

From Typology to Doxology

Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35

ANDREW DAVID NASELLI

FROM TYPOLOGY TO DOXOLOGY

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Job 41:3a in Context

EXAMINING JOB 41:3A (ENG. 41:11a) in context is essential for substantively discussing the use of the OT in Rom 11:34–35. This chapter traces the argument of Job in more depth than the previous two chapters trace the arguments of Romans and Isaiah, but it follows the basic organization of the previous two chapters by situating Job 41:3a in its larger literary and theological context before focusing on that verse.¹

1. SYNOPSIS OF JOB

Understanding the entire book of Job is essential for understanding Job 41:3a—even more so than understanding the entire book of Romans or Isaiah is essential for understanding Rom 11:34–35 and Isa 40:13, respectively. The reason is that Job 41:3a occurs near the end of a carefully crafted wisdom story, so the weight of 41:3a is felt most significantly when one reads it in light of all that precedes it as well as how the story concludes.

This book assumes that the book of Job is a coherent, literary unity.² The book's genre is difficult to identify because it is *sui generis*. There is nothing like it in the rest of the OT, and its similarities to Ancient Near Eastern literature are limited. Most OT scholars agree that the book may be categorized broadly as wisdom literature, but it is wisdom literature

1. The formats of this chapter and the ones on Rom 11:34–35 and Isa 40:13 slightly differ from each other because the chapters analyze different genres. Thus, it is less useful to analyze each passage through exactly the same grid.

2. Contra, e.g., Maag, *Hiob*. On this and related introductory issues, see Harrison, *Introduction*, 1022–46; Hartley, *Job*, 3–63; Archer, *Survey*, 503–15; Longman and Dillard, *Introduction*, 224–36; Carson, *How Long*, 137–39, 154–56.

distinct from the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, for example, because it “is both an epic and a wisdom disputation” that “has drawn on numerous genres.”³ The drama unfolds in five parts; the first and last are prose, and the middle three are poetry.

1. Prologue (chs. 1–2)
2. Job’s lament and three cycles of debates between Job and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (chs. 3–31)
3. Elihu’s discourse (chs. 32–37)
4. God’s interrogation of Job (38:1—42:6)
5. Epilogue (42:7–17)

What follows summarizes the prose frame (i.e., the prologue and epilogue) and paraphrases the poetic dialogue (3:1—42:6). Each paraphrase expresses the kernel of the speech in order to track the interaction between the speakers and to follow the progression of the dialogue. It conveys the characters’ emotions to a greater degree by unconventionally employing an informal writing style.⁴

1.1. Prologue (*Job* 1–2)

The prologue sets the scene by introducing the patriarch Job and the problem with which the rest of the book wrestles. Job is a “blameless and upright,” God-fearing, evil-hating man (1:1; cf. 1:8; 2:3). He is the richest person in the East and unusually devout: he regularly offers pre-emptive burnt offerings to God on behalf of his seven sons and three daughters (1:2–5).

Meanwhile, unknown to Job, Satan joins the sons of God (apparently God’s angels) when they present themselves before God, and God initiates a discussion with Satan about Job (1:6–8). Satan accuses Job of serving God merely because God has blessed Job, and God gives Satan permission to test Job but not touch him (1:9–12). Satan strikes acutely by synchronizing a series of calamities like a terrorist mastermind: he destroys Job’s livestock and murders all ten of his children and nearly all of his servants (1:13–19). Without any knowledge of God’s interaction

3. Hartley, *Job*, 38.

4. Kidner similarly paraphrases the twenty-seven stanzas in the Babylonian Theodicy (*Wisdom*, 135–38). Cf. the occasional paraphrases of Job’s dialogue in Talbert, *Beyond Suffering*.

with Satan, Job responds with remarkable integrity, worshipping and praising Yahweh (1:20–22).

Again Satan joins God's angels when they present themselves before God, and again God initiates a discussion with Satan about Job (2:1–3). Satan accuses Job of serving God merely because God blessed him with health, and God gives Satan permission to touch Job but not murder him (2:4–6). Satan strikes severely by inflicting Job with painful sores over his entire body (2:7–8). Even Job's wife urges him to curse God, but he again, without any knowledge of God's interaction with Satan, responds with remarkable integrity (2:9–10).

When three of Job's friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—hear about Job's suffering, they come to sympathize with him and comfort him (2:11). They stay with him for a full week without saying a word because his suffering is so severe (2:12–13), but they soon confirm several proverbs about keeping silent (e.g., Prov 10:19; 17:28; 21:23).

1.2. Paraphrase of Job's Lament and Three Cycles of Debates between Job and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (Job 3–31)

1.2.1. Paraphrase of Job's Lament (Job 3)

I wish I had never been born (3:3–10)! I would be better off if I had been stillborn or just starved to death right after birth (3:11–19). I wish God would let me die (3:20–24)! My worst nightmare has come true, and I'm in turmoil and despair (3:25–26).

1.2.2. Paraphrase of Round One (Job 4–14)

Eliphaz's Response (Job 4–5). I must speak (4:2). It looks like Mr. Advice-giver is actually a hypocrite in need of advice himself (4:3–5). If you really are blameless, would you be suffering like this or be so discouraged (4:6)? God destroys the wicked—not the upright (4:7–9). I heard in a vision that mortals can't be more righteous than God, so stop pretending that you are (4:12–21). If I were you, I would humbly and repentantly submit to God's chastisement and not despise it; then you can experience his blessings (5:8, 17–27).

Job's Response (Job 6–7). My misery is immeasurably heavy (6:2–3). God has afflicted me (6:4), and I'd rather die than deny his words (6:8–10). I've lost hope that God might restore me (6:11–13). What compassion-

ate friends you are (6:14–23)! I'm willing to listen to you if you actually teach me, but show me what I've done wrong instead of wrongly assuming that I deserve this because I sinned (6:24–30). This is my hopeless lot: life is hard and then you die (7:1–10). Have pity on me, God (7:7). I'd rather be strangled to death than continue my meaningless life; I hate my life (7:15–16). Why are you picking on me, God (7:17–21)?

Bildad's Response (Job 8). You windbag (8:2)! Do you dare to question God's justice (8:3)? Your children must have deserved to die because they sinned against God (8:4). If you seek God and if you are pure and upright, God will lavishly restore you (8:5–7), but he hasn't because you are godless (8:13). Just ask the previous generations, and you'll see that what we're telling you is right (8:8). God neither rejects blameless people nor blesses evildoers (8:20).

Job's Response (Job 9–10). I agree that God is just, but how can I prove to him that I'm suffering innocently so that he will vindicate me (9:2)? No one can win a legal dispute with God because he is wise and powerful (9:3–24). I'm blameless! I hate my life (9:21). What's the point? God destroys both the innocent and the guilty (9:22). And you're actually increasing my suffering by condemning an innocent man (9:28). I am presumed guilty until proven innocent, so why should I even try defending myself (9:29)? Even if I were sparkling clean, you would ignore the evidence and plunge me into a slime pit to prove that I'm dirty (9:29–31). I need a mediator to arbitrate between God and me, but that's not going to happen (9:32–33). I hate my life, so I'm going to complain about it (10:1). God, don't condemn me; please explain why you're doing this to me (10:2). Are you sadistic? Do you get pleasure from torturing me while beaming at the schemes of the wicked (10:3)? You know I'm not guilty (10:7). Why did you create me and then do this to me (10:8–19)? Go away, and let me die (10:20–22)!

Zophar's Response (Job 11). Will no one rebuke your mocking (11:2–3)? How dare you claim to be pure in God's sight (11:4)? I wish God would openly rebuke you; he's exacting less punishment from you than you deserve (11:5–6). You can't fathom the deep things of God, you idiot; God is so powerful and wise that he can see right through your deception, so he must punish you (11:7–12). Repent and experience God's blessing, or perish (11:13–20).

Job's Response (Job 12–14). Wisdom will doubtless die with you (12:2)! I know as much as you do about God's greatness; I'm not inferior to you (12:3; 13:2). Even animals are smarter than you because at least they know that Yahweh has done this (12:7–10). Wisdom and power belong to God (12:13–25), and I wish I could argue my case with him (13:3). You worthless quacks are smearing me with lies (13:4). The best way you could demonstrate wisdom is to shut up (13:5). You're defending God with lies (13:7). I am innocent and don't deserve this (13:13–19), but even if God kills me, I'll hope in him because I know he will vindicate me (13:15). Why are you doing this, God (13:23–25)? You have ordained our lives to be short and full of trouble (14:1–5). Give us a break (14:6)! My death is inevitable and irreversible, so I wish you would just kill me and get it over with (14:7–13). Then I'd eagerly await my resurrection (14:14–17). Meanwhile, you unremittably grind down my hope with impending death (14:18–22).

1.2.2. Paraphrase of Round Two (Job 15–21)

Eliphaz's Response (Job 15). You're not a wise man, you windbag (15:2–3)! Your own words testify against you (15:5–6). Don't ignore the wisdom of your elders (15:7–11). You claim to be righteous, but mortals are corrupt (15:12–16). The wicked always suffer eventually, so your extreme suffering is irrefutable evidence that you have been extremely wicked (15:20–35).

Job's Response (Job 16–17). You miserable comforters are endlessly blowing hot air (16:2–3). If I were in your place, I would edify and comfort with my words (16:4–5). God has crushed me even though I am innocent (16:7–22). I'm surrounded by taunting mockers; there's not a single wise man among you (17:2–10). I just want to die (17:11–16).

Bildad's Response (Job 18). Do you think we're stupid (18:2–4)? God severely punishes the wicked: he snuffs out his lamp, weakens his steps, traps him, terrifies him, destroys him, burns him, dries up his roots, perishes the memory of him from the earth, and cuts off his descendents (18:5–20). Therefore, you are wicked and don't even know God (18:21).

Job's Response (Job 19). How long will you shamelessly torture me with your insulting words (19:2–3)? Even if I have sinned, it's none of your business (19:4). God has wronged me; I don't deserve this (19:6–12). My

own family and friends have abandoned me, and even little boys scorn me (19:13–20). Have pity on me (19:21)! Why do you persecute me like God does (19:22)? But I know that my Redeemer lives, and in my body I will see God; he will vindicate me and punish you for persecuting me (19:25–29).

Zophar's Response (Job 20). You're insulting me, Job (20:2–3). God always judges the wicked like this (20:4–29).

Job's Response (Job 21). Just hear me out, and then you may mock on (21:2–3). Why do the wicked prosper (21:7–21)? Who can teach God knowledge (21:22)? Some people experience a vigorous, prosperous, secure life, and others never enjoy a single good thing; but both die (21:23–26). Open your eyes, and look around: wicked people prosper all the time (21:27–33). How can your futile words comfort me? Your so-called answers are nothing but lies (21:34).

1.2.3. Paraphrase of Round Three (Job 22–31)

Eliphaz's Response (Job 22). Is God punishing you because you're so righteous (22:4)? It's obvious to everyone that your wickedness is great: you've ruthlessly robbed your own poor relatives, refused to feed the poor, mistreated widows, and crushed orphans (22:5–9). That's why you're suffering (22:10–11). Do you think that God is so far away that he can't see us and judge us accurately (22:12–14)? Will you continue on the path with wicked people (22:15)? Repent and experience God's blessing (22:21–30).

Job's Response (Job 23–24). I wish I knew where God is so that I could present my case to him; then he would answer me and establish my innocence (23:3–9). I am innocent (23:10–12), but God sovereignly does whatever he wants (23:13–14). He terrifies me (23:15–17). Why doesn't the Almighty punish the wicked now (24:1–17)? He will punish them in due course (24:18–24). If this is not so, then who can prove me a liar (24:25)?

Bildad's Response (Job 25). God is awesome (25:2–3). How can mortals be righteous before God (24:4)? They are maggots and worms (25:5–6).

Job's Response (Job 25–31). Thank you so much for helping me when I'm powerless and for giving such wise advice to me when I'm without wis-

dom (26:2–4)! God sovereignly controls death, the heavens, the weather, animals, and what we perceive as chaos—and that’s just scratching the surface (26:5–14). God has unjustly denied me justice; I’m innocent (27:2–6). Nevertheless, God will bring the wicked to justice, if not in this life then certainly in the next (27:7–23). Only God has all the answers because people don’t even know where to find wisdom (28:1–27). Wisdom, for us, means fearing the Lord and turning away from evil (28:28).⁵ I used to be blessed and esteemed (29:2–25), but now contemptible wretches mock me (30:1–15). I’m in the grip of suffering as God ruthlessly attacks me (30:16–31) even though I have been righteous: I have not lusted after women, lied, committed adultery, treated my servants unfairly, refused to help the poor, mistreated widows, refused to care for orphans, trusted or boasted in my wealth, worshiped the sun or moon, rejoiced over the misfortune of my enemies, cursed anyone, turned away strangers, nor hid my sins (31:1–34). If only I could plead my case to the Almighty (31:35–37)! I have neither stolen nor murdered to obtain my land (31:38–40).

1.3. Paraphrase of Elihu’s Discourse (Job 32–37)

(Elihu, who waits to speak because he is much younger than the others, is furious with both Job and his three friends: “He burned with anger at Job because he justified himself rather than God. He burned with anger also at Job’s three friends because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong” [32:2–3].)⁶

5. Many commentators are convinced that ch. 28 does not record the words of Job, but instead is a reflective interlude inserted as a parenthesis and composed by the narrator. But this issue does not merit our attention here because it makes little difference to the overall message of the book whether ch. 28 records the words of Job or the narrator. For a recent analysis of Job 28 that sees it as central to the book of Job, see Lo, *Job 28*.

6. Elihu’s role in Job is debated. There are two primary views among those who consider the book to be a literary unity. (1) Elihu is an arrogant whippersnapper, a pompous young know-it-all who merely recycles the retribution theology of Job’s three friends. Luther, for example, calls Elihu “the good-for-nothing chatterer” who is “greedy and anxious” to teach (*Zechariah*, 234). Cf. Good, *Turns*, 321; Dumbrell, “Job,” 91, 101; Wilson, *Job*, 13, 420; Longman and Dillard, *Introduction*, 229–30. (2) More convincing is the view that Elihu speaks accurately and transitionally as a precursor and foil to God. “Elihu is right to defend the justice of God, and he has advanced the discussion by suggesting that Job’s greatest sin may not be in something he said or did *before* the suffering started, but the rebellion he is displaying *in* the suffering (Carson, *How Long*, 150–51, emphasis in original). “The three counselors had claimed that Job was suffering because he was sinning, but Elihu explained that he was sinning because

I know I'm young, but I've listened to you guys long enough; listen to me (32:6–11). Not one of you three refuted Job's arguments, so I must speak (32:15–22). Listen carefully to me, Job (33:1–7). You claim to be innocent and thus charge God with injustice, but you're wrong to charge God with injustice; God is just and can do whatever he wants (33:8–13). God is not as remote as you think: sometimes he reveals himself by dreams, and other times the language he uses to communicate to us is pain (33:14–22).⁷ Repent and experience God's blessing (33:25–30). I've got more wisdom to share, so keep listening (33:31–33).

Job claims that he is just and that God is unjust (34:5–9). But God can't be unjust (34:10–30)! Job deserves God's severest judgment for answering like wicked men (34:36–37). Job, do you think it's right to claim, on the one hand, that you're more righteous than God and, on the other hand, that living a righteous life doesn't pay off (35:2–3)? God is not listening to your pathetic pleas to plead your case before him; you're foolish to think that God is obligated to answer you (35:13–16). Job is speaking without knowledge (35:16).

I've got more to say on God's behalf, and be assured that I am "perfect in knowledge" (36:2–4). God is just (36:3). He is mighty and gives justice to the afflicted (36:5–7). He tells them how they have sinned and then restores them if they repent or punishes them if they don't (36:8–15). God is ready to restore you, Job, so don't turn to evil (36:16–21). God is incomparably great and beyond our understanding (36:22–26); you don't even understand how he controls thunderstorms (36:27–37:18). We're too ignorant to argue our case before the majestic, merciful, almighty, righteous God (37:19–23). That's why people fear him (37:24).

he was suffering!" (Zuck, *Job*, 141). Some who hold this view also consider Elihu to be arrogant and bumptious to some degree. Cf. Hartley, *Job*, 427–86; Carson, *How Long*, 148–50; Konkel, "Job," 191–95, 218–19; cf. also Wilson, "Role," 81–94; McCabe, "Elihu's Contribution," 47–80; Waters, "Elihu's Theology," 143–59. Others who hold this view argue that Elihu is not arrogant. Cf. Calvin, *Job*, 558–88; Talbert, *Beyond Suffering*, 163–94, 339–54.

7. Cf. Lewis, *Problem*, 90–91: "Pain is unmasked, unmistakable evil; every man knows something is wrong when he is being hurt . . . Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

1.4. Paraphrase of God's Interrogation of Job (Job 38:1—42:6)

God's First Interrogation (Job 38:1—40:2). Who is this who questions my wisdom and justice with words without knowledge (38:2)? Get ready to defend yourself, Job, because now *I* will question *you*, and you will inform me (38:3)! Where were you when I created the universe (38:4–7)? Can you providentially control every detail of my creation: the sea, the morning daylight, the springs that fill the sea, death, the vast expanses of the earth, light, darkness, snow, hail, the east wind, rain, thunderbolts, dew, ice, frost, the stars, the laws of the universe, clouds, lightning, wisdom, lions, and ravens (38:8–41)? Surely you know these things, for you were already born and have lived so many years (38:21)! Do you know everything about my animals: the mountain goat, deer, wild donkey, wild ox, ostrich, horse, hawk, and eagle (39:1–30)? Will you contend with, accuse, and correct the Almighty? Now is your chance to speak up (40:2).

Job's First Response (Job 40:3–5). I am not worthy. How could I answer you? I am speechless. I have said far too much and will say no more (40:4–5).

God's Second Interrogation (Job 40:6—41:26 [Eng. 40:6—41:34]). Get ready to defend yourself, Job, because now I will question you, and you will inform me (40:7)! Will you defend your own righteousness at the expense of my righteousness (40:8)? Are you as strong as God? Prove it by punishing everyone who is proud, and then I'll acknowledge your superiority (40:9–14). Can you control the untamable, invincible Behemoth (40:15–24) and Leviathan (40:25—41:26 [Eng. 41:1–34])? You would never pick a fight with them, so why are you picking a fight with me? Why do you think you can stand against me—that you have a claim against me that I must pay? I own everything and owe nothing to anyone (41:2–3 [Eng. 41:10–11])!

Job's Second Response (Job 42:1–6). You are supremely sovereign, so you do whatever you want (42:2). I questioned your wisdom with words that lacked knowledge; I didn't know what I was talking about (42:3–4). Now that I understand you far more clearly than before, I repent (42:5–6).⁸

8. Some disagree that Job repented of sin, insisting that God's commendation of Job's words in 42:7–8 implies that Job did not have anything for which to repent. In support of the above paraphrase, see §3 below.

1.5. *Epilogue (Job 42:7–17)*

God then rebukes Job's three friends because they spoke wrongly about God in a way that Job did not (42:7–9).⁹ Further, God blesses Job with twice as much wealth as before, family and friends who are sympathetic and comforting, seven more sons, and three more daughters (42:10–17).

God allows Satan to afflict Job, but he does not *merely* allow it. The epilogue describes Job's Satan-inflicted calamities as "all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him" (42:11). This is consistent with the prologue where God twice initiates discussions with Satan about Job (1:8; 2:3). The end of God's statement in 2:3 implies that God himself is the ultimate cause of the calamity since he, not Satan, is the one who destroys Job: "you incited me against him to destroy him without reason."

2. THE THEME OF JOB

Some argue that it is fruitless to seek a single overarching theme for the book of Job.¹⁰ Many such themes have been suggested. Some are not only unconvincing as the overarching theme of the book; they are not even motifs in the book. For example, some people argue that the book's theme is that doubting orthodoxy is a sign of mature faith.¹¹ Many of God's people, while mature in their faith, have expressed doubts to God (cf. many of the psalms), but the book of Job does not commend questioning and rejecting orthodoxy as a sign of mature faith. Job rightly questions whether retribution theology, the traditional theology of his day, can explain everything, but he is rebuked—not commended—for questioning God's justice.

2.1. *Eight Motifs in Job*

Each of the following eight motifs is textually rooted and thus contributes to the book's theme, but none adequately encapsulates the book as a whole.¹² §2.2 shows how these various motifs cohere as part of one overarching theme, but first it is worth describing these motifs.

9. See Porter, "Job," 291–304.

10. E.g., Dell, *Job*.

11. Di Lella, "Job," 54.

12. Some have suggested these motifs as the overall theme of the book, but authors referenced below under various motifs do not necessarily consider that motif as Job's

1. *The problem of innocent, unexplained suffering.*¹³ All humans are sinful and thus deserve God's eternal righteous wrath, but there is a sense in which some humans suffer more than they deserve. Job does not claim to be sinless, but he does claim to be innocent with reference to this particular suffering (10:7; 13:13–19; 16:7–22; 19:6–12; 23:10–12; 27:2–6; 31:1–40). Job deserves this suffering about as much as an eight-year-old girl deserves to be raped by her uncle. His suffering is evil, horrific, painful, disorienting, disillusioning. It seems irrational to him. He cannot figure out what he did to deserve losing his children, his servants, his wealth, his health, support from family and friends, and his reputation. The narrator and reader know that Job's innocence itself is the catalyst for his suffering, but Job is left in the dark. God never explains to Job why he is suffering, and his suffering never makes sense to him.

2. *Maintaining faith during innocent, unexplained suffering.*¹⁴ Job never learns the answer to his "Why?" question (7:20–21; 10:8–19; 13:23–25), but he learns something more important. He learns that God is immensely great, absolutely sovereign, and unfailingly trustworthy. Although his questions about why he is suffering remain unanswered, Job learns to trust God and not demand answers as if God owes them to him. This does not mean that in the end Job trusts God ignorantly or blindly. Rather, Job trusts God on the basis of God's character and revelation. Job's faith is a reasonable, informed faith. Even though Job is burning to prove himself innocent before God, he learns that God is more concerned that Job trust him.

3. *Mystery.*¹⁵ Even worse than abusing Job with their retribution theology, Job's friends do not speak rightly about God. They think they know more about God than they really do. But none of the human characters in the book of Job understand why God treats Job the way he does. They do not have all the information. Nor do we. The only person not limited

overarching theme. Sometimes authors may describe the book of Job with one of these motifs while subsuming other motifs under it.

13. Cf. Hengstenberg, "Job," 91; Tsevat, "Job," 96; Archer, *Job*, 17–19; idem, *Survey*, 503–4; Clines, "Job," 459; Brueggemann, *Theology* 386–87; Good, "Problem," 50–69, 236–38. See also Waters, "Reflections," 436–51; Carson, *How Long*, 140, 146–48.

14. Cf. Steinmann, "Job," 89–91, 99–100. Wilson (*Job*, 2) argues that Job's "core message" is "that it is necessary to endure faithfully in the face of extreme loss and suffering."

15. Thomas argues that John Calvin understood this to be the theme of Job (*Proclaiming*, 373 et al.).

by perspective is God, so everyone except God lacks sufficient information to understand God and his ways completely.

Job learns to live with tension on one level, but the reader is faced with tension on another level. Even though the narrator gives the reader a glimpse into God's heavenly throne room to learn about God's interaction with Satan (information never disclosed to Job), the reader does not learn the full reason that God brought all this evil upon Job (42:11). We do not know all the reasons that God ordained that Job experience undeserved suffering. It is a "mystery" in the sense of "something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain" (not in the sense that Paul uses the term *μυστήριον*). We know about God's interaction with Satan, but this may strike some readers as cruel: Why should Job have to endure excruciating innocent suffering merely so that God can win a bet with Satan? That is a crass way to put it because it assumes that Job is suffering *merely* for that reason, but we do not know all of the reasons for God's inscrutable ways.¹⁶ We know only what he has revealed, and he has not revealed everything (cf. Deut 29:29). We may not know all of God's reasons, but we must conclude based on God's character and revelation that his reasons must be good ones: "The solemnity and majesty of God's response to Job not only mask God's purposes in mystery, but presuppose they are serious and deep, not flighty or frivolous."¹⁷

Because Job calls God's justice into question, some describe the book of Job as a theodicy.¹⁸ But the book is not a typical theodicy because it does not directly answer Job's charge that God is unjust for his innocent suffering—or at least it does not answer the question the way many people would expect. In his interrogation of Job, God defends his right to do whatever he wants to whomever he wants and insists that he is always righteous in doing so. And Job humbly affirms it.¹⁹

16. We can, however, reasonably deduce at least some of these reasons. For example, God has used Job's suffering to teach millions of humans over some three millennia about himself and his ways. We can also eliminate possible reasons, such as this one proposed by Patton ("Beauty," 167): "We know God is speaking truth when God says chaos is created for divine amusement, because we know Job suffers because God was amused by Satan's wager."

17. Carson, *How Long*, 156.

18. E.g., Bullock, *Introduction*, 69–71.

19. Cf. Lévêque, *Job*, 2:532; Nicholson, "Limits," 71–82.

4. *Comfort.*²⁰ Job's three friends "come to show him sympathy and comfort him" (2:11). It would comfort Job for him not to deny God's words (6:10). He cannot seem to find comfort anywhere else (7:13). Eliphaz rebukes Job for spurning "the comforts of God" (15:11), and Job replies, "Miserable comforters are you all" (16:2). Job pleads with them to comfort him by at least hearing him out (21:2) rather than comfort him "with empty nothings" (21:34). Job used to comfort mourners, but now he is a mourner in need of comfort (29:25). The narrator records in the epilogue that Job's family and friends "showed him sympathy and comforted him" (42:11). Some argue that Job remarks in 42:6 that he is "comforted in dust and ashes."²¹

5. *Refuting retribution theology.*²² Job's insensitive friends so glibly and inflexibly cling to a proverbial truth that they merit God's rebuke (42:7–9). Appealing to their venerable tradition (8:8–20), they insist that you reap what you sow (cf. Prov 22:8; Gal 6:7), that God blesses the righteous and curses the wicked (cf. Prov 3:9–10; 10:27–32). That is generally true, but it is not always true. You reap what you sow, but you do not reap only what you sow. Conversely, it is wrong to conclude that those whom God blesses are righteous and that those whom God curses are wicked. Because Job's condescending friends have no category for guiltless suffering, they mechanically conclude that because Job is suffering, he must have sinned (cf. Job 4:7–9; 11:13–20). But the law of retribution does not explain everything because it is a general principle, not an inviolable rule (cf. John 9:1–3, 34). Thus, their error is at least threefold:

The basic error of Job's friends is that they [1] overestimate their grasp of truth, [2] misapply the truth they know, and [3] close their mind to any facts that contradict what they assume. . . . The book shows (by its context, the opening scene in heaven) [1] how small a part of any situation is the fragment that we see; [2] how much of what we do see we ignore or distort through preconceptions; and [3] how unwise it is to extrapolate from our elementary grasp of truth.²³

20. Cf. Mickel, *Hiobbuch*.

21. See further discussion on 42:6 in §3 below.

22. Cf. Dhorme, *Job*, cxxviii–cli; Dumbrell, "Job," 91–105. Burrell (*Deconstructing*, 16), who denies that the book is about theodicy at all, unconvincingly argues that its primary role is "to correct that characteristic misapprehension of the revelation [from God] displayed by Job's friends."

23. Kidner, *Wisdom*, 61.

Consequently, the three friends cruelly abuse Job by unbendingly adhering to a general rule and then rigidly and heartlessly applying that rule to him.

6. *Putting humans in their place.*²⁴ People sinfully tend to view God's universe through a self-centered lens. They tend to think too highly of themselves and too lowly of God. In few places is this evident more clearly than when people suffer and then demand answers from God as if God owes them an explanation, as if they have the authority to call God into account, as if God must defend himself to them, as if they are qualified to judge God. It is hard to think of a better illustration of self-idolatry. This mindset domesticates the omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.

7. *Wisdom.*²⁵ Who is wise? That is, who has wisdom to diagnose Job's situation most accurately? The book of Job is, after all, wisdom literature.²⁶ The book's first verse and the prologue's leading question are about a prominent unifying theme of wisdom literature, the fear of the Lord: the narrator comments that Job "feared God" like a wise man (1:1; cf. Prov 3:7; 14:16; 16:6), and Satan asks, "Does Job fear God for no reason?" (Job 1:9).²⁷ All of the characters in the dialogue—Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, and God himself—analyze Job's situation in a way that claims they have wisdom (cf. 11:12; 12:2–3, 12–16; 13:2–12; 15:2–13; 17:10; 26:3; 28:12–28; 32:7–13; 33:33; 34:2; 37:24; 38:36–37; 39:17). Chapter 28, which is devoted to wisdom, is integral to the book,²⁸ and God's argument in chapters 38–41 "is essentially that what is inexplicable from human understanding is explicable within the context of divine wisdom."²⁹

24. Cf. Carson, *How Long*, 152–53.

25. Cf. Longman and Dillard, *Introduction*, 232–34. See also Zerafa, *Wisdom*, 96–184; Habel, "Of Things," 142–54; Perdue, "Wisdom," 73–98; Berry, *Introduction*, 11–12, 141–56.

26. Cf. G. Wilson, *Job*, 3–5.

27. L. Wilson ("Book of Job," 59–79) traces this theme through Job and rightly concludes that it is not the answer to Job's dilemma.

28. Lo, *Job* 28.

29. Hartley, "Theology," 790.

8. *Emotional and spiritual maturity.*³⁰ God does not waste suffering. Job's suffering is a catalyst that helps all of the human characters in the book to mature emotionally and spiritually. The clearest example, of course, is Job himself because his raw honesty gives the reader a window into his emotional and spiritual condition. Job's view of God and his ways is enhanced significantly by the end of the story. This maturity motif is related to the wisdom motif because God commends Job as a wise man (42:7–9). Brown argues that the central issue of Job is not God, theodicy, or anything other than Job himself, namely, the transformation of his moral character.³¹

2.2. *The Theological Message of Job: Why People Should Trust God*

The suggested themes above are motifs in the book of Job, but no one of them standing alone sufficiently summarizes the book's theme, that is, its holistic, overarching topic. The theme of Job is "the nature and basis of the relationship between God and man."³² Stated pastorally and rhetorically, Job's theological message is that *people should respond to innocent, unexplained suffering by trusting God because he is supremely wise, sovereign, just, and good.* Job's suffering precipitates discussion about the book's main focus: God. The book is not consumed with answering why the righteous suffer innocently but how they should relate to God in the midst of that suffering. "Suffering clarifies and isolates the central issue of faith."³³ Talbert usefully distinguishes between the book's subject, theme, function, and thesis:

The primary *subject* under discussion throughout the book of Job is God. The concept of suffering is only a secondary subject, the catalyst for the discussion. The *theme* of Job is the nature and basis of the relationship between God and man—founded on faith in God's self-revelation as ultimate reality and God's Person as supremely worthy. The *function* of the book is to display the dynamics of the relationship between God and man—honesty, trust, and submission to a sovereign, wise, and good God. The *thesis* of the book is two-sided: (1) God is unquestionably sovereign, sometimes inscrutable, but always righteous, aware, com-

30. Cf. Harrison, *Introduction*, 1043–46.

31. Brown, *Character*, 51, 115–19.

32. Talbert, *Beyond Suffering*, 22.

33. Wilson, "Job, Book of," 386. Cf. Terrien, "Job," 897; Barrett, "Job," 25.

passionate, and good in all He does or allows. (2) Man has the privilege and responsibility to know and to trust this one true God in an intimate and infinitely rewarding relationship.³⁴

3. THE ARGUMENT OF JOB 38:1—42:6

God's interrogation of Job in 38:1—42:6 is "the literary and theological climax of the book,"³⁵ and understanding it is crucial for understanding 41:3a. The unit is a disputation speech dominated by the motif of praise.³⁶ The genre in which God addresses Job in chapters 38–41 is unique:

The Yahweh speeches, being a blend of multiple genres—theophany, hymn of praise, dispute, interrogation of a defendant, myths of the divine battle with primordial monsters—create a unique form. The essential nature of these speeches is a hymn of praise, but the list of natural phenomena and the series of rhetorical questions dominate their structure.³⁷

3.1. *The Setup for God's Interrogation of Job (Job 38:1—42:6)*

Job persistently maintains his innocence in his suffering—and rightly so—but he is wrong on at least two counts. First, he is determined to prove his innocence before God even at the expense of God's justice. He concludes that God is unjust for allowing his innocent suffering (cf. 27:2–6). Second and more fundamentally, he presumes that God owes him an explanation.

Job repeatedly wishes to appeal directly to God and get a hearing with him (13:13–23; 23:3–9; 31:35–37; cf. 9:32–33). All will be well, he thinks, if only he gets an interview with God. The exasperated Job finally gets his wish, but the interview is not what he had in mind. After thirty-

34. Talbert, *Beyond Suffering*, 22. This agrees with the thesis of Parsons' dissertation ("Job 38:1—42:6," 1 of abstract): "The major purpose of Job was not to explain human suffering but to demonstrate that the proper relationship of man to God (whether in suffering or otherwise) is based solely upon the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust" ("Job 38:1—42:6," ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980). Cf. idem, "Structure," 142–51; idem, "Job, Theology of," 415–19; Viberg, "Job," 202–3.

35. Rowold, "Theology," 1.

36. Westermann, *Hiob*, 108–24 (see also 30, 40–51, 84–92); Murphy, *Wisdom*, 44; Perdue, *Wisdom*, 76–80, 201–2, 218.

37. Hartley, *Job*, 488.

five chapters of human dialogue, God responds to Job, but only on his own terms. Instead of Job questioning God, God questions Job. He does not informally pull up a chair and ask Job to have a seat on the couch over a cup of coffee. Nor does he take Job to a courtroom to let Job plead his case for God's vindication. He answers Job by thundering out of the whirlwind, an appropriate vehicle to convey the gravitas and authority of his words (cf. 2 Kgs 2:1; Ezek 1:4; Nah 1:3; Zech 9:14). His very presence evokes a response of humility.

3.2. *God's First Interrogation of Job (Job 38:1—40:5)*

No one would want to be Job when the first words come from God's mouth (38:2). He immediately puts Job in his place by asking, "Who is this . . . ?" In other words, "Who is this peon? Who does he think he is?" Then comes a piercing rebuke: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" God rebukes Job for foolishly questioning his wisdom and justice.

It is important to qualify God's rebuke of Job, again presuming the book's literary unity and coherence.³⁸ First, the narrator and God commend Job in the prologue (1:1, 8, 20–22; 2:3, 10), and the rest of the book never rescinds that commendation. Second, God firmly expresses his anger at Job's three friends and firmly rebukes them while again commending Job. He explains to Eliphaz, "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (42:7). Third, God will not deal with Job's three friends according to their folly only if they offer sacrifices and then Job intercedes to God on their behalf (42:8–9). God states the reason, repeating, "For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (42:8). Fourth, the book ends with God restoring and bountifully blessing Job (42:10–17). Thus, despite his missteps, Job maintains his integrity and trust in God throughout the book. So in the book as a whole, God vindicates Job but not his three friends.³⁹

38. Some who examine the book of Job as a literary whole argue that the description of Job in prose frame and Job's words in the poetic core contradict each other. E.g., Cheney, *Dust*.

39. See Porter's probing essay "Job," which concludes that in Job 42:7b God commends Job "both for his protesting and questioning and for his repenting" (303), even though "the ambiguity is unsettling" (304).

God asks Job a series of stunning, humbling questions about creation (38:2—40:2).⁴⁰ God's point is that only he controls every aspect of his creation and that Job cannot control any of them. The way God talks about his animals also offers a glimpse of his compassion.⁴¹

These are not the sorts of questions Job wants to consider because they do not directly address the justice of his innocent suffering. But these are exactly the sorts of questions Job needs to hear because they reframe the issue in such a way that shows Job how myopic, self-centered, presumptuous, arrogant, and idolatrous his worldview and its corresponding assumptions are. Job wrongly presumes that he has the ability and the right to accuse God of injustice, stand before God, and learn the answer to his questions.

God's interrogation exalts his unique greatness and goodness, and the result is that Job is humbled. He recognizes, "I am of small account" and then shuts his mouth (40:4–5).⁴² But God is not done yet. His second round of questions is even more intense.

3.3. *God's Second Interrogation of Job (Job 40:6—42:6)*

Some argue that various portions of God's speeches to Job are interpolations,⁴³ but the unified testimony of the Hebrew manuscripts affirms the book's unity with the result that positing interpolations is highly subjective.⁴⁴ Consequently, it is not uncommon for biblical scholars to treat God's speeches as a literary unity even if they are not necessarily convinced that it is.⁴⁵

If God's first speech emphasizes his justice, then his second speech emphasizes his supreme sovereignty, namely, his authority and power.⁴⁶ He asks a second series of stunning, humbling questions. The key verse of this interrogation is 40:8, where God rebukes Job for discrediting

40. Cf. Crenshaw, "When Form," 70–84.

41. Talbert, *Beyond Suffering*, 206.

42. Contra Dailey ("Wisdom," 105–19), who argues that Job's response "is actually a sophisticated epistemological ploy."

43. Westermann (*Hiob*, 124) postulates that 39:9–12, 13–30; 40:15–24; and 41:4–26 (Eng. 41:12–34) are secondary additions. Cf. Rowley, *Job*, 254; Vermeylen, *Job*, 25–27.

44. For defenses of the second speech's literary integrity, see Kubina, *Hiob*, 115–23; Hartley, *Job*, 31–33; Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 199–201.

45. E.g., Gradl, "Ijobs," 66–67.

46. Cf. Hartley, *Job*, 522.

God's justice at the expense of Job's innocence. Job questions how God governs his universe, and God retorts by questioning whether Job is as strong as God (40:9–14).

Here [in 40:8–14], if we have rightly found the heart of the theology of the whole book, is a very great depth. There is a rebuke in it for any person who, by complaining about particular events in his life, implies that he could propose to God better ways of running the universe than those God currently uses.⁴⁷

God reinforces the message of 40:8–14 with two formidable illustrations: Behemoth (40:15–24) and Leviathan (40:25–41:26 [Eng. 41:1–34]). This second interrogation intensifies God's unique grandeur, sovereignty, and independence.

There are four major views on the identification of Behemoth and Leviathan.

1. Behemoth and Leviathan refer to prehistoric dinosaurs.⁴⁸ Some of the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan do not seem to correspond literally with any known animal living today, but could correspond with dinosaurs (e.g. 41:10–12 [Eng. 41:18–21]).

2. Behemoth and Leviathan refer to known animals living today, namely, the hippopotamus and crocodile, respectively.⁴⁹ Most of the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan seem to correspond with these animals, and the few apparent discrepancies are poetic hyperbole (e.g., 41:10–13, 23 [Eng. 41:18–21, 31]), a device that God uses frequently in chapters 38–41, which are laced with figures of speech.⁵⁰

47. Andersen, *Job*, 287.

48. Udd, "Evaluation," 72–199; Morris, *Job*, 115–22. Cf. Maarten, "לְיָהוּא," 2:780.

49. Delitzsch, *Job*, 687–99; Dhorme, *Job*, 619; *BDB* 97, 531; Kroeze, *Job*, 445–66; Gordis, *Book of Job*, 119–20; idem, *Book of Job*, 569–72; Rowley, *Job*, 255–64; Andersen, *Job*, 288–89; Archer, *Job*, 107–8; Rude, "God's Answer," 40; Bullock, *Introduction*, 84–85.

50. E.g., God shut up the sea behind doors "when it burst out from the womb" and "made clouds its garment" (38:8–10); God makes the dawn know its place (38:12); light lives in a home (38:19–20); lightning talks to God (38:35); God keeps snow and hail in storehouses (38:22); rain and ice were conceived and birthed (38:28–29); rain falls from tipped water jars in the sky (38:37); young ravens cry out to God for food (38:41); the ostrich laughs at the horse and its rider (39:18); the horse laughs at fear, swallows the ground, and says "Aha!" when it hears the trumpet (39:22, 24–25); Behemoth's bones are made of bronze (40:18); Leviathan's "back is made of rows of shields" (41:7 [Eng.

The second most common suggestion for Behemoth is the elephant since “tail” in 40:17 could be translated as “trunk.” Couroyer argues that Behemoth is a buffalo.⁵¹ A less common suggestion for Leviathan is the whale.

3. Behemoth and Leviathan refer to mythological creatures that represent evil, primordial, cosmic, chaotic forces (cf. the other four OT references to Leviathan: Job 3:8; Pss 74:14; 104:26; Isa 27:1).⁵² Smick holds a variation of this view, namely, Behemoth and Leviathan are not “mythological creatures,” but God uses “mythological terminology . . . to present graphic descriptions of the powers of evil such as the Satan in the Prologue.”⁵³ Waltke calls Behemoth and Leviathan “mythological creatures, quintessential representations of evil’s power” that “show that humanity cannot subdue evil.”⁵⁴ Leviathan may be a mythical sea monster who represents chaos and evil and whom God crushes (cf. Job 3:8; Ps 74:13–14; Isa 27:1). This leads some to identify Leviathan with Satan, a serpent and dragon who embodies evil and whom God will crush (Gen 3; Rom 16:20; Rev 12:9; 20:2–3, 7–10).⁵⁵

4. Behemoth and Leviathan refer to a combination of views 2 and 3 (or possibly views 1 and 3): God describes two real creatures that secondarily symbolize larger cosmic realities.⁵⁶ This is not a *tertium quid* view

41:15]); Leviathan “laughs at the rattle of javelins” (41:21 [Eng. 41:29]). Cf. 41:12–13 (Eng. 41:20–21) with Ps 18:8.

51. Couroyer, “Qui,” 418–43; idem, “Glaive,” 59–79; idem, “Behemoth,” 214–21.

52. Gordon, “Leviathan,” 1–9; Terrien, “Yahweh,” 503–4; Pope, *Job*, 320–46; Habel, *Job* (1975), 221–22; Rowold, “Theology,” 121–60; Payne, “לוֹהַ,” in *TWOT*, 472; Day, *God’s Conflict*, 62–87, 180–82; idem, “Leviathan,” 296; Gibson, *Job*, 250–51; idem, “On Evil,” 402–9; Caquot, “Léviathan,” 40–69; Mettinger, “God of Job,” 45–47; idem, “Enigma of Job,” 11–14; Clifford, *Wisdom Literature*, 92–94; Viberg, “Job,” 202; Patton, “Beauty,” 149–53; Scobie, *Ways*, 241–42, 671; Fyall, *Now*; Dempster, *Dominion*, 204; Waltke, *OT Theology*, 939, 943; Schifferdecker, *Whirlwind*, 63–64 et al.; Cornelius, “Job,” 298–99. Cf. Good, *Job*, 358–70; Lévêque, “L’interprétation,” 212–16; Yeager and Dailey, “Job’s World,” 184.

53. Smick, “Job,” 1049; see also 1047–51. Cf. idem, “Mythology,” 106; idem, “Another,” 226–28; idem, “Architectonics,” 99–101.

54. Waltke, *OT Theology*, 939.

55. The most persuasive argument for this is Fyall, *Now*, whose thesis is that Behemoth and Leviathan represent death and Satan, respectively (see esp. 101–74).

56. Keel, *Jahwes*, 126–56; Parsons, “Job 38:1–42:6,” 199–207, 215–28, 336–48; Martens, “בְּהֵמוֹת,” 93; Zuck, “Job,” 772–73; Alter, “Truth,” 85–86; Hartley, *Job*, 521–22,

that identifies Behemoth and Leviathan as liminal creatures that are neither earthly nor supernatural or mythical.⁵⁷ Rather, this view affirms that Behemoth and Leviathan are actual animals with which Job is familiar while also affirming that these animals have additional significance because of their connection to cosmic realities. This is the most convincing view. The evidence for larger cosmic realities is too strong to dismiss, but Behemoth and Leviathan cannot refer exclusively to evil forces because God says that he created Behemoth (and, by implication, Leviathan) just as he created Job (40:15).

Far more important than identifying what Behemoth and Leviathan refer to is understanding why God speaks about them the way he does to Job. The four views above do not significantly alter the main point of 41:2–3 (Eng. 41:10–11) since various adherents of all four views agree on the theological significance for God’s mentioning Behemoth and Leviathan: God created these powerful, fear-inducing creatures, and only God can control them. God is God; Job is not. Therefore, Job’s respectful fear of God should surpass his respectful fear of Behemoth and Leviathan.⁵⁸

Adhering to view 4 above enhances the application further: God controls not only the earthly dimensions of Job’s suffering but also the cosmic ones, namely, the role of Satan himself. Once again, God’s questions make Job recognize that God has the ability and right to do many things that Job does not and that, therefore, Job should think twice before demanding a hearing with God or accusing him of injustice.

Job’s response is commendable. He recognizes God’s omnipotence, sovereignty, and omniscience, and he repents (42:1–6). Suggested translations of 42:6 that depict Job as merely changing his mind about himself (dust and ashes are taken to represent the injustice of human

530, 534; idem, “Theology,” 791; Clines, *Job 1–20*, xlvi; Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 221–32; Kaiser et al., *Hard*, 261–62; Maarten, “לִיָּוִיִּם,” 779–80; Uehlinger, “Leviathan,” 514; Goldingay, *OT Theology*, 723; Carson, *How Long*, 151–52; Talbert, *Beyond Suffering*, 269–82, 371–75.

57. Proponents of that view include Newsom, “Job,” 615; Balentine, *Job*, 683.

58. Contra Gammie (“Behemoth,” 226), who reverses the passage’s meaning by arguing that God’s second interrogation is ironic; i.e., it merely seems to humble Job and accentuate his inferior strength compared to Behemoth and Leviathan, but it actually portrays “the divine pride in human triumph over oppression” while “the beasts themselves celebrate instead Job’s triumph.”

life)⁵⁹ are unpersuasive because Job repents of sin, namely, misinformed presumption.⁶⁰

3.4. *The Significance of God's Interrogation of Job (Job 38:1—42:6)*

Parsons shrewdly summarizes 38:1—42:6 with this “thesis statement”:

Because of his omnipotent work of creating and sustaining the order of the cosmos, YHWH alone is its sovereign and benevolent lord who relates to finite man only on the basis of his own sovereign grace and man's joyous trust in him.⁶¹

God's questioning of Job is the book's climax and turning point, and its significance is at least fourfold.⁶²

1. God is too small in Job's eyes. Prior to God's interrogation of Job, Job's perception of God is too soft, too tame, too domesticated. But God's questions underscore his unshakable trustworthiness as uniquely and infinitely wise, sovereign, just, and good.⁶³ God is not someone whom Job can drag into court so that he and God can argue their case before an impartial judge. The Almighty God is without peer. He himself is the judge, jury, executioner, and standard of justice.

2. Correspondingly, Job is too large in his own eyes.⁶⁴ God gives Job a theocentric view of the universe because Job cannot help viewing God's world with himself at its center.⁶⁵ Job actually discredits God's justice at the expense of his own innocence. So an effect of God's piercing ques-

59. Gutiérrez, *Job*, 86–87; Engseth, “Role,” 128–30; Dailey, “Job 42,6,” 205–9; idem, “Aesthetics,” 64–70; Wolde, “Job 42,1–6,” 223–50; Brown, *Character*, 108–11; Habel, “Verdict,” 33–34; Wilson, *Job*, 14–15, 420–21, 468; Krüger, “Did Job,” 217–29.

60. Cf. §3.1 above and §3.4 below. See also Newell, “Job,” 298–316, who concludes, “Job recognized that he had sinned and he repented of that sin. This sin was not committed prior to his suffering—it was not the cause of his suffering. Rather, his sin was in the words he spoke, accusing and condemning God, though in measure unconsciously, as he justified himself. He also sinned in thus exalting himself as a ‘rival god’” (315).

61. Parsons, “38:1—42:6,” 231.

62. Cf. Kidner, *Wisdom*, 70–72.

63. Cf. Pury, *Hiob*, 32–35.

64. See Parsons, “Job 38:1—42:6,” 208–9.

65. See Schifferdecker, *Whirlwind*, whose thesis is that God's speeches in Job 38–41 sufficiently answer Job's situation by showing people their place in God's “radically non-anthropocentric” creation. Cf. Fohrer, “Gottes,” 1–24.

tions is that Job repents by humbling himself before God as insignificant, ceasing to question God's ways with him, and submitting to God's unthwartable sovereignty (40:4–5; 42:1–6). Job does not claim to understand why he is suffering, nor does he insist on his right to know why. Instead, he repents. But he does not repent of sins that he committed prior to his innocent suffering. Rather, he repents of his conceited perspective about God's justice that he expressed in the midst of his suffering.⁶⁶ Job's maturity grows as he himself becomes smaller.

3. God is not obligated to give Job anything, not even answers to his questions. So he changes the subject. He does not answer the main question that Job repeatedly asks: "Why am I suffering?" The closest God comes to answering it is rebuking Job for defending his own righteousness at the expense of God's righteousness (40:8). God does not answer Job's "Why?" question because Job's question, though sincere, is misguided. The narrator and reader know that God challenges Satan about Job's integrity and gives Satan permission to make Job suffer, but Job never learns this. The point for Job—and the point that the narrator is making for the reader—is that God is not obligated to answer Job's question. The reason is simple: God is infinite, and Job is finite. God himself is the answer.⁶⁷ God as the Creator of the universe owns everything and owes nothing to anyone; a finite person cannot understand the inscrutable ways of the infinite God.

That a discourse which began with the cosmos should end in praise of two aquatic monsters, however fearsome, may strike us as eccentric; and that it should ignore our burning questions altogether may be a bitter disappointment.

But there is no mistaking the thrust of it, congenial or not. It cuts us down to size, treating us not as philosophers but as children—limited in mind, puny in body—whose first and fundamental grasp of truth must be to know the difference between our place and God's, and to accept it. We may reflect that if, instead of this, we were offered a defense of our Creator's ways for

66. Contra Wilson, "Job, Book of," 387: "The Hebrew permits, and the context demands, a translation [of 42:6] such as 'therefore I reject and turn from the way of dust and ashes' (lamenting as a social outcast)." Wilson argues elsewhere that Job does not repent of sin, but merely retracts his litigation ("Protest," 137–47). But Job does more than simply retract his litigation; he turns from the sinful assumptions behind his litigation.

67. Preuß, "Jahwes," 342.

our approval, it would imply that he was accountable to us, not we to him. And if, not being offered this, we were to demand it, we should be guilty of the arrogance of Adam.⁶⁸

This is why some alternative interpretations of Job 38:1—42:6 fail.⁶⁹ They are based on the errant assumption that Job deserves to know the whole story, that it is his right to learn the answer to his “Why?” question, that God really does owe him an explanation regarding his suffering. For example, some mock God’s “answer” to Job as an inadequate reply: Job calls God’s bluff, but God dodges Job’s “Why?” question and instead boasts about creating and controlling various aspects of the universe like the weather and animals. In other words, they claim that a fallible God gives Job a proud, abusive, rude, intimidating, impertinent, irrelevant non-argument that adds fog to the situation instead of clearing up his confusion. Brueggemann, for example, concedes that God’s answer “takes Job seriously,” but not in a way that helps Job:

It is not, however, a user-friendly answer, and it concedes nothing to Job. . . . Yahweh is lordly, haughty, condescending, dismissive, reprimanding, refusing to entertain Job’s profound question, refusing to answer the probe of 21:7, and refusing to enter into any discussion about justice, sanctions, moral reliability, or covenantal symmetry. . . . The lyrical, self-congratulatory assertions of Yahweh about the wonder of Behemoth (40:15–24) and Leviathan (41:1–34) open the assertion of power to the claim of artistry. But the whole statement is one of overwhelmingness, not engagement.⁷⁰

Some criticize God’s address to Job more brazenly than Brueggemann.⁷¹

Other views are not quite so impudent yet are equally misguided. For example, some argue that God’s talk about the weather and animals

68. Kidner, *Wisdom*, 72.

69. Cf. the refutation of some of these by Andersen, *Job*, 270–71; Carson, *How Long*, 152–53.

70. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 390. Similarly, Wilson, surpassing the audacity of Job’s questioning God, depicts God’s speeches as “bombastic” (*Job*, 8, 13, 359, 421). Cf. Rad, *Wisdom*, 224–25; Gibson, “On Evil,” 399.

71. Shaw, *Adventures*, 11–13; Robertson, “Job,” 446–69; Curtis, “Job’s Response,” 511; Brenner, “God’s Answer,” 129, 134–35; Penchansky, *Betrayal*, 48–53; Williams, “Victims,” 208, 221–22; Morrison, “God’s Answer,” 345–51, 355–56.

is medicine to dull Job's pain.⁷² But God's creation, as inspiring and breathtaking as it is, looks different to people who view it through the lens of excruciating innocent suffering. It may even make their suffering worse rather than minimize it.

4. Only God is all-wise. By asking two series of imposing questions, God answers the question "Who is wise?" The answer is that God alone is wise.⁷³ So rather than accusing God and doubting his integrity, the right response for Job is to trust God, who is supremely wise, sovereign, just, and good. God demonstrates that he sovereignly controls his universe and that he is not unjust and capriciously cruel. To the contrary, τὸ τέλος κυρίου with Job is to show "how the Lord is compassionate and merciful" (Jas 5:11).⁷⁴

4. THE ARGUMENT OF JOB 41:2–3

Quoting Job 41:3a, as Paul does in Rom 11:35, recalls to mind the entire context of the book of Job since that framework is necessary to make sense of the brief quotation. The part makes the most sense in light of the whole. Now that we have surveyed the contours of the book of Job, we may examine the argument of Job 41:3a with significantly more profit.

In Job 40:25–41: 26 (Eng. 41:1–34), God highlights Leviathan, one of his most fearsome creatures. Of the thirty-four verses devoted to Leviathan, two most concisely explain why God asks Job about Leviathan: verses 2–3 (Eng. vv. 10–11).

לֹא-אֶכְזֵר בִּי יְעוֹרְנֵנוּ וּמִי הוּא לִפְנֵי יִתְיַצֵּב:
מִי הַקְדִּימָנִי וְאֲשַׁלֵּם תַּחַת כְּלֵה־שָׁמַיִם לִי-הוּא:

No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up.

Who then is he who can stand before me?

Who has first given to me, that I should repay him?

Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.⁷⁵

72. E.g., Gordis, *Book of God*, 133: "When man steepes himself in the beauty of the world his troubles grow petty, not because they are unreal, but because they dissolve within the larger plan, like the tiny dabs and scales of oil in a painting. The beauty of the world becomes an anodyne to man's suffering—and the key to truth."

73. Cf. Lévêque, *Job*, 2:528.

74. Cf. Moo, *James*, 228–30.

75. See ch. 5 below for a discussion of textual issues in this passage.

God makes two basic arguments in these two verses by using simple logic. The first is a lesson on humility, and the second a lesson on ownership.

4.1. A Lesson on Humility:

An Argument from the Lesser to the Greater (Job 41:2)

The word translated “stand” in 41:2 (Eng. 41:10) is the hithpael stem of **צָבַר**, a legal term that Elihu uses when challenging Job: “Answer me, if you can; set your words in order before me; take your stand [הִתְיַצְּבָה]” (33:5). God demonstrates that Job’s actions are logically absurd. On the one hand, he confidently demands to plead his case before God so that he can contend with him. But on the other hand, he would never demand to contend either with Leviathan or the evil, primordial, cosmic powers that Leviathan symbolizes. God argues that if Job could not contend with Leviathan, why was he contending with God, who created and controls Leviathan? If Job would be terrified to stand before Leviathan, why is he not terrified to demand a trial with God and stand before him? Compare how Carson summarizes the argument of 40:15–41:26 (Eng. 40:15—41:34):

If Job is to charge God with injustice, he must do so from the secure stance of his own superior justice; and if he cannot subdue these beasts [Behemoth and Leivathan], let alone the cosmic forces they represent, he does not enjoy such a stance, and is therefore displaying extraordinary arrogance to call God’s justice into question. . . .

If there are so many things that Job does not understand, why should he so petulantly and persistently demand that he understand his own suffering? *There are some things you will not understand, for you are not God.*⁷⁶

While this seems like a non-answer to some skeptics, Job’s response to God indicates that God’s answer is indeed satisfying. With his characteristic wit, G. K. Chesterton observes,

God comes in at the end, not to answer riddles, but to propound them. . . . Verbally speaking the enigmas of Jehovah seem darker and more desolate than the enigmas of Job; yet Job was com-

76. Carson, *How Long*, 152–53, emphasis in original. Cf. Parsons, “Job 38:1—42:6,” 202; Fohrer, *Buch Hiob*, 529; Caquot, “Léviathan,” 55–56; Lévêque, “L’interprétation,” 217; Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion*, 616.

fortless before the speech of Jehovah and is comforted after it. He has been told nothing, but he feels the terrible and tingling atmosphere of something which is too good to be told. The refusal of God to explain His design is itself a burning hint of His design. The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.⁷⁷

4.2. A Lesson on Ownership:

An Argument from the Greater to the Lesser (Job 41:3)

The axiom of this logical lesson is that a creator owns his creation. He is not in debt to his creation. He does not owe his creation anything. Rather, the creation owes its very existence to the creator.

More specifically, God is the Creator of the universe, that is, he created everything that is not God. Therefore, he owns the universe. He is not in debt to the universe in any way. He does not owe the universe anything. Rather, the universe owes its very existence to God. God is not anyone's debtor because he owns the universe. God is without creditors.

Even more specifically, God created Job. Therefore, he owns Job. He is not in debt to Job in any way. He does not owe Job anything. Rather, Job owes his very existence to God. God is not Job's debtor because he owns Job. Job is not God's creditor.⁷⁸

As Job recognizes earlier, God is free to give what he desires, and he is free to take away what he desires (1:21; 2:10). God has given Job everything: his life, health, family, wealth, position, and reputation. So God owes Job nothing. God's words in 41:3 reinforce Elihu's earlier rebuke to Job in 35:7: "If you are righteous, what do you give to him? Or what does he receive from your hand?"

5. CONCLUSION

In order to understand how Paul uses Job 41:3a in Rom 11:35, one must first understand its context in the book of Job. This chapter's understanding of Job 41:3a is rooted in its understanding of 38:1—42:6 and the book as a whole. (We will see in due course that Paul presupposes all this by quoting Job 41:3a.) Job's theological message is that people

77. G. K. Chesterton, "Job," para. 10.

78. "The pagan religions" held "that God was obligated (by a business contract or a judicial claim) to reward man if he was obedient" (Parsons, "Job 38:1—42:6," 203).

should respond to innocent, unexplained suffering by trusting God because he is supremely wise, sovereign, just, and good. The significance of God's interrogation of Job in 38:1—42:6 is at least fourfold: God is too small in Job's eyes; Job is too large in his own eyes; God is not obligated to give Job anything, not even answers to his questions; and only God is all-wise.

God's argument in 41:2–3 is twofold. First, he argues from the lesser to the greater to teach Job a lesson on humility. If Job would be terrified to stand before Leviathan, he should be even more terrified to demand a trial with God and stand before him. Second, God argues from the greater to the lesser to teach Job a lesson on ownership. Because God created Job, God owns Job, and because God owns Job, God does not owe Job anything.