

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

The Book of Job

The Cycle of the Three Friends

The contentions of Job and his three friends may be divided into three cycles or steps of development and unfoldment.

There is, as we have shown, a spiritual law and a material law, and man is endowed with free will whereby he may choose for himself which of these laws he will elect to obey. If it be the spiritual, then he must make a complete surrender of the personal life, desiring and possessing nothing of himself. His dependence is then entirely upon the power of the Spirit; he becomes a free channel for its use and is in turn provided for according to its law. If, on the other hand, he elects to submit to material law, he puts his trust in material possession, the "things which are seen," and must consequently work out his destiny in accordance with this law, which is a law of suffering and death.

The purpose of the Book of Job is to indicate how the aspirant may gradually learn to control and transmute the forces of the lower mar, physical desires and human mind, so that these become channels for the illumined Spirit.

When this has been achieved, he is lifted above karmic Law. Job receives an intimation of this ideal condition when Eliphaz says: "He shall deliver thee six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

Job 5:20-23

In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword.

Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.

At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.

Robert Browning aptly describes the struggle for mastership between the spiritual and the animal man when he writes: "When the fight begins within himself a man's worth is something. God stoops o'er his head, Satan looks up between his feet — both tug — he's left to himself in the middle; the soul awakens and grows."

The symbolism of this strange and wonderful Book of Job is perfect. For instance, the three friends come to argue and dispute with Job as he sits upon an ash heap outside the city walls — an effective representation of the chaos and confusion that exists in one's life until the light within has been discovered — a state of development which Job

describes thus: "They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

Job 2:11

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.

The three friends to whom Job turns for consolation in his extremity — Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite — symbolize the three lower vehicles of the ego, sometimes named mind, desire nature and body; or mental sheath, desire body and physical body.

Eliphaz, a son of Esau, represents one immersed in the interests and affairs of the physical life, for Tenn means "a desert," aridity of spirit. Bildad, a son of contention, represents the desire body; he is called a Shuhite, which means helplessness. The average person in his present state is helpless in his thralldom. to carnal desires. It is desire which dominates the mass consciousness.

Job 8:9,14

For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon the earth are but a shadow.

Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.

The impermanency of the life of the senses and the impossibility of obtaining any lasting satisfaction by means of them is found in the words of Bildad: "He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure."

Zophar (mortal or human mind) has been termed a ruthless realist. He contends from the levels of the purely human concept, unillumined as yet by any ray of spiritual light:

Job 11:2,12

Should not the multitude of words be answered and should a man full of talk be justified?

For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.

Zophar means "brightness" and indicates the promise inherent in mind. According to the occult axiom, "The mind is the Path."

These three friends, in their arguments with Job, thus represent the striving of the lower nature to retain its hold upon the ego. The mind of man linked itself with the animal desires in early epochs of evolution on our planet. The

purpose of evolution today is to reverse that process, to break the hold of the animal soul (which is the soul that dies) by purifying the desires and illuminating the reasoning mind in such wise that they become channels for the workings of Spirit, thus rendering the personality wholly amenable to higher guidance.

Sorrow, pain, disease and death are the common inheritance of all humanity, and before the mind is illumined these serve as accelerators along the way of progression. The oftener a man dies the better he lives. Experience is the greatest teacher and to gather its fruits constitutes the chief purpose of life upon Earth. The transitoriness of the material world and of the physical body is shown in the words of Eliphaz:

Job 4:18,19

Behold, he puts no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:

How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?

This lament comes from a failure to realize a source higher than mortality, in which there is no refuge other than materiality.

Job 5:7;6:7;10:1

Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. O remember that my life is wind; mine eye shall no more see good. My soul is weary of my life: I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

And again, in his anxious thinking, Job seeks for a means of escape from the hopelessness and futility of a life ordered to materiality.

Job 10:15,18,20,21,22

My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. If I be wicked woe unto me and if I be righteous yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou my affliction.

Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?

Oh that I had given up the ghost and no eye had seen me.

Are not my days few I cease then and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little.

A land of darkness as darkness itself and of the shadow of death without order and where the light is as darkness.

Job's experience is one common to every man who eventually grows weary of words that bear no sustained meaning to deeds, that are only externalized impulses empty of spiritual support or value:

Job 13:4;16:3;14:1-2

But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value.

Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble,

He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.

Thus Job laments while the contest rages between the spiritual and the material man, with the lower man still in the ascendancy. Yet despite the apathy and bitterness of despair, the urge of the ego is not wholly overcome, and ever and again it may be heard to call: "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." (Job 14:4)

The cry of the flesh is loud as Eliphaz says:

Job 15:5-6

For my mouth uttereth thine iniquity and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty.

Thine own mouth condemneth thee and not I; yea thine own lips testify against thee.

The arguments of Eliphaz (the physical senses) may be summed up in the fact that his idea of the highest human blessedness is the accumulation of earthly possessions and a long life in which to enjoy them. He reiterates that material prosperity is the true mark of heavenly approbation, and adversity an equal sign of God's disfavor.

Job is naturally not satisfied with this materialistic theory, in view of his own unceasing efforts to live in a way pleasing to God; he strives for a deeper and more intimate approach to Truth. He is no longer satisfied with "things" of the outer world as such, but is eagerly seeking, "like some bold watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken", for an explanation of the origin and purposes of sorrow; for his own suffering has suddenly made him see and feel the sorrow of all the world. He is tortured by the sense of estrangement which he feels as between the human and the divine. Faust at this place upon the Path cries out, "Two souls, alas, are housed within my breast," and Job laments, "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." (Job 7:11)

Bildad (the desire nature) argues the uselessness of struggle. He contends that Job is at the mercy of so powerful a force that from its dictates there can be no appeal. Apathy, or psychic inertia, is perhaps one of the

most difficult of all the trials and temptations which beset the novice on the Path of Perfection. It comes often in the guise of a false humility, instilling despair and self-depreciation. It is the nether aspect of desire, being in very truth a desire for death, although the conscious mind does not recognize it as such. It is accordingly very dangerous, for there are many times when only the will to survive keeps the body from dissolution, when that body is wracked by suffering or tormented by the unrest of mind and soul. Apathy at such a time may make the difference between life and death.

Bildad's words, "For we (the mortal men) are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon the earth are but a shadow," is true from the standpoint of Spirit; the mortal is indeed a shadow flitting across the face of the Earth. So long as the ego is enmeshed in the lower desires, which Bildad signifies, this fact rests upon him like some terrible weight, reducing him to a state of deadly apathy. There can be no release from it except in the realization of the ALLNESS of Spirit.

The experiences related in the Bible are by no means exceptional in human psychological history. Many are the instances to be found in every age of characters known to have lived through similar experiences. The artist-seer, Leonardo da Vinci, for example, has stated that in his

"wanderings" he found himself at the mouth of an immense cavern wrapped in impenetrable darkness. He was filled both with fear and desire, fear of the dark and desire to ascertain if the cavern held the treasure he sought. Dante, similarly, speaks of how he wandered in a dark and lonely wood and became lost:

*In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray
Gone from the path direct, and even to tell
It were no easy task, how savage wild
That forest ...
How first I entered it I scarce can say,
Such sleepy dullness in that instant weighed
My senses down, when the true path I left.*

We have written elsewhere that the world of the soul — which is as truly a world as is the world of the senses — corresponds, according to known laws, with the state of consciousness of the individual. Thus, in one sense, the whole of the soul world (astral or desire world) may be looked upon allegorically, for its least phenomenon embodies part of the consciousness of the ego which awakens within its borders. The gloomy cavern of da Vinci, the savage, dark forest of Dante, are descriptions of certain conditions in the soul world which outpicture the state of consciousness of one who has "gone from the path direct."

In the Book of Job, it is Bildad who represents this state of consciousness.

The sophistry which characterizes a cunning mortal mind is shown in the counsel of Zophar, and Job's refusal to accept it proves one of the high moments in his quest:

Job 13:13-16

Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will.

Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put mine life in mine hand?

Though he slay me, yet will I trust him: but I will maintain mine own way before him.

When this note of spiritual integrity, perseverance and humility sounds within the caverns of the soul, the powers of the lower man are fast waning and the light of the spirit is gaining the ascendancy. From this time to the end of the controversy with the three friends, their arguments grow less persistent; job's affirmative attitude firmer and more authoritative.

Thus we learn that this portion of the Book is not a monotonous conversation between Job and the three friends. We find instead three dialogues, each pertaining to cycles of soul experience, in which the voice of the senses becomes weaker and weaker, until at last the thunder of

the spirit enunciates that triumphant climax first heralded in the coming of Eliphaz, whose words show the end of the sense life:

Job 15:20,21,24,28,29,30

The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.

A dreadful sound is In his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.

Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid: they shall prevail against him as a king ready to the battle.

And he that dwelleth in desolate cities and in houses which no man inhabiteth which are ready to become heaps.

He shall not be rich neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth.

He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.

Job realizes that he can lean upon no external counsel such as this, and he replies, "I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answereth? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in

my sours stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you!" (Job 16:2-4)

Knowing the Truth, indeed, Job is yet not sufficiently poised therein to escape the attacks of despair, and he is again plunged into the abysmal darkness of despair:

Job: 19,20,21

Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor!

Yet almost in the same breath, Job has proclaimed, "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." (Job 14:14-15) His expansion of consciousness now makes it possible for him to assert that even in the midst of an encompassing adversity his allegiance to Good must be supreme in his life. These verses have been called a "rocket which shoots above the darkness."

Job 17:6-9

He hath made me also a byword of the people: and aforetime I was as a tabret.

Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow and all my

members are as a shadow.

Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.

The righteous also shall hold on his way and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Into this flight of spiritual thought, the counsel of low desires pierces like an arrow of death; Bildad continues:

Job 18:8-14,18

For he is cast into a net by his own feet and he walketh upon a snare.

The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him.

The snare is laid for him on the ground, and a trap for him in the way.

Terror shall make him afraid on every side and shall drive him to his feet.

It shall devour the strength of his skin, even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength.

His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.

He shall be driven from light into darkness and chased out of the world.

Had Job been susceptible to counsel such as this, he would have fallen into an apathy from which only the death of the body could have released him. He would have been

in that condition called "a blind alley" of the soul, unable either to continue in spiritual progression, or to return to his first path. This does indeed happen to many. Death then intervenes to free the unhappy, self-imprisoned soul. However, the coercion of the senses can now no longer dominate Job's emancipated spirit. He has attained a new status, like that of Browning's triumphant Paracelsus when he sings,

I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first
I ask not: but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet or stifling snow
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive.

The pendulum of the emotional nature is not yet stilled in Spirit despite the new consciousness, for Job now feels alone in the world. It is this aloneness, a solitude not of body but of mind, which afflicts most grievously the neophyte who has come to the place where he is "in the world and yet not of it;" as Job describes it:

Job 19:13-19

He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.

My kinfolk have failed and my familiar friends have forgotten me.

They that dwell in mine house and my maids count me for a stranger: I am alien in their sight.

*I called my servant and he gave me no answer, I
intreated him with my mouth.*

*My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for
the children's sake of mine own body.*

*Yea, young children despised me: I arose and they
spake against me.*

*All my inward friends abhorred me: they whom I loved
are turned against me.*

Yet, following hard upon this lament of the lonely in heart
is the magnificent chant of Spirit, perhaps most famous of
all the great songs of Job:

Job 19:93-26

*Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were
printed in a book!*

*That they were graven with an iron pen and lead In the
rock forever!*

*FOR I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH, AND THAT
HE SHALL STAND AT THE LATTER DAY UPON THE
EARTH:*

*And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet
in my flesh (i.e. reincarnation) shall I see God.*

The friends are not silenced by the grandeur of Job's
faith. They are convinced still that Job must in some wise
have angered God to be thus afflicted. He is, they are
certain, a secret sinner. Zophar bids him (Job, 20th

chapter) remember that the wicked are ever punished under the Law of God: "The Heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the Earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God — meaning by all this that Job is that wicked man, since all these things have happened to him.

Job (21st chapter) replies patiently that on the contrary the wicked prosper: "Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Yet all of these wicked ones who prosper and despise God are conquered at last by the greatest of man's enemies, death. Job denies that he is to be classed with the wicked, despite the misfortunes which his friends are convinced prove him a wicked man as he well knows: "Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me!"

Job is nevertheless able to agree with Zophar's advice to the effect that wickedness is punished, for well he knows the insignificance of human knowledge unless it be

illuminated with the wisdom of Spirit. "How oft is the candle of the wicked put out and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! ... They are as stubble before the wind." Then he adds, "How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?" i.e., they state truth, but only part of the truth. He agrees with them, but insists that they have still not touched upon the real point of issue, the reason for sorrow and suffering in the lives of the righteous, for he will not admit that he has sinned against God.

Seeing that Job understands their attitude and is not deceived by their circumlocutions, the friends now lay tact aside, and upbraid him openly, with no pretense of commiseration. Eliphaz the Temanite (Job: 22nd chapter) answers Job bluntly: "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? ... Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?"

And he enumerates the misdoings of which he thinks Job is guilty:

Job 22:6-7,9

For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing.

Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.

Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.

Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubles thee;

Or darkness, that thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee.

And he concludes his argument by exhorting Job to repentance and conversion: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.... and he shall save the humble person. He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands."

Such counsel as this, well intentioned as it may be, represents the acme of materialism. It predicates a God who presides only over the material Earth and the things which are good in terms of the body (Eliphaz). In every man, this voice must have its moment for speech; but, as with Job, its counsel must be recognized as essentially wrong because it nowhere touches upon the integrity of the soul.

Again Job repeats the tale of his innocence in the face of so much contrary evidence (Job: 23rd chapter). He is at last beginning to realize that the purpose of sorrow is to purify and ennoble the soul. He realizes, as have many

others who have trod this path of tears, that God is most present when the clouds of life are lowest and darkest, and his words, descriptive of this realization, are a beacon light for all who have come after him. He has formerly been in perfect accord with the words of Eliphaz who said (22nd chapter) that "If thou return to the Almighty — then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks ... yea, thou shalt have plenty of silver." But he has now come to a higher understanding, as expressed in the 23rd chapter:

Job 23:10-13

But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

He then repeats that the wicked often go unpunished for their wickedness, and prosperity is therefore not to be taken as an infallible sign of holiness, just as poverty and sorrow are not an infallible sign of sin (Job: 24th chapter). But again, he insists that he has faith in the Law of God: "His eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of

the way and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar?"

To this Bildad the Shuhite replies (Job: 25th chapter). In him the voice of desire again comes to cloud the high resolve and supreme dedication to Spirit:

Job 25;4-6

How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of woman?

Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.

How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man which is a worm?

But Job's spiritual allegiance is firm. He cannot be even momentarily swayed.

Job 26:6-14

Hell is naked before him (God), and destruction hath no covering.

He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.

He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them.

He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.

He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the

day and night come to an end.

The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.

He divideth the sea with his power,,and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.

By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.

Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him, but the thunder of his power who can understand?

And Job continues his parable (Job: 27th chapter), saying:

Job 27:2-8

As God liveth, . . .

All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils:

My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.

God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.

My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous.

For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?

The three friends have not answered the question as to why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer; Job declares that he will now tell them the answer to that question, and this he does. "This," he says, "is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of the oppressors. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death and his widows shall not weep. Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver."

How true Job's statements are can be fully known only in the light of rebirth. If it seems that for an entire life time the wicked multiplies his possessions, heaping up silver as the dust and preparing fine raiment, yea, let him do so, for it shall at last be taken from him and given to those whom he has defrauded. "For God shall cast upon him, and not spare." Not only in purgatory shall the oppressor and miser suffer the torments of seeing his hard-won spoils dissipated by his heirs and eventually finding their way back into the hands of the innocent; but in his succeeding incarnations he must rehabilitate his character under the Law of Causation through continued suffering, until he understands that the

only treasure worth having is the gold laid up in heaven where thieves cannot break through and steal.

In the eyes of his friends, Job is conceited and self-righteous to the ultimate degree. They become more and more contemptuous of him as he refuses to admit to any sin against God, either hidden or revealed. They are resentful because, when they have advanced an argument which, as they think, proves him a sinner, Job accepts the argument and carries it to a conclusion which proves his innocence. They are no match for Job in dialectic and debate. And as the argument continues, we come to recognize that in Job we see a man who has actually progressed so far as to be beyond most human counsels, a man of superior intellect, a man of remarkable moral integrity, but lacking in that spiritual or interior wisdom which comes from God alone.

— ***Corinne Heline***