

Second Part

Genesis

Book IX

The Prophet and Patriarch Job

Chapter I

The Book of Job

1. The Book of Job is a sublime exaltation of heroic fidelity and patience. It is, besides, a most evident example of how God tries his elect in order to refine them further in virtue and so that, by their heroic example, the glory of God may shine forth, and it be made clear that suffering and affliction are inseparable companions of the life of man along the way to salvation. Job himself says, “*The life of man on earth is warfare.*” The person of Job, then, is a compendium of the most exquisite supernatural virtues which should always enrich the soul of every servant of God; and so, in the Book of Job, the elevated state of holiness which the Patriarch possessed can be seen with perfect clarity. The person of Job is a figure of the Suffering Christ, surrendering Himself completely to God’s will.

2. The exalted Book of Job was written entirely by himself, except for the Prologue which comprises the first five verses of chapter I, and the Epilogue which continues from verse 7 of chapter XLII to the end. In his Book, the wise Patriarch presents a judgment of himself in the form of a dialogue between several important persons, when in reality it was a monologue. Therefore the discourses of the three whom Job calls his friends, Eliphaz of Teman, Baldad of Suha and Sofar of Naamat, as well as that of the one known as Eliu the son of Barachel Buzite, are in reality reflections made by Job himself, since these four personages never existed. We say the same of the discourses that Job puts on God’s lips from a whirlwind, as they too are the Patriarch’s own reflections. Concerning the dialogues between God and the devil at the beginning of his Book, these correspond to an allegorical heavenly vision that Job himself had.

Chapter II

The first stage of Job’s life

1. Patriarch Job was the thirteenth son of Patriarch Saint Jecthan, who was Phaleg’s twin brother. Jecthan observed the law given him by his father Heber in the ‘Book of Heber’, thus named, which he subsequently handed down to his descendants. Jecthan, then, was an adorer of the God of Heber, that is, of the One True God. Patriarch Job was born in the year 2976 in Ur of Chaldea; fifty years, therefore, before the submerging and separation of continents during the three days of darkness. Job was presanctified in his mother’s womb in the ninth month of his conception, the Holy Ghost abiding in his soul from that same instant, filling him with other Graces and special charismata. Job, when thirty-five years

of age, married Racca, of Phaleg's line, by whom he had ten children, seven sons and three daughters.

2. Job, then, was a leading man, simple, upright and God-fearing, whom God had endowed with all that in the natural and supernatural orders one could desire to be happy on Earth; for, besides the seven sons and three daughters born to his wife Racca, he had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys and a large number of servants, so that he was an important personage among all the orientals. Peace and love reigned within the family. His sons used to hold banquets in their homes, each on his day, on the occasion of different feasts, and they invited their three sisters to eat and drink with them. But when the days of the celebration ended, Job called them all and blessed them. Moreover, rising early in the morning, he offered holocausts to God for each of them, for he said: *"In case my sons have sinned and cast God from their hearts."* Thus Job proceeded in all those days.

Chapter III

Job's trial and heroic patience

1. During the year 3046, when Patriarch Job was seventy years of age, he underwent his great trials. For God, in His inscrutable plans, so as to leave an example to posterity of heroic fidelity and patience in the face of adversity, permitted Satan, who was envious of Job's happiness, to tempt him with unheard-of virulence. The devil's action and God's permission are vividly expressed in the following mysterious dialogue between God and Satan, narrated in catechistical form by the Patriarch, in conformity with the allegorical heavenly vision he had, and which is of profound doctrinal content. Here is what Job himself tells us: *"It happened that, one day while God was in the presence of His children the Blessed, Satan appeared there also and the Lord asked him: 'Where have you come from?' And Satan answered: 'I have just been around the Earth, and surveyed it all'. The Lord replied: 'And have you observed My servant Job, how there is no one else like him on Earth, for he is an upright and just man, God-fearing and foreign to all evil?' Satan however replied: 'Does Job by chance fear and serve God for nothing? Have You not protected him on every side, in his person and in his goods? Have You not blessed the work of his hands, and thus multiplied his possessions on Earth? But let him feel Your hand somewhat heavy upon him, and touch him in his goods, and You will see how he curses Your Name and scorns You to Your Face'. The Lord then said to Satan: 'Well then, all his possessions I put at your disposal, but you may not raise your hand against his person'. At this, Satan left the presence of the Lord to carry out his designs."*

2. Following this allegorical vision, appalling misfortunes befell Job, narrated by himself in his Book. When Job was at home a messenger came and told him: *"While the oxen were ploughing and the donkeys grazing nearby, without warning men from the tribe of the Sabians set upon the animals robbing them all, and killed your servants putting them to the sword; I alone could escape and*

bring you the news.” While he was still speaking another man arrived who said: *“Fire of God came down from heaven and reduced the sheep and the shepherds to ashes, and I alone could escape and bring you the news.”* The words were still on his lips when another entered saying: *“Chaldean folk, divided into three bands, fell upon the camels and made off with them, after putting your servants to the sword, and I was able to escape and am come to give you the news.”* While he was speaking another arrived who told Job: *“Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the home of their eldest brother, when suddenly a hurricane arose from the desert and shook the four corners of the house, which collapsed, trapping your children underneath, who have been found dead; and I alone could save myself and come to tell you the news.”* Job, on hearing of these misfortunes, arose and rent his garments and, having caused the hair of his head to be shaved, prostrated himself on the ground and adored the Lord saying: *“Naked I came out of my mother’s womb, and naked will I return to the earth. The Lord gave me all, and the Lord has taken it away. What has been done is to His pleasing: blessed be the Name of the Lord.”* Throughout these misfortunes Job did not sin, nor did he utter any unconsidered word against God.

3. As the Book goes on to narrate, Satan saw that in spite of the misfortunes that befell Job, he continued blessing God in the midst of his adversities. Yet Satan did not yet consider himself worsted in his infernal design, so he contrived another crueler way to snare the just Patriarch; which God permitted for there to be an even more exceptional proof of Job’s heroic faithfulness and patience. In another allegorical vision of the Holy Patriarch, there began another mysterious intellectual dialogue between God and Satan, just as Job narrates: *“One day while God was in the presence of His children the Blessed, Satan also appeared there, and the Lord asked him: ‘Where have you come from?’ And Satan answered: ‘I have just been around the Earth, and surveyed it all’. The Lord replied: ‘And have you observed My servant Job, how there is no one else like him on Earth, for he is an upright and just man, God-fearing and foreign to all evil, and who still perseveres in his perfection in spite of your having afflicted him by My permission.’ However, Satan replied: ‘While you respect man in his person he willingly gives up all he possesses, providing that you do not touch his skin. Come now, stretch out Your hand and touch him in his flesh and bones, and then You will see how he turns his back on You.’ The Lord then said to Satan: ‘There he is, I put him in your hands, but understand well, I do not permit you to take his life.’ At this, Satan left the presence of God.”* Following this vision, Satan struck Job with a repugnant and foul-smelling leprous ulcer, from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, and he was compelled to separate himself from others; so that, seated on a dunghill, with a potsherd he scraped off the rotten matter and removed the worms that issued from his wounds.

Chapter IV

Job's heroic testimony to his wife

Job's first wife Racca, who in her husband's prosperity was full of exuberance at the happiness that reigned in her family, nevertheless interiorly rebelled against God when the terrible misfortunes struck, to the point that she even cursed Him with blasphemy. As the Book continues to narrate, she, seeing Job in that lamentable state, said to him with satanic irony and malice: *"Do you still persist in your stupid acceptance of God's Will? Go on, keep blessing Him, and die then! For you see well how cruelly He treats you."* Job replied to her: *"You have spoken like a foolish woman; since if we receive good things from God's hand, why should we not receive bad things as well?"* And in the midst of the greatest misfortunes Job did not sin, nor speak any unconsidered word against God. And the Holy Prophet not only gave testimony of acceptance and patience to his wicked wife, but also to all those who had known him in prosperity and now saw him plunged into the greatest misfortunes. Racca, after inciting Job to curse God, wishing his death, and hearing Job's wise reply in which he calls her foolish, was fulminated by God and cast body and soul into Hell.

Chapter V

Job's dark night, with intervals of light

1. Job continued living on the dunghill on the outskirts of the city for almost a year. According to his Book, he only begins to speak after seven days of profound silence. Job breaks his silence with an initial soliloquy, which is followed by a series of discourses that, though recounted like a dialogue, doctrinally constitute a monologue. It is, then, the Prophet Saint Job who speaks to himself and answers, sometimes lamenting his misfortune, sometimes recriminating himself for his possible faults, and at other times with arguments in self-defence. But, in every case, in his words there is always an exaltation of the majesty and goodness of God.

2. Job's monologue in the midst of his misfortune is the sublime experience, in his soul, of a long dark night brought about by Satan, with intervals of very clear light from God. The Patriarch, then, besides being tried in his family, in his possessions and in his own body, was exceedingly tried in his spirit by bitter interior desolation; for he believed that his material misfortunes were caused by some hidden fault of which he was not conscious, but which would have to be very grave for God to punish him in that way. The very thought of having offended his Lord and God, plunged him into such bitter anguish that it made him burst forth into heart-rending laments and maledictions against himself and the day of his birth, since he ardently desired never to have been born rather than offend his God whom he loved so dearly. But the Patriarch, in his interior monologue, amid his own soul's terrible struggle with itself, proclaims, with irrefutable evidence, the infinite Justice and Holiness of God, and the nothingness and frailty of man. At the same time, all this affirmation is impregnated with the

conviction of his own innocence, and the profound feeling that the good he receives comes from God without him deserving it, and that the evil he receives comes from Satan, deserving it. But, in his bitter protests and recriminations against himself, Job always spoke with integrity, never uttering a single word offensive to God.

3. Patriarch Job, in his exalted Book, begins his account with sentiments of personal guilt for some grave hidden sin which he imagined he had committed, and to which he attributed the reason why God should punish him so terribly. This then is why, in that dreadful spiritual obfuscation of the dark night of his soul, he opened his lips and cursed the day of his birth, saying among other things: *“Cursed be the day I was born, and the night when it was said of me that a son had been conceived! Let that day be turned into darkness, let God not take it into account from on high, let not a ray of light shine upon it, for not having closed the doors to fecundity in my mother’s womb, and for not having taken from my sight so much misery. Why did I not die in my mother’s womb, or perish on being born? Why did I find a lap to hold me and breasts to suckle me? Since if I were now dead I would sleep and repose in the silence of death. For what reason was the light of day granted to a wretch, and life to those who, like me, live it out in bitterness of soul? Sighs are my food, and my groans pour out like water. I have neither tranquillity nor peace nor rest, and consternation has overcome me. God’s indignation has discharged itself upon me.”* In this sublime and heart-rending lament of Job, the complete and utter rejection he felt for sin is evident; and therefore he preferred not to have been born rather than offend God.

4. As one can appreciate in the course of his Book, following the dark night, Job, in an interval of spiritual light, recriminates himself for his discouragement through wise maxims which everyone should take seriously into account in moments of trial. Here are some of his reflections on himself: *“You it was who taught many and strengthened the overburdened; since your words sustained those who wavered and strengthened the weak. But now that your time of trial has come, amid misfortune you grow weak; the Lord has touched you and you are utterly disconcerted. Where now is your confidence in God, your strength, your patience and perfection in your conduct?”* To this meditation on his own feebleness, he adds others of great consolation for those who, being faithful to God, are nevertheless refined by Him through multiple afflictions; for in the measure in which God tries the just and they generously respond, afterwards will be their eternal reward. In contrast to the ungodly who, while it is true that they habitually pass the days of their lives in earthly pleasures, and have the goods and praises of this world lavished upon them, are afterwards eternally chastised. Here are some of Job’s self-reflections: *“Consider, what innocent man ever perished, or when were the just ever chastised eternally? On the contrary, what I have seen is that those who work iniquity and sow evil, reap evil; for they perished at the breath of God, and were eternally tormented by the fire of His Just Anger.”* At another moment, Job contrasts the Infinite Goodness of God with the misery of

the creature: *“Can a man by any chance consider himself just before God, or can he believe himself to be purer than his Maker? See how the very angelic spirits, created to serve Him, were not stable, since many of the angels prevaricated. How much harder it is for man, made of clay, full of weakness and with a corruptible body, to consider himself blameless in God’s eyes?”* Job, then, takes pleasure in God’s provident and just doings: *“Blessed is the man whom God corrects: so do not despise the Lord’s correction, because He Himself opens the wound, and gives the medicine; strikes, and with His hands He heals.”*

5. Satan, continuously tempting Job to incite him to despair, arouses in him the most convinced feeling of his own iniquity in his past life, which causes the Patriarch to break forth in severe self-recriminations which, being unfounded in him since he is a just man, nevertheless must be taken very much into account to avoid God making assertions like these to us on the day of judgment: *“Is it for your piety perhaps that God chastises you? Is it not more likely for your very grave malice, and for your endless wrongdoings? For without cause you seized your brothers’ goods, and stripped the beggar of his clothes. You did not give water to the thirsty, and took bread from the hungry. You possessed the land by force, and being the strongest you made it your own. You sent widows away empty-handed, and despised the pleading outstretched hands of the orphans. Therefore you are straitened on every side, and sudden fear troubles you.”* But Job, to the suggestions of guilt that Satan infuses into him, responds with firm purpose of amendment which, although unfounded in him, should serve as great teaching for us, given our frailty. Here are some of his reflections: *“Reconcile yourself to God and you will have peace, and thus gather the best fruits. Receive the Law from His lips, and impress His words upon your heart. If humbling yourself you return to the Almighty, you will be re-established, and wrongdoing will be far from you. The Almighty will protect you against your enemies, and in His arms you will abound in delights, and full of confidence you will raise your countenance to God.”*

6. However, as Job feels his own culpability only when his soul is perplexed, in another interval of light he declares his innocence with candid words that indicate the holiness of his life, and which should be imitated on our part. Here are some of his self-reflections, which are a mirror of the holiness of his life: *“As a youth I made a pact with my eyes not to look at, nor even think of, a maiden; because otherwise what communication would God have with me from above, or what part would the Almighty give me in His heavenly inheritance? Is He not observing my ways and counting my every step? I have not walked in deceit, nor have my feet rushed into double-dealing, nor did my heart let itself be seduced by a woman, nor did I deny the poor what they wanted, nor did I thwart the widow’s hope, nor did I eat my meal alone without giving the orphan a share. For from infancy mercy grew up with me, and issued from my mother’s womb with me. However, in spite of my innocence, God knows my ways and has purified me like gold in the fire. My feet have followed His footsteps and I have kept His ways,*

and have not turned aside from them. From the Commandments of His lips I have not departed, and in my heart I have kept the word of His lips. For He is the only one who subsists of Himself, and no one can overturn His plans.”

7. But Job, even acknowledging his innocence, deeply afflicted by his present misfortune, speaks out with bitter lamentations, without there being glimpsed, in any of them, the slightest rebellion against the divine plan of his personal trial. Here are some words selected from his Book: *“My eyes cry out to God. My spirit is weakening, my days are shortening and only the sepulchre awaits me. I have not sinned, and my eyes see only bitterness. But what shall I do? If I speak, my suffering will not cease; and if I am silent it will not let me be. But now my suffering has oppressed me, and all my members have been reduced to nothing. Concentrating his fury against me, and threatening me, my enemy bared his teeth at me, and with terrible eyes watched me. They opened their mouths against me, and striking me they wounded my cheek, satiating themselves with my pains. God has penned me up in the power of the wicked, and has delivered me into the hands of the ungodly. He surrounded me with his spears and wounded my loins all over, he has not pardoned, and has scattered my entrails on the ground. My countenance is swollen with weeping, and my eyelids are darkened. This I have suffered without malice of my hands, when I offered to God my unsullied pleas. O Lord, why do You hide Your Face from me and consider me as Your enemy?”* The desolation is such that his soul in distress complains and cries out in demand of consolation: *“For how long will you all afflict my soul, and grind me down with your accusations? For if, as you say, I have fallen into error, my error will be mine for me to expiate. But what is more, you rise up against me, and cast my shame in my face. At least this time understand that God has not afflicted me and girded me with lashes according to judgement. See here that suffering violence I will cry out, and no one will hear me; I will call out and there is no one to do justice. Everywhere my way is closed off and I cannot pass, and in my truth they have put darkness. He has stripped me of my glory and taken the crown from my head. His fury became inflamed against me, and thus he treated me as an enemy. He made my brothers draw back from me, and my acquaintances like strangers turned away from me. My relatives have abandoned me, and those who knew me have forgotten me. The members of my household and my servants have treated me like a stranger, and I have been like an alien in their eyes. I called my servant and he did not respond, with my own lips I besought him. My wife loathed my breath, and I had to pray to the deceased children of my loins. Even the foolish despised me, and when I withdrew from them, they spoke ill of me. Those who in other times were my counsellors abominate me; and the one I loved most has turned his back on me. My flesh consumed, my skin has stuck to my bones, and only my lips remain about my teeth. Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord has touched me. Why do you pursue me as God does, and sate yourselves with my flesh?”*

8. In another moment of his Book, Job remembers his past happiness and prosperity, which he always put at the service of God and of his neighbour: *“Would that I could be as I was in previous months when God watched over me! When His torch shone upon my head, and by His light I walked amid darkness. As I was in the days of my youth, when God dwelt secretly in my tent; when the Almighty was with me, and around me and my children; when I washed my feet in oil, and even the stones poured out rivers of balm for me; when I went out to the city gate, and in the square they made a seat ready for me. When they saw me, the young were quite abashed, and the elderly stood up and remained standing. I clothed myself with justice, and dressed myself in my equity, as with cloak and diadem. I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and informed myself with utmost diligence of the case I did not understand. I broke the teeth of the wicked and from his jaws snatched the prey. If I wished to go to them, they seated me in the first place; and being seated like a king, surrounded by men-at-arms, notwithstanding I was consoler of the afflicted.”*

9. In contrast to his previous prosperity and happiness, Job then describes his present wretchedness using deeply heart-rending phrases, but without detriment to his heroic patience and submission to the divine will: *“But now I have come to be the object of mocking ballads and derision by men. They abominate me and fly far from me, and have no difficulty in spitting in my face. For God has opened His quiver and afflicted me, and put a bridle on my tongue. At the height of my prosperity a chain of calamities came upon me that have thrown me to the ground, and casting themselves upon me like a flood have oppressed me. I have been reduced to nothing. You, O my God, like a wind have snatched away all that I most loved, and my prosperity passed over like a cloud. And now, within myself my soul withers away, and days of affliction possess me. At night my bones are pierced by pains. The worms that gnaw me do not sleep; by their multitude my clothing is consumed, and they have girded me like a tunic’s hood. I am reputed as mud, and likened to dust and to ashes. I cry to you, O my God, and You do not hear me. I am in Your presence and You do not even look at me. You raised me up, and as though placing me on the wind, have dashed me down violently.”*

10. Despite Satan’s arrogant endeavours to incite Job to despair in order to cause him to succumb amid the trial, his intents were utterly useless, since the Patriarch’s soul was always buoyed up by hope in Christ the Redeemer: *“Who shall grant me that my words be written down? Who shall grant me that they be printed in a book with iron burin, or on lead plates, or be carved with chisel on flint-stone? For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that on the last day I am to rise up from the earth. And once again I will be encompassed in my skin, and in my flesh I will see my God; Whom I myself am to see, and my eyes are to look upon Him, and none other: this, my hope, is laid up within my breast.”*

Chapter VI

God gives the Prophet and Patriarch Job back his past happiness and more

1. After God had availed Himself of Job in order to leave to the world testimony of his heroic patience, He reinstated the Holy Patriarch in his past happiness and prosperity, restoring his health and rewarding him with increased goods, giving him double of all he had owned. All his brothers, sisters and relatives then came to see him, and those whom he knew and had dealings with before, dined with him at his home, giving him demonstrations of their tender compassion, consoling him for all the tribulations the Lord had sent him, and each of them gave him a sheep and a golden ring.

2. And since his first wife, the wicked Racca, had been chastised by God with death, Job at seventy-one years of age married Celeste, by whom he had ten children, seven sons and three daughters. When he was one hundred and forty years of age, he became a widower again, and in consequence, at the age of one hundred and forty-one, married for the third and last time. By his third wife Aurea he had ten children, seven sons and three daughters. To these three daughters he gave the following names: to the first, Diana; to the second, Casilda; and to the third, Cornelia. And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father let them enter into part of the inheritance like their brothers. Job came to possess fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. After his trial Job lived one hundred and forty years, seeing his children and grandchildren down to the fourth generation, and came to know his great-granddaughter Lia, Thare's wife, and his great-great-grandson Abraham when a child of two years. Job gave his descendants the Book of Heber and his own Book. The Holy Prophet and Patriarch Job died very advanced in years, at the age of two hundred and ten, in the year 3186, one week before Aurea.

3. The Matriarchs Saint Celeste and Saint Aurea, Job's wives, were descendants of Phaleg. Among the descendants of Saint Job, we should mention the three Holy Wise Kings of Orient who adored the Child Jesus in the Stable of Bethlehem.