

JUNG ON JOB

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IF ever there were grist for the Jungian mill it was, one might suppose, the Book of Job. It can be read almost as a paradigm of the 'integration process' as Jung himself has repeatedly described it. For here we have a man 'perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil'—as well he might, never having experienced it, and abounding in cosy piety and worldly prosperity. He has, as Satan points out, 'a fence about him, and his house, and his substance'. Anybody can be 'good' in such narrow, sheltered confines as these; but he can hardly be a grown-up man let alone a hero, a prototype of the way of salvation through crucifixion and resurrection. Any psychologist should know he is heading for a crash. Any theologian should know that such easy and complacent virtue cannot continue long in this post-lapsarian world. Job's professed love for God—and God's for him—must grow up from this agreeable but infantile and unconscious, autoerotic phase. Job's idol of a merely intelligible and amiable God must be smashed: he must learn the lesson which the New Testament writers were to see it was the function of the Old Testament heroes to teach: that man's righteousness before God is not wrought by moral works without 'faith in the Absurd', the Unseen and the Unknown. So the psychologically and theologically inevitable happens: Job's fences are down; evils rush in. His sufferings are truly frightful, but they are also symptoms; and the loss of his domesticated animals and his children (concerning whose youthful high spirits he had been inordinately anxious), the chidings of the *anima* (his wife), and the psychosomatic eruptions (his boils) add up to a clear clinical picture. He cannot cope. He retires to the dunghill, the libido is introverted, and he is in the grips of intense neurotic depression and conflict.

The conversation with the three 'friends' begins, and goes on and on. Job suffers, they say, *ergo* he is morally guilty. Job knows he has not sinned, and morally he has not; but unconsciously he has disregarded the natural laws which require that a man must grow up, and that his physical, psychological and spiritual growth should keep pace with one another. He has forgotten (or has not

realized) that the Author of moral commandments and legal covenants is also the Author of man's physical, animal and psychological nature, and that its laws and demands cannot be disregarded with impunity. He oscillates miserably between confidence in Yahweh and ironic blasphemy (God is just not what he had supposed); he is overwhelmed with perplexity and self-pity. Job and his friends are all right, and all wrong: the problem is simply insoluble on the conscious level of rational argument about moral merit, and on the supposition that God is nothing but an indulgent Daddy or an equal party in commutative justice.

Then comes Elihu, the *fourth* friend (this surely should have appealed to Jung). He is young, inferior, hitherto silent and repressed; yet he claims to have (what the talkative three had quite overlooked) the *Spirit* of the Lord. He is something of an intuitive, a poet. He is sick of all this argument without issue, and must break down its fatal assumption of the competence of consciousness to resolve it. Like any skilful analyst (though certainly he preaches overmuch) he indeed grants what he can of the conscious convictions and values of his hearers; but he opens to them gradually another point of view: he stresses the vastness and incomprehensibility of God and the limitations of the conscious human standpoint: he 'will not level God with man' (32, 21). He silences the rationalistic and moralistic chatter by recalling that 'there is a *spirit* in man; and an *inspiration* of the Almighty gives him understanding' (32, 8). There are ways of God that are beyond wordy explanations (33, 13); but 'by a *dream*, in a *vision* by night, when deep sleep falleth upon men and they are sleeping in their beds; then he openeth the ears of men, and teaching instructeth them what they are to learn, that he may withdraw a man from what he is doing, and may deliver him from pride' (33, 15-17). (How could Jung have missed that?) It is from the unconscious and its 'royal road' that deliverance must come, and sure enough it does. The emotional tensions are transformed, in typical Jungian fashion, into the terrible, numinous but healing symbol of Yahweh in the whirlwind: a mandala of dynamic spirit. The amiable, comprehensible maker of covenants with Israel, the intelligible author and rewarder of the moral law, is *also* the *mysterium tremendum*, the Lord and Creator of the irrational and brute creation as well as of man's high ethical aspirations. In the vision Job also beholds Behemoth, the clumsy, mighty irrational brute power beneath

which he had squirmed; and he learns that precisely this 'evil' is 'the chief of the ways of God'. So the vision unites the opposites, the former evil is integrated into the totality of the Self; the 'captivity' of Job is 'turned', he emerges from the ordeal the adult man Yahweh had repeatedly urged him to be, and 'with twice as much as he had before'.

It has all gone according to schedule: one might almost think that the author had consulted Jung's psychological treatises before writing it. And one might suppose that Dr Jung would be very pleased. But he is not pleased at all; he is very—we might say blindly—angry. So blindly that he gives us a reading of Job no more subtle than that of Bernard Shaw's *Black Girl*. Jung identifies himself wholly with Job in his sufferings and with his sense of being treated abominably and insanely. His sufferings are just cruel sufferings and in no wise symptoms; only Yahweh is to blame for them. When Elihu appears, it is not at all as a mediator of the unconscious, but just as one heartless idiot more to maintain that Yahweh cannot, in spite of reason and experience, be wrong. (Yet this 'absurdity' is, after all, Job's own deep conviction also; without it there would be no opposites, no conflict, no tragedy.) There is no transformation of the libido into the symbol, and no transformation of Job—he merely submits, with his tongue in his cheek, to *force majeure*. The story has no dénouement at all: 'Yahweh abruptly breaks off his cruel game of cat and mouse. . . . Job's torments suddenly come to an end.' Anyway, they have been 'pointless', 'to no purpose'. Job's harrowing experiences have profited him nothing; the only lesson to be drawn is that God is a beast. Yahweh in any case has nothing to teach Job; he is 'unconscious', 'at odds with himself', contradictory, irritable, irrational, unstable, childishly hungry for love and admiration; in short 'a prehistoric menagerie'. On the contrary, it is Job who 'shows himself superior to his divine partner both intellectually and morally', and it is Job who will, and does, teach God. Yahweh is a slow learner, but after further graded instructions from Ezechiel, Daniel, the Sapiential writers and Enoch, he himself becomes man: not, however, *propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem*, but for his own self-improvement. Unfortunately, however, he incarnates only his 'light side', to the neglect of the 'dark', in the guiltless Christ who 'did no evil'. So the last state is worse than the first: evil is more repressed and unconscious than ever and threatens a

terrible revenge. The coming of Christ heralds the reign of Anti-christ: the triumph of almighty evil through atomic fission. There are, however, signs that God is learning better the dark, feminine side of his all too masculine nature: there is the Woman of the Apocalypse, and there is the papal definition of the Assumption: hints of a coming, and more satisfactory, rebirth of the God-Man.

The summary of the argument is of course unfair, but no more astounding than many passages within it.¹ It is not surprising that some of Jung's friends, jealous for his honour in his old age, and concerned for the repute and future of his school, have regretted the publication of this document, or that the German original met with considerable indignation. Psychiatric journals appear, on the whole, to have received it with discreet silence. But the *bien-pensants*, if not also the genuinely devout, could hardly restrain their complaints of impiety and blasphemy. Protestant divines were particularly censorious²: they seem not to have read the preface addressed *Lectori Benevelo*. But Jung hardly invites their benevolence. Such a *reductio ad impossibile* of the private interpretation of Scripture, when it really succeeds in cutting loose from all tradition and every *consensus fidelium*, must seem a cruel caricature. Nor can it be pleasing to be told that the Pope's definition of the Assumption is thoroughly enlightened and up-to-date, while at its critics (the Anglican Archbishops included) is hurled the supreme insult of being obscurantist and behind the times—as well as of being deaf to the Holy Ghost. Catholics will welcome Jung's insights into the psychological and cultural significance of the definition, and of contemporary Marian devotion generally; but they will be hesitant to open their arms to this gift-bearing Greek. For Pius XII and C. G. Jung seem hardly to be talking about the same thing in their affirmations of the Assumption. According to the latter, while the visionary figure of Apocalypse 12 is 'an ordinary woman, not a goddess' (for all that she is apparently the monstrous titaness Leto, who begat Apollo by leaning against a mountain!), the mother of Christ, being an immaculate virgin, is

1 *Answer to Job*. By C. G. Jung, translated from the German by R. F. C. Hull. (Routledge & Kegan Paul; 12s. 6d.)

2 A very noteworthy exception is the deeply sympathetic but critical *Assessment of Jung's 'Answer to Job'* by the Rev. Erastus Evans, obtainable for 1s. 7d. from the Guild of Pastoral Psychology, 124 Pepys Road, London, S.W.20. A brief but penetrating critique from the standpoint of a Catholic exegete appeared in *Dominican Studies*, 1952, pp. 228 ff., Both are to be recommended for their presentation of other aspects of this many-sided book.

'different from all other mortals': hardly flesh and blood at all.

This is only one of the many ideas in this volume which may give some readers the feeling that the author is not in earnest, even that he is pulling their legs. Is he, after the manner of his own 'Yaliweh', duped by some satanic trickster into purposely torturing his friends and devotees? Or is he, more rationally, purposely putting them to the test to discover how much they will stand rather than admit the fallibility of their master—or how many, more Job-like, will venture to observe that the Emperor has appeared in public without his clothes? But the bizarre ideas will astonish the educated Christian readers less than the naïve misunderstandings and misrepresentations of elementary doctrine. Can Jung really suppose that sacrifice and worship are for God's benefit rather than man's? Or that the commandments are or could be directives for divine behaviour as well as human—or would he subject God also to the laws of gravitation or thermodynamics? Has any Bible-reader really supposed that 'Christianity burst upon world history as an absolute novelty'? How does he charge a religion, which puts the Cross at its centre, with repressing consciousness of evil? How has he missed the very essence of the Christian's situation which is to be at once a child of God by baptism and a child of wrath by inheriting a grace-deprived nature? He quotes St John's, 'He that is born of God commits no sin', but ignores his reiterated 'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves . . . make him a liar.' Thereby he misses the conscious duality in John (yet this is vital for understanding the Apocalypse) —and in grown-up Christians generally.

But when we have read Jung's preface ('I beg of you, dear reader, not to overlook it', he writes), we must see that all such questions and observations are largely beside the point. Nor will a Catholic, firm in the security of his faith, 'answer' the book by drawing from his treasure things new and old and showing how they sort out and dispose of the countless points which the book raises. Jung has remarked elsewhere that there must be continual misunderstanding between the theologian and the empirical psychologist over their use of the word 'God'; for 'the theologian will naturally assume that the metaphysical *Ers Absolutum* is meant', while the empiricist 'just as naturally means a mere statement, at most an archetypal motif which preforms such statements.' It appears, then, that Jung employs names like 'Yahweh'

and nouns like 'God' to function not as signs but as things (to adopt modern terminology): as second, not first, *intentiones* (to adopt scholastic terminology). Such usage is legitimate, though perhaps unusual even among empiricists, but we must allow Jung to use words in the way he chooses, and (difficult though it may sometimes be to construe some of his sentences in his own way) try to understand them accordingly. Thus it emerges from this preface that in statements about 'God' or 'Yahweh' he is talking about endopsychic images considered as psychological phenomena and not as signs for what they merely represent. He is 'quite conscious that . . . none of my reflections touches the essence of the Unknowable'. He is talking all the time of the interaction between archetypes and ego-consciousness, personifying the former because of their seeming autonomous behaviour. When, for instance, the book says that Yahweh is unconscious, or that aspects of him become conscious, we should understand it to mean that he (or it) is unconscious to the human ego, or that aspects emerge into human consciousness—the only consciousness which the rigid empiricist, who rejects the validity of inference, will recognize. We have suggested, in our *God and the Unconscious*, that for Catholic theology also 'progressive revelation' consists precisely in such an enlargement of human consciousness, and it might be expected that Jung's book could be read as a contribution to the history of that process. Read from this standpoint, it certainly offers several illuminating and exciting insights. But, generally speaking, it cannot be so read.

For Jung deliberately reads the Scriptures through a pair of highly distorting spectacles. Although he is not writing of God but of God-images, he is not writing directly even of Job's images of God, but rather of his own images of Job's images. This method effectively obscures an objective and dispassionate reading of the Scriptures against their own authentic historical background: it is an interpretation of 'God' at several removes. Its aim is 'not to give a cool and carefully considered exegesis that tries to be fair in every detail, but a purely subjective reaction': to present 'the way in which a modern man with a Christian education and background comes to terms with the divine darkness which is unveiled in the book of Job'. Jung will 'not write in a coolly objective manner, but must allow my emotional subjectivity to speak if I want to describe what I feel when I read certain books of the

Bible. . . . I shall express my affect fearlessly and ruthlessly.' What he offers us is the highly feeling-toned reaction of 'a layman and a physician who has been privileged to see deeply into the psychic life of many people'. It is an angry book, but it is an anger born of experience and compassion for mankind in its contemporary quandary, and in the disastrous inadequacy of its supposed Christian education to enable it to come to terms with contemporary realities. The preface is headed with the text, 'I am distressed for thee my brother'; and we recall Jung's declaration which, if it cannot win our approval, must yet command our respect:

'I do not write for church circles, but for those who stand *extra Ecclesiam*. I associate myself on purpose and deliberately with those who are outside the Church. . . . The Church is my Mother, but the Spirit of my Father draws me away from her into the wide world and its battlefields.'

Even an instructed Christian may expect an explosion when an adult, whose religious development has become fixated at the kindergarten level of bourgeois morality *plus* 'a Friend for little children above the bright blue sky', becomes confronted with the realities of life, of the ways of God both in the Bible and in contemporary events. It is understandable that he feels a close kinship with the disillusioned, tortured Job. Yet it is a fact that the acquaintance of millions of our contemporaries with Christianity has not reached beyond this stage. The violence of the abreaction is understandable, but its infantile quality may still amaze readers who are unfamiliar with abreactions. We might suppose, for instance, that the text, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth', might call a halt to the tantrums, and even induce the author to reflect that his grievance is hardly adult. But the only reaction is that of the spoiled child: 'It would be quite understandable if the Laodiceans did not *want* too much of this "love".' Other remarks about Christian ideas of love and goodness, otherwise unintelligible or merely abusive (e.g. 'To believe that God is the Summum Bonum is impossible for a reflecting consciousness'), become clear commonsense if they be understood as the reactions of a consciousness which, religiously speaking, has become fixated at the oral phase, for which 'love' means the egotistic 'I want', and 'goodness' only an elementary *bonum delectabile*—perhaps just 'good luck'. 'Reflecting' or not, such a consciousness is a primitive one which has as yet scarcely differentiated religion from magic,

which has never heard of the logician's niceties about the analogical predication of *bonum*, or come within miles of experiencing the saints' joy in God: St Paul's 'All things work together for good to those who love God' or St Julie Billiart's 'How good the good God is!'

'One would be very ill advised', Jung remarks in quite another connection, 'to identify me with such a childish standpoint.' Nobody who has read his more 'objective' books or who has noted the deep insights in this book—let alone anyone who knows him personally—could make such a mistake about one of the most mature and advanced spirits of our time. Why then, we must ask, does he identify himself with such childish standpoints here? To this there seems no answer except his distress for his brother, his deliberate identification with those *extra Ecclesiam*. An analyst must give his heart to those who suffer and require his aid; and even though he may not lose his head he must run the risk of exposing himself to, and being infected by, their complaints. This book should be neither laughed off nor should it provoke anger or disgust. It does not belong to the large and worthless library written by cranks who wrest the Scriptures to prove some crackpot theory. It has—and this is its most distressing feature—the ingenuity and power, the plausibility and improbability, the clear-sightedness and blindness of the typical paranoid system which rationalizes and conceals an even more unbearable grief and resentment. Its depth and tragedy we can only guess from the fact that it calls upon, not other men, but the hallowed names and symbols of God to carry the projection of the criminal and pathological persecutor. A Christian reader should hear, beneath all the provocation, behind the seeming mockery of all he holds most sacred and most dear, a profoundly moving cry of anguish, a reproachful signal of distress.

But he should also observe that, destructive and childish as much of this book seems to be, its aims are eminently constructive, and that its challenge to ourselves and our contemporaries is imperative and urgent. We must regret that the author seems so often to bark up the wrong tree; but we should see that his attack is essentially directed on Victorian, liberal, diluted, one-sided pictures of God and his Christ which are utterly inadequate to the tasks which our age imposes upon humanity. We can only agree with Jung that these obsolete and insipid idols must be destroyed

if a new realization of the God-Man in his wholeness is to be born in human minds and hearts, and humanity itself is to survive. But this precisely is the constant lesson to be drawn from a dispassionate reading of holy Scripture itself, and it is seldom more explicit than in the Book of Job itself. It is also the lesson of the history of the Church, whose task is to carry on and develop 'what Jesus began to do and to teach'—what Jung calls the 'continuing incarnation of God which began with Christ'. We too await another coming of Christ, not in meekness only, but in the full exercise of his power and majesty, and for 'the *hieros gamos*, the marriage of the son with the mother bride.'³ The pity is that in his violent reaction against an emasculated version of Christianity, he has failed to see that he is, in spite of himself, on the side of the Bible and of authentic orthodox Christianity. Blake wrote of Milton that he was on the devil's side without knowing it; we may say of Jung that he is on Yahweh's side even when he seems to mock at him.

In the very last sentence of the book, when all its *Sturm und Drang* have subsided, Jung leaves us in no doubt that he has known the answer to Job all along:

'Even the enlightened person remains what he is, and is never more than his own limited ego before the One who dwells in him, whose form has no visible boundaries, who encompasses him on all sides, fathomless as the abysses of the earth, and vast as the sky.'

What is this if not—though couched in more modern language—the answer to Job; precisely Yahweh's answer to Job in the Book of Job?

3 Jung asserts that the *hieros gamos* with which the Apocalypse closes 'takes place in heaven . . . high above the devastated world'. This is unfortunately characteristic of his reading of a 'pie in the sky' Christianity into the Bible, even (in this case) to the extent of defying the explicit text. Apoc. 21, 1-3 could hardly be more clear to the contrary: there is 'a new heaven and a new earth', the old heaven-earth opposition is destroyed, the bride 'comes down out of heaven from God' and the 'dwelling of God is with men'.