

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND ROUND

"I AM OFFENDED" (CH. 15)

- THEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,
- ²Should a wise man make answer with vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?
- ³Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?
- ⁴Yea, thou doest away with fear, and restrainest devotion before God.
- ⁵For thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth, and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.
- ⁶Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I; yea, thine own lips testify against thee.
- ⁷Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou brought forth before the hills?
- ⁸Hast thou heard the secret counsel of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?
- ⁹What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us?
- ¹⁰With us are both the grayheaded and the very aged men, much elder than thy father.
- ¹¹Are the consolations of God too small for thee, and the word that *dealeth* gently with thee?
- ¹²Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and why do thine eyes wink?
- ¹³That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest *such* words go out of thy mouth.
- ¹⁴What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?
- ¹⁵Behold, he putteth no trust in his holy ones; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.
- ¹⁶How much less one that is abominable and corrupt, a man that drinketh iniquity like water!
- ¹⁷I will shew thee, hear thou me; and that which I have seen I will declare:
- ¹⁸which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it;
- ¹⁹unto whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them:
- ²⁰the wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, even the number of years that are laid up for the oppressor.
- ²¹A sound of terrors is in his ears; in prosperity the spoiler shall come upon him:
- ²²he believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword:
- ²³he wandereth abroad for bread, *saying*, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand:
- ²⁴distress and anguish make him afraid;

- they prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle:
- ²⁸because he hath stretched out his hand against God, and behaveth himself proudly against the Almighty;
- ²⁹he runneth upon him with a *stiff* neck, with the thick bosses of his bucklers:
- ²⁷because he hath covered his face with his fatness, and made collops of fat on his flanks;
- ²⁸and he hath dwelt in desolate cities, in houses which no man inhabited, which were ready to become heaps.
- ²⁹He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall their produce bend to the earth.
- ³⁰He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.
- ³¹Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself: for vanity shall be his recompence.
- ³²It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green.
- ³³He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive.
- ³⁴For the company of the godless shall be barren, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery.
- ³⁵They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

SILENCE lay for a while over the dung-hill until it was broken by Eliphaz' voice. There is a sharp edge to it now and a spot of red on his cheeks. He is trying hard to keep his temper, and as his words begin to roll out a little of the old graciousness returns. But it is clear that Eliphaz has been really shocked and offended.

"Are you one of the Wise, Job? What wise man would talk like you?" (vv. 2f). Urbanity and moderation, the carefully turned phrase and balanced aphorism, these have always been beloved in the schools of learning. When our Lord looked around Him with anger (Mark 3: 5) or called His opponents "ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers" (Matt. 23: 33), the Pharisees, like so many of their modern descendants, were doubtless shocked that one who was called Rabbi should so lower His dignity. They probably said, "After all He is only one of the *am ha-aretz* (common people) from Galilee." But there are times when the hard facts of life demand the sweeping away of sophistries which try to empty them of true meaning.

"Job, you speak like a godless man and you will encourage others to follow your example" (vv. 4ff.). Eliphaz always loves to make his own standards the pattern of behaviour, and he will always be found turning to the alleged perils of the "younger brother" as a good motive for condemning what he does not

approve of. In my own experience I have generally found the "younger brother" strangely tough. He is all for a bit of experiment and is apt to think of Eliphaz as an old stick-in-the-mud, if not worse. It is unchristian living by the professedly Christian leader that makes him stumble.

"Job, you are suffering from swelled head, you want to know what only the superhuman could know" (vv. 7f.). The Christian will quite cheerfully discuss the mystery of the Trinity; he will dogmatize how man and God could co-exist in the person of the Messiah; he will peer down the vistas of time and draw up a timetable for the future. But when you take him by the back of the neck and rub his nose on some of the facts of life, he is promptly up in arms, and appeals to the inscrutable wisdom of God.

"Job, you are claiming to know more than *we*, than *I*, who am old enough to be your father"—this is the meaning of verse 10. Here is the rub. Eliphaz, who has based his whole theology on experience, feels that a challenge to his theology is a challenge to his experience, a challenge to his yard-stick, a challenge to his personal integrity, especially when it comes from a much younger man.

I once received a letter from a well-known Christian: How can you write like that to a man of my age and position? That he had wantonly slandered me obviously did not trouble his conscience. That he had no answer to my rebuttal of his charges against me left him unmoved. My sin was that I had ventured to reject his judgment.

So once again Eliphaz repeats the teaching of chs. 4 and 5. But now the shadows have been increased. The picture of the sinfulness of man (vv. 14ff.) is darker, and it is clear enough that Eliphaz would be ill-pleased, if you perversely saw *him* in the picture; it is Job he is thinking of. Then, with a glance at Bildad, he appeals to the things most surely believed, the undiluted traditions of the fathers (vv. 17ff.). Before our eyes is unrolled the tragic life and death of Mr. Badman (vv. 20-35); whose first name is, of course, Job, if only he will recognize himself.

It is easy to smile as we picture Eliphaz leaning forward in his eagerness, a little pompously and a little breathlessly reaching a triumphant conclusion in which he sees the wicked not merely going down to a premature grave, but leaving nothing but disaster behind him. But whether it was the pious young man asking me incredulously how there could be "pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25),

or those who deny that there can be piety and a knowledge of God among the Roman Catholics (or any other denomination they dislike, for that matter), or who affirm that unless you have conformed to something external you cannot be a Christian, or who commiserate with Judaism as being nothing more than sterile legalism, this is always the voice of Eliphaz, who subordinates fact to theory.

JOB SOLILOQUIZES (CHS. 16, 17)

- T**HEN Job answered and said,
¹I have heard many such things:
 miserable comforters are ye all.
²Shall vain words have an end?
 or what provoketh thee that thou answerest?
³I also could speak as ye do;
 if your soul were in my soul's stead,
 I could join words together against you,
 and shake mine head at you.
⁴But I would strengthen you with my mouth,
 and the solace of my lips should assuage *your grief*.
⁵Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged:
 and though I forbear, what am I eased?
⁶But now he hath made me weary:
 thou hast made desolate all my company.
⁷And thou hast laid fast hold on me,
which is a witness against me:
 and my leanness riseth up against me,
 it testifieth to my face.
⁸He hath torn me in his wrath, and persecuted me;
 he hath gnashed upon me with his teeth:
 mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon me.
⁹They have gaped upon me with their mouth;
 they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully:
 they gather themselves together against me.
¹⁰God delivereth me to the ungodly,
 and casteth me into the hands of the wicked.
¹¹I was at ease, and he brake me asunder;
 yea, he hath taken me by the neck,
 and dashed me to pieces:
 he hath also set me up for his mark.
¹²His archers compass me round about,
 he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare;
 he poureth out my gall upon the ground.
¹³He breketh me with breach upon breach;
 he runneth upon me like a giant.
¹⁴I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
 and have laid my horn in the dust.
¹⁵My face is red with weeping,
 and on my eyelids is the shadow of death;
¹⁶although there is no violence in mine hands,
 and my prayer is pure.
¹⁷O earth, cover not thou my blood,
 and let my cry have no *resting* place.
¹⁸Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
 and he that voucheth for me is on high.
¹⁹My friends scorn me:
but mine eye poureth out tears unto God;
²⁰that he would maintain the right of a man with God,
 and of a son of man with his neighbour!
²¹For when a few years are come,

- I shall go the way whence I shall not return.
17. My spirit is consumed, my days are extinct,
the grave is *ready* for me.
- ²Surely there are mockers with me, and mine eye abideth in their provocation.
- ³Give now a pledge, be surety for me with thyself;
who is there that will strike hands with me?
- ⁴For thou hast hid their heart from understanding:
therefore shalt thou not exalt *them*.
- ⁵He that denounceth his friends for a prey,
even the eyes of his children shall fail.
- ⁶He hath made me also a byword of the people;
and I am become one in whose face they spit.
- ⁷Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow,
and all my members are as a shadow.
- ⁸Upright men shall be astonished at this,
- and the innocent shall stir up himself against the godless.
- ⁹Yet shall the righteous hold on his way,
and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.
- ¹⁰But return ye, all of you, and come now:
and I shall not find a wise man among you.
- ¹¹My days are past, my purposes are broken off,
even the thoughts of my heart.
- ¹²They change the night into day:
the light, *say they*, is near unto the darkness.
- ¹³If I look for Sheol as mine house;
if I have spread my couch in the darkness;
- ¹⁴if I have said to corruption, Thou art my father;
to the worm, *Thou art* my mother,
and my sister;
- ¹⁵where then is my hope?
and as for my hope, who shall see it?
- ¹⁶It shall go down to the bars of Sheol,
when once there is rest in the dust.

ONCE he had answered Eliphaz for the first time (ch. 6), Job had grown ever less interested in what his friends had to say, for they were only repeating the platitudes in which he had been brought up himself. Zophar woke a spark of sarcasm, but Eliphaz' indignation produces only a dignified rebuke. He reminds them that they are only repeating themselves (16: 2a), and that after all they had come to comfort him (16: 2b, cf. 2: 11). As Knox renders it, *Old tales and cold comfort; you are all alike*. After all, if they could not comfort, they were under no compulsion to say anything.

The futility of Eliphaz' pomposity did not stir Job as Zophar's jibes had done, and seated, as it were, between God and his friends he begins a soliloquy in which, while he may address one side or the other, he speaks mainly to himself.

Neither speaking nor silence has had much effect on his condition (16: 6). After all, there was not much purpose in blaming his friends, for it was God who had treated him as though he were

guilty (16: 7f.). If God had acted as though He were a wild animal (16: 9, 12a,b.), he could not blame men for acting similarly (16: 10). He had been the mark for God's arrows (16: 12c, 13), a fortress attacked by the strongest of warriors (16: 14). In spite of all, his reply had been humility and prayer (16: 15ff). *I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin* implies the permanence of his mourning. Among the Arabs one may under certain circumstances sew oneself into a garment, so that it cannot be removed without cutting the seams. Job is not referring to his friends in verse 11, but to the great, evil men who have rejoiced at the downfall of a pillar of righteousness.

Job had never doubted that sooner or later God would change His attitude towards him (7: 8, 21, 14: 13ff.), though he had no hope that friends or enemies would. So he calls on the earth (16: 18) to keep on crying to God till He hears—for He, the just one, is already his witness—and proclaims that he was in spite of all right with God (16: 21). Perhaps nowhere more strongly than in 17: 3, does Job suggest a contradiction in God Himself: God is to become surety for Job that his cause will be vindicated with God. Such language may shock us, but in fact there can be few children of God who have not at one time or another faced this very problem. There is an apparent contradiction in God's acts, and it is only as our eyes are fixed on the power and love of God that it disappears.

Since the vision of God's power is yet future, Job, left in his perplexity, gives a pitying glance at his friends (17: 4) and maintains that he will *hold on his way* (17: 9)—verses 8f. surely refer to Job himself—even though the hopes of physical recovery held out to him by his friends are false (17: 12–16).

Not only is the translation of 17: 5 very doubtful, but however we render it, it seems almost impossible to give a satisfactory meaning to it in its setting. A reference to Moffatt *ad loc.* will show to what straits he is driven.

THE FATE OF MR. BADMAN (CH. 18)

THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,

¹How long will ye lay snares for words?
consider, and afterwards we will speak.

²Wherefore are we counted as beasts,

and are become unclean in your sight?

³Thou that tearest thyself in thine anger,
shall the earth be forsaken for thee?

or shall the rock be removed out of its place?

- ⁵Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,
and the flame of his fire shall not shine.
- ⁶The light shall be dark in his tent,
and his lamp above him shall be put out.
- ⁷The steps of his strength shall be straitened,
and his own counsel shall cast him down.
- ⁸For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
and he walketh upon the toils.
- ⁹A gin shall take *him* by the heel,
a snare shall lay hold on him.
- ¹⁰A noose is hid for him in the ground,
and a trap for him in the way.
- ¹¹Terrors shall make him afraid on every side,
and shall chase him at his heels.
- ¹²His strength shall be hunger-bitten,
and calamity shall be ready for his halting.
- ¹³It shall devour the members of his body,
the firstborn of death shall devour his members.
- ¹⁴He shall be rooted out of his tent wherein he trusteth;
and he shall be brought to the king of terrors.
- ¹⁵There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his:
brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.
- ¹⁶His roots shall be dried up beneath,
and above shall his branch be cut off.
- ¹⁷His remembrance shall perish from the earth,
and he shall have no name in the street.
- ¹⁸He shall be driven from light into darkness,
and chased out of the world.
- ¹⁹He shall have neither son nor son's son among his people,
nor any remaining where he sojourned.
- ²⁰They that dwell in the west shall be astonied at his day,
as they that dwell in the east were affrighted.
- ²¹Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous,
and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.

BILDAD was in his own way as annoyed as Eliphaz; but because he stood for a cause and not some personal interest he could control his feelings better. He honestly could not understand the attitude of the man who rejected the wisdom of the past. It was clear that "there is nothing new under the sun," and obviously the wisdom of the great saints and theologians must have taken a case like Job's into consideration.

So he breaks out:

Ah, you wordmongers, you have never had enough! First grasp our meaning, and we might argue to some purpose; but no, to men like thee we are worthless as dumb beasts. See with what fury he tears his own bosom! (18: 2ff, Knox).

It is quite likely that the last remark is looking back to Job's words in 16: 9. Bildad believes that Job is just trying to keep his end up by wilfully misunderstanding his friends.

So he takes up the story of Mr. Badman again and turns it with

a cold pitilessness against Job. Eliphaz is to go farther (ch. 22), but loses his temper in doing so and makes a fool of himself, thus defeating his own ends. Your traditionalist, however, is too conscious of the weight of the past behind him to allow his feelings to be involved. If Eliphaz was sufficient of a gentleman to describe the fate of Mr. Badman in general, conventional terms (15: 20-35), perhaps Bildad was correct after all in suggesting that Job had not wanted to understand Eliphaz. Well, he will not misunderstand Bildad, who leaves nothing to chance!

He begins, therefore, as did the story of Job's misfortunes, with the extinction of Mr. Badman's family (18: 5ff.). Most commentaries understand the *light* and the *lamp* as referring to prosperity and happiness, but II Sam. 21: 17, I Kings 11: 36, 15: 4, II Kings 8: 19, Psalm 132: 17, all suggest most strongly that it is life and above all descendants that are intended. Where there is life in an oriental dwelling there will be a light at night. Psalm 127: 3ff., is a telling commentary on v. 7a.

In vv. 8-11 we have the unrecorded consequences of 1: 13-22, unrecorded because to an Oriental they were self-evident. The wicked and evil had risen against him (cf. 16: 10f.), and even his own kin had disowned him (cf. 19: 13-19). Then follows (vv. 11ff.) a reference to Job's physical sufferings, and Bildad finishes in cold satisfaction with a picture of his certain end (vv. 14-21). Amen! so shall be the fate of Job!

Eliphaz, after time for reflection, may see that he has been defending his own experience, Zophar may possibly realize that human common sense is inadequate to cope with the divine, and so they may in time come to terms with the world's Jobs, but not so Bildad. The world must conform to his pattern, for it is divinely given; where such things are in fashion he will excommunicate, persecute and even burn the man he considers to be under the judgment of God, in the hope of saving his soul.

"I KNOW THAT MY VINDICATOR LIVETH" (CH. 19)

THEN Job answered and said,
 *How long will ye vex my soul,
 and break me in pieces with
 words?
 *These ten time have ye re-
 proached me:
 ye are not ashamed that ye deal
 hardly with me.

⁴And be it indeed that I have erred,
 mine error remaineth with myself.
⁵If indeed ye will magnify your-
 selves against me,
 and plead against me my re-
 proach:
⁶know now that God hath sub-
 verted me *in my cause*,

- and hath compassed me with his net.
- ⁷Behold, I cry out, Violence! but I am not heard:
I cry for help, but there is no judgement.
- ⁸He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass,
and hath set darkness in my paths.
- ⁹He hath stripped me of my glory,
and taken the crown from my head.
- ¹⁰He hath broken me down on every side, and I am gone:
and mine hope hath he plucked up like a tree.
- ¹¹He hath also kindled his wrath against me,
and he counteth me unto him as *one* of his adversaries.
- ¹²His troops come on together, and cast up their way against me,
and encamp round about my tent.
- ¹³He hath put my brethren far from me,
and mine acquaintance are wholly estranged from me.
- ¹⁴My kinsfolk have failed,
and my familiar friends have forgotten me.
- ¹⁵They that dwell in mine house,
and my maids, count me for a stranger:
I am an alien in their sight.
- ¹⁶I call unto my servant, and he giveth me no answer,
I intreat him with my mouth.
- ¹⁷My breath is strange to my wife,
and I am loathsome to the children of my *mother's* womb.
- ¹⁸Even young children despise me;
if I arise, they speak against me.
- ¹⁹All my inward friends abhor me:
and they whom I loved are turned against me.
- ²⁰My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh,
and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.
- ²¹Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends;
for the hand of God hath touched me.
- ²²Why do ye persecute me as God,
and are not satisfied with my flesh?
- ²³Oh that my words were now written!
oh that they were inscribed in a book!
- ²⁴That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever!
- ²⁵But I know that my vindicator liveth,
and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth:
- ²⁶and after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
yet without my flesh shall I see God:
- ²⁷whom I shall see on my side,
and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.
My reins are consumed within me.
- ²⁸If ye say, How we will persecute him!
seeing that the root of the matter is found in me;
- ²⁹be ye afraid of the sword:
for wrath *bringeth* the punishments of the sword,
that ye may know there is a judgement.

JOB does not deign to answer Bildad's accusation. He tells his friends what he had already boldly said to God (7: 20a), that even if he had sinned his sin was no concern of theirs (19: 4).

Sin is a social offence, an offence against individuals, and an offence against God. Those who are called to rule and judgment must deal with sin in its first capacity. If we have been personally sinned against we have a duty to the sinner, at least if he is a member of the Church (Matt. 18: 15ff.). Otherwise we have

no concern with the sins of others, only with the sinner. Our purpose should not be to try to persuade men to sin less, a process that may produce Pharisees, but not saints, but to turn the sinner to God. We must preach that men are sinners, but we dare not sit in judgment and assess the quantity and quality of their sins.

Job's friends had undoubtedly judged Job secretly on the basis of the scale of his sufferings even before he spoke. Once he had implicitly challenged their judgment, they were not concerned with showing that he was a sinner (Job knew that quite well), but that he was a great sinner. They were not concerned so much with turning him to God as with getting him to acquiesce in their judgment. When they spoke of the greatness of God, it was to bludgeon Job, not to draw him to God. Job's friends are with us today, as they have ever been in the Church. That is why the worldly man shrinks from the pious but not from saints. The open sinners in the time of Christ shrank from the Pharisees but flocked to our Lord.

The greatest wrong his friends did Job was resolutely to refuse to see that he was genuine in his efforts to come to terms with God. So now he reminded them once again that he really had a complaint against God (vv. 5-12). This had been aggravated by the behaviour of kith and kin (vv. 13f.); his slaves, male and female, had forgotten their duty (vv. 15f.); his wife had lost her affection for him (taking *My breath is strange to my wife* metaphorically, as does Stevenson), and his pleas to brothers and sisters remained unheard (v. 17); even the little children refused him the honour due to his age (v. 18). He turned to his friends for a little sympathy, a little understanding (v. 21), but we may suppose that he met nothing but the cold glance of bewilderment and anger.

It is hard enough for a Christian to be silent when he is calumniated, even though he knows that he can trust his Lord to care for his honour. For Job, to whom honour meant more than it does to us, the thought that God and man had joined together to drag his honour in the dust meant more than physical suffering or material loss. He declared that if only he could write his vindication on a scroll, or better still engrave it in stone, then surely a generation would come that would vindicate him (vv. 23f.)

But what would be the use of human vindication, when his controversy was with God? Suddenly the conviction we have noted before, the conviction of a strange duality in God, a God who is temporarily unjust, but who will yet remember His former

mercy and love, flared up into white light. The verses (25ff.) in which Job expressed his new insight have led to much controversy among translators and commentators, but the following seems a fair rendering of them:

I know that my Vindicator lives
 and will yet stand upon the earth;
 and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
 then without my flesh shall I see God,
 whom I shall see on my side,
 and my eyes shall see to be unestranged.
 My heart fails with longing within me.

Job had no hope of vindication in this life, but now he knew God *must* vindicate him. But (and here is the leap of faith) a vindication in which he did not share would be a hollow mockery, so he knew that he would see this hour, bodiless though he might be; yes, he would see God unestranged! He nearly swooned at the thought.

There is no need to justify the rendering "Vindicator." It is given by R.V. mg., R.S.V., and is accepted explicitly or implicitly by almost all moderns. Job calls God his *go'el*; the *go'el* was a man's near kinsman, whose duty was the avenging of wrong, e.g. as avenger of blood, or the redeeming of the man, when he had become a slave, or of his property. When the term is used of God (either the substantive or the cognate verb), as it is particularly in the Psalms and Isa. 40-66, it obviously receives a much richer meaning. In our context Job is thinking neither of healing nor of resurrection, as A.V. and R.V. tx. might suggest. He is concerned with the clearing of his good name and hence "Vindicator" expresses the sense best—a similar rendering would suit Pr. 23: 11, and it is implicit in a number of passages where we must retain "redeemer."

A vindication that is not shared, we have already said, is a hollow thing and so Job is brought to the confidence of Ps. 139: 8, where David realizes that communion with God is possible in Sheol, and above all to that of Pss. 73: 23f., 17: 15, that death cannot break off a communion with God begun in this life. In other words it is continued conscious communion with God after death rather than the resurrection of the body that Job is proclaiming.

Far more important than an exact definition of Job's hope of

life beyond the grave is his calling God his *go'el*. The only real parallel is Ps. 19: 14, for it is a plural in Isa. 47: 4, 63: 16, the nation and not an individual speaking. Everywhere else we find the second or third person. God can speak of Himself as Israel's *go'el*, for He bound Himself to Israel by the choice of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai. God says, "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Exod. 4: 22, cf. Hos. 11: 1), but Israel, and above all the individual Israelite, hesitated to claim the kinship involved in calling God his *go'el*. Job, who is not a member of the chosen people and who does not stand in covenant relationship with God discovers in the furnace of affliction that he has been so bound up with his God that he can turn to him and call on him for vindication as a *right*, for God has made him His.

This is the turning point in Job's words. He might have kept his certainty to himself for all the difference that it made to his friends. If they looked on it as anything more than the ravings of an unhinged mind, it only infuriated them the more. Though Job never quite rises to the same heights again, we can sense that the strain had been relieved, that he could think more calmly, that he could set his sufferings in a wider framework.

"I AM INSULTED" (CH. 20)

THEN answered Zophar the Na-
amathite, and said,

¹Therefore do my thoughts give
answer to me,
even by reason of my haste that is
in me.

²I have heard the reproof which
putteth me to shame,
but out of my understanding *my*
spirit answereth me

³Knowest thou *not* this of old time,
since man was placed upon earth,
⁴that the triumphing of the wicked
is short,
and the joy of the godless but for
a moment?

⁵Though his excellency mount up
to the heavens,

and his head reach unto the clouds;
⁷yet he shall perish for ever like his
own dung:

they which have seen him shall
say, Where is he?

⁶He shall fly away as a dream, and
shall not be found:

yea, he shall be chased away as a
vision of the night.

⁹The eye which saw him shall see
him no more;

neither shall his place any more
behold him.

¹⁰His children shall seek the favour
of the poor,
and his hands shall give back his
wealth.

¹¹His bones are full of his youth,
but it shall lie down with him in
the dust.

¹²Though wickedness be sweet in
his mouth,

though he hide it under his tongue;
¹³though he spare it, and will not
let it go,

but keep it still within his mouth;

¹⁴yet his meat in his bowels is turned,
it is the gall of asps within him.

- ¹⁵He hath swallowed down riches,
and he shall vomit them up again:
God shall cast them out of his
belly.
- ¹⁶He shall suck the poison of asps:
the viper's tongue shall slay him.
- ¹⁷He shall not look upon the rivers,
the flowing streams of honey and
butter.
- ¹⁸That which he laboured for shall
he restore, and shall not swallow
it down;
according to the substance that
he hath gotten, he shall not
rejoice.
- ¹⁹For he hath oppressed and for-
saken the poor;
he hath violently taken away an
house, which he builded not.
- ²⁰Because he knew no quietness in
his greed,
he shall not save aught of that
wherein he delighteth.
- ²¹There was nothing left that he
devoured not;
therefore his prosperity shall not
endure.
- ²²In the fulness of his sufficiency he
shall be in straits:
the hand of every one that is in
misery shall come upon him.
- ²³When he is about to fill his belly,
God shall cast the fierceness of his
wrath upon him,
and shall rain it upon him as his
food.
- ²⁴He shall flee from the iron weapon,
and the bow of brass shall strike
him through.
- ²⁵He draweth it forth, and it cometh
out of his body:
yea, the glittering point cometh
out of his gall;
terrors are upon him.
- ²⁶All darkness is laid up for his
treasures:
a fire not blown *by man* shall
devour him;
it shall consume that which is left
in his tent.
- ¹⁷The heavens shall reveal his ini-
quity,
and the earth shall rise up against
him.
- ²⁸The increase of his house shall
depart,
his goods shall flow away in the
day of his wrath.
- ²⁹This is the portion of a wicked
man from God,
and the heritage appointed unto
him by God.

HIS confidence that God would finally vindicate him made Job bold and he carried the war into the enemies' camp. His friends could hardly believe their ears, when they heard him saying:

If you say, "How we will pursue him!"
and, "The root of the matter is found in him";
be afraid of the sword,
for wrath brings the punishment of the sword,
that you may know there is a judgment (19: 28f. R.S.V.).

This left Zophar bursting to answer (20: 2). Approach the man of common sense the right way; ask his opinion on matters he obviously has not noticed and he is likely to veer round to your opinion and perhaps even to forget that he did not hold it all along. Tell him, however, that his common sense will bring disaster to himself or others, and *I hear censure which insults me* (20: 3a, R.S.V.) is likely to be his reaction.

There is little need to occupy ourselves with the details of Zophar's picture of Mr. Badman. He adds little to Eliphaz' picture in ch. 15. The chief new element is his insistence on the brevity of Mr. Badman's enjoyment of the fruits of evil. Here too we see a weakness of common sense. Eliphaz was, after all, generalizing from an imperfect knowledge of God and of human life, but at least he based himself on facts. Zophar, once he has accepted the theories of the Wise, does not need facts; to him it is obvious that if Mr. Badman is under the judgment of God, judgment must fall suddenly and soon. Yes, obvious, but . . .!

One thing Zophar spares Job. He is too annoyed and too little of a man of theory to work out a parallel between his picture of Mr. Badman and the plight of his friend as did Bildad. He does, however, prepare the way for Eliphaz (ch. 22). As a shrewd man of common sense he must have been puzzled by the lack of concrete accusations they could bring against a man who must obviously have been guilty of heinous offences, if they were to judge by his sufferings. So he indirectly accuses him of the commonest of all offences of the rich against the poor (20: 19), i.e. land-grabbing and oppression.

MR. BADMAN'S PROSPERITY (CH. 21)

THEN Job answered and said,
²Hear diligently my speech;
 and let this be your consolations.

³Suffer me, and I also will speak;
 and after that I have spoken, mock
 on.

⁴As for me, is my complaint of
 man?
 and why should I not be im-
 patient?

⁵Mark me, and be astonished,
 and lay your hand upon your
 mouth.

⁶Even when I remember I am
 troubled,
 and horror taketh hold on my
 flesh.

⁷Wherefore do the wicked live,
 become old, yea, wax mighty in
 power?

⁸Their seed is established with them
 in their sight,
 and their offspring before their
 eyes.

⁹Their houses are safe from fear,
 neither is the rod of God upon
 them.

¹⁰Their bull gendereth, and faileth
 not;
 their cow calveth, and casteth not
 her calf.

¹¹They send forth their little ones
 like a flock,
 and their children dance.

¹²They sing to the timbrel and
 harp,
 and rejoice at the sound of the
 pipe.

¹³They spend their days in pros-
 perity,
 and in a moment they go down to
 Sheol.

¹⁴Yet they said unto God, Depart
 from us;
 for we desire not the knowledge of
 thy ways.

¹⁵What is the Almighty, that we
 should serve him?

- and what profit should we have,
if we pray unto him?
- ¹⁶Lo, their prosperity is not in their hand:
the counsel of the wicked is far from me.
- ¹⁷How oft is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?
that their calamity cometh upon them?
that *God* distributeth sorrows in his anger?
- ¹⁸that they are as stubble before the wind,
and as chaff that the storm carrieth away?
- ¹⁹*Ye say*, *God* layeth up his iniquity for his children.
Let him recompense it unto himself, that he may know it.
- ²⁰Let his own eyes see his destruction,
and let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.
- ²¹For what pleasure hath he in his house after him,
when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?
- ²²Shall any teach *God* knowledge?
seeing he judgeth those that are high.
- ²³One dieth in his full strength,
being wholly at ease and quiet:
- ²⁴his breasts are full of milk,
and the marrow of his bones is moistened.
- ²⁵And another dieth in bitterness of soul,
and never tasteth of good.
- ²⁶They lie down alike in the dust,
and the worm covereth them.
- ²⁷Behold, I know your thoughts,
and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me.
- ²⁸For ye say, Where is the house of the prince?
and where is the tent wherein the wicked dwelt?
- ²⁹Have ye not asked them that go by the way?
and do ye not know their tokens?
- ³⁰That the evil man is spared in the day of calamity?
that they are led away in the day of wrath?
- ³¹Who shall declare his way to his face?
and who shall repay him what he hath done?
- ³²Yet shall he be borne to the grave,
and shall keep watch over the tomb.
- ³³The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him,
and all men shall draw after him,
as there were innumerable before him.
- ³⁴How then comfort ye me in vain,
seeing in your answers there remaineth only falsehood?

JOB was too much under the influence of his vision of God his Vindicator for Zophar's angry words to touch him as they would have earlier. Only his *mock on* (singular! 21: 3) shows that the arrow of 20: 19 had not left him untouched. He asked his friends to listen and so give him consolation (21: 2)—a touch of sarcasm this—for he had something to lay before them that would strike them dumb (v. 5).

The thought that lay hidden under the Why? of ch. 3, under the glimpse of the universality of human suffering in ch. 7, which for a moment was openly expressed in 9: 22ff., now comes out into the open. It had been dropped while his friends' accusations had driven him to self-vindication and to God for vindication. Now that he knows that God will yet be on his side, he can face the

deeper cause of his agony, his doubt of that moral government of the world on which all the theories of the Wise were based.

Job looks at the wicked, the *resha'im*, at Mr. Badman, who fears neither man nor God, and has no respect for law, whether God's or man's. What he sees makes him deny all he was taught and all his friends have been telling him. Mr. Badman lives to a prosperous old age, and his children flourish after him; when the time comes for death it is a falling asleep: *They go down at last without a struggle to the grave* (21: 13, Knox). Though they flout God (21: 14f.), there is no supernatural intervention in their lives: *Behold, is not their prosperity in their hands?* (21: 16, R.S.V.).

To forestall his friends' angry interruption Job challenges them, "How often do things turn out the way you say (vv. 17f.)? Or, if you are going to push the judgment off on his children (v. 19), what does Mr. Badman care about that, once his life is run (vv. 20f.)?"

Silenced for a moment, they let Job continue. He maintains that things are even worse than he has depicted. Mr. Badman goes down to the grave without knowing an evil hour: Mr. Goodman dies without knowing a good hour, and yet there is the same end for both (vv. 23-26). In fact his friends' arguments pointed to quite opposite conclusions to those they had drawn. Any traveller (v. 29) could tell them *that the wicked man is spared in the day of calamity, that he is rescued in the day of wrath* (v. 30, R.S.V.), and his tomb is honoured in days to come. In fact, so implies Job, he must obviously be a good man, if his friends' theories and the aphorisms of the Wise are correct.

What shall we say to Job before Eliphaz explodes? Is there any truth in his charge? That he exaggerates is obvious, but under other circumstances he would probably have owned up to this himself.

To begin with we must acknowledge that long before the time of Job's friends down to our own the religious man has tended to distort the facts. God is the impartial pourer of His gifts on godly and ungodly alike (Matt. 5: 45), and the great scourges of nature have normally smitten godly and ungodly alike. While from Scripture, Church history and personal experience we can find a goodly number of examples of God's judgment on the wicked, we can as easily find at least as many examples of the sufferings of the righteous. More than that, the reverse is also true. The worst king of Judah, Manasseh, also reigned the longest.

Beside a Hitler and a Mussolini reaping the whirlwind in their deaths, we must place a Lenin and Stalin dying in their beds. Though "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3: 12) is a New Testament statement, "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Psalm 44: 22, cf. Romans 8: 36) is equally true for the Old Testament, if we but read between the lines. When a crowded congregation breathes Hallelujah at some outstanding testimony of God's keeping, it is apt to forget the many who have gone to prison, and death with praise in their hearts to God. Lowell exaggerated, as Job did, when he wrote,

Truth for ever on the scaffold,
Wrong for ever on the throne,

but with his knowledge of the cross he could balance it, as Job could not, with,

And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.

When God's will is done and God's law is respected, the righteous are likely to prosper and the wicked to suffer. Indeed, wherever law is at all respected the righteous will profit from it. But since we know that the whole world, i.e. human society, lies in the evil one (I John 5: 19), we must expect that the moral government of God will often not be visible, and in place of prosperity the believer will have to say, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him" (Rom. 8: 28, R.S.V.).

As the second round in the debate closes we find that the initiative has passed to Job. He is still wrestling with his problems, which we are beginning to see in their true proportions. His friends, however, are fighting desperately to salvage some part of their treasured ideas from the onslaught of this savage to whom nothing is sacred. It would have been well for them, if they had left then and there, but Eliphaz is not prepared to confess quite so easily that he has been defeated.