CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND ROUND

"I AM OFFENDED" (CH. 15)

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

because he hath stretched out his hand against God, and behaveth himself proudly against the Almighty;

he runneth upon him with a stiff neck, with the thick bosses of his bucklers:

because he hath covered his face with his fatness, and made collops of fat on his flanks;

and he hath dwelt in desolate cities, in houses which no man inhabited, which were ready to become heaps.

He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall their produce bend to the earth.

He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.

Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself: for vanity shall be his recompence.

It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green.

He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive.

For the company of the godless shall be barren, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery.

They 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)**

*Then Job answered and said,*

1 I have heard many such things:
   miserable comforters are ye all.
2 Shall vain words have an end?
   or what provoketh thee that thou answerest?
3 I 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.
4 But I would strengthen you with my mouth,
   and the solace of my lips should assuage your grief.
5 Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged:
   and though I forbear, what am I eased?
6 But now he hath made me weary:
   thou hast made desolate all my company.
7 And 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.
8 He hath torn me in his wrath, and persecuted me;
   he hath gnashed upon me with his teeth:
   mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon me.
9 They have gaped upon me with their mouth;
   they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully:
   they gather themselves together against me.
10 God delivereth me to the ungodly,
   and casteth me into the hands of the wicked.
11 I 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.
12 His archers compass me round about,
   he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare;
   he poureth out my gall upon the ground.
13 He breaketh me with breach upon breach;
   he runneth upon me like a giant.
14 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
   and have laid my horn in the dust.
15 My face is red with weeping,
   and on my eyelids is the shadow of death;
16 although there is no violence in mine hands,
   and my prayer is pure.
17 O earth, cover not thou my blood,
   and let my cry have no resting place.
18 Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
   and he that voucheth for me is on high.
19 My friends scorn me:
   but mine eye poureth out tears unto God;
20 that he would maintain the right of a man with God,
   and of a son of man with his neighbour!
21 For 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.

Surely there are mockers with me, and mine eye abideth in their provocation.

Give now a pledge, be surety for me with thyself; who is there that will strike hands with me?

For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them.

He that denounceth his friends for a prey, even the eyes of his children shall fail.

He hath made me also a byword of the people; and I am become one in whose face they spit.

Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow.

Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the godless.

Yet shall the righteous hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.

But return ye, all of you, and come now: and I shall not find a wise man among you.

My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.

They change the night into day: the light, say they, is near unto the darkness.

If I look for Sheol as mine house; if I have spread my couch in the darkness;

if I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister;

where then is my hope? and as for my hope, who shall see it?

It 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,

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

2 Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and are become unclean in your sight?

3 Thou that tearest thyself in thine anger, shall the earth be forsaken for thee? or shall the rock be removed out of its place?
Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the flame of his fire shall not shine.

The light shall be dark in his tent, and his lamp above him shall be put out.

The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down.

For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon the toils.

A gin shall take him by the heel, a snare shall lay hold on him.

A noose is hid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.

Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall chase him at his heels.

His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and calamity shall be ready for his halting.

It shall devour the members of his body, the firstborn of death shall devour his members.

He shall be rooted out of his tent wherein he trusteth; and he shall be brought to the king of terrors.

There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.

His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.

His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.

He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.

He shall have neither son nor son’s son among his people, nor any remaining where he sojourned.

They that dwell in the west shall be astonied at his day, as they that dwell in the east were affrighted.

Surely 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)
and hath compassed me with his net.

7 Behold, I cry out, Violence! but I am not heard: I cry for help, but there is no judgement.

8 He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and hath set darkness in my paths.

9 He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head.

10 He hath broken me down on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he plucked up like a tree.

11 He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his adversaries.

12 His troops come on together, and cast up their way against me, and encamp round about my tent.

13 He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are wholly estranged from me.

14 My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me.

15 They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.

16 I call unto my servant, and he giveth me no answer, I intreat him with my mouth.

17 My breath is strange to my wife, and I am loathsome to the children of my mother's womb.

18 Even young children despise me; if I arise, they speak against me.

19 All my inward friends abhor me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.

20 My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.

21 Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.

22 Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?

23 Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were inscribed in a book!

24 That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever!

25 But I know that my vindicator liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth:

26 and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet without my flesh shall I see God:

27 whom I shall see on my side, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

My reins are consumed within me.

28 If ye say, How we will persecute him! seeing that the root of the matter is found in me;

29 be 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 Na­amathite, and said,
5Therefore do my thoughts give answer to me, even by reason of my haste that is in me.
6I have heard the reproof which putteth me to shame, but out of my understanding my spirit answereth me.
7Knowest thou not this of old time, since man was placed upon earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment?
8Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?
9He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.
10The eye which saw him shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.
11His children shall seek the favour of the poor, and his hands shall give back his wealth.
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 forsaken 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 everyone 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.
27The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, 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 impatient?
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 prosperity,
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?

19Ye 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'ım*, 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. Good-
man 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.