



THE DIVINE STRUGGLE FOR “I” AND “THOU” VI:

Empowerment

ONCE GOD BEGAN replacing the possessive consciousness of the bicameral mind with the self-conscious “I,” recipient humans struggled to cope with what self-consciousness meant, how it involved what they were to do, and how the self-conscious “I” related to “others.”¹ In light of their history, most human beings assumed that the “I” of self-consciousness was intended to instruct, lead and dominate “others.”

This inevitably brought the revival of imperial power structures — e.g., Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. The presiding rulers regarded their self-conscious “I” as the expression of God. They further believed that they had either achieved or been granted divinity themselves. Other human beings endowed with the self-conscious “I” reluctantly submitted to the reigning power structures but often covertly cultivated their own preeminence.

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Empowerment and the Chosen People

It was in this context that the Chosen People entered and conquered what became the land of Israel. Meanwhile, priests represented the people to God, and prophets represented God to the people. Then the people demanded that kings preside over them. Thus, the elders of Israel came to Samuel and insisted that he “make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:4, 5).

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However, it is often overlooked that, throughout this critical period of Israel's growth and development, God and/as his "alter ego" exerted the "I" of his own self-consciousness to bring order out of chaos on behalf of his Chosen People and other nations.² This is reflected in biblical legends and stories. Thus, it was God who inflicted the Egyptians with the plagues and drowned their soldiers in the sea (Exodus 3:20; 14:26-28). It was God who said, ". . . I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite . . ." (Exodus 33:2). It was God who intervened to punish Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron: "And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:2). Later, with the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, it was God who intervened: "And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" (Numbers 16:35).

Numerous subsequent biblical stories of God's intervention for his people over more than half a millennium could be cited.³ Thus, the self-conscious "I" painfully emerged. It was only with the dispersion of the ten northern tribes of Israel by the Assyrians (722 BCE) and the exile of the southern tribes by the Babylonians (586 BCE) that the struggle for the expression of the self-conscious "I" seemed to moderate.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the emergence of the loving, self-conscious "I" and "Thou" was neither peaceful nor pleasant. Nor has it remained so. The struggle, therefore, must next be pursued.

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Endnotes

1. See "The Divine Struggle for 'I' and 'Thou' IV: Possession," *Outlook* (January 2010); "The Divine Struggle for 'I' and 'Thou' V: Self-Consciousness," *Outlook* (February 2010).
2. See "The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The 'Other Side' of God," *Outlook* (January 2008).
3. See Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995).