CHAPTER V

GOD'S SPEECH
(DIVINE SPEECH)
In the Bible the Divine speech comprises of the chapters 38, 39, 40 & 41.

"After the naive story of the prologue in heaven and the sophisticated dialogue on earth a word is spoken from heaven to earth by God himself. He is the Yaweh of the prologue and he addresses the Job of the dialogue, the tormented, decent, rebellious man who has raged against the human situation and demanded that God "Justify his ways to men". The author with the audacity of genius, tackles the problem of putting in God's mouth, words that will not be an anti-climax after the tempestuous eloquence of his hero.

"The divine speech sweeps away all the irrelevancies and false problems in which the argument with the friends had entangled Job. It puts Job's problem in a new perspective and opens up a vista in which, although still without an answer, it ceases to require one. Throughout this long speech Yahweh does not make a single statement. He only puts to Job, majestically, patiently, ironically, a series of unanswerable questions. A critic should know where of he speaks; and he who would "Correct God" must himself have divine knowledge. Yahweh pretends to believe this of Job and cross examines him on the divine activity in the universe. If Job is incapable of the simplest answer, how can he and Yahweh hold debate?
How can Yahweh even explain to him the deeper mystery of his providence over men and his treatment of those who are dear to him? The questions cover the most familiar phenomena of nature, the stars, the weather, land and sea, a selection of beasts and birds. Everywhere are marvels, everywhere is mystery. Two points clearly emerge; One is the loving concern of Yahweh for his innumerable creatures, even or especially, those most independent and far removed from man; The other is the infinite variety and richness of creation, extending to beings that to men seem grotesque or monstrous. In the divine wisdom they have their place, and God finds pleasure in them. The analogy holds in the moral order, where also his ways are not man's ways."

The silence of heaven is broken to answer Job's challenging cries. In dealing with Job God was not acting haphazardly but according to consistent, intelligent design. All the speeches upto the present stage in the book both by Job and the four friends, had sent shadows across that truth. The format of God's response is to ply Job with rhetorical questions, to each of which Job must plead ignorance. God does not say anything about Job's suffering, nor offer any clue about divine justice. Job is neither indicted nor declared innocent. God does not humiliate or condemn Job which would have taken place if the counsellors had been
right. So by implication Job is vindicated and later his vindication is directly affirmed. The divine discourses, then, succeed in bringing Job to complete faith in God's goodness without his receiving a direct answer to his questions.

Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me

(XXXVIII - 3).

Strahan says "It denotes man, not in friality but 2 in his strength, man as a combatant. Repeatedly Job had used language:

Then call thou, and I will answer: Or let me speak, and answer thou me

(XIII - 22)

which denotes that God would find in him a worthy combatant. He reveals His mighty power to make the frail creature bow in abject confession of need before a fresh revelation of the mighty creator so that the combatant may become a humble worshipper.
Job is further enlightened with the marvels of the inanimate world. He was questioned whether he was a partner with God in creation, initiated in all its mysteries. In this connection the author poetically speaks of stars and angels alike joining in the praise on creation's morning. He magnificently depicts the sea bursting forth from the womb, with clouds and darkness as its swaddling clothes, not as a rebel, but as a creature of God, called forth by God and controlled by God.

Job is reminded of his fleeting life in contrast to the antiquity of the world and God's eternal being. The effect of the dawn of the wicked, who, love darkness rather than light, is then described. The dawn shakes them out of their treasured refuge. The effect of the dawn on earth is portrayed.

Job's ignorance of hidden things is questioned. He is asked if he has roamed at large through the deep springs that supply the sea, and through the mysteries of the underworld. God questions Job whether he knows the extent of the earth's surface and is versed in knowledge about the home of light and darkness and whether he can conduct them to their proper spheres and then bring them home again. It implies that even natural phenomena are a mystery to Job.
They are snow and hail, the artillery of heaven, wind, rain, lightening, frost and ice. Let not the proud man imagine that he is the sole object of the divine providence. God only sends His rain 'on the just and the unjust':

That ye may be children of your
Farther which is in heaven for
He maketh his sun to rise on
the evil and on the good, and
sendeth rain on the just and
the unjust.

(Mathew, V-45)

The poet of Job makes him remember also the dreary, uninhabited regions of the world. The inference is that providence is a much more involved affair than Job had imagined. God's power over the universe is eulogized. Job is heavily taxed with the rhetorical questions. For instance does Job control the constellations and the heavens? There are various identifications of the zodiac, the morning or evening star.

And he put down the idolatrous priests
whom the kings of Judah had ordained to
burn incense in the high places round
about Jerusalem; them also that burned
incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the
moon, and to the planets, and to all the
host of heaven.

(II Kings, XXIII-5)

Verse 33 of Chap.38 of Job refers to the popular belief that
the heavenly bodies exercised an influence over the affairs
of men.

Further elaborating on the marvels of animal
kingdom, in chapters, 38-39 the author draws a contrast
between man and God. Man is disposed to kill the lion,
certainly not to assist in finding food for him or for the
cubs. But God, on the other hand cares for him and for the
cubs. In this connection the author of Job who had accused
God of savagery, remembers God's attitude even to wild
beasts.

The reference for the wild ass is:

Who hath sent out the wild ass
free? or who hath loosed the bounds
of the wild ass?

(XXXIX-5)
to an animal quite different from the domestic ass, wandering in herds over vast stretches of the country. Here the emphasis is on its freedom. It is as high spirited as if it had been suddenly released from captivity. This is not a work of man. The emphasis in the reference to the wild ox is the animal's strength and unreliability. Can Job use this creature for agriculture purposes as men use the tame ox. Only the God who created him alone can control him.

The pinions and plumage of love is a reference to the proverbial cruelty of the ostrich.

Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

(Lamentations. IV-3)

The discussion of ostrich is based on the popular belief that she neglects her young ones. There have been various explanations of this belief. (1) The bird sometimes wanders away from her eggs during the daytime and loses her way back, (2) Apparently some eggs are laid outside the nest, and either by accident or design, those eggs are used for food for the newly-hatched chicks. The broken pieces of
egg-shell seem to have given rise to the view that the ostrich neglects her young. Of the modern ostrich the Encyclopaedia Britannica writes "The parents display great solicitude for their young."

The ostrich has no fear means that she does not care if her labour in laying eggs goes all for nothing.

Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.

(XXXIX - 17).

The proverbial foolishness of the Ostrich is ascribed to an act of God. Man does not know the reason for the act of God. He cannot know for he does not possess the Creator's wisdom which ranges the universe.

Similarly God questions Job if he had given the strength to the horse thus:

Hast thou given the horse strength?

hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

(XXXIX - 19)

"Perhaps the author is comparing the arched neck of the war horse to the bow in the sky in stormy weather. The horse is the only domestic animal in the discourses. This fact,
though unexpected serves the lord's purpose, since it is specifically the war horse that is in view. Horses and locusts are compared also in several other books of the Bible.

...... cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars.

(Revelations IX - 7)

And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

(Revelations IX - 7)

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

(Joel, II-4)

The imagery of the hawk and eagle further startles Job. He is questioned if his wisdom can make the hawk fly and stretch her wings towards south and if he can make the eagle mount up at his command to make its nest at the apex point.
Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom,
and stretch her wings toward the south?
Doth the eagle mount up at thy
command, and make her nest on high

XXXIX. 26 - 27

'Toward the South' refers to the southward migration of the
to refer to the southward migration of the bird when the cold weather comes. The description of the
eagle powers and habits is particularly vivid. Job is
further shown his human friability by being reminded that he
has no say in such matters.

The mighty power of God is vindicated. Job's
self-esteem is shattered. Ironically God had taken Job at
his own evaluation as a combatant. God asks Job, whether he
has any answer to offer after listening to the impressive
commentary upon the wonders of nature both animate and
inanimate which the God of nature had graciously granted him.
But the revelation of Heaven has made the defiant combatant a
humble worshipper. Job, duly chastened and no longer "like a
prince", is unwilling to speak another word of complaint.

Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer
thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

XL - 4

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Here we have a classic illustration of the results which must always follow when the silence of heaven is broken, when the almighty God appears with a fresh revelation of himself, to which man listens in that posture of faith without which it is impossible to praise him.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
but now my eye seeth thee.
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent
in dust and ashes.

(XLII. 5 - 6)

Job could have bitten out his tongue for some of the hot words of complaint which he had poured out. At such times man sees himself in his true light. It is not a confession of sin, although there is no doubt that Job would have immediately acknowledged the sinfulness of some of his words and attitudes. It is rather a confession of insignificance. As he locked away from himself to the God he was seeing in a more impressive way than ever before he saw himself in a new perspective. In Job's reply we are rather in touch with an advance to a more adequate view of God and at least something of what Paul called the 'secret and hidden wisdom of God'.
But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

(I Corinthians. II-7)

Man is not in a position to comprehend every aspect of the meaning of the human situation. Job came to the realisation that what had been and still was, a puzzle to him was no puzzle to God.

At this stage of the book it would be a greater tax on our credulity, if Job were portrayed carrying on his one-man war with God. In his eagerness to prove his integrity he had travelled dangerously towards imagining that he could attain equality with God. He deserved the divine irony in such a word as:

Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.

(XL 10)

To have persisted in his attitude would have pushed him right over the brink of the sin behind all other sins, to which the serpent lured Adam and Eve in the glittering dream.
For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

(Genesis. III - 6)

But the Satanic whisper cannot survive the divine word. That word brought a transformation which the word of man had been totally unable to achieve. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu had all poured out words without speaking a single word which brought conviction or comfort to Job. Job's replies had also failed to interpret the mystery. They had also darkened God's counsel by words without knowledge.

Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

(XXXVIII-2)

The word of God came and the strife of words was over. It did not come through a carefully reasoned argument, dealing a death blow to Job's intellectual difficulties by its inexorable logic. It did not come through a cut-and-dried explanation of the strands of suffering in Job's experience. There is silence on such issues. The silence about the
question of retribution which had bulked so large in speech after speech. Silence about the disciplinary aspect of suffering. The word came through a fresh vision of the almighty God, and majestic God behind the marvels of animate and inanimate nature, painstakingly attentive to the unexpected and the insignificant towering above human might and wisdom.

The word in the vision convinced Job that he could trust such a God. It brought home to his heart the realisation that providence was a much more involved and painstaking affair than he had imagined it to be. He had been like a man living in a stuffy room, whose closed windows had been shutting out God's clean, sweet air and whose drawn blinds had been excluding God's sunshine. With the appearance of God, the windows had been thrown open and the blinds had gone up. God did not answer Job. He healed the wound of his heart and brought quite resignation flooding back into his heart. This was not a man, who was 'cowed' or bludgeoned but a man who was convinced that all was well with the world because the everlasting arms could not fail. Yet Job had never heard the most impressive divine word, which has given mankind the clearest vision of God, and the most indisputable evidence that God can and must be trusted - the Word of the cross. The vision of the God of nature made Job a worshiper.
How much more can the vision of the God of Calvary bring the sufferer to his knees, lost in wonder, love and praise.

We find God's power in the moral order. Unlike the first discourse, God here addresses the issue of his own justice and Job's futile attempt at self-justification. Hitherto in Chs. 21 and 24 Job had complained about God's indifference towards the wickedness of evil men. Here the Lord asserts his ability and determination to administer justice which is a matter in which Job has no control. Therefore by implication Job is admonished to leave all this including his own vindication under the power of God's strong arm.

Hast thou arm like God? or can'st thou thunder with a voice like him?

(XL - 9)

God asks Job if he is prepared to hold on to his own innocence at the price of rejecting the justice of God. The thought now swings from the natural order of the universe of the moral order. If Job has the mighty arm and the commanding voice of God, he can take God's glorious garments. He can mount the throne of the universe, to send the thunder bolts of his anger speeding against the proud and the wicked. Only then he can pass an intelligent judgment upon the divine
ordering of things and earn the divine well done praise. Thus God lauds the creature.

We come across a description of two monsters created by God. They are (1) Behemoth usually identified as the hippopotamus, (2) Leviathan - usually identified as the crocodile. Here the challenge is whether Job can assume sway over the material order as represented by these formidable creatures? It is a much more formidable undertaking to stand forth as a combatant against their creator.

By this turn in the argument the Lord closes the last possible escape route by which Job might have tried to make sense of his predicament. The adversities of life can be brought within a framework of logical explanation if one is able to say that God is not wise enough always to make our circumstances match what we may deserve.

In His speeches to Job, the Lord opened on the theme of loving, detailed and provident wisdom. The second theme is God's power in the moral order, His ability to abase the proud and to tread down the wicked. Thus His moral justice is asserted. The marvels of physical strength of Behemoth and Leviathan, are intended to point to the awesome power of God. To men these giants represent untamable strength, but yet they must submit if their creator brings
near his sword. How powerful then God is in Job's sight. Along the line of this type of argument God brings Job to his final position of repentance and faith. Now job has no other alternative but to rescind his way of argument from denying the wisdom, justice or power of God. He has simply to set humbly and truthfully upon God.

The proposal to capture the behemoth forms a transition to the similar proposal concerning the leviathan. God used Leviathan as a symbol of something powerful and uncontrollable. The formidable qualities of the crocodile are emphasised in lines in chapter 41 from 1 to 9.

Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more.

Behold, the hope of him is in vain; shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?

(XLI. 8-9)

Ironical questions run through the passage. They are: Can Job look upon the crocodile as a suitable object on which to demonstrate his fishing ability? Can Job look upon him as a domestic servant or as a plaything. Verse 8, tells according to New Bible Commentary thus: "Meddle with him in any of these ways, and you will rue the day." If a creature
For who hath known the mind of the lord?
Or who hath been his counsellor.
Or who hath first given to him
and it shall be recompensed unto him again?
(Romans: XI. 34-35)

God is indebted to no man. Man has given him nothing; but he has given now everything. So it is preposterous for man to imagine that he can stand on an equal footing with God.

The Epilogue opens with the condemnation of the three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. The omission of Elihu from public censure is significant and may have bearing upon his repudiation of the traditional theology that suffering necessarily implies sin and is always in proportion to its gravity. The three friends are charged with not speaking of God what is right. Their view of the divine character was erroneous, especially in the case of God's rule upon earth and His dealing with men. Job, on the other hand, is commended. This, of course, does not mean that everything he had said was right. The narrative continues to portray the integrity of Job. The patriarch freely forgives the hurt that false words had given and even makes intercession for
the three pseudo-comforters. God upholds Job publicly as a righteous man.

The following passage provides a beautiful picture of the spiritual and maternal tokens of this divine approval of which the spiritual tokens are of supreme significance.

And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against, thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams and go to my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly in that ye have not spoken of me what is right, like my servant Job.

So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.
And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

(XLII. 7-10)

In 7 and 8 verses God refers to Job as my servant. Here one is reminded of the suffering Servant of Isaiah for comparison with Job.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

(Isaiah : LIII.3-5)
He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.

(Isaiah LIII-11).

The above lines refer to the Lord Himself who suffered on the cross. Job finally sees God that God and his purposes are supreme. Job and his three friends and Elihu, had only heard of God but now Job has seen God with the eyes of faith and spiritual understanding. He can therefore accept God's plan for his life which includes suffering. To his humility Job adds repentance for the presumptuous words he had spoken to God. Despite Job's mistakes in word and attitude while he suffered he is now commended and the counsellors are rebuked. Why because even in his rage, even when he challenged God, he was determined to speak honestly before Him. The counsellors on the other hand, mouthed many correct and often beautiful creedal statements but without living knowledge of the God they claimed to honour. Job spoke to God. They only spoke about God. Even worse, their spiritual arrogance caused them to claim knowledge which they did not possess. They simply presumed to know why Job was suffering.
Then God commends Job for his sincere quest for truth and censures the friends for their opposition to that quest. The large sacrifice mentioned in verse 8 (42) is surely meant to indicate how much they were out of favour with God. Out of the welter of discussion, Job stands as the champion of intellectual and religious freedom with the seal of the God of truth stamped upon his disfigured brow:

... and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

(XLII-8)

The passage is a striking warning that intrepid honesty in facing the facts of existence is much more pleasing to God than timid clinging to familiar and uncomfortable ideas in the teeth of evidence. Finally God honours Job's prayers for his friends. Thus Job enters the galaxy of the great interceders - Abraham, praying for Abimelech, and Moses for Pharaoh etc. The inference is that the costly sacrifice was not enough and prayer was necessary. This is a hint that orthodox ritual was insufficient to deal with human sin.
For thou desirest not sacrifice; else
I would give it: thou delightest not in
burnt-offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, thou wilt not despise.

(Psalms LI. 16-17)

Job's prayer for those who had abused him is a
touching Old Testament illustration of the high Christian
virtue which our Lord taught in the following verse:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies,
bless them that curse you, do good to
them that hate you, and pray for them
which despitefully use you, and
persecute you;

(Matthew: V-44)

Job's prayer marked the turning point back to prosperity for
him. In passing from the spiritual tokens of God's approval
to the material, it is striking to note that it was when Job
was praying for others that his material prosperity was
restored. It was when his attention was focussed on
spiritual interests of others that all other things were added to him. The cosmic contest with the Accuser is now over, and Job is restored. "He renounces the 'hubris' into which he had fallen and confesses that God's ways and plans are infinitely beyond his understanding." No longer is there a reason for Job to experience suffering - unless he was sinful and deserved it, which is not the case. God does not allow us to suffer for no reason, and even though the reason may be hidden in the mystery of his divine purpose.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

(Isaiah LV. 8-9).

It is never for us to know in this life about His ways and His plan for us. We must trust in Him as the God who does only what is right.
REFERENCES


