

THE LORD GOD AS AN OLD MAN BULGARIAN FOLK-TALE

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In the beginning, when man began to plough, when he had cut a furrow from one end to the other, he lifted his plough on to his shoulder, and when he had carried it back to the same end that he had begun from, he began again to plough thence. The Lord, in the form of an old man, passed by and said to him, 'Not thus, my son, but when you make a furrow, turn your plough round at the same place to which you have cut the furrow, and plough back to the end from which you began.' And thus the ploughman learnt to plough aright, as people plough at this day.

Thence the Lord went away in the form of an old man, and saw a woman who was weaving at a loom, and putting the thread, three threads at a time, into her mouth; she bit the thread off at one end, and began again at the same side. The Lord said to her, 'Not thus, daughter; but put the thread hither and thither with two hands without biting the thread off.' And she learnt to weave as people weave at this day.

The next day the Lord again passed alongside of the ploughman in a different guise, and asked him: 'Who taught you, my son, to plough thus?' He replied to him: 'The Lord God, in the form of an old man.' The Lord blessed him, and said: 'A day to plough and a year to eat!' Afterwards he passed by the woman and asked her: 'Who taught you, daughter, to weave thus?' She replied: 'Myself, my very own self, quickly, quite quickly.' Then the Lord said to her: 'A year to weave, that you may carry it under the arm!'

They say, moreover, that at that time men had command not only over all animals, but also over inanimate things; but later, they say, it was altered when men became wicked. For instance, when a man had cut logs of wood and piled them in a heap, he struck them with a stick, and they went of themselves whither they were required to go. But a certain woman having cut logs and struck them to make them go, they started; but she, being tired of walking beside them on foot, seated herself at top, and the logs resisted. She struck them on one side, she struck them on the other, but they didn't move any whither. Then she unfastened her girdle, and put them on her back. On the way God showed himself to her, and said to her: 'Since you are wicked, instead of your riding on them, let them ride on you.'

When the Lord walked about the earth and blessed it, he went first to a herdsman. He was lying on his back under a tree, a pear-tree; his pitcher, in which he fetched water for himself, stood by empty. The Lord, in the form of an old man, asked him: 'My son, is there any water in the pitcher?' He said to him: 'No.' The Lord said to him: 'Go, my son, to fetch me a little

water, that the old man may drink.’ The herdsman made a sign to him with his foot: ‘There is where the spring is; if you’re thirsty, go, drink.’ The Lord then gave the word that all the herd should run off as if assailed by the gadfly; then, when they began all to run in one direction, the herdsman took his hat in his hand and started off, and as he ran after them thought: ‘How I have sinned against God!’

Then the Lord went to a shepherd. The shepherd also had a pitcher. The Lord asked him: ‘My son, have you any water?’ He replied to him: ‘There is water, old man, but I cannot go to fetch it myself, or the sheep will disperse.’ Then said the Lord: ‘Go, my son; I will watch them.’ When the shepherd went off for the water, the Lord took the shepherd’s staff, and when he had stuck it into the ground, placed the shepherd’s cloak upon it, and blessed the sheep. They became quiet and tranquil in the shade. During the shepherd’s absence up came a wolf to obtain the appointed tribute which he received every day from the shepherd. The Lord gave him a lamb of little value. The wolf, discontented, did not choose to take it, but darted forward and seized another, which he liked. Then the Lord took the shepherd’s trumpet, and struck him on the loins—on the spine. From this it has remained a property of the wolf that his loins are just as weak as his neck is strong. But he carried off the lamb which he had seized. The Lord took two little stones, threw them after the wolf and blessed them; they became two dogs, ran after the wolf, and took away the lamb which the wolf had seized. The shepherd came up bringing the Lord cold water, and saw the sheep quiet, for they were standing in the shade and the two dogs were frolicking round them. The shepherd then asked the old man: ‘Well, old man, now when the sheep are standing quiet, and are like blocks of wood, how shall I drive them to pasture?’ The Lord said to him: ‘My son, take a copper trumpet, and blow it to them; they will start off in the direction from which the wind blows gently.’ From that time forth down to the present day people drive their sheep to pasture blowing trumpets.

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