

## CHAPTER IX

### ELIHU

So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. <sup>2</sup>Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. <sup>3</sup>Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. <sup>4</sup>Now Elihu had waited to speak unto Job, because they were elder than he. <sup>5</sup>And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled.

<sup>6</sup>And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I held back, and durst not shew you mine opinion.

<sup>7</sup>I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.

<sup>8</sup>But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.

<sup>9</sup>It is not the great that are wise, nor the aged that understand judgement.

<sup>10</sup>Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion.

<sup>11</sup>Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.

<sup>12</sup>Yea, I attended unto you,

and behold, there was none that convinced Job, or that answered his words, among you.

<sup>13</sup>Beware lest ye say, We have found wisdom;

God may vanquish him, not man: <sup>14</sup>for he hath not directed his words against me;

neither will I answer him with your speeches.

<sup>15</sup>They are amazed, they answer no more:

they have not a word to say.

<sup>16</sup>And shall I wait, because they speak not,

because they stand still, and answer no more?

<sup>17</sup>I also will answer my part, I also will shew mine opinion.

<sup>18</sup>For I am full of words; the spirit within me constraineth me.

<sup>19</sup>Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; like new wine-skins it is ready to burst.

<sup>20</sup>I will speak, that I may be refreshed;

I will open my lips and answer.

<sup>21</sup>Let me not, I pray you, respect any man's person; neither will I give flattering titles unto any man.

<sup>22</sup>For I know not to give flattering titles;

*else would my Maker soon take me away.*

As Job's last impassioned words rang out, his friends looked at each other and nodded almost imperceptibly. Their task was finished: they had vindicated the wisdom of the Wise, but all in vain. With heavy hearts at the impenitence of their old friend they prepared to leave, when they were startled by a

new voice vibrant with passion: *I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you* (32: 6, R.S.V.).

Modern commentators and writers are agreed by a large majority that chs. 32-37, containing the speeches of Elihu, are a later interpolation, though a few would see in them an afterthought by the original author. It may be frankly admitted that, superficially at least, their arguments are strong. But we must remember that, though he has since changed his mind, the American scholar Pfeiffer could write, "These arguments did not seem convincing to the present writer in 1915,"\* and they have only become valid to him now because he has found a new and doubtful interpretation for Elihu's views. In addition different scholars mutually contradict one another in the purpose they suggest for the interpolation. If the book is in any sense a drama, the non-mention of Elihu at an earlier stage can be reasonably explained. Had the reader been waiting all the time for Elihu's cue, he might have missed much of the drama and tension in the speeches of Job and his friends. Were it true, as so many (but not Pfeiffer) maintain, that Elihu adds virtually nothing to the debate, it is difficult to see why anyone should have troubled to interpolate him.

The introduction of Elihu in prose (32: 2-5) indicates that a new element is being introduced. He is given a brief genealogy, something that is lacking in the case of Job and his friends. As was stressed at the beginning of this study, Job and his friends are introduced, irrespective of whether they were of good family or not, as representatives of the Wise. Their position in society rested on their own merits, not on those of their fathers. Elihu, however, is introduced as a young aristocrat. He does not share in the vested interests of the Wise, and he begins by challenging their whole position:

I said, 'Let days speak,  
and many years teach wisdom.'

But it is the spirit in a man,  
the breath of the Almighty,  
that makes him understand.

It is not the old that are wise,  
nor the aged that understand right (32: 7ff., R.S.V.).

\* Pfeiffer: *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1948), p. 673.

The Wise were not godless men; their goal was the understanding of the divine rule of the world, that they might direct their own and their pupils' footsteps accordingly. But they believed that provided God gave them the right start—for Eliphaz, as we have seen, it was religious experience, for Bildad the voice of tradition, for Zophar sound common sense—their own reason was ample and would bring them to their goal. Elihu challenges them with the claim that man needs the inspiration of the Spirit for this—*Yet God inspires a man, 'tis the Almighty who breathes knowledge into him* (32: 8, Moffatt).

Beyond a doubt Elihu stands on firmer ground than the three friends. With one burning phrase he has laid bare the inner weakness of those who have spoken before him. Human reason cannot grasp the depths of God's work in heaven or on earth (cf. 28: 20–28), but the sequel is to show that Elihu's claim to inspiration is as shallow as the three friends' claim to divine Wisdom.

A hint as to the outcome is given us already in the prose introduction to Elihu: *Against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God* (32: 2), which Moffatt rightly interprets, "for making himself out to be better than God." Even more than in the arguments of Job's friends we find in Elihu the inability to bring together God's sovereign rule and His loving concern for the individual. As a result he has even less sympathy and understanding for Job's "Why?" than the others, though of course there is more excuse for him than for the older men.

We are apt to find in Elihu a noble, youthful indignation, with which, in fact, 32: 3 does not credit him. If we retain the Hebrew text, we must render it with I.C.C., *because they had found no answer, and had not shown Job to be unrighteous*. It is, however, more probable that the rabbinic tradition, which makes this verse one of the *tiqqune sopherim* (corrections of the scribes), eighteen passages deliberately changed to avoid objectionable expressions, is correct. In that case Job has been substituted for God, and the original form will have been, "because they had found no answer, and so had condemned God." We can see that Elihu's "inspiration" was merely a true realization that the friends were lacking in something, but not a revelation of what that lack was.

In fact Elihu represents a phenomenon we constantly meet for good in our church life. The self-satisfaction of an older generation finally drives young men to revolt. In practice they seldom say much that is new and seldom say it well, but there are

almost invariably glimpses of valuable truth which the older generation had missed to its loss.

Much in Elihu's speeches is strongly reminiscent of Eliphaz and Bildad, but it does not seem that Zophar appealed to him. He was genuinely shocked by three features in Job's words and he deals with them in turn. This gives us a useful criterion for the division of his answer.

### ELIHU'S FIRST ANSWER (CH. 33)

- H**OWBEIT, Job, I pray thee, hear my speech,  
and hearken to all my words.
- <sup>2</sup>Behold now, I have opened my mouth,  
my tongue hath spoken in my mouth.
- <sup>3</sup>My words *shall utter* the uprightness of my heart:  
and that which my lips know they shall speak sincerely.
- <sup>4</sup>The spirit of God hath made me,  
and the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.
- <sup>5</sup>If thou canst, answer thou me;  
set *thy words* in order before me,  
stand forth.
- <sup>6</sup>Behold, I am toward God even as thou art:  
I also am formed out of the clay.
- <sup>7</sup>Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid,  
neither shall my pressure be heavy upon thee.
- <sup>8</sup>Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing,  
and I have heard the voice of *thy words, saying,*
- <sup>9</sup>I am clean, without transgression;  
I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me:
- <sup>10</sup>Behold, he findeth occasions against me,  
he counteth me for his enemy:
- <sup>11</sup>He putteth my feet in the stocks,  
he marketh all my paths.
- <sup>12</sup>Behold, I will answer thee, in this thou art not just;  
for God is greater than man.
- <sup>13</sup>Why dost thou strive against him,  
for that he giveth not account of any of his matters?
- <sup>14</sup>For God speaketh once,  
yea twice, *though man* regardeth it not.
- <sup>15</sup>In a dream, in a vision of the night,  
when deep sleep falleth upon men,  
in slumberings upon the bed;
- <sup>16</sup>then he openeth the ears of men,  
and sealeth their instruction,
- <sup>17</sup>that he may withdraw man *from his purpose,*  
and hide pride from man:
- <sup>18</sup>he keepeth back his soul from the pit,  
and his life from perishing by the sword.
- <sup>19</sup>He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,  
and with continual strife in his bones:
- <sup>20</sup>so that his life abhorreth bread,  
and his soul dainty meat.
- <sup>21</sup>His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen;  
and his bones that were not seen stick out.
- <sup>22</sup>Yea, his soul draweth near unto the pit,  
and his life to the destroyers.
- <sup>23</sup>If there be with him an angel,  
an interpreter, one among a thousand,  
to shew unto man what is right for him.
- <sup>24</sup>then he is gracious unto him, and saith,  
Deliver him from going down to the pit,  
I have found a ransom.
- <sup>25</sup>His flesh shall be fresher than a child's;  
he returneth to the days of his youth:

<sup>26</sup>He prayeth unto God, and he is favourable unto him; so that he seeth his face with joy: and he restoreth unto man his righteousness.

<sup>27</sup>He singeth before men, and saith, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not:

<sup>28</sup>he hath redeemed my soul from going into the pit, and my life shall behold the light.

<sup>29</sup>Lo, all these things doth God work, twice, *yea* thrice, with a man, <sup>30</sup>to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of living.

<sup>31</sup>Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak.

<sup>32</sup>If thou hast anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee.

<sup>33</sup>If not, hearken thou unto me: hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom.

ELIHU turns first to Job's protestations of innocence (vv. 8-11). He prefaces his answer, however, with a rather disingenuous claim to be doing what Job had wanted all along. In 9: 32-35 and 13: 20-22, Job in his anguish had called on God to remove His heavy hand from him, so that he might be able to stand and answer Him. Elihu, catching the words but not the sense, offers himself as God's spokesman without the dread of God surrounding him. If the language of vv. 2-7 seems rather involved, it is because he is making oblique references to Job's own words. He had completely failed to see that Job's agony had driven him to the point where only the voice of God Himself would satisfy him. (It is to be noted that the A.V. in v. 6a is impossible and completely distorts the picture.)

For the quotations in v. 9 compare 9: 21, 10: 7, 16: 17, 23: 10-12 and 27: 5, 6. This has been the way of the heresy-hunter down the ages; expressions are snapped up out of their factual and emotional contexts, and balancing statements like 7: 21 and 13: 26 are conveniently forgotten. In vv. 10, 11 Elihu goes on to summarize some of Job's complaints against God (cf. 10: 13-17, 19: 6-12, 13: 24, 27). He is undoubtedly correct when he sums up, *Behold, in this you are not right* (v. 12, R.S.V.), but he immediately dodges the issue by adding, *For God is greater than man*, i.e. "the moral loftiness of God's nature made it impossible that He should act in the arbitrary, hostile manner charged against Him by Job" (Davidson, *ad loc.*).

It is repeatedly stressed in Scripture that the character of God is known from His words and acts. We know Him not merely from what He claims to be but even more from what He has done. Job has claimed to depict God's character from the way He has treated him, but he has yet to realize that to argue from human

finiteness to divine infinity on the basis of part of one's own experience (Job conveniently forgot the experiences of his earlier life), with a few hand-picked facts thrown in as a make-weight, is a perilous process. But Elihu has embarked on a much more perilous path. He dismisses Job's explanation of his experience with an airy wave of his hand as being incompatible with his *a priori* concept of God and goes on to give a completely arbitrary explanation of it.

But let us be fair to Elihu. If Job's sufferings mean very little to him, it is because he is a young man and they lie outside his experience. Although he has been genuinely shocked by Job's words (cf. 34: 7ff.), it has been shock, not the personal hurt that Job's friends felt. His view of God's character and ways may be somewhat theoretical, but it is noble. Instead of thinking of punishment he sees God active in salvation. He did not deny that men were punished for their sins (cf. 36: 13f.), but in his thoughts punishment took second place to restoration. Job had himself had a glimpse of this truth on a higher level (23: 10); what marks out Elihu from Job's friends is that his explanation (vv. 14-28) does not establish a ratio between sin and suffering. Who knows? Had the others been as wise as Elihu, the whole discussion might have flowed in other channels.

Elihu seems to envisage two methods of divine warning. The former (vv. 14-20), strongly influenced by Eliphaz' words (4: 12-19), is that of the warning dream. The latter (vv. 21-28) is illness. He uses popular ideas of angels of death (*the destroyers*, v. 22) and angels of mercy (v. 23). The *if* (v. 23) does not express doubt: Elihu's whole point is that there are a thousand, i.e. very many, angels of mercy available. It is not clear whether the speaker in v. 24 is the angel or God; the latter seems more natural. The "ransom" (*kopher*) is probably to be understood metaphorically of that which covered the sick man's sin, i.e. his repentance. Elihu was no more an inspired theologian than were Job's friends.

#### ELIHU'S SECOND ANSWER (Ch. 34)

**M**OREOVER Elihu answered and said,

<sup>2</sup>Hear my words, ye wise men;  
and give ear unto me, ye that have  
knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>For the ear trieth words,  
as the palate tasteth meat.

<sup>4</sup>Let us choose for us that which is  
right:  
let us know among ourselves what  
is good.

<sup>5</sup>For Job hath said, I am righteous,  
and God hath taken away my  
right:

- <sup>6</sup>notwithstanding my right I am  
accounted a liar;  
my wound is incurable, *though I*  
*am* without transgression.
- <sup>7</sup>What man is like Job,  
who drinketh up scorning like  
water?
- <sup>8</sup>which goeth in company with the  
workers of iniquity,  
and walketh with wicked men.
- <sup>9</sup>For he hath said, It profiteth a  
man nothing  
that he should delight himself with  
God.
- <sup>10</sup>Therefore hearken unto me, ye  
men of understanding:  
far be it from God, that he should  
do wickedness;  
and from the Almighty, that he  
should commit iniquity.
- <sup>11</sup>For the work of a man shall he  
render unto him,  
and cause every man to find ac-  
cording to his ways.
- <sup>12</sup>Yea, of a surety, God will not do  
wickedly,  
neither will the Almighty pervert  
judgement.
- <sup>13</sup>Who gave him a charge over the  
earth?  
or who hath disposed the whole  
world?
- <sup>14</sup>If he set his heart upon himself,  
*if* he gather unto himself his spirit  
and his breath;
- <sup>15</sup>all flesh shall perish together,  
and man shall turn again unto dust.
- <sup>16</sup>If now *thou hast* understanding,  
hear this:  
hearken to the voice of my words.
- <sup>17</sup>Shall even one that hateth right  
govern?  
and wilt thou condemn him that is  
just *and* mighty?
- <sup>18</sup>Is it *fit* to say to a king, *Thou art*  
*vile*?  
or to nobles, *Ye are* wicked?
- <sup>19</sup>*How much less* to him that respect-  
eth not the persons of princes,  
nor regardeth the rich more than  
the poor?  
for they all are the work of his  
hands.
- <sup>20</sup>In a moment they die, even at  
midnight;
- the people are shaken and pass  
away,  
and the mighty are taken away  
without hand.
- <sup>21</sup>For his eyes are upon the ways of  
a man,  
and he seeth all his goings.
- <sup>22</sup>There is no darkness, nor shadow  
of death,  
where the workers of iniquity may  
hide themselves.
- <sup>23</sup>For he needeth not further to  
consider a man,  
that he should go before God in  
judgement.
- <sup>24</sup>He breaketh in pieces mighty men  
without inquisition,  
and setteth others in their stead.
- <sup>25</sup>Therefore he taketh knowledge of  
their works;  
and he overturneth them in the  
night, so that they are destroyed.
- <sup>26</sup>He striketh them as wicked men  
in the open sight of others;
- <sup>27</sup>because they turned aside from  
following him,  
and would not have regard to any  
of his ways:
- <sup>28</sup>so that they caused the cry of the  
poor to come unto him,  
and he heard the cry of the  
afflicted.
- <sup>29</sup>When he giveth quietness, who  
then can condemn?  
and when he hideth his face, who  
then can behold him?  
whether *it be done* unto a nation, or  
unto a man, alike:
- <sup>30</sup>that the godless man reign not,  
that there be none to ensnare the  
people.
- <sup>31</sup>For hath any said unto God,  
I have borne *chastisement*, I will  
not offend *any more*:
- <sup>32</sup>That which I see not teach thou  
me:  
if I have done iniquity, I will do it  
no more?
- <sup>33</sup>Shall his recompence be as thou  
wilt, that thou refuseth it?  
for thou must choose, and not I:  
therefore speak what thou know-  
est.
- <sup>34</sup>Men of understanding will say unto  
me,

yea, every wise man that heareth me:  
<sup>35</sup>Job speaketh without knowledge, and his words are without wisdom.  
<sup>36</sup>Would that Job were tried unto the end,

because of his answering like wicked men.  
<sup>37</sup>For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

JUST as his first answer had contained a deliberate allusion to Eliphaz' position, so his second takes up Bildad's attitude. He appeals to the consensus of the Wise (vv. 2, 34) as Bildad had to tradition (8: 8ff.).

In his first answer, for all his weakness, we saw Elihu at his best; here he is at his worst. There we obviously have his own reflections, here he is mouthing the shibboleths he has learnt from his childhood. He sets up a completely *a priori* picture of God's rule in the world. We have seen that one of the outstanding features of Job's spiritual progress was his learning to look on life in a new way and to see things that had been hidden from him and his friends by the blinkers of preconceived ideas. But for all we can gather from Elihu's words he might have been away at lunch when Job was describing the world as he had come to see it. We must not forget that in the setting of the book of Job it is not a question whether Elihu is right or not—obviously he is right, at least in large measure—but whether he contributes anything to the solution of Job's "Why?" Obviously he does not. Equally today the Christian who merely repeats theological truths will seldom meet the needs of those who, battered in life, are asking "Why?"

It would seem that Elihu, being a young man of rank and riches, had grown up with a vested interest in the maintenance of society as it was. He believed not only that "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13: 1), but also that the powers that be must be good. As a result he was more shocked by Job's challenge to the accepted order than by his apparent denial of sinfulness. This goes far to account for the complete lack of sympathy for Job in this chapter.

Elihu's attitude is the worse because of its emptiness. However much we may refuse to follow Bildad in his appeal to tradition, we have the feeling that here is a learned man whose views have been carefully thought through and elaborated and who knows all the arguments. His tragedy is that he has become the prisoner of a theory. With Elihu we gain the impression that he has never

thought of applying the theories he has learnt off by heart to life around him.

This is a constant danger in any church, where the theological manual threatens to displace the Bible as the text-book for the young. It is always easier to teach the adolescent theology than the Bible. The danger is that he will become as orthodox but as empty as Elihu shows himself in this chapter.

### ELIHU'S THIRD ANSWER (CHS. 35-37)

**M**OREOVER Elihu answered and said,

<sup>2</sup>Thinkest thou this to be *thy* right, or sayest thou, My righteousness is more than God's,

<sup>3</sup>that thou sayest, What advantage will it be unto thee?

What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?

<sup>4</sup>I will answer thee, and the companions with thee.

<sup>5</sup>Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the skies, which are higher than thou.

<sup>6</sup>If thou hast sinned, what doest thou against him?

and if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?

<sup>7</sup>If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?

or what receiveth he of thine hand?

<sup>8</sup>Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou art; and thy righteousness *may profit* a son of man.

<sup>9</sup>By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty.

<sup>10</sup>But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night:

<sup>11</sup>who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?

<sup>12</sup>There they cry, but none giveth answer,

because of the pride of evil men.

<sup>13</sup>Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

<sup>14</sup>How much less when thou sayest thou beholdest him not, the cause is before him, and thou waitest for him!

<sup>15</sup>But now, because he hath not visited in his anger, neither doth he greatly regard arrogance;

<sup>16</sup>therefore doth Job open his mouth in vanity; he multiplieth words without knowledge.

36. Elihu also proceeded, and said,

<sup>2</sup>Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee:

for I have yet somewhat to say on God's behalf.

<sup>3</sup>I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

<sup>4</sup>For truly my words are not false: one that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.

<sup>5</sup>Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength of understanding.

<sup>6</sup>He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth to the afflicted *their* right.

<sup>7</sup>He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings upon the throne he setteth them for ever, and they are exalted.

<sup>8</sup>And if they be bound in fetters, and be taken in the cords of affliction;

<sup>9</sup>then he sheweth them their work,

- and their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly.
- <sup>10</sup>He openeth also their ear to instruction,  
and commandeth that they return from iniquity.
- <sup>11</sup>If they hearken and serve *him*,  
they shall spend their days in prosperity,  
and their years in pleasures.
- <sup>12</sup>But if they hearken not, they shall perish by the sword,  
and they shall die without knowledge.
- <sup>13</sup>But they that are godless in heart lay up anger:  
they cry not for help when he bindeth them.
- <sup>14</sup>They die in youth,  
and their life *perisheth* among the unclean.
- <sup>15</sup>He delivereth the afflicted by his affliction,  
and openeth their ear in oppression.
- <sup>16</sup>Yea, he would have led thee away out of distress  
into a broad place, where there is no straitness;  
and that which is set on thy table should be full of fatness.
- <sup>17</sup>But thou art full of the judgement of the wicked:  
judgement and justice take hold *on thee*.
- <sup>18</sup>Because there is wrath, beware lest thou be led away by *thy* sufficiency;  
neither let the greatness of the ransom turn thee aside.
- <sup>19</sup>Will thy riches suffice, *that thou be* not in distress,  
or all the forces of *thy* strength?
- <sup>20</sup>Desire not the night,  
when peoples are cut off in their place.
- <sup>21</sup>Take heed, regard not iniquity:  
for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.
- <sup>22</sup>Behold, God doeth loftily in his power:  
who is a teacher like unto him?
- <sup>23</sup>Who hath enjoined him his way?  
or who can say, Thou hast wrought unrighteousness?
- <sup>24</sup>Remember that thou magnify his work,  
whereof men have sung.
- <sup>25</sup>All men have looked thereon;  
man beholdeth it afar off.
- <sup>26</sup>Behold, God is great, and we know him not;  
the number of his years is unsearchable.
- <sup>27</sup>For he draweth up the drops of water,  
which distil in rain from his vapour:  
<sup>28</sup>which the skies pour down  
and drop upon man abundantly.
- <sup>29</sup>Yea, can any understand the spreadings of the clouds,  
the thunderings of his pavilion?
- <sup>30</sup>Behold, he spreadeth his light around him;  
and he covereth the bottom of the sea.
- <sup>31</sup>For by these he judgeth the peoples;  
he giveth meat in abundance.
- <sup>32</sup>He covereth his hands with the lighting;  
and giveth it a charge that it strike the mark.
- <sup>33</sup>The noise thereof telleth concerning him,  
the cattle also concerning *the storm* that cometh up.
37. At this also my heart trembleth,  
and is moved out of its place.
- <sup>2</sup>Hearken ye unto the noise of his voice,  
and the sound that goeth out of his mouth.
- <sup>3</sup>He sendeth it forth under the whole heaven,  
and his lightning unto the ends of the earth.
- <sup>4</sup>After it a voice roareth;  
he thundereth with the voice of his majesty:  
and he stayeth them not when his voice is heard.
- <sup>5</sup>God thundereth marvellously with his voice;  
great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.
- <sup>6</sup>For he saith to the snow, Fall thou on the earth;

- likewise to the shower of rain,  
and to the showers of his mighty  
rain.
- <sup>7</sup>He sealeth up the hand of every  
man;  
that all men whom he hath made  
may know *it*.
- <sup>8</sup>Then the beasts go into coverts,  
and remain in their dens.
- <sup>9</sup>Out of the chamber of the south  
cometh the storm:  
and cold out of the north.
- <sup>10</sup>By the breath of God ice is given:  
and the breadth of the waters is  
straitened.
- <sup>11</sup>Yea, he ladeth the thick cloud  
with moisture;  
he spreadeth abroad the cloud of  
his lightning:
- <sup>12</sup>and it is turned round about by  
his guidance,  
that they may do whatsoever he  
commandeth them  
upon the face of the habitable  
world:
- <sup>13</sup>whether it be for correction, or for  
his land,  
or for mercy, that he cause it to  
come.
- <sup>14</sup>Hearken unto this, O Job:  
stand still, and consider the won-  
drous works of God.
- <sup>15</sup>Dost thou know how God layeth  
*his charge* upon them,  
and causeth the lightning of his  
cloud to shine?
- <sup>16</sup>Dost thou know the balancings of  
the clouds,  
the wondrous works of him which  
is perfect in knowledge?
- <sup>17</sup>Thou whose garments are  
warm,  
when the earth is still by reason of  
the south *wind*,
- <sup>18</sup>canst thou with him spread out  
the sky,  
which is strong as a molten mir-  
ror?
- <sup>19</sup>Teach us what we shall say unto  
him;  
*for* we cannot order *our speech* by  
reason of darkness.
- <sup>20</sup>Shall it be told him that I would  
speak?  
or should a man wish that he were  
swallowed up?
- <sup>21</sup>And now men cannot look on the  
light when it is bright in the  
skies:  
when the wind has passed, and  
cleanseth them.
- <sup>22</sup>Out of the north cometh golden  
splendour:  
God hath upon him terrible  
majesty.
- <sup>23</sup>The Almighty, we cannot find him  
out; he is excellent in power:  
and in judgement and plenteous  
justice he will not afflict.
- <sup>24</sup>Men do therefore fear him:  
he regardeth not any that are wise  
of heart.

As Elihu saw it, Job had not merely made baseless claims for himself and denied God's righteous rule of the world; he had also denied that there was any profit in serving God (35: 3, cf. 9: 22f., 30f., 21: 15, 24: 1), though it is questionable whether Job had ever intended his words to be so understood.

When Karl Marx declared that religion was opium for the people and that all promises of blessing for the keeping of the moral law were only means for making the proletariat satisfied with their chains, he put his finger on an all-too-frequent misuse of religion. All too often some subtle shift of emphasis has brought the official Church on to the side of the dominant classes. In Job's day the virtual equation of poverty and sin, not unknown in the Victorian age, was most comforting to the rich and powerful.

We do not doubt that Elihu was genuinely shocked by the suggestion that God would not reward those who served him, but equally certainly the shock was increased by the uneasy knowledge that, if Job was right, he would have to reconsider his whole outlook on the world. This probably explains the rather malicious reference to Job's *companions* (35: 4), literally "friends"; he is probably thinking of the rich, careless wicked whom Job had so graphically described, e.g. 21: 14f., and he suggests that Job for all his outward godliness was at heart one of them.

In the earlier part of his answer (35: 5-9) Elihu takes up and expands Eliphaz' aphorism in 22: 2-4, but what was just within the bounds of truth in the mouth of the older man becomes a travesty of Scriptural truth as it is exaggerated by the younger. But it is clear that he does not really believe his own picture of God, for the one who gives "songs in the night" (35: 10f.) is not the transcendent Deity, unmoved by the acts of His creation, whom he had earlier depicted. We need not be surprised or distressed by this. There is little hope for the young man with a fully co-ordinated theology; he is only a copy-cat or a poll-parrot. True enough, Elihu was teaching when he should have been learning, but he shows enough good for us to hope great things for him.

He goes on to reveal this dichotomy in thought by expanding in 36: 2-12 his thought of the drawing and teaching of God in suffering. He goes so far as to call it a *ransom* (36: 18), presumably in the sense that it will be accepted as such by God, if the sinner bows under it and accepts it (cf. 33: 24). Even though Elihu is as convinced as Job's friends that Job is a great sinner—not, as with them, because of the greatness of his sufferings, but because of the evil of his words—the R.V. translation of 36: 18f., is so wildly inappropriate to Job's position that we should probably follow the R.S.V. rendering of a very difficult passage:

Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing;  
and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.  
Will your cry avail to keep you from distress,  
or all the force of your strength?

For a moment Elihu strikes true Scriptural balance: *Behold, God doeth loftily in His power: who is a teacher like unto Him?* (36. 22). Then, however, he turns again to his concept of God All-Sovereign, above the finding out and understanding of men (36: 26-37: 24).

It may well be that he was stung to the quick by a look of amusement on the faces of Job's friends. After all, with all his self-assurance he had ended up very much where they had and with even less result. He had not even stung Job into answering. So he launches out into a description of the wonders of God in nature to cover his confusion. But though he uses many words, and at times strikes genuinely poetic notes, he does not really add anything to what Job himself had said, viz. 9: 4-10; 12: 13-25, and perhaps 26: 6-14.

Is it too much to think that, as he describes the greatness of God, Elihu gradually realizes that he has rushed into a subject far too great for him? As his voice tails off there is no need for anyone to answer him; he has realized that after all righteous emotion need not be inspiration.