scripture - "out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." Christian mystics have always recognized the "dark night of the soul" as a real experience through which they had to travel on their way to enlightenment.

If we look at the human situation "realistically" and ascribe everything to God, then we cannot help but regard God as a monster, as the Great Evil. But when the reality of God is forced upon the awareness somehow an entirely new perspective is attained. "The nations are as nothing before Him; they are accounted to Him as less than nothing and emptiness." With this change of view, this looking away from human misery to the Infinitude of God, there comes the realization that God is still in charge of His Universe - and God is Good. "He will gather the lambs in His arms, . . . and gently lead those that are with young." If anyone wants to, he can find as much evidence for this as he can for the remoteness of God. It is a matter of where one looks.

The dialogue shows the depth of Job's misery, the bull-headedness of his self-assertion, and the inadequacy of his friends to help him or to explain his situation. The speeches of Yahweh serve to call Job's attention away from himself to the Almighty. Job's two responses show the only answer that man can make to God.

In his first answer Job finally starts to break down. He admits that he is a lightweight and says that he will listen rather than violently assert his own virtue and innocence. He says: "I am a light thing; what shall I reply? I have spoken once and have not been humbled - twice, but I will not do it again." This is the first step toward reconciliation.

The second answer of Job, which is the conclusion of the poem, should contain the denouement, the resolution of Job's problem.

Job says:

I have declared what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . . I had heard (of) You by the hearing of the ears, but now my eye has seen You. So I am dissolved; I am comforted - in dust and ashes.

With a beautiful simplicity this ties right in with the prologue and binds the whole together. The prologue ends with Job sitting in the ashes; and this humiliation coupled with his pain causes him to cry out and to curse the day of his birth. He violently cries that he is suffering innocently and that God must be cruel, or at least capricious. The poem ends with Job's self-assertion dissolved. He is so overcome by the spectacle of the Almighty of God that he is comforted and he rejoices in his self-abasement.

This conclusion cannot help but seem insipid and unsatisfactory to any realistic, materialistic view of man and the world. Yet it is the essence of any spiritual religion. It presupposes that it is possible to "see" God. (And if this is not so, then Christianity makes no sense.) But this seeing is as

different from what is usually called a religious experience as a lightning flash is from a firefly. So Jesus said: "As the lightning comes from the east (the within) and shines even unto the west (the outer), so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The vision of God is never easily attained. It comes only to those who are "dissolved," who lose their lives to find them. And this comes only through agony and loneliness. Aeschylus has a famous line in his Agamemnon (1.177): "Learning from suffering." History confirms that this is a true equation, and the author of Job would agree. Suffering has no value in itself. It can be the catalyst that brings men the very greatest good. The knowing of God is worth any degree of agony.

The prose epilogue of Job reads like a typical Hollywood ending; yet it fits in with the whole; it is the only right conclusion. It says three things: (1) Yahweh was pleased with Job; (2) Job prayed for his tormentors; (3) Job ended with more than he had had before.

1) To the friends Yahweh says: "You have not spoken to Me what is true, as My slave Job." These words refer back to the last answer of Job: "I have declared what I did not understand. . . . I am dissolved." It is Job's complete humility, the result of his agony and his honesty, with which God is "pleased."

2) To Eliphaz and the other two friends God says: "My slave Job will pray for you." Job has already received his commendation from God, but his fortunes are not restored until he prays for his persecutors. To pray for one's enemies is not just sentimental, religious nonsense. It is a tacit and therefore powerful acknowledgment of the truth that the same God created us all and He is no respecter of persons. No one can be in right relation with God if he is in wrong relation with his fellow man, for he is then denying the Truth of God. The word in our Old Testament (pesha) that is often translated "transgression" means the breaking of the right relation between man and God. But this relation is restored when a man surrenders his self-assertion and when he honestly prays for those who have tried to hurt him. This is what the author of Job is saying.

"The Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends." This is a "true" conclusion to the account of Job. All things do "work together for good to them that love God" - not their own goodness or their own notion of God. The meek always do "inherit the earth." The meek are not the wishy-washy. They are the men who stand at attention before God, seeing His Allness and their nothingness. They are those who put the shoes off their feet, for the ground on which they stand is always holy ground. They are the foolish who confound the clever, the weak who confound the mighty.

When we consider the men and the women who have been dedicated, they do not always seem to have been blessed - Jesus was killed. But they have always known that they were blessed mightily. Jesus said: "For this purpose came I to this hour." Hebrews says of Him: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross."

But Job could recognize only material blessings. So he received them. "Yahweh doubled all that had belonged to Job."

If the author of the Book of Job says anything about the nature of the God-man relation, it is that a man cannot by reason comprehend the Almighty or by virtue attain Him. For a man to think he can do so is foolishness and blasphemy. But when any man surrenders all his self-justification and self-

assertion to stand naked before God, not opening his mouth, then he perceives and receives all the Goodness of God.

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PSALM 46

God is for us a hiding-place and our strength.
Our strengthening in pressures - a strengthening we have discovered often.
So we will not fear if the earth moves and the mountains totter into the heart
of the sea;
If the waters of the sea roar and boil and the mountains quake in their pride.
A river! - its streams will make glad the City of God:
The pure dwelling-place of the All-Powerful.
God is within her: she will not totter.
God will strengthen her before the dawn.
The nations roar; the kingdoms totter;
He sends forth His Voice; the earth dissolves.*
Yahweh (the I AM) of the Armies is with us;
A hiding-place for us is the God of Jacob.
Come and perceive the working of Yahweh -
what awesome things He has done in the earth.*
He is making wars to cease unto the ends of the earth;*
He is breaking the bow and cutting the spear;
He is burning the chariot in the fire.
Let go - and experience that I AM God.
I AM high among the nations;
I AM high in the earth.*
Yahweh of the Armies is with us;
the God of Jacob is a hiding-place for us.

*(The "earth" is our consciousness.)

(Trans. by R. A. Applegate, Jr.)

SPIRITICITY, March 1965

THE THINGS THAT BE OF GOD

By Alden Truesdell

WHEN PETER rebuked Jesus for mentioning His coming crucifixion Jesus said:
"Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God,
but the things that be of men."

Materialists are so filled with the things of men that there is no place
in their philosophy for the things of God. Such things are all right, they say,
for the childlike, the gullible; but are hardly worthy of adult men who are
prepared to meet the challenge of reality.

When the great majority of humanity is going in the way of bondage and
disintegration, it is difficult to sound the note that will turn the tide upward
again to the way of liberation and integration. Shall we plead or shall we
shame? We have no choice in this matter; for if any effective work is to be

done, it will be the Father working within us to do His own works in His own way through His own instrument. We will know when God is working; for the workmanship will be of an easily recognized quality.

We know when we hear the Truth. We know when we are moving toward the Truth, just as a horse knows when he is heading toward home. We recognize certain unmistakable overtones in the presentation of the pure Christ Truth. Those who were privileged to hear Mr. H. B. Jeffery were more impressed by the tone of spiritual authority than by the beautiful construction of the prose. We recognize the Truth because it is true.

One of man's main goals is power over other men and power that can be seen of men. A close business associate of mine was obsessed with this idea of power, and he had observed that money seemed to be the real power in the world; so he decided to get money. He was a brilliant promoter in the circulation of publications. He attained a degree of power and he made a great deal of money. He could not understand my interest in Christ Truth, as it did not seem to be a particularly lucrative field. He attracted all the persecutions attending power in the world and what the Scripture calls the "pride of life." He had a broken home, an unhappy affair with his lady business associate. He died young.

I do not gloat, for I might very easily have been in his place. But I do give thanks for the belief taking form in me that there had to be a better way of life.

To choose the things that be of men is to go the way of all flesh and to experience the "deceitfulness of riches." To choose the things of God opens up a new and miraculous way of life - the only way to any permanent progress. Joy and power - real joy and real power - are the first and most obvious results of seeking the things of God.

Jesus dealt entirely with the things of God. He left for our enjoyment a Finished Kingdom.

SPIRITICITY, March 1965

THE WORD OF TRUTH WORKS

By H. B. Jeffery

WHEN YOU HEAR the Voice of the Spirit and give your attention to the Truth, your eye is opened and you see the utter negativeness of the outer world and the thought of the natural man. You see how the natural man lives in negation and in ignorance and in utter foolishness.

And so you spend a day saying, "No, no, no," to everything that anybody tells you. You think that is hard to say "No" to something good, to some good report? It is not hard. There is a good beyond good. The report you hear may seem good to a certain person, but you don't accept it. It's all nothing. It's what the Easterners call maya, illusion. It is the dream of the natural man. So you say, "No." You will find this will clarify the mind.

You will find that instruction will come from Above. Out of the blue, so-called, will come new light, new illumination. If you are engaged in writing,

you will touch words that are particularly helpful at that time for your papers. There is always a right word at the right time.

When you say "No" to the outer, you will hear the healing word for someone who had appealed to you for help. It will be the particular word for that particular case. There will be a great power in it, and there will be no end to its action. It will go on and on and on. The word of Truth is eternal; it does not pass away. It is a living thing. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," Jesus said: "But My words shall not pass away."

Truth has its own way of working and so you need not be concerned about that. If you have spoken the word of Truth, it is working. If you take a dose of medicine - well, that is just the beginning. So when you have spoken the word of Truth, you have only started things. The word is a dynamic, living thing, a strong force. You may have faith and confidence in it. God will sanction it, back it up, work in and through it.

In the day that you walk in complete denial of all the outer you will find that there is uncovered the beauty and the power and the peace and the glory that inhere in man as a son of God. The soul will come forth; the divine Self will come from its hiding-place. You will then be lifted up to the place of your ability. Other men will see that there has been an uncovering, a coming forth, of a hidden power. They will say, "I didn't know it was in him."

Say, "No, no, no," to everything. If you hear a good report, say, "No." There's only one Good; that is God. Your ear will become more and more sensitive; your eye will see more and more of the Kingdom of Heaven roundabout you in all its beauty and grandeur. You will realize the truth of Jesus' words: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

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SPIRITICITY, March 1965

THE WORD OF LIFE

By Nell Truesdell

IN THE 19th century, the British economist, political journalist, and critic, wrote of William Gladstone, Prime Minister of England: "He has a nature toward his audience. He is sure that if they only knew what he knows, they would feel as he feels, and believe as he believes, and by this he conquers."

The Unitarian divine, Dr. Martineau, went often to hear Charles H. Spurgeon, British Baptist preacher. A friend asked, "Why do you go to hear that man? You don't believe what he preaches." Dr. Martineau replied, "No, I don't, but he does."

Why do we believe in Jesus of Nazareth? Because He believed He was the Christ, the Son of God; He believed that we also are sons of God. When Jesus asked His disciples if they would leave Him, Peter declared: "Lord, to whom shall we go. Thou hast the words of eternal Life." (Jn 6:68)

When our faith is questioned, when we need help, comfort, and mercy, we have to hold on to some one just as Peter did. As followers of Jesus Christ, we hold on to Him, not rationalism or agnosticism or so-called spiritual sciences or epicurianism or the business of "having fun."

Where there is worship, there is a demand for a person. To us that Person is our Teacher, Friend, and Lord: Jesus Christ. The glory of God abides in him. Fellowship with Him fills us with awe and satisfaction, for He represents everything that is of God. His words are life-giving and inspiring words. They are not cut-and-dried orders that we must blindly obey. Our very questioning of them awakens in us a new eagerness for the Activity of God to possess us bodily (as it did Jesus of Nazareth) so that our life may be worth while.

To whom - not to what - shall we go? To Jesus Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth said in effect, "My words are Spirit and they are Life." By that statement, our Lord establishes a new relation between us and God. For when we understand the words the remoteness of God is dissolved for us. We sense His nearness, His glory, in a new way. We know the Love of God that guarantees our relation to Him as sons through Jesus Christ.

We may think of our self as a vehicle of divine, eternal Life. We may look back in memory, look forward with faith, look inward with reverence, and look up with love - love for God - not for things or achievements in the world, but for God. By the words of Jesus Christ, we establish our identity as sons of God.

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Practice tithing when you "can't afford" it, because you cannot afford NOT to practice it. - NT

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
for every week day of the month

MARCH, 1965

1. Thou ART ACQUAINTED with ALL my ways, O Lord.
2. Thou hast BESET me BEHIND and BEFORE, and laid Thine hand upon me.
3. Thou COMPASSEST my path and my lying down.
4. I will DIRECT my prayer unto Thee.
5. Lift up thine EYES round about, and see.
6. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my FORTRESS.
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8. Thou shalt GLORIFY Me.
9. Lay up HIS words in thine HEART.
10. The just man walketh IN his INTEGRITY.
11. Be perfectly JOINED together in the same mind and in the same JUDGMENT.
12. He (God) KNOWETH the way that I take.
13. I LIVE by the faith of the Son of God.
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15. MAKE MELODY in your heart to the Lord.
16. I will NEVER forget Thy precepts.
17. OFFER the sacrifice of praise to God continually.
18. Sing unto Him, sing PSALMS unto Him, talk ye of all His wondrous works.
19. QUICKEN me after Thy lovingkindness.
20. RECEIVE, I pray thee, the Law from His mouth.
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22. SACRIFICE the SACRIFICES of thanksgiving.
23. Give THANKS always for all THINGS unto God.
24. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth UPWARD?
25. Hear the VOICE of the Son of God.
26. Beloved, I WISH above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health.
27. Speak to YOURSELVES in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.
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29. Be ZEALOUS for spiritual gifts.
30. Be thou an example of the believers.
31. Seek peace, and pursue it.

"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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