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## **Job and His Comforters**

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## JOB AND HIS COMFORTERS

THE patience of Job is proverbial, and so are the perplexities of the readers of the book that bears his name. It is a book of manifold difficulties, difficulties told many times by many people; a book of paradoxes and problems; a curious, confounding, fragmentary work that nonetheless coheres often enough to seem all of a piece. When it holds together, it does so with such towering strength, with such persuasiveness, that few can resist its magnetism.

The Book of Job casts its spells, exerts its charms, puzzles its readers and edifies them precisely as does the larger work of which it is a part. For it is, as perhaps no other book in the Bible, the Old Testament in brief. Here difficulties are sometimes more acute and revelation is occasionally more cogent because they are confined in time and space and reduced to the dimensions of the drama of one man's encounter with God. It is, as the Bible itself, a work with a soul, with a personality of its own, which flatters us by accepting us—each one of us—on our own terms. For the archaeologist it provides spadework, for the historian something more than a bare exercise in chronology. For the specialist in linguistics it presents robust textual problems, splendid elisions and omissions over which to puzzle out a lifetime.<sup>1</sup> For the theologian and the philosopher it spreads forth the full range of speculation open to their sciences,<sup>2</sup> and for the poet—"pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comi-

1. Some indication of the range and breadth of the technical problems still to be solved as well as a fair number of the proffered solutions can be found in *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. Harold H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), pp. 216-221.

2. An admirably succinct summary of "the problem of Job" is to be found in Johannes Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1926), I-II, 363-374. Pedersen places his statement that "the two poles" of life, "the righteousness of man and the justice of God, . . . must be in harmony with each other" (p. 368), in the midst of a forty-page discussion of righteousness and truth in the Old Testament.

cal-historical-pastoral"<sup>3</sup>—it offers all the world of intuition and fantasy in all its accents and colors. Here are the questions Charles Baudelaire hoped men would ask but which, sadly, he never heard uttered: "Why are we here? Do we come from somewhere? What is freedom?"<sup>4</sup> Here these and many related questions are asked and answered with that extraordinary concentration of meaning, compacted in line after line, in what Dom Hilaire Duesberg has called "the succulent sentence," that special literary skill cultivated by the writers of the Old Testament and demonstrated in phrases, nourishing and paradoxical, with "an enveloping meaning that carries far."<sup>5</sup>

### PUZZLE AND MEANING

FOR St. Gregory the Great the reach of the Book of Job was just as far as man could go. The *Magna Moralia* of the sixth-century Pope is a line-by-line examination of the book which in the course of elaborate exegesis and excursus encompasses almost every aspect of human nature and the relationship of that nature to its Creator. He is determined to furnish his readers with moral instruction, he explains to St. Leander, his old associate in the diplomatic service at Constantinople and one of those who entreated Gregory to write his exposition of "the book of blessed Job." But he is not hesitant to "turn aside" from any subject as long as it is for any "useful purpose":

For he that treats of sacred writ should follow the way of a river; for if a river, as it flows along its channel, meets with open valleys on its side, into these it immediately turns the course of its current, and when they are copiously supplied, presently it pours itself back into its bed. Thus unquestionably . . . should it be with every one that treats of the Divine Word, that if, in discussing any subject, he chance to find at hand any occasion of seasonable edification, he should, as it were, force the streams of discourse towards the adjacent valley, and, when he has poured forth enough upon its level of instruction, fall back into the channel of discourse which he had proposed to himself.<sup>6</sup>

3. Polonius to Hamlet, on the "best actors in the world," in *Hamlet*, Act II, scene ii.

4. Charles Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare*, trans. Norman Cameron (New York: Vanguard, 1951), p. 179.

5. Dom Hilaire Duesberg, *Les Valeurs Chrétiennes de l'Ancien Testament* (2nd ed.; Maredsous: Editions de Maredsous, 1951), p. 61.

6. St. Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job* (London: Walter Smith, 1883), I, 6-7 (PL 75:513).



There are many such digressions in the flowing course of the thirty-five books of Gregory's treatise which are as much a tribute to the depth and breadth of the Book of Job as they are to the speculative ingenuity of its commentator. For Job's is a book that moves one to speculation, to meditation on the divine mysteries, through and across the various emotional states. Sorrow and joy, peace and anger, fierce anger, are all elicited at various times by the dualities and dichotomies, the many two-edged swords with which the arguments of the Book of Job are cut and drawn. If one sees the book whole, one sees, on its evidence alone, that, as St. Gregory says, "Job was both in one sense smitten without cause, and again, in another sense . . . was smitten not without cause."<sup>7</sup> But if one sees the book in fragments, one sees, on incomplete evidence, as Carl Jung does, that "Job is challenged as though he himself were a god" and emerges from the resultant conflict the victor: "Job stands morally higher than Yahweh. In this respect the creature has surpassed the creator."<sup>8</sup>

For the man who reacts in wholeness to wholeness, the logic of God's ways in dealing with men is unassailable. According to St. Gregory,

it was necessary that the holy man, who was known to God alone and to his own conscience, should make known to all as a pattern for their imitation with what preeminent virtue he was enriched. For he could not visibly give to others examples of virtue, if he remained himself without temptation. Accordingly it was brought to pass, both that the very force of the infliction should exhibit his stores of virtue for the imitation of all men, and that the strokes inflicted upon him should bring to light what in time of tranquillity lay hidden. Now by means of the same blows the virtue of patience gained increase, and the gloriousness of his reward was augmented by the pains of the scourge. Thus, that we may uphold the truth of God in word, and His equity in deed, the blessed Job is at one and the same time not afflicted without cause, seeing that his merits are increased, and yet he is afflicted without cause, in that he is not punished for any offense committed by him. For that man is stricken without cause, who has no fault to be cut away; and he is not stricken without cause, the merit of whose virtue is made to accumulate.<sup>9</sup>

7. *Ibid.*, I, 131 (PL 75:600).

8. Carl G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), pp. 29, 68.

9. St. Gregory, *op. cit.*, I, 131-132 (PL 75:600-601).

For the man who sees Yahweh as Job's opponent, a figure in a drama, an analogue of man if not something lower, there is a very different sort of logic.

Yahweh must become man precisely because he has done man a wrong. He, the guardian of justice, knows that every wrong must be expiated, and Wisdom knows that moral law is above even him. Because his creature has surpassed him he must regenerate himself.<sup>10</sup>

Here Jung seems deliberately to court blasphemies. Unchristian though his reasoning is, he sees the Incarnation as the result of the great conflict described in the Book of Job:

The life of Christ is just what it had to be if it is the life of a god and a man at the same time. It is a *symbolum*, a bringing together of heterogeneous natures, rather as if Job and Yahweh were combined in a single personality. Yahweh's intention to become man, which resulted from his collision with Job, is fulfilled in Christ's life and suffering.<sup>11</sup>

From both approaches, both logics, a sense of purpose, of design and function, emerges. In one interpretation, that of St. Gregory, the whole of the moral law is given fuller shape by the case of Job; in the other, that of Jung, by however perverted a line of reasoning, nothing less than a scheme for the redemption of man through an incarnate god is discovered at its source in the Job narrative.

All sorts of things interfere with the design of the Book of Job. They impede its orderly progress, disturb the scholar, bewilder the lay reader, from time to time even seem to frustrate any clear communication on the part of the writer or writers of the book. The point of view shifts far more often than the dialogue and the few speakers—Job, his three friends, the young Elihu, and Yahweh—can possibly account for. When Elihu speaks, it is without adequate preparation; his speeches could very well be removed without doing any great damage to the poetry or drama of the book and with a considerable accretion of weight for the words of God that immediately follow his. A similar structural imperfection is felt by a careful reader when he comes to chapter 28, the hymn to wisdom, imposing in itself but curiously placed between Sophar's third attempt to answer Job and Job's last monologue, which, in the absence of any

10. Jung, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 76.



evidence of the presence of his three friends, must really be read as a soliloquy.

Portions of Job's speeches are not convincing in his mouth. The last eleven verses of chapter 27, for example, could more logically and more profitably be read as part of the hymn to wisdom that follows them, or could equally well be assigned to any one or even all three of the friends. In any case, they are an answer to the plea of Job in the first ten verses of the chapter, a reproof of him, and a prediction of more unpleasant things to come. They are patently out of place as part of Job's assertion of his own innocence in the opening half of the chapter.

Bildad's third speech (chap. 25) is extraordinarily short, quite out of character with the rest of the book in its commanding brevity, in the quick spluttering brilliance of its rhetorical questioning. As a result of these five terse verses, Bildad himself suddenly assumes a stature that is too large for the sanctimonious prosecutor of chapter 8 and the gleeful manufacturer of gory apocalyptic of chapter 18:

*Domination and terror are with Him,  
Who maketh peace in His high places;  
Is there any number of His troops?  
And against whom doth not His ambush rise?  
And how can man be just before God?  
And how can one born of woman be pure?  
Lo, even the moon is not bright,  
And the stars are not pure in His sight;  
How much less a man, a maggot,  
And the son of man, a worm!*

(25:1-6)<sup>12</sup>

One either resents the brief splendor with which Bildad disappears from the dialogue in this chapter, finds it dramatically unacceptable—

12. Throughout this article, the translation by Edward J. Kissane of *The Book of Job* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1946) has been used. It has much to recommend it. Kissane's is a very close, careful, and conscientious reading of the Hebrew text. The strophic arrangement of the poetry which he has chosen may or may not be that intended by the original writer of the Book of Job, but it certainly carries much conviction. On the whole, too, his poetic diction is persuasive, only occasionally falling into that Victorian usage which for some reason or other biblical translators have convinced themselves is timeless. His introduction, critical notes, and commentary are helpful, and even where one may disagree with his rearrangement of the text, his defense of the transpositions must be taken seriously into account.

too far removed from the earlier characterization of the speaker—or wonders whether another speaker has not been lost from the proceedings, or whether part of Bildad's speech has not been misplaced somewhere else in the poem.

It is possible that no third speech at all was intended for Bildad. Sophar is assigned only two,<sup>13</sup> the second of which ends almost precisely the way Bildad's second speech does, with a brief peroration emphatically slamming the weight of his ugly prophecy upon an already prostrate Job. Bildad's concluding words:

*Surely, this was the dwelling of a wicked man,  
This the place of one who knew not God!*  
(18:21)

are echoed in tone and substance by Sophar:

*This is the portion of the wicked man from God,  
And the heritage of his pride from God.*  
(20:29)

Both would seem to have made their point with a fitting finality. The six verses of chapter 25, reminding Job and the reader that no man can be justified before God, more properly belong to Yahweh Himself, who in chapters 38, 39, and 40 speaks of His own power, or even to Job, in his humble and contrite concluding meditations.

These are puzzles of some size. They stand in the way of a straightforward reading of the Book of Job. For a few readers, they may even diminish some of its grandeur, for by their very existence they challenge and sometimes altogether destroy the dramatic continuity and hence the clarity of the book's vision. But as compared with the enigma presented by the prologue and epilogue, they are very minor difficulties indeed. For in these sections, the only ones written in prose

13. Kissane awards Sophar a third speech, and thereby solves several problems at once. To Sophar he gives the speech of Bildad in question as well as the last ten verses of the first chapter of Job's long answer to Bildad (26:5-14). Some of Job's reply to Bildad is recast as an answer to Sophar, beginning with the first six verses of chapter 27 and concluding with chapter 31 in its entirety, with a few transpositions of verses within chapter 31. Kissane achieves a symmetrical balance by assigning Bildad a new third speech, made up of 26:1-4 and 27:7-23 and somewhat rearranged. He places the poem of wisdom after this last speech of Bildad's, and follows it with Job's reply to the new third speech of Bildad; this consists of chapters 29 and 30. For the reasoning behind these large-scale changes, see Kissane, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-165.



in the original Hebrew, an atmosphere of fable or folk tale obtains: Yahweh is pitted against Satan; grief and misery are visited upon Job as little more than the result of a side bet, of a casual contest between God and His adversary. When the issue is decided in God's favor, so to speak, Job is rewarded with peace and prosperity and progeny for having endured the trying conditions of the contest. It is, in these portions, almost as if Job's legendary patience were a kind of humoring of the Almighty.

The opening two chapters and the closing one of the Book of Job are prosaic in more than one sense. They clash uncomfortably with the thirty-nine chapters in between and press the defenders of the intervening material, the true poem of Job, very closely. One recognizes that here is the genesis of Jung's picture of a creator who vies with his creature and comes off second-best, the clear moral inferior. One sees that even St. Gregory, with all the supernatural wisdom and tight natural reasoning at his command, is uncomfortable and not quite equal to the task. Faced with the spectacle of Satan twice described as having come before the presence of God, he recognizes "a grave question": "for it is written, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' But Satan, who can never be of a pure heart, how could he have presented himself to see the Lord?" The answer seems simple: "He is said to have come before the Lord, but not that he saw the Lord . . . He was in the Lord's sight, but the Lord was not in his sight."<sup>14</sup> There is more merit in Gregory's point that Satan is merely the agent of God's permissive will, allowing the devil to put the innocence of the elect to the test, knowing that men such as Job would continue in their uprightness. For, Gregory reminds us, as St. Paul says, "God is faithful and will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also give you a way out that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13).<sup>15</sup>

There is, then, a special logic that can be brought to bear upon the reading of the introductory and concluding passages of the Book of Job. But it is hard to find a sufficiently particularized or pointed argument to raise these sections to the level of the rest and to turn the fabulous into the philosophical or a primitive prose narrative into a subtle and sensitive poetic language with far-carrying

14. St. Gregory, *op. cit.*, I, 70-71 (PL 75:557).

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81 (PL 75:564).

enveloping meanings. There are, at first sight, anyway, few succulent sentences in chapters 1, 2, or 42 of the Book of Job.

Even if one does find acceptable St. Gregory's explanation of Satan's presence and is not discomforted by a pedestrian prose frame surrounding the soaring poetic content, one structural problem remains. Both Jobs, the Job of the prose and the Job of the poetry, must be united in at least one basic respect. This is Holy Scripture. It must hold together in some way, with all its uneasy matching of passages and styles, no matter what conflicts on the surface or contradictions beneath may appear. One cannot excuse the inconsistencies or leap over the holes in the text, turn away arguments by learned evasions or skillful sophistries. It will not do, either, to dismiss the problem as an unimportant one. For this is nothing less, as St. Augustine says in his primer on the reading of sacred Scripture, than the bulwark of faith: When the authority of Scripture is weakened, faith itself will falter, and if faith, then charity, "for one cannot love what one does not believe exists."<sup>16</sup>

#### JUNG AND BUBER

THESE are formal problems. Left unsolved, they must bedevil the specialist and at least annoy the layman who seeks a surface as well as an underlying order in the books of the Bible. More important, if one cannot find in the Book of Job a logical structure of form, what will one think of its content? Will its exposition of the theology of freedom and suffering offer any satisfaction to a reader who moves only from puzzle to puzzle, as much harassed by the incursions of modern commentators as Job was by the excursions of his friends?

From higher criticism there can be little aid and almost no comfort for the careful reader of the Book of Job. To learn that Job was not an Israelite is only to confirm the opening line of the prologue, in which it is clearly stated that he came from the land of Uz. To be told that he did not really exist at all is merely to be reminded of the figurative character of much of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. To be informed that the book was not written by a Jew

16. St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, I, 37, 41 (PL 34:35). For an amplification of these views, see all of the *De Doctrina*, but especially the concluding sections of the first book (PL 34:34-36).



at all, and certainly not by Moses, as it is assumed by that generous patristic tradition that confers on the greatest of Israel's leaders the authorship of so much of the Old Testament, is simply to be shown the breadth of background of biblical writers as well as of the men of whom they have written.

Compared to such meager offerings as the reiterations of the obvious by the latter-day followers of Renan and Wellhausen and the accusations and fencings of Jung,<sup>17</sup> one is at first greatly impressed by the comfort and counsel offered by Martin Buber. For Buber, the Book of Job is a "paradigm" of the moods and tenses of good and evil, to be inflected as topic and treatise require. Here is among all the dialogues which form the tapestry of conversation of his works one of his most touching, one to which many have responded warmly, and will again. For he writes about Job as one deeply concerned, for readers as much concerned.

For Buber, Job is the desperately believing man whose despair has been turned into love by God's pity, and not merely by commiseration from above, but rather by a tutelary pity. Job is the clear analogue, if not the prototype, of the believing man who accepts the world as it is and his position in it as it must be: "He endures in the face of

17. Job "has discovered," Jung says of the protagonist of the drama at the very end of the events described in the Book of Job, "that Yahweh is not human but, in certain respects, less than human, that he is just what Yahweh says of Leviathan (the crocodile): 'He beholds everything that is high: He is king over all proud beasts'" (*op. cit.*, p. 32). Jung goes on to pronounce: "[Yahweh's behavior] is the behavior of an unconscious being who cannot be judged morally. Yahweh is a *phenomenon* and not a human being" (p. 33). In a footnote comment Jung pushes his point further: "The naïve assumption that the creator of the world is a conscious being must be regarded as a disastrous prejudice which later gave rise to the most incredible dislocations of logic. . . . Divine unconsciousness and lack of reflection, on the other hand, enable us to form a conception of God which puts his actions beyond moral judgment and allows no conflict to arise between goodness and beastliness" (p. 33, n. 13).

In spite of these assertions, Jung flails at Yahweh the "phenomenon" not only as if he were a conscious being, but a human one. His language is uncomfortably anthropomorphic; he himself is guilty of naïve assumption and disastrous prejudice: "Truly, Yahweh can do everything and permits himself everything without batting an eyelid" (p. 31). ". . . it is Yahweh himself who darkens his own counsel and who has no insight. He turns the tables on Job and blames him for what he himself does . . ." (p. 25). ". . . that does not prevent him [Yahweh] from being jealous and mistrustful like any other husband . . ." (p. 53). "Yahweh is still intoxicated with the tremendous power and grandeur of his creation" (p. 66). One could go on and on with examples of such unscientific rhetoric. Here indeed is Marcion *redivivus* or worse.

God the reality of lived life, dreadful and incomprehensible though it be. He loves it in the love of God, whom he has learned to love."<sup>18</sup> It is a trusting love, a love based upon faith, faith in God, "faith in all things." It is a trust that accepts the "dreadful," as it is to be found in "the concrete contextual situations of [man's] existence," and the "incomprehensible," the "dark," into which at certain stages "man penetrates step by step . . . until the mystery is disclosed in the flash of light."<sup>19</sup>

There is, then, a declared and open purpose in suffering, even when prefaced by complaint and reproof. Without speaking in the precise terms of the prose epilogue of the book, Buber concurs in its spirit: There is a reward for the acceptance of things as they are, the reward of God's pity, the reward of participation in God's work of salvation, the reward of a direct and personal revelation. Job

experiences and expresses without restraint the apparent godlessness of the course of the world and reproaches God with it, without however diminishing his trust in Him; indeed, whilst God Himself "hides His face" and "withdraws the right" from His creature, Job waits in expectation of seeing Him in the body (19:26 is to be understood in this way), by which sight the cruel appearance of what appears is pierced and overcome, seeing by seeing—and it happens (42:5).<sup>20</sup>

At this point, there is in Buber's thought a change of syntax: Subject becomes object and object subject. For "God loves as a personality and . . . wishes to be loved like a personality." In one of Buber's most satisfying passages, the failure of the abstract conceptualization of God, even at its most exalted, stands exposed, and in contrast is revealed the perceptiveness of those who, like the transformed Job, turn from idea to person:

He who loves God only as the moral ideal is bound soon to reach the point of despair at the conduct of the world where, hour after hour, all the principles of his moral idealism are apparently contradicted. Job despairs because God and the moral ideal seem diverse to him. But He who answered Job out of the tempest is more exalted even than the ideal sphere. He is not the archetype of the ideal, but he contains the archetype. He issues forth the ideal, but does not exhaust himself in the

18. Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper, 1952), p. 52.

19. Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), pp. 40, 144; *Eclipse of God*, pp. 51-52.

20. *Two Types of Faith*, pp. 40-41.



issuing. The unity of God is not the Good; it is the Supergood. God desires that men should follow his revelation, yet at the same time he wishes to be accepted and loved in his deepest concealment. He who loves God loves the ideal and loves God more than the ideal. He knows himself to be loved by God, not by the ideal, not by an idea, but even by Him whom ideality cannot grasp, namely, by that *absolute personality* we call God. Can this be taken to mean that God "is" a personality? The absolute character of His personality, that paradox of paradoxes, prohibits any such statement. It only means that God loves as a personality and that He wishes to be loved like a personality. And if He was not a person in Himself, he, so to speak, became one in creating Man, in order to love man and be loved by him—in order to love me and be loved by me. For, even supposing that ideas can also be loved, the fact remains that persons are the only ones who love.<sup>21</sup>

As so often proves to be true of Buber, there is to be no finality here, no rest or fulfillment in "that *absolute personality* we call God." For Buber there can be no "rest on the broad upland of a system that includes a series of sure statements about the absolute," but only "on a narrow rocky ridge between the gulfs where there is no sureness of expressible knowledge but the certainty of meeting what remains, undisclosed."<sup>22</sup> According to Buber, we cannot say that God is a personality. We must speak with that curious employment of language that gave one modern philosophical system the name "As If"—not quite a contradiction of the law of contradiction, for according to that system absolute contradiction, like all absolutes, does not exist.

Buber's reluctance to make definitive statements eventually impairs the considerable splendor of his language and turns, one regrets to say, his comfort cold and his counsel improvident. He commits himself to faith in a transcendent God, most unmistakably no "It" but a "Thou," and describes with at least some of the trappings of literary tragedy our loss of contact with Him, "our *vis-à-vis*"—a loss for which man is responsible and for which he is punished by being doomed to dwell "in darkness, consigned to death." But just as Buber reduces God's personality to a way of speaking about Him, so does he remove from those who are responsible for the grievous loss of con-

21. *Eclipse of God*, pp. 81-82.

22. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), p. 184.

tact with Him the onus of responsibility. "Let us ask," he writes, "whether it may not be literally true that God formerly spoke to us and is now silent, and whether this is not to be understood as the Hebrew Bible understands it, namely, that the living God is not only a self-revealing but also a self-concealing God."<sup>23</sup> Again, if the I-Thou relationship, the dialogue between God and man, is broken, "if man is no longer able to attain this relation, if God is silent toward him and he toward God, then something," he not only asks, but insists, "has taken place, not in human subjectivity but in Being itself."<sup>24</sup>

It has been common to speak of Buber as a mystic—though he would certainly demur—and one easily forgives imprecision and ambiguity in a mystic as the price he pays for his daring. But one cannot as easily understand what seems the degrading of the role of God to a partner in a conversation, or, to use Buber's own term, a "*vis-à-vis*," our opposite number.<sup>25</sup>

One also speaks of Buber as a philosopher. And here too singularities of language must not only be forgiven, but understood. But how does one follow that elusiveness of expression which subsists on contradiction and equivocation but will admit to neither? Is "the narrow ridge" wide enough to hold a man who professes—or at least seems to profess—faith in "the guiding counsel of God," in "the divine Presence communicating itself direct to the pure in heart,"<sup>26</sup> and who at the same time turns from that Presence after the outrages of the concentration camps? The rhetoric deserves to be aired—it is strong enough:

How is a life with God still possible in a time in which there is an Oswiecim? The estrangement has become too cruel, the hiddenness too deep. One can still "believe" in the God who allowed those things to happen, but can one still speak to Him? Can one still hear His word? Can one still, as an individual and as a people, enter at all into a dialogic relationship with Him? Can one still call to Him? Dare we recom-

23. *Eclipse of God*, p. 89.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

25. But let it be said that for Buber this term, *vis-à-vis*, *Gegenüber*, is simply a way of describing "the effective reality of the transcendence" of God, of translating His role from that of an "It" to a "Thou." See, for example, *Eclipse of God*, pp. 34-36.

26. Martin Buber, *Good and Evil* (New York: Scribner's, 1953), p. 43.



mend to the survivors of Oswiecim, the Job of the gas chambers: "Call to Him, for He is kind, for His mercy endures forever"?<sup>27</sup>

The distance between Jung and Buber seems very short, in spite of Buber's explicit and correct criticism of Jung's "psychological doctrine" as that "modern manifestation of Gnosis" which with Carpo- crates mystically deifies "the instincts instead of hallowing them in faith," and in spite of his discovery in one of Jung's small works, "proclaimed in all clarity," of "the ambivalent Gnostic 'God' who balances good and evil in himself."<sup>28</sup> But how far apart, really, is this ambivalence of the Gnostics from the God who failed those who looked to Him for justice at Auschwitz? Has not Buber too contributed to the eclipse of God with his deity in retreat, now too deeply hidden in his lair, too cruelly estranged, even to be addressed? Where, finally, can we find bearings, tidings of comfort if not of joy, in a mystic and philosopher who leaves us struggling with a Job-like despair "because God and the moral ideal seem diverse" to him?

We—by that is meant all those who have not got over what happened and will not get over it. How is it with us? Do we stand overcome before the hidden face of God as the tragic hero of the Greeks before faceless fate? No, rather even now we contend, we too, with God, even with Him, the Lord of Being, Whom we once, we here, chose for our Lord. We do not put up with earthly being, we struggle for its redemption, and struggling we appeal to the help of our Lord, Who is again and still a hiding one. In such a state we await His voice, whether it come out of the storm or out of a stillness which follows it.

27. Martin Buber, *At the Turning. Three Addresses on Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), p. 61. These addresses in November and December 1951, the Israel Goldstein Lectures for that year, were delivered at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. As so often with Buber, one wishes he conducted a better dialogue with himself, or, to put it another way, paid more attention to his own words. He himself provides an effective answer to his questions in the passage of *Two Types of Faith* (pp. 40-41) cited above. In the same paragraph, Buber says: "A man does the works of God . . . in proportion to the effectiveness of his faith in all things. . . . Trusting can only exist at all in the complete actuality of the *vita humana*. Naturally there are different degrees of it, but none which requires for its actuality merely the sphere of the soul and not the whole area of human life. By its very nature trust is substantiation of trust in the fulness of life in spite of the course of the world which is experienced." Each of these sentences of Buber's reads like a reproach and an answer to the sentences of Buber in *At the Turning* quoted just above and below.

28. *Eclipse of God*, pp. 175-176. This passage is in the last chapter of the volume, the one called "Reply to C. G. Jung."

Though His coming appearance resemble no earlier one, we shall recognize again our cruel and merciful Lord.<sup>29</sup>

Neither Buber nor Jung has heeded, either in letter or spirit, the sternest of Yahweh's admonitions in the Book of Job. "Wilt thou make void my judgment," the Lord asks, "Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?" (40:8). Neither has seen the subtlety of the role of the devil in the drama. If it is the devil's cleverest

29. *At the Turning*, p. 62. These are the concluding words of the last of the three Goldstein lectures, "The Dialogue Between Heaven and Earth." For Buber the answer that Job receives from God "does not answer the charge" that "the 'cruel' (30:21) God has 'removed his right' from him (27:2) and thus that the judge of all the earth acts against justice"; God's answer "does not even touch upon" the charge. "The true answer that Job receives is God's appearance only, only this that distance turns into nearness, that 'his eye sees Him,' (42:5) that he knows Him again. Nothing is explained, nothing adjusted; wrong has not become right, nor cruelty kindness. Nothing has happened but that man again hears God's address" (pp. 61-62).

Buber has clearly allied himself with "all those who have not got over what happened and will not get over it," not only in his Goldstein lectures but also in another speech made when he was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, in Frankfurt, in 1953. The latter address is now printed as "Genuine Dialogue and the Possibilities of Peace," the last of the essays in the collection entitled *Pointing the Way* (New York: Harper, 1957).

At the very beginning of his speech of thanks, Buber makes haste to explain "the sense" in which he accepted the Peace Prize, "just as I earlier accepted the Hanseatic Goethe Prize given me by the University of Hamburg" (p. 232). It is his most forceful declaration of his refusal to forgive. Buber does indeed remember "those who refused to carry out the orders and suffered death or put themselves to death, and those who learned what was taking place and opposed it and were put to death, or those who learned what was taking place and because they could do nothing to stop it killed themselves. I see these men very near before me in that especial intimacy which binds us at times to the dead and to them alone. Reverence and love for these Germans now fills my heart" (p. 233). But there were others: "About a decade ago a considerable number of Germans—there must have been many thousands of them—under the indirect command of the German government and the direct command of its representatives, killed millions of my people in a systematically prepared and executed procedure whose organized cruelty cannot be compared with any previous historical event. I, who am one of those who remained alive, have only in a formal sense a common humanity with those who took part in this action. They have so radically removed themselves from the human sphere, so transposed themselves into a sphere of monstrous inhumanity inaccessible to my conception, that not even hatred, much less an overcoming of hatred, was able to arise in me. And what am I that I could here presume to 'forgive!'" (p. 232).

Once again, one need point only to Buber for the answer to Buber. What a tragic irony that this answer should come in the same speech, in the same essay! It is the last paragraph of his address: "The name Satan means in Hebrew the hinderer. That is the correct designation for the anti-human in individuals and in the human race. Let us not allow this Satanic element in men to hinder us from realizing man! Let us release speech from its ban! Let us dare, despite all, to trust!" (p. 239).



wile, as Baudelaire says, to convince us that he does not exist,<sup>30</sup> it is certainly almost as cunning to make us his allies in his condemnation of the just man, of all the righteous, and finally and inevitably of the Author of justice and right. One becomes the devil's particular friend in this warfare of the soul if one concludes, with Jung, that Yahweh "has done man a wrong," or if, in the dumb show Buber has made of our silent struggle, we decide that it is "with God" that "we contend . . . even with Him, the Lord of Being, Whom we once, we here, chose for our Lord."

#### NEWMAN

IN THE extraordinary parable of life in the twentieth century which Job provides, we find the terms of what Albert Camus has called in a telling phrase "metaphysical rebellion."<sup>31</sup> Job knows, as we do, the impossibility of a literal acceptance of a *quid pro quo* theology of reward here and now for acts of goodness done here and now. This "man of genius, perhaps the greatest of all Biblical poets," has "the hardihood to criticize"<sup>32</sup> such a literal-minded, vulgar optimism. It is a "hardihood," a boldness, founded on something larger than this-worldly hope: He speaks from what can for once, with justice, be called bitter experience. Job's is not metaphysical rebellion, though at first it seems close to it. His concern is to understand Yahweh and His justice, not to degrade either. He tortures himself with the inequities and injustices of this world, but quickly, when summoned to account

30. "Mes chers frères, n'oubliez jamais, quand vous entendrez vanter le progrès des lumières, que la plus belle des ruses du diable est de vous persuader qu'il n'existe pas!" (Charles Baudelaire, "Le Joueur Généreux," *Petits Poèmes en Prose, Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris: Conrad, 1922-39, II, 104.)

31. "Metaphysical rebellion is the movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it contests the ends of man and of creation . . . the metaphysical rebel declares that he is frustrated by the universe . . .

" . . . He opposes the principle of justice which he finds in himself to the principle of injustice which he sees being applied in the world.

" . . . the history of metaphysical rebellion cannot be confused with that of atheism. From a certain point of view it is even confused with the contemporary history of religious sentiment. The rebel defies more than he denies. . . ." (Albert Camus, *The Rebel, An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower, New York: Vintage, 1956, pp. 23, 24, 25.)

32. Albert Gelin, *The Key Concepts of the Old Testament*, trans. George Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), p. 77.

by the Lord, recognizes his position, and identifies it.<sup>33</sup> His position? *Our* position! That is the point curiously missed by Buber and skillfully evaded by Jung.

In this recognition lies our justification; for God justifies, as He creates, as a free gift, not in return for merit intrinsically worthy of such grace. In his *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, Cardinal Newman wisely defines the primary sense of the term "justification" as "a real and gracious act on God's part towards us sinners." He sees Job's condition—and ours—quite differently from the way metaphysical rebels view it.

Now, the doctrine of our justification not only implies, but derives its special force from our being by birth sinners and culprits. It supposes a judicial process, that is, an accuser, a judgment-seat, and a prisoner. Such is our condition by nature; the devil is our accuser, as of old time he accused Job; and the natural man, not being righteous as Job, has so much more cause for amazement and confusion. Yet even Job says, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer Thee? *I will lay my hand upon my mouth*. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further." Or as Ezra speaks, "We are *ashamed and blush* to lift up our faces to God, for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." If this be the case with holy men, what should it be with the world at large, when the heavy catalogue of their sins is spread out in the sight of Divine Holiness! Then, as St. Paul says, "*Every mouth is stopped*, and all the world is guilty before God." Under these circumstances, when there is no health or hope in us, when we hide our faces and are speechless, the All-merciful God, as we are taught in the Gospel, for Christ's sake, freely pardons and *justifies* us. He justifies instead of condemning; that is, He exalts us by how much we were overwhelmed and cast down, by a salvation as strange as the peril was imminent.<sup>34</sup>

It is not an easy doctrine, but it is a rewarding one, in every sense of the word. Recognition begets recognition. In our open acknowledgment of "our being by birth sinners and culprits" we inaugurate

33. See Camus, *op. cit.*, p. 62: "From the moment that man submits God to moral judgment, he kills Him in his own heart. And then what is the basis of morality? God is denied in the name of justice, but can the idea of justice be understood without the idea of God? At this point are we not in the realm of absurdity?" Job never enters this realm, though at moments he seems to come close to its borders.

34. John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* (3rd ed.; London: Rivington's, 1874), pp. 72-73.



that "judicial process" which, ultimately, brings us gracious acquittal and, better still, recovery. "It is an act as signal, as great, as complete, as was the condemnation into which sin plunged us." It is a process which has grandeur; it is "formal and august." It holds before us nothing less than our sanctification; it takes from us nothing less than our condemnation.

Justification is a word of state and solemnity. Divine Mercy might have renewed us and kept it secret; this would have been an infinite and most unmerited grace, but He has done more. He *justifies* us; He not only makes, He declares, acknowledges, accepts us as holy. He recognises us as His own, and publicly repeals the sentence of wrath and the penal statutes which lie against us. . . . Before man has done anything as specimen, or paid anything as instalment, except faith, nor even faith in the case of infants, he has the whole treasures of redemption put to his credit, as if he were and had done infinitely more than he ever can be or do. He is "declared" after the pattern of his Saviour, to be the adopted "Son of God with power, by a [spiritual] resurrection." His tears are wiped away; his fears, misgivings, remorse, shame, are changed for "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"; he is clad in white, and has his crown given him.<sup>35</sup>

How much for how little, Newman is saying here, as he says in effect through all his works. And properly enough, inspired by the example of Job, he pronounces the syllables of solemnity with a requisite stateliness. For the free act of justification by which God declares man righteous is nothing less than the very majesty of God, the witness of His lordliness.

It is a great and august deed in the sight of heaven and hell; it is not done in a corner, but by Him who would show the world "what should be done unto those whom the King delighteth to honour." It is a pronouncing righteous while it proceeds to make righteous. As Almighty God in the beginning created the world solemnly and in form, speaking the word not to exclude, but to proclaim the deed; as in the days of His flesh He made use of the creature and changed its properties not without a command, so does He new-create the soul by the breath of His mouth, by the sacrament of His Voice. The declaration of our righteousness, while it contains pardon for the past, promises holiness for the future.<sup>36</sup>

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

There is a price: faith. Job pays it, and will go on paying it, he makes clear in his reply to Sophar's first speech.

*Even though He should slay me, I will not quail,  
I will indeed argue my ways before Him;  
Even this must be my salvation:  
That it is no impious man that cometh before Him.*  
(13:15-16)

This much he can offer "as specimen," and pay "as instalment": faith, the faith "that God is our sole strength, our sole refuge; that if good is in any way in store for us, it lies with God; if it is attainable, it is attained by coming to God. Though we be in evil case even after coming to Him, we are sure to be in still worse, if we keep away."<sup>37</sup> It may be the destiny of some such as Job to wait in darkness, but not in absolute blackness, for there is the light of faith and the shining example of the faithful—of some such as Job.

This is the light Job commends to us, not the light of reason. It is the *somma luce*, the supreme light of the last canto of Dante's *Commedia*, that vision *maggio che'l parlar nostro*, "greater than our words," and, Dante adds, beyond the powers of memory. Longfellow's translation is felicitous:

*My mind in this wise wholly in suspense,  
Steadfast, immovable, attentive gazed,  
And evermore with gazing grew enkindled.  
In presence of that light one such becomes,  
That to withdraw therefrom for other prospect  
It is impossible he e'er consent;  
Because the good, which object is of will,  
Is gathered all in this, and out of it  
That is defective which is perfect there.*<sup>38</sup>

In words like these, there is none of the satisfaction of rational discourse, but a higher satisfaction; for in the Book of Job, as in Dante's concluding pages, one is brought face to face with God. In such a confrontation facile language fades and glibness is an ugly intrusion.

37. Sermon VIII, "Peace and Joy amid Chastisement," in Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (new ed.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1919), IV, 117. Newman is preaching on a text from Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (13:15).

38. "Paradiso," XXXIII, 67, 55-56, 97-105.



The Book of Job offers, as Rudolf Otto points out, something more appropriate to the grandeur of God:

In the words put into the mouth of Elohim nearly every note is sounded which the situation may prepare one to expect *a priori*: the summons to Job, and the demonstration of God's overwhelming power, His sublimity and greatness, and His surpassing wisdom. This last would yield forthwith a plausible and rational solution of the whole problem, if only the argument were here completed with some such sentences as: "My ways are higher than your ways; in my deeds and my actions I have ends that you understand not"; viz. the testing or purification of the godly man, or ends that concern the whole universe as such, into which the single man must fit himself with all his sufferings. If you start from rational ideas and concepts you absolutely *thirst* for such a conclusion to the discourse. But nothing of the kind follows; nor does the chapter intend at all to suggest such teleological reflections or solutions. In the last resort it relies on something quite different from anything that can be exhaustively rendered in rational concepts, namely, on the sheer absolute wondrousness that transcends thought, on the *mysterium*, presented in its pure, non-rational form. All the glorious examples from nature speak very plainly in this sense.<sup>39</sup>

The marvels with which Yahweh presents Job—and us—are not only mysterious and inexplicable, they bring us something for which the words given are most obscure but not entirely inadequate signs (see 38:4—39:30, 40:9—41:26). We must agree with Otto that certainly the beasts of Yahweh's discourse "would be the most unfortunate examples that one could hit upon if searching for evidences of the purposefulness of the divine 'wisdom.'" <sup>40</sup> Lion, goat, wild ass and wild ox, ostrich and eagle, behemoth and leviathan—what sense of order do they bring, what meaning, what solution to problems, what ease to troubled men? Does it help to translate "behemoth" into "hippopotamus" and "leviathan" into "crocodile"? Are we not left as mystified, and perhaps even as depressed, as the Job of the early chapters of his book, if we look for simple catechetical responses to questions that transcend the summary and the formulary? What these beasts and everything else in the great proclamations of Yahweh express, instead, "in masterly fashion," is

39. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 81.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

the downright stupendousness, the wellnigh daemonic and wholly incomprehensible character of the eternal creative power; how, incalculable and "wholly other," it mocks at all conceiving but can yet stir the mind to its depths, fascinate and overbrim the heart. What is meant is the *mysterium* not as mysterious simply, but at the same time also as "fascinating" and "august"; and here, too, these latter meanings live, not in any explicit concepts, but in the tone, the enthusiasm, in the very rhythm of the entire exposition. And here is indeed the point of the whole passage, comprising alike the theodicy and the appeasement and calming of Job's soul. The *mysterium*, simply as such, would merely . . . be a part of the "absolute inconceivability" of the numen, and that, though it might strike Job utterly dumb, could not convict him inwardly. That of which we are conscious is rather an *intrinsic value* in the incomprehensible—a value inexpressible, positive, and "fascinating." This is incommensurable with thoughts of rational human teleology and is not assimilated to them: it remains in all its mystery. But it is as it becomes felt in consciousness that Elohim is justified and at the same time Job's soul brought to peace.<sup>41</sup>

#### CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

THE Fathers of the Church found in the drama of Job the materials for their most stirring apostrophes to the Creator, for their invocations of the mysteries of being and evocations of the marvels of creation. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, when at the very center of his beautiful *Catecheses*, delivered in Lent of the year 347 or 348, turned to Job for a text with which to apostrophize and epitomize "God, the Creator of all things." His sermon is the ninth of eighteen instructions to catechumens, a gem lovingly burnished and polished to shine forth with the splendors of the highest works of art, "the Divine works," from which "we may obtain some idea" of the power of the divine nature which "with the eyes of the flesh we cannot see."<sup>42</sup>

Cyril's text is the great challenge of Yahweh to Job:

*Who is this that obscureth counsel  
With words without knowledge?  
Gird up thy loins like a man,  
I will question thee, and do thou let me know!*  
(38:2-3)

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

42. St. Cyril, *The Catechetical Lectures* (Oxford: James Parker, 1872), p. 91 (PG 33:640).



In sixteen admirably ordered paragraphs, he offers his homage. It is a tribute designed to end tribulation by bringing the heart rest in its Maker.

The logic is straightforward. Yahweh declared that no man "shall see me and live" (Ex 33:20). "Wherefore," St. Cyril explains, "of His exceeding loving-kindness, God has spread out the heaven to be the veil of His proper Godhead, lest we perish. . . ." We cannot, then, know the nature of God; it is "incomprehensible." We can, however, "offer glory to Him from His works that are seen." This Cyril proceeds to do, in a series of glosses and commentaries on texts drawn in small part from Genesis, Jeremiah, Wisdom, and Proverbs, and in large part from the Psalms and Job.

Truly they ought to have been struck dumb, when they viewed the vaultings of the heavens, and worshipped Him who has reared the sky as an arch, who out of the fluid waters, has made the immoveable substance of the heavens. For God said: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters." God spoke once, and it stood fast, and does not fall. . . .

What? is there not much to wonder at in the sun, which being small to look on, contains in it an intensity of power, appearing from the east, and shooting his light even to the west. The Psalmist describes his rising at dawn, when he says: "Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber." This is a description of his pleasant and comely array on first appearing to men; for when he rides at high noon we are wont to flee from his blaze; but at his rising he is welcome to all, as a bridegroom to look on.<sup>43</sup>

See, he says, with what reason and balance God has given us an abundance of time in the daylight when the days are clement and a scarcity when they are not:

And see likewise in what order the days correspond to each other, in summer increasing, in winter diminishing, but in spring and autumn affording one another an uniform length; and the nights again in like manner.<sup>44</sup>

He quotes and paraphrases Yahweh speaking to Job:

"Who is the father of rain: and who hath given birth to the drops of dew?" Who hath condensed the air into clouds, and bid them carry

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 91, 92 (PG 33:637, 641, 644).

44. *Ibid.*, p. 92 (PG 33:644-645).

the fluid mass of showers, at one time "bringing from the north golden clouds," at another, giving these a uniform appearance, and then again curling them up into festoons and other figures manifold?

. . . Who can tell the depth and breadth of the sea, or the force of its enormous waves? Yet it stays within its boundaries, because of Him who said, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." And to show the decree imposed on it, when it runs up on the land, it leaves a plain line on the sands by its waves; declaring, as it were, to those who see it, that it has not passed its appointed bounds.

. . . Who of men can behold the eagle? But if thou canst not read the mystery of birds when soaring on high, how wouldest thou read the Maker of all things?

Who among men knows even the names of all wild beasts? or who can accurately classify their natures? But if we know not even their bare names, how shall we comprehend their Maker?<sup>45</sup>

It is such texts that lead St. Cyril to the key questions, those which could as well be addressed to the modern metaphysical rebel as to the ancient, to those who would still contend with Yahweh exactly as the chastised but unchastened Job did, but certainly with less justification. "For such wonders," Cyril demands, "was the great Artificer to be blasphemed—or rather to be worshipped?" And he adds that He has "not yet spoken of that part of His wisdom which is not seen."

Cyril is awed as much at the order he does not see as at the one he does.

Is not the Artificer then rather worthy to be glorified? For what if thou know not the nature of everything? are the things therefore, which He has made, without their use? For canst thou know the efficacy of all herbs? or canst thou learn all the advantage which comes of every animal? Even from poisonous adders have come antidotes for the preservation of men.

. . . Now then enter into thyself, and consider the Artificer of thine own nature. What is there to find fault with in the framing of thy body? . . . And how doth the babe grow to be a child, and the child to be a youth, and then to be a man; and is again changed into an old man, no one the while discerning exactly each day's change?<sup>46</sup>

En route to this last set of reflections, which he concludes with a

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94, 95 (PG 33:648, 649, 652).

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 96-97 (PG 33:652-653).



psalm, half his own and half that of Scripture, St. Cyril pauses to answer Manichaeism doctrine, or rather finds in an expression of reverence for the restful and recollective powers of darkness an excellent opportunity to condemn those who would separate the Creator of light and darkness into two creators, equating the one with good and the other with evil:

No one must tolerate such as say, that the Maker of light is different from the Maker of darkness; for let a man remember Isaiah's words, "I the Lord form the light and create darkness." Why, O man, art thou offended with these? Why so annoyed at the time of rest given thee? The servant would not have gained it from his masters, but for the darkness bringing a necessary respite. And often, after toiling in the day, how are we refreshed by nights; and he who was yesterday amid labours, starts in the morning vigorous from a night's rest? And what more conduces to religious wisdom than the night, when oftentimes we bring before us the things of God, and read and contemplate the Divine Oracles? When too is our mind more alive for Psalmody and Prayer than at night? When does a recollection oftener come over us of our sins than at night? Let us not then be perverse enough to entertain the notion, that another besides God is the Maker of darkness; for experience shows that darkness is good and most useful.<sup>47</sup>

It is, in all, a rich gathering of texts, a *florilegium* and accompanying meditation constructed that others may, like the suffering just man, find peace. That peace is not to be found in that "other," that merely transcendent God "behind a dark cloud," in whom, according to Eliphaz, Job believes (22:12-14). Nor is it to be found in oneself alone, or in a relationship with God that sees Him immanent only, immanent in humanity and thus our equal, our mere *vis-à-vis*, as Job for a moment taunts Yahweh with being:

*Hast Thou eyes of flesh?  
Seest Thou as man seeth?  
Are Thy days as the days of a mortal?  
And Thy years as the years of a man,  
That Thou seekest after my iniquity,  
And searchest after my sin . . . ?*  
(10:4-6)<sup>48</sup>

47. *Ibid.*, p. 93 (PG 33:645).

48. This is, for a brief moment, the Jungian compound of fear and affection—mostly for oneself: God "wants to become man, and for that purpose he has chosen, through the Holy Ghost, the creaturely man filled with darkness—the nat-

With the eloquent example of Job before him, St. Cyril has preached on several texts, on the one just quoted and on that text which is implicit in it and in the whole book:

*And how can a man be just before God?  
Should he wish to contend with Him,  
He could not answer Him one thing in a thousand;  
Wise in heart, and mighty in strength,  
Who hath defied Him, and remained unscathed?*  
(9:2-4)

Here the words are Job's, in answer to Bildad's first speech. Later, they are Bildad's and Sophar's: "And how can man be just before God?" (25:4).

#### LEO, AUGUSTINE, AND AMBROSE

THE Fathers ask: How indeed can man be just before God? St. Leo the Great reminds us of our human condition—stained from birth. Only by presumption can we expect a rich reward in return for performances that accurately reflect our tarnished inheritance.<sup>49</sup> In justice, any one of us should be allotted a poor enough reward. In God's mercy, however, we are given much; but not here on earth:

For the measure of heavenly gifts does not rest upon the quality of our deeds, nor is in this world, in which "all life is temptation," each one rewarded according to his deserving, for if the Lord were to take count of a man's iniquities, no one could stand before His judgment.<sup>50</sup>

If man cannot be found just before God, what can he do himself to improve his condition, to merit something more than his condign punishment? He can be virtuous; he can believe, hope, love. Lacking

ural man who is tainted with original sin and who learnt the divine arts and sciences from the fallen angels. The guilty man is eminently suitable and is therefore chosen to become the vessel for the continuing incarnation, not the guiltless one who holds aloof from the world and refuses to pay his tribute to life, for in him the dark God would find no room" (*op. cit.*, p. 163).

The same reduction of God to man's size and lower is accomplished by Robert Frost in *A Masque of Reason* (New York: Henry Holt, 1945), in which the Lord apologizes to Job, after the issue has been decided, for "showing off to the Devil," and "anxiously" asks Job if he minds. "No," Job replies. "'Twas human of You . . ." (pp. 16-17).

49. See St. Leo the Great, *Sermons*, XXI, i; XXVIII, iii (PL 54:190-191, 222-223).

50. St. Leo, *Sermon II*, i (PL 54:143). The quotation is from the Septuagint translation of Job 7:1.



the one essential virtue, faith, the greatest of God's gifts, he can at least prepare himself to receive it when the grace of faith is offered, as we are assured it is some time in everyone's life. For St. Augustine, the greatest of the preparations for the greatest of the gifts is *pietas*. By means of piety, which is wisdom—so Job has taught St. Augustine<sup>51</sup>—man makes such steadfast progress as he may in this world. By means of piety he helps others already outside this world, in purgatory. Piety is a major weapon in the Christian struggle against the pride and cowardice, the futility and feebleness of man's depressed condition. It is one way man has of becoming, or at least of seeking to become, just before God.

Job provides another of the Fathers, St. Ambrose, with the example of justice. This example inspired him to tell his congregation of faithful Milanese of the wonder of the Christian life, of the wonder of their life. And it was to the man of the land of Uz that he turned when the Arians attempted to seize the new basilica in Milan. "I went up into the pulpit to admire Job," the bishop said to his congregation, "I found I had all of you to admire as Jobs. Job lives again in each of you, in each the patience and virtue of that saint is reflected." What, Ambrose asks, is commanded when we are asked to yield our churches to heretics? What indeed but the advice of Job's wife: "Curse God, and die" (2:9). And what shall we answer? he asks. What but the strengthening words of Job's reply: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh" (2:10).<sup>52</sup>

In his travail, St. Ambrose found what all discover who identify themselves with Job in his misery, the strength of faith: "Hear what Job says, 'The Spirit of God hath made me.' And so, strengthened against the temptations of the devil, he preserved his steps steadfast and without stumbling." Job is his comfort, the eighteenth Psalm is his text: "The heavens show forth the glory of God." It is also Job's text, for upon that transcendent faith does the just man finally rest his cause—and find rest.<sup>53</sup>

The Lord's answer to all who seek explanations for grief, misery,

51. See St. Augustine, *Enchiridion de fide, spe et caritate*, trans. by Bernard M. Peebles as "Faith, Hope and Charity" in *The Fathers of the Church*, IV (New York: Cima, 1947), 369 (PL 40:231-232).

52. See Letter XX in *The Letters of Ambrose*, ed. H. Walford (Oxford: James Parker, 1881), pp. 131-133 (PL 16:1040-1041).

53. See Letter XXII, *ibid.*, pp. 159-160 (PL 16:1063-1064).

and suffering visited upon the just is His being, is Being itself. His justice must be just, for He is Justice. The suffering He sends, even to a man as righteous and just as Job, must be just, for He is Justice. He is who is. That, in sum, is the sound and the substance and the fury of the Voice out of the whirlwind. Just before His second speech (40-42:6), Yahweh asks Job: "Will he that contendeth with the Almighty give way? Will he that argueth with God answer [Him]?" (39:32; in Kissane, 40:2). Job's reply defines the state of humility to which he has been brought:

*Behold, I am of little account, how shall I answer thee?*

*I lay my hand upon my mouth;*

*Once I have spoken, and I will not answer,*

*Yea, twice, and I will not again.*

(39:34-35; in Kissane, 40:4-5)

It also gives Job his ultimate stature, for his words show him humble, contrite, and, finally, aware of whom it is he addresses, and therefore reluctant to speak. His reply makes him, more than ever before, the very model of the just man.

#### GREGORY THE GREAT

ST. GREGORY's commentary on these verses is instructive. To begin with, he points out:

The higher holy men advance with God, in the dignity of virtues, the more accurately do they discover that they are unworthy; because while they become close to the light, they find out whatever escaped their notice in themselves, and they appear to themselves the more deformed without, in proportion as that is very beautiful, which they see within. For everyone is made known to himself, when he is illumined with the touch of the true light, and by the same means as he learns what is righteousness, he is also instructed to see what is sin.<sup>54</sup>

We see ourselves truly when we see God, no matter how darkly we see Him. This ultimate measurement puts man in his proper place and establishes in him a fitting sense of proportion:

Job, surpassing in virtues the race of men, overcame his friends in speaking; but when instructed more highly, by God speaking to him,

54. St. Gregory, *op. cit.*, III, 506 (PL 76:631-633).



on knowing himself, he remained silent. For he overcame those who spoke unjustly, but at the words of the voice within he knew that he was justly condemned. And he knows not indeed why he was scourged, but yet he proved by silence why he revered not the scourges. For when the Divine judgments are not known, they are not to be discussed with bold words, but to be venerated with awe-struck silence; because even when the Creator of all things discloses not His reasons in inflicting the scourge, He shows them to be just, by pointing out that He inflicts them Who is perfectly just.<sup>55</sup>

Man, then, cannot in any true sense of the word be "just before God." He cannot assume sufficient stature to challenge God's justice, for paradoxically he finds his greatest stature when he is most troubled. The heavens do not show forth the glory of man. Man is not his own maker, uncaused cause of his own being. But there is that in man which proclaims his magnitude, a vastness other than that of the firmament, a depth other than that of the ocean, a magnitude that elicits a love so great that God, even He, would contend with the devil to save it.

The human mind fumbles and equivocates when it attempts to find words with which to explain or even to describe God's love of man. We know ourselves unworthy of His love. We also recognize that our very existence is contingent upon it, and not only our existence, but everything that is. If to such a love we respond with distrust, despair, or indifference, we reject God, we reject being itself; we show ourselves altogether insensitive to the splendors of creation.

Usually it is the very opposite of splendor that elicits in a man distrust, despair, or indifference. Saddened or, worse, sickened by the torments to which he or others have been subjected, he can find no reason for the torment and often none for the existence of the tormented. Honestly and deeply moved by suffering or only sentimentally pricked by it, he turns upon others, upon God, upon himself, in revulsion. He finds life without purpose; finds it loathsome, and absurd.

Suffering is the kiln in which man's virtue is tempered, made robust, made whole, or broken to pieces. In Job's book both possibilities are presented. For the longest time, there seems to be only the second, the process of doubt and despondency, if not utter hopelessness. We hear only a hurdy-gurdy drone of complaint from Job and an an-

55. *Ibid.*, III, 507 (PL 76:633-634).

swering whine of self-righteous "I told you so's" from his friends. But then Yahweh speaks, most unequivocally. There is nothing fumbling about the Voice out of the whirlwind. With a clarity that bespeaks its divine character, the Voice leaps into the realms of mystery, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. And Job becomes a new man. The drone ceases. Complaint is erased and replaced by praise. A new dimension of piety and of love has been added to Job's faith.

In the preface to his *Magna Moralia*, St. Gregory defines his argument in terms of this reading of the Book of Job. The failure of the three friends of Job is in offering not only cold, but old comfort: "For they are moved to speak not by the zeal of the new man, but by the evil principles of the old life." In their very names he sees "contempt of the Lord," "oldness alone," and "dissipation of the prospect," that is, an attempt to block the "contemplation of things above," of "right objects." The summation of etymologies is simple and to the point; whatever their linguistic accuracy, theologically they are precise. For him, they characterize the ruined minds of Pelagians, Arians, and Manichaeans. For us they apply equally well to their modern counterparts.

Thus in the three names of Job's friends, we have set forth three cases of the ruin of heretical minds. For unless they held God in contempt, they would never entertain false notions concerning Him; and unless they drew along with them a heart of oldness, they would never err in the understanding of the new life; and unless they marred the contemplation of good things, the Supreme judgments would never condemn them with so strict a scrutiny for the guiltiness of their words. By holding God in contempt, then, they keep themselves in oldness, and by being kept in oldness, they injure the contemplation of right objects by their erring discourses.<sup>56</sup>

Everything that follows in the systematic analysis of Job, line by line and when necessary word by word, is organized to make the point indicated in this summary judgment. Step by step, with the ineluctable directness of the columns and piers, capitals and vaults of a Romanesque cathedral, St. Gregory moves down the aisles of Job's edifice. The bricks fall into place not only one by one, but dimension by dimension. Each part of each verse is scrupulously subjected to

56. *Ibid.*, I, 28 (PL 75:526).



historical, allegorical, and moral probing. Taking his cue from St. Augustine, he has an explanation in allegorical, not to speak of metaphysical, depth for every number that is to be found in the book. He offers a fullness of moralization, happily escaping the kind of preachment which turns the reading of Scripture into empty chatter or haggling piousness. His is an exalted peregrination through the Book of Job, but in none of it does he ever entirely forget "the plain words of the historical account," even though there are times when "they cannot be understood according to the letter, because when taken superficially, they convey no sort of instruction to the reader, but only engender error. . . ." There is purpose in the presence, side by side, of meanings open and exposed and others dark and hidden:

For as the word of God, by the mysteries which it contains, exercises the understanding of the wise, so usually by what presents itself on the outside, it nurses the simple-minded. It presents in open day that where-with the little ones may be fed; it keeps in secret that whereby men of a loftier range may be held in suspense of admiration. It is, as it were, a kind of river, if I may so liken it, which is both shallow and deep, wherein both the lamb may find a footing, and the elephant float at large.<sup>57</sup>

These are not the words of an unusually ingenuous man. They suggest, rather, a wise exegete who has examined Scripture with an understanding that challenges many a modern biblical scholar in range of interest, adaptability, and accommodation.<sup>58</sup> All of this, one might properly conclude, indicates a considerable sophistication on St. Gregory's part. Gregory's sophistication does have a stop, however, a full one. Confronted by the sheer breadth and depth of creation, he can only marvel—marvel twice, at the miracles daily performed in nature by a wonder-working God and at the dullness in men that permits them to look and yet not to see, or worse, to have become blind to the beauties all around them just because they exist in such abundance. In a passage which is perhaps his greatest, Gregory returns to us that sense of wonder without which the philosophical act is im-

57. *Ibid.*, I, 7, 9 (PL 75:513, 515).

58. An example of a modern scholar whose breadth at least suggests that of St. Gregory, and whose temper allows him to make the broadest possible philosophical adaptation of the Book of Job, is Fridolin Stier. His translation of the text and his notes and commentary on it justify such a comparison. See Fridolin Stier, *Das Buch Ijob* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1954).

possible. It is a prime example of Gregory's moralizing magnitude, for the commentary is on a verse in Eliphaz's first speech which otherwise runs to the specious and the facile. The rest of Eliphaz's words rest uncomfortably on that premise, so repugnant to the moralist who is an honest observer of man's fortunes and misfortunes, that with a tender heart and a mathematical conscience

[God] frustrateth the devices of the crafty. . . .  
[And] saveth the guileless from the sword,  
And the poor from the hand of the mighty;  
And so the lowly hath hope,  
And iniquity shutteth her mouth.

(5:12, 15-16)

The line that moves Gregory is a tribute to the omnipotence of God:

Who doth great things, beyond reckoning,  
Marvellous things, without number. . . .  
(5:9)

It comes again, in almost the same words, in Job's answer to Bildad's first speech, as part of a litany of demonstration of the omnipotence of Yahweh:

Who doth great things, beyond computing,  
Marvellous things, beyond reckoning. . . .  
(9:10)

It is the first employment of this verse that elicits St. Gregory's and our exhilaration:

Who may see to the bottom of the marvelous works of Almighty God, how He made all things of nothing, how the very framework of the world is arranged with a marvelous mightiness of power, and the heaven hung above the atmosphere, and the earth balanced above the abyss, how this whole universe consists of things visible and invisible, how He created man, so to say, gathering together in a small compass another world, yet a world of reason; how constituting this world of soul and flesh, He mixed the breath and the clay by an unsearchable disposal of His Might? A part, then, of these things we know, and a part we even are. Yet we omit to admire them, because those things which are full of marvels for an investigation deeper than we can reach, have



become cheap from custom in the eyes of men. Hence it comes to pass that, if a dead man is raised to life, all men spring up in astonishment. Yet every day one that had no being is born, and no man wonders, though it is plain to all, without doubt, that it is a greater thing for that to be created, which was without being, than for that, which had being, to be restored. Because the dry rod of Aaron budded, all men were in astonishment; every day a tree is produced from the dry earth, and the virtue residing in dust is turned into wood, and no man wonders. Because five thousand men were filled with five loaves, all men were in astonishment that the food should have multiplied in their teeth; every day the grains of seed that are sown are multiplied in a fulness of ears, and no man wonders. All men wondered to see water once turned into wine. Every day the earth's moisture being drawn into the root of the vine, is turned by the grape into wine, and no man wonders. Full of wonder then are all the things, which men never think to wonder at, because, as we have before said, they are by habit become dull to the consideration of them.<sup>59</sup>

Such a gladdening of the spirit, St. Gregory insists, can be experienced by anyone. But such experience requires an act of submission. It is here that we can share our lot, by consent at the very least, with Job. It is here, in return, that God, through Job and all the rest of His suffering servants, consents to share His redemptive suffering with us.

One must accept the beauties of this world, but never take them for granted. That is clear enough. Equally, one must be willing to undertake the sufferings of this world. It is not enough, as the Fathers and Newman explain in their elaborate glossing of the Job text, to accept suffering whiningly or within the confines of a simple-minded system of punishment and reward. For suffering is like beauty in this, that it too cannot be taken for granted, that it too is full of wonder, and that to the consideration of it too men "are by habit become dull."

#### FROM TRIAL TO INTIMACY

IN THEIR slowness of understanding, an obtuseness that seems narcotized, men have lost the fine edge which only such suffering as that of Job can give to faith. They have become insensible to their own

59. St. Gregory, *op. cit.*, I, 324-325 (PL 75:738-739).

natures; they have lost that secondary awareness which should be the intimate accompaniment of their suffering, a kind of delicate counterpoint of prayer and philosophical speculation to the gross airs of misery. It is only through suffering that we are suffered to approach God and that we can rise, in heightened consciousness, with a totality of our thoughts and feelings, to some knowledge of who He is and who we are. We will afterwards, like Job, have to withdraw. But we will emerge from the contact, we ourselves, in temporary possession at least of our real selves. We may even, then, possess something closer to our identities. We may gain some insight into that which makes a man distinct from all other creatures, that which, by the grandest of antinomies, it may be said he has in common with all men: his individuality.

We may see ourselves tried or, to use the hardened metaphors of Job in his reply to Eliphaz, we may see our lives as a kind of peonage or military service.

*Hath not man a period of service on earth?  
And are not his days like the days of a hireling?  
Like a slave who is eager for the shade,  
And like a hireling who looketh for his wages,  
So have I been allotted months of woe,  
And nights of trouble have been appointed to me.*  
(7:1-3)

If we understand this trial, this period of service, these labors, as the saints do, we may in the process discover ourselves. How? By finding our being in others, by achieving the bond of identity that Gabriel Marcel has called "togetherness" or "intersubjectivity,"<sup>60</sup> by following what might be called the Augustinian prescription for lightening one's burdens:

... if one engaged in these efforts encounters difficulty, and, making his way by hard and painful efforts, encompassed with manifold temptations, and beholding the troubles of his past life surging up all around him, he fears that he cannot carry through his endeavors, let him put his mind to a plan for obtaining assistance. And what other plan is

60. See Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, passim*, but especially I, *Reflection and Mystery* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1950), pp. 171-196.



there but that he bear the infirmity of others and that he relieve it as much as he can, who himself wishes for divine assistance?<sup>61</sup>

To this reality Job has been brought at the end of his trial, a reality which confers upon the prose epilogue much dignity. For in those concluding paragraphs, brief enough so one can easily miss their significance, there is something larger than the restoration of Job's plenty; there is that special part of wisdom which is his by the direct gift of Yahweh. Job's friends are censured and directed by Yahweh to go to Job, sacrifices in hand, requesting his intercession. He has become, in effect, the priest who will offer their holocaust, who will pray for them. Yahweh's commands are explicit:

Now, therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go unto my servant Job, and offer for yourselves a holocaust, and let my servant Job pray for you; for his plea will I accept, not to do aught unseemly to you. For ye have not spoken that which is right concerning me as my servant Job hath.

(42:8)

Then comes the full redressing of grievances: The three comforters are restored to Job's friendship and to God's: "and Yahweh accepted Job's plea when he prayed for his friends, and he pardoned them their sin" (42:10b).

The remaining paragraphs are chiefly devoted to God's gratuitous gifts to the now twice-blessed Job. But in the new time of plenty there is no minimizing of the leanness that preceded it, nor is there any attempt to obscure the Author of Job's undoing. It is acknowledged, as the visits of the restored friends to condole and comfort Job are described, that that was indeed "evil which Yahweh had brought upon him." It is clear, at the very end, that Job's reproaches to Yahweh have been summoned forth from the very lowest depths, from nothing less than degradation. It is just as clear that he was

61. St. Augustine, *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, trans. by John J. Jenson, s.s., in *Ancient Christian Writers* (Westminster: Newman, 1948), p. 67 (PL 34:1256).

The fullness of the prescription includes a felicitous distinction between the meek and the merciful, who to many seem to be one. The meek man, "in his love for God does not oppose the divine sentences directed against his sins nor those words of God which as yet he does not understand; but he confers no benefit" upon those whom he treats meekly, "whom he does not contradict or resist; whereas the merciful person in offering no resistance does this for the amendment" of those "he would make worse by resisting" (*ibid.*). By the end of the drama, Job has qualified not merely as meek, but as merciful: He bears the infirmity of others; his nonresistance is for their amendment.

brought to those depths by Yahweh Himself, that he might finally come as close to God as possible. It is an explication of that closeness which is the Book of Job's general concern and special achievement.

In Job's closeness to Yahweh we descry as well the distance that separates them. We have learned that only in the most intimate dealings with God can we understand our relative stature, can we find our requisite humility and develop a fitting faith, hope, and love with which to express it. Only in suffering is such intimacy possible. And only in the last lines of the book, with the acceptance of Job's redemptive offering for his friends, does all this become clear—what excellent reason for their being the last lines!<sup>62</sup> Thus is the prose epilogue given its proper position, and, by theological and literary structure, the prose prologue as well. For without the prologue, the epilogue would not make sense, and without the two prose sections we should not understand half so well the closeness of Job to God.

Job is perhaps allowed to come closer to God than anyone else in the Old Testament. His reproaches to Yahweh approach revilement. But still closer does he come, to the point where Yahweh must draw the picture of the difference between creature and Creator for him in the most elementary terms, must thunder the wonders of creation to him, to bring him to prayer, to recantation, to repentance "on dust and ashes" (42:6). For only in such intimacy can the infinite dif-

62. For the contrary point of view, see the Schweich Lecture of the British Academy, 1943, by William Barron Stevenson, *The Poem of Job, A Literary Study with a New Translation* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1947), pp. 21-22: "Casual readers of the Book of Job inevitably interpret the dramatic poem of the book in the light of the easily understood and first read commencement of the folk-story [that is, the prose sections]. Even professional scholars have shown themselves regrettably liable to the same lack of discrimination. No sentence in the folk-tale has had a more mischievous influence on the interpretation of the poem than the words addressed to Eliphaz by the Almighty, as recorded at the end of the book, in ch. 42, ver. 7: 'you have not spoken truth regarding me, as my servant Job has done.' When the poem is read without the prejudice injected by this sentence, it is clear that Job's words were generally less in agreement with religious principles than were those of his three comforters." One can only exchange regrets with the learned Emeritus Professor of Semitic Languages at the University of Glasgow. Far from finding the folk story, either at its commencement or at its conclusion, easy to understand, I have been much puzzled by it, as others who are not "casual readers of the Book of Job" must have been, too. The sentence addressed by Yahweh to Eliphaz seems to me to be perfectly justified in the light of the friends' clearly delineated spiritual pride and their smug and self-righteous taunting of Job. Their reduction of divine morality to a reciprocal system of fair play, with God in the role of an impartial umpire, sits better with one's understanding of the traditions of the playing fields of Eton than it does with Old Testament morality or human experience in or out of the Bible.



ferences between God and man be set forth with conviction. Only in the direct and loving colloquy of faith can God—and man—be found and described in their true dimensions and thus—both of them—be understood.

Faith, then, is the question, and faith is the answer. It is by faith that we can see ourselves in a true perspective, understand our grief, our misery, our failures, even become thankful for them, and in that understanding come to share the grief and misery and failures of others and, *mirabile dictu*, come to be thankful also for them. It is by faith that we come to see God in a true perspective, and recognize, with Newman, that ours is not “a desperate state, [that] we are not cast out of our Father’s house; we have still privileges, aids, powers, from Him; our persons are still acceptable to Him.” In faith, we can go further, we can “take in good part whatever sorrow He inflicts in His providence, or however long.”<sup>63</sup> We may then boldly answer Martin Buber’s questions: “Can one still call to Him? Dare we recommend to the survivors of Oswiecim, the Job of the gas chambers: ‘Call to Him, for He is kind, for His mercy endures forever?’” Can one? Dare we?<sup>64</sup> After Job’s example, and with his faith, and in his words, we may answer Yes:

*I know that Thou canst do all things,  
And that no design is hidden from Thee. . . .  
I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear,  
But now, mine eye hath seen Thee.*

(42:2, 5)

63. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, IV, 130, 131.

64. Our daring is increased by the daring of another, a Polish Franciscan, Father Maximilian Kolbe. Because of his ardent pastoral work in Poland, Father Kolbe was imprisoned by the Nazis, and many times severely beaten, sometimes into unconsciousness. Finally transferred to the concentration camp at Auschwitz, he was subjected to tortures nothing less than bestial. He did not complain, but offered only thanks for the opportunity to suffer for others. When one of the prisoners in his block of cells escaped, the authorities at the camp sentenced ten others in the block to death in the starvation shed. Father Kolbe insisted on replacing one of the ten: “I am old and useless. My life is no longer of much value.” He was, in fact, not yet fifty years old. In the past, those in the starvation sheds had screamed, yelled, and cursed in their misery. Not now. Father Kolbe led those in his shed in prayer and singing, and the other sheds soon joined in. He was the last in his group to remain conscious; he had to be killed by injection.

A figure of meekness and of mercy, like Job one for whom suffering became a redemptive act, Father Kolbe adds considerable strength to our answer to Buber. But he is not alone. There are many other cases almost as striking recorded in *Christ in Dachau* (Oxford: Newman Bookshop, 1952) and in *Dying We Live* (New York: Pantheon, 1956).