

Lord, Teach Us How to Grieve: Jesus' Laments and Christian Hope

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of the Doctor of Theology
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation studies the role and function of lament in the New Testament. It addresses the problem that lament does not seem to be a pervasive feature of the New Testament, particularly when viewed in relation to the Old Testament. In some cases the voice of lament appears subdued or muted altogether in favor of resurrection hope and endurance in suffering.

I argue that a careful investigation of the New Testament reveals that it thoroughly incorporates the pattern of Old Testament lament into its proclamation of the gospel, especially in the person of Jesus Christ as he both prays and embodies lament. Jesus represents God's answer to Israel's long-prayed cries of lament, but he also takes up the prayer of lament as a human being; as the Messiah-King, high priest, and prophet of Israel; and as the divine Son of God. Because of this, lament has a dual function in the New Testament: it points to Jesus as the beginning of the fulfillment of lament's cries, and it points forward to the consummation of God's kingdom as guaranteed in Jesus' resurrection.

My working definition of lament in the New Testament derives from the Old Testament pattern: lament is a persistent cry for salvation to the God who promises to save, in a situation of suffering or sin, in the confident hope that this God hears and responds to cries, and acts *now* and *in the future* to make whole. Lament calls upon God to be true to God's own character and to keep God's own promises, with respect to humanity, Israel, and the church.

Although lament texts occur throughout the New Testament—in the Gospels, the epistles, and Revelation—they cluster predominantly in the Gospels, especially in the passion narrative. Therefore, I focus first on the significance of Jesus’ laments in the Gospel passion narratives. I discuss the role of lament in all four passion narratives, and then I read these same texts through the lenses of Jesus’ humanity, Jesus’ messianic identity, and Jesus’ divinity. Finally, in the light of this investigation, I consider lament as a prayer of eschatological longing for the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Dedication

For my mother, Carol Ann Grossi (1946–2008)

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Abbreviations

<i>ASCE</i>	<i>Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CQR</i>	<i>Church Quarterly Review</i>
<i>EThL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>HThR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Hervormde theologiese studies</i>
<i>JBTh</i>	Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie
<i>JDTh</i>	Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSPL</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Paul and his Letters</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBLMS</i>	Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JSSt</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Neotest</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NZSTh</i>	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NTLi</i>	New Testament Library
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTSS</i>	Novum Testamentum Supplements Series
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro Ecclesia</i>
<i>RelEd</i>	<i>Religious Education</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>SJTh</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SNTSMS</i>	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses</i>
<i>ThZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus testamentum</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Wesleyan Theological Journal</i>
<i>WBC</i>	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Acknowledgements

I am grateful first and foremost to the Louisville Institute for their generous grant support in my final year of writing. The other Louisville Fellows (2011-2012), especially Teresa Delgado, provided me with encouragement and helpful comments. Many others supported me and cheered me on during the writing process, including my colleagues in the Th.D. program (special thanks to the Th.D. women's lunch group), my dissertation support group (Jeff Conklin-Miller, Melanie Dobson-Hughes, and Heather Vacek), and my parents, Chuck & Caroline Eklund and Carol & Frank Grossi. Three faith communities kept my writing grounded in the church: Bethlehem Covenant Church in Minneapolis, the Congregation at Duke Chapel, and the Wave Church of Durham. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to friends and colleagues who read my chapters and offered invaluable feedback: Evan Cate, Mindy Makant, Klyne Snodgrass, Mark Storslee, and Sam Wells. Finally, this project was improved at every turn by the conscientious guidance of my advisor, Allen Verhey.

1. Introduction: Defining Lament

1.1 *The Place of this Project within Existing Research on Lament and the New Testament*

Lament is a key feature of the Old Testament, but seems less evident in the New. What is the role and function of lament in the New Testament? This is the primary question that I address in this project. At first glance, lament is not a pervasive feature of the New Testament, particularly when viewed in relation to the Old Testament, and in some cases the voice of lament appears subdued or muted altogether in favor of resurrection hope and endurance in suffering.¹ Furthermore, a handful of contemporary theologians have argued that Christian theology and worship throughout history have not always provided hospitable spaces for the practice of lament.² Several recent monographs

¹ For example, Markus Öhler claims, “The New Testament is characterized by the absence of lament. There are no newly written psalms and songs of lament, indeed that painful turning to God in the face of suffering and death almost seems opposed to the Christian way of life”; in Markus Öhler, “To Mourn, Weep, Lament and Groan: On the Heterogeneity of the New Testament’s Statements on Lament,” in *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2009), 150. It may be, however, that the New Testament contains no “newly written psalms” because it had no need for such: the early church already had a collection of psalms as its prayerbook in the Psalter. Indeed, the Muratorian Canon seems explicitly to reject the composition of new psalms (Muratorian Canon, lines 81-82, in the appendix to Harry Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985]). Martin Ebner also points out that the Old Testament seems replete with lament, whereas the New Testament seems to sing only songs of praise and thanks; see Martin Ebner, “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im Neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, ed. Martin Ebner et al., *JBTh* 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 73-87. Like Ebner, I argue that this perception is a mistaken one.

² Claus Westermann writes, “It would be a worthwhile task to ascertain how it happened that in Western Christendom the lament has been totally excluded from man’s relationship with God, with the result that it has completely disappeared above all from prayer and worship.” He attributes this loss in part to the paraenesis of the New Testament letters, which instructs the believer to bear suffering with patience, and in part to the ethic of Stoicism; see Claus Westermann, “Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament,” *Interpretation* 28, no. 1 (1974): 25. Ottmar Fuchs argues that lament and accusation (Klage and Anklage) have vanished from church liturgy and formal Christian prayers but continue to appear in forms of popular piety; see Ottmar Fuchs, *Die Klage als Gebet: Eine theologische Besinnung am Beispiel des Psalms 22* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1982), 19; cf. Franz Weber, “Klagen und Anklagen: Unterdrückte und befreite Klage in der Volksfrömmigkeit,” in *Klage*, 305. In Nicholas Wolterstorff, “If God Is Good and Sovereign, Why Lament?,” *CTJ* 36, no. 1 (2001): 45-50, Wolterstorff argues that the “mainstream theology” of the church has stifled lament, and he takes particular aim at Augustine (who displaces lament with confession of sin), John Calvin (who displaces it with patience and gratitude), and present-day American culture (which smothers it with a “victorious living” mentality). See also Ernst Dassmann, “Die

and edited volumes attest to a renewed interest in reclaiming the practice of lament for the church.³ I affirm with these scholars that lament is not counter to the Christian life but is rather a faithful part of Christian prayer and Christian hope, and I seek to contribute to this theological conversation regarding the place of lament in the church through a thorough exploration of the function of lament in the New Testament.

Although lament texts occur throughout the New Testament—in the Gospels, the epistles, and Revelation—they cluster predominantly in the Gospels, especially in the passion narrative. Therefore, in my first four chapters I focus on the significance of Jesus’ laments in the passion narratives. First, I discuss the role of lament in all four passion narratives, and then I read these same texts through the lenses of Jesus’ humanity (Chapter 3), Jesus’ messianic identity (Chapter 4), and Jesus’ divinity (Chapter 5). In the light of this investigation, in Chapter 6 I consider lament as a prayer of eschatological longing for the kingdom inaugurated by his death and resurrection.

While New Testament scholars have examined key lament texts in great detail—most notably, Jesus’ “cry of dereliction” from the cross in Matthew and Mark—scholars have generally paid less attention to lament in the New Testament as a whole.⁴

verstumme Klage bei den Krichenvätern,” in *Klage*, 135-51; and Andreas Holzem, “‘Kriminalisierung’ der Klage? Bittgebet und klageverweigerung in der Frömmigkeitsliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Klage*, 153-81.

³ See, e.g., Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller, *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Eva Harasta and Brian Brock, eds., *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 1-3; Richard Hughes, *Lament, Death, and Destiny*, Studies in Biblical Literature 68 (New York: P. Lang, 2004). The claim that Christian theology or tradition has “lost” lament or failed to incorporate lament fully has obvious merit, but warrants greater nuance. These claims tend to concentrate on Western mainstream churches, particularly Western European and American Protestant traditions. For example, the black church in America has arguably practiced lament throughout its history (see Chapter 7, section 7.2.3).

⁴ Several recent theological works on lament that include reference to New Testament texts are Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 216-54; Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* (Eugene: Pickwick

Furthermore, scholars often concentrate their study of lament texts on one Gospel (or perhaps on the Synoptic Gospels, studied for their literary relationships). In the following pages, I seek to read the four Gospels narratively, alongside one another, in order to discern the role that lament plays in each of their unique narratives, but also to read them together as “the fourfold gospel,” that is, one coherent witness to the life and laments of Jesus of Nazareth.

1.2 Statement of Thesis

I argue that a careful investigation of the New Testament reveals that it thoroughly incorporates the pattern of Old Testament lament into its proclamation of the gospel, especially in its description of Jesus’ passion, and that it weaves the longing prayer of lament into its inaugurated eschatology. In short, Jesus Christ embodies the full pattern of lament: Jesus provides God’s answer to Israel’s long-prayed petitions for restoration in his ministry of healing and exorcism and his proclamation of the dawning kingdom of God; he takes up Israel’s prayer of lament himself during his own time of trial and suffering; and he enacts lament’s common pattern of humiliation and vindication in his death and resurrection. Elsewhere in the New Testament, in the epistles and Revelation, lament functions primarily as eschatological longing for the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated.⁵ An important implication, then, is that Christian lament joins with

Publications, 2008); Oswald Bayer, “Zur Theologie Der Klage,” in *Klage*, 289-300; Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore, *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1999); Öhler, 150-65; Martin Ebner, “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, 73-87; Johann Reikerstorfer, “Über der ‘Klage’ in der Christologie,” in *Klage*, 269-87; Ottmar Fuchs, “Unerhörte Klage über den Tod hinaus! Überlegungen zur Eschatologie der Klage,” in *Klage*, 347-79.

⁵ One exception to this is Hebrews 5:7, which is another record of Jesus’ laments. Other possible exceptions are lamenting speeches of Paul over the human condition and over Israel’s unbelief, but even these are set within the context of eschatological tension – between human sin and God’s rectifying action, between Israel’s rejection of her Messiah and God’s ultimate plan to show mercy to all.

Christ in taking up Israel's prayer of lament, but it does so in the space opened up by Jesus' death and resurrection. This means that vindication is brought forward partly into the present but remains to be fully consummated in the future, at the eschaton.

1.2.1 Social Context of Lament

Lament typically arises from settings of dispossession, oppression, and marginalization. In the Old Testament, lament arises from many troubles (illness, threats from enemies, betrayal by friends), but the “primal habitats” for Israel's laments are slavery in Egypt (one might include the wilderness wanderings here) and exile.⁶ In the Second Temple period, although lament plays a lesser role as a form of prayer (see section 1.3.1 below), anguished laments arise from the destruction of the temple and the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. (e.g., 4 Ezra). In the New Testament, one may see the connection between lament and marginalized social location both in the shameful nature of Jesus' crucifixion—a punishment often reserved for the lower classes—and in the cry of the martyrs persecuted and executed by the Roman Empire in Revelation 6.

In the modern era, complaints that lament has vanished from Christian practice often focus on Western, mainstream Christianity, whereas lament has flourished in Two-Thirds-World contexts, particularly as embodied political protest. Due to the important connections between lament and socioeconomic and political context in the Old and New Testaments, I attend throughout the project to these connections and their implications for contemporary church practice.

⁶ Walter Brueggemann describes the exile as the “primal habitat” of Israel's lament: Walter Brueggemann, “Lament as Wake-up Call (Class Analysis and Historical Possibility),” in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, ed. Nancy C. Lee and Carleen Mandolfo (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 225.

1.2.2 Penitence and Protest

Broadly speaking, there are two main streams of lament in the Jewish and Christian traditions: lament as protest, and lament as penitence. Both of these streams appear in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the two forms often overlap and occur simultaneously. Even when the lamenter acknowledges that Israel's suffering resulted at least in part from sin or disobedience, the lamenter might charge God with excessive punishment or argue that God should still show mercy according to God's own character and promises (Exod 32:11-14; Dan 9:4-19).⁷ In the New Testament, the two streams tend to be more distinct. As I explore the various lament texts in the New Testament, I identify these two strands to argue that lament as protest or "conflict speech" (Konfliktgespräche) dominates the Gospels but occurs in the epistles as well, especially in a modified form in Romans, whereas lament as penitence tends to appear in the epistles. A brief survey of the Christian tradition reveals that the second strand—lament as penitence for sin—quickly rises to prominence in Christian practice.

1.3 Lament in the First Century C.E.

Before embarking on the main body of the study, a few important prolegomena are in order. First, I situate New Testament lament in its first-century contexts: Second Temple Judaism and the ancient Greco-Roman world. Second, I define the basic pattern and form of lament in the Old Testament, which provides the essential background for lament in the New Testament. Third, I offer a working definition of lament that guides my investigation of lament texts in the New Testament, including the three categories of lament that I developed for heuristic purposes.

⁷ Jon Douglas Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), xviii.

In this section, I briefly describe the role of lament in the surrounding culture, both theologically and sociologically. This sketch reveals that significant pressures militated against lament at the time of the New Testament, both in forms of Judaism contemporaneous with the New Testament and in the Stoicism of Greco-Roman culture (factors which, of course, were not mutually exclusive). In the face of this pressure, the New Testament maintains a clear, indispensable role for lament in its witness to Jesus' identity, but it also displays the marks of some accommodation to these factors. (I discuss this accommodation with respect to Luke's Gospel in my Chapter 2, section 2.2.1.2.)

1.3.1 Second Temple Judaism

Lament as protest or complaint became largely overshadowed by purely penitential prayers in the Second Temple period. Fourth Ezra and 2 Baruch are notable exceptions; the former in particular offers an extended lament over the fall of Jerusalem and the mistreatment of the chosen people at the hands of the Gentiles, evokes the complaints of Job, and includes an impassioned accusation against God regarding God's treatment of God's own creation.⁸ In general, however, lament makes a turn from protest toward penitence in the Second Temple era.⁹

⁸ Claus Westermann argues that the genre of lament developed in three distinct phases, from the early laments of the Old Testament narratives (constituted almost exclusively of complaint against God), to the communal and individual laments of the Psalms (where lament and praise are interdependent), to the postexilic laments (which return to accusation against God, but primarily as description rather than prayer); see Claus Westermann, "The Complaint against God," in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 233-41. Another interesting example of lament in Second Temple literature occurs in Joseph and Asenath in the form of an "I-lament" or "woe is me" lament (cf. Rom 7:24); see Edgar W. Smith, Jr., "Form and Religious Background of Romans 7:24-25a," *NovT* 13, no. 2 (1971): 127-35.

⁹ Gunkel and Begrich trace the "dissolution" of the genre of lament historically to the Maccabean period and textually to the Psalms of Solomon (Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998], 197-8). For a brief description of lament in the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, including reasons for its eventual exclusion as a form of prayer, see Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 201-12. William Morrow

The Second Temple texts, and their appropriation of lament, provide important background to the way that the New Testament appropriates the laments of Israel (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.1, and Chapter 6, section 6.2). For example, because pressures within Judaism itself were shifting lament away from its function as protest and toward penitential prayer, it is all the more remarkable that the New Testament writings retain such a strong tradition of lament, relying primarily on the lament psalms.

1.3.2 Greco-Roman Philosophy: Stoicism

The Stoic philosophy of the Greco-Roman world affected both Judaism and early Christianity in their respective attitudes toward grief and lament. Fourth Maccabees, for example, engages directly with Stoicism by describing devout reason or “godly piety” (εὐσεβής λογισμός) as that which rules over the emotions (4 Macc 18:8; 13:21). Early Christian writers such as Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine clearly interact with Stoicism’s aversion to outward expressions of grief, sometimes echoing this aversion and sometimes resisting it. Some scholars suggest that some New Testament

describes the disappearance of lament and the reasons for its replacement by penitential prayer during Second Temple Judaism; see William Morrow, *Protest Against God: The Eclipse of a Biblical Tradition*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006). See also Richard J. Bautch, *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Rodney A. Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998). On a smaller scale, Henrike Frey-Anthes describes the dissociation of lament from accusation, and the marginalization of lament in favor of praise, in the book of Tobit, in Henrike Frey-Anthes, “Praise, Petition, Lament – and Back: On the Significance of Lament in the Book of Tobit,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 136-49. Finally, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, lament appears primarily as penitential prayer or mourning over the sinful human condition. Adele Berlin notes that in the Dead Sea Scrolls, “[t]he lament for Jerusalem, in and of itself, seems to have diminished in the post-exilic period, and to have been absorbed into penitential prayer” (Adele Berlin, “Qumran Laments and the Study of Qumran Literature,” in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, Ruth Clements, and Avital Pinnick [Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003], 11). In my Chapter 5, I briefly sketch the character of lament in the texts of Second Temple Judaism, including the appropriation of the lament psalms by the Dead Sea Scrolls, in more depth.

writers, especially Luke and Paul, display signs of accommodation to Stoic philosophy.¹⁰ The extent of the Stoic influence on the New Testament is highly debated; for my purposes, it suffices to note that the prevailing philosophy of the culture within which early Christianity took root was not hospitable soil for full-bodied lament. The influence of Stoicism may help to explain the apparent “trajectory” of the Gospels away from lament (see my Chapter 2, section 2.5, for a discussion of this trajectory within the four Gospels) – but, more importantly, it makes it all the more striking that the Gospels do embrace lament as an integral part of their narratives.

1.3.3 Theology of the Cross

In addition, theological factors internal to the New Testament appear to subdue or redirect lament into patience or gratitude. These factors include a “theology of the cross,” which emphasizes imitation of Christ’s sacrificial self-giving (Phil 2:1-11), and texts that emphasize the patient, even joyful, endurance of suffering (Rom 5:3-5; 2 Cor 1:6; Col 1:11-12; 2 Thess 1:4; Heb 12:2; Jas 1:2-4).¹¹ Additionally, Paul’s description of the

¹⁰ For Stoic influence on Luke’s portrayal of Jesus in Gethsemane, see Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Absence of Jesus’ Emotions: The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22:39-46,” *Bib* 61, no. 2 (1980): 153-71. Stanley Stowers argues that Matthew adapted elements of Stoic thought in his portrayal of Jesus, including Jesus’ grieving; see Stanley K. Stowers, “Jesus the Teacher and Stoic Ethics in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 59-76, esp. 72-3. Harold Attridge studies the relationship between the Gospel of John and Stoicism’s attitude toward the emotions, and concludes that some elements of John’s portrait of Jesus echo “the ideal Stoic sage,” whereas other elements are less compatible with Stoic beliefs, especially John’s positive portrayal of Jesus’ emotions; see Harold W. Attridge, “An ‘Emotional’ Jesus and Stoic Tradition,” in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, 77-92; cf. the similar discussion in Gitte Buch-Hansen, “The Emotional Jesus: Anti-Stoicism in the Fourth Gospel?,” in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, 93-114.

¹¹ This is not to say that theologians who focus on these texts, or theological systems that do so, automatically exclude lament. For example, see Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009); and Arthur C. McGill, *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982). Gorman opens up a creative potential space for lament through his analysis of Phil 2:1-11 as an ethic of reversal, and McGill’s emphasis on the cross as God’s definitive defeat of evil through an exercise of a radically different mode of power also creates the possibility of narrating lament as an alternative form of power: a practice from a position of apparent powerlessness that calls upon God to defeat evil.

sinfulness of all humanity has tended to authorize lament in the Christian tradition as a form of penitence for the sinful human condition and to discourage lament as protest or petition for change.¹²

In Chapter 4, I incorporate feminist critiques of theologies of the cross to argue that lament is an active rather than a passive practice – one that includes ὑπομονή in the face of suffering while still giving voice to pain and hope in God’s redemption. Paul himself occasionally incorporates language drawn from the lament psalms in order to describe the struggle to be faithful in the midst of opposition; and Romans 8 indicates that the Spirit assists humanity (along with all creation) in its groaning (στενάζω) and crying out (κράζω), two verbs commonly used to express the pain of lament.¹³

1.4 The Function and Role of Lament in the Old Testament

This brings us to the question of how to identify lament in the New Testament.¹⁴ The verb “to lament” and the noun “lament” are both flexible terms; Old Testament scholars, New Testament scholars, and theologians do not always use the terms in the same ways.¹⁵ Lament can mean complaint, an expression of grief, the ritual act of mourning, a dirge for the dead, a cry for help, an accusation directed to God, a public

¹² See, e.g., Westermann, “The Role of the Lament,” 25, 33; Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 323; cf. Ellington, 168-9.

¹³ See my Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 for more detailed discussions of lament in the Pauline letters, especially Romans 8.

¹⁴ In the introduction to *Evoking Lament*, the editors write, “Though there is a resurgence of interest in practical theologies of lament, this volume suggests that these theologies ignore crucial theoretical problems. In effect, they commend lament to the church without saying what it is” (Harasta and Brock, 1).

¹⁵ Harasta and Brock point out that one’s native language can also influence how one defines lament/Klage. In English-speaking cultures, “lament has a long association with the passionate expression of intimate and personal pain, is not primarily oriented to rectifying the outer situation, and is most strongly associated with grieving a death” (ibid., 3). In German-speaking cultures, by contrast, lament tends to be associated with accusation and is thus connected to theodicy (ibid., 4-5).

protest over injustice, or wordless wailing. In order to be more precise about the definition of lament, I first briefly summarize the form and function of Old Testament lament, which undergirds lament in the New Testament. From this foundation, I offer the working definition of lament that guides my subsequent study, including the three categories of lament that I explore in the New Testament.

1.4.1 The Pattern of the Lament Psalms

The individual psalms of lament are the primary background for Jesus' laments. Two figures are of seminal importance for the study of the lament psalms: Hermann Gunkel (whose work was completed by Joachim Begrich) and Claus Westermann.¹⁶ Gunkel's form-critical work, largely followed and supplemented by Westermann, describes the basic form of the lament in the Psalter and other key Old Testament texts.¹⁷ The following constitute the essential formal elements of an individual lament psalm, according to form-critical categories:¹⁸

¹⁶ Another influential work is Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmestudien* (Amsterdam: Verlag P. Schippers, 1961); in English as Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI; Dearborn, MI: Eerdmans; Dove Publishers, 2004). Walter Brueggemann has also written extensively on the lament psalms, and I am indebted to his fine work as well.

¹⁷ Gunkel and Begrich, 88, 177-80. While the dirge (mourning for the dead) has important points of connection with the lament, it has its own pattern. The dirge for the city is a form of national mourning and grief over prophetic judgment that overlaps with the communal lament (cf. Rev 18 and Jesus weeping over Jerusalem in Matt 23:37-39//Luke 13:31-35; see my Chapter 4 for Jesus' "prophetic laments" over Jerusalem). For a study of the lament for the dead in the Greek tradition, see Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). While the lament celebrates the reversal from humiliation to vindication, the dirge is the "tragic reversal" exemplified in the cry "How are the mighty fallen"; see Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, Studies in Biblical Theology No. 14 (London: SCM Press, 1954); cf. Verhey, 228.

¹⁸ I have drawn this pattern primarily from Gunkel and Begrich, 152-77; Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 64-81; 181-94; and Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 65-122. While I find the form-critical description of the lament psalm helpful for describing the basic pattern of lament, I adopt a somewhat broader and more flexible definition for lament.

- 1) *Invocation*. The invoking of YHWH's name frames the lament as a prayer by directing it toward God and evoking the relationship between the lamenter and God (e.g., "My God").
- 2) *Description of the complaint or problem*. Westermann names three subcategories of lament based on the nature of the complaint: laments toward God (accusations or complaints against God); laments toward the other (complaints regarding an enemy); and self-laments (an I-lament or we-lament over suffering or sin).¹⁹ The nature of the complaint can be specific, but sometimes lacks specificity, rendering the complaint applicable to a wide variety of situations of distress.
- 3) Sometimes, *a confession of sin* (Ps 25:11, 18; Ps 51:3-5, 9, 11) or *an assertion of innocence* (Ps 7:3-5, 8; 26:1-8). As noted above, Old Testament laments often intertwine protest and complaint with penitence.
- 4) Sometimes, *a motive* – i.e., why God should hear and help. This might be an assertion of righteousness, but it is more often based on God's own character ("Save me according to your steadfast love," Ps 109:26).
- 5) *Petition* (request for help). This is the most central component of the lament. Erhard Gerstenberger argues that the petition (*Bitte*) is a more fundamental component of the lament than the complaint (*Klage*).²⁰ Likewise, James Mays and Patrick Miller define lament simply as a "cry for help." This indicates that the biblical lament is never merely a complaint. Rather, it requests or even demands a

¹⁹ Westermann, "The Role of the Lament," 27; see also Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 267ff.

²⁰ Erhard Gerstenberger, *Der bittende Mensch: Bitritual und Klagegedes Einzelnen im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980). Westermann prefers to see the lamentation and the petition as inextricable and therefore of equal importance (Westermann, "The Role of the Lament," 26).

response; it expects salvific action from the God to whom the cry is directed. The lament always pleads for God to act: Hear! Save! Help! Vindicate! Heal! Rescue!²¹

- 6) Sometimes, *imprecation against enemies*. This has been and remains the most problematic feature of lament in the Christian tradition, because of Jesus' command to love enemies and to pray for those who persecute; see my Chapter 4, section 4.5.2, for a discussion of the role of imprecation in the New Testament.
- 7) *Certainty of being heard*. The psalmist acknowledges the divine help, in the past, present, and/or future. This can take the form of a confession of trust or an expression of assurance in God's hearing. (The only lament psalm that concludes without an expression of praise or trust is Psalm 88.) The expression of certainty often begins with a "But" (a *waw* adversative, as in Psalm 13:5; 22:3; 31:14).²²
- 8) Sometimes, *a vow or pledge*, whereby the lamenter promises to offer sacrifices and praise to God after receiving help (Ps 35:18; 43:4).

Importantly, the lament psalm of Israel occurred primarily in a public setting, as part of the community's worship, and probably included a variety of ritual actions.²³ Gunkel and

²¹ On the petitions (Save!; Arise!; Judge/Vindicate!) see James Luther Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 29.

²² For the role of the *waw* adversative in the lament psalms, see Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 70-75. A similar "But" or "Nevertheless" appears in Jesus' two-part petition in the Garden of Gethsemane ("Take this cup...But [ἀλλά] not my will but yours"). Some scholars identify the "But" as the moment at which the priest offers an oracle of salvation to the petitioner, initiating the turn toward praise and confidence; see Gunkel and Berrich, 182-3; cf. Friedrich Kuehler, *Das Priesterliche Orakel in Israel und Juda* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1918). For a different viewpoint, see Sung-Hun Lee, "Lament and the Joy of Salvation in the Lament Psalms," in *The Book of Psalms*, 224-47.

²³ See especially Gunkel and Berrich, 122-30; Mowinckel, 1-41. Mowinckel argued that the great majority of the psalms were cult hymns composed for use in the Temple; many scholars now take a somewhat more nuanced approach. Gary Anderson rightly points out that grief and joy were ritual actions as well as emotional responses in ancient Israel; see Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 1-18. For expressions of grief, Anderson concentrates on ritual acts of mourning especially in

Begrich assume that the two chief genres of the psalms (lament and thanksgiving) arose out of two worship events: the celebration of sacrifice and the thanksgiving offering.²⁴

1.4.2 The Pattern of Lament in the Wider Old Testament

Of course, lament occurs not only in the Writings but in the Pentateuch and the prophets. The basic form-critical description of lament in the Psalter describes the essential pattern of lament elsewhere in the Old Testament as well: a cry for help to God from within a situation of distress, arising from trust that God is faithful to hear and respond to cries.²⁵ The cry for “help” is a request for God’s saving actions: healing, redemption, mercy, vindication, rescue from enemies or from danger, restoration, *shalom*. The cry for salvation arises from any situation of “non-salvation” or distress, whether it be suffering or sin. Lament is thus an urgent form of speech, an “insistent imperative address to YHWH,” arising from a crisis.²⁶ The Exodus is sometimes described as the defining crisis in Israel’s life and thus the paradigmatic situation of distress from which lament arises: the people cry out to God from oppression and pain, and God hears and promises to deliver (Exod 2:23-25).²⁷ James Kugel goes a step further and argues that the

the face of death, with “lamentation” as part of those rituals. He studies hints of the rituals of mourning and joy in the lament psalms, proposing that lamentation was sometimes a metaphorical descent to the dead “associated with ritual actions of self-inflicted dishevelment that were presumed to identify oneself with the realm of the dead” (ibid., 89; cf. Ps 86:13; 71:20; 9:14-15; 30:2-6). For the specific actions of grief see ibid., 49.

²⁴ Gunkel and Begrich, 19.

²⁵ Christiane de Vos describes lament as “praise from the depths” (*Gotteslob aus der Tiefe*); Christiane de Vos, *Klage Als Gotteslob Aus Der Tiefe: Der Mensch Vor Gott in Den Individuellen Klagepsalmen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

²⁶ Walter Brueggemann, “The Psalms in Theological Use: On Incommensurability and Mutuality,” in *Book of Psalms*, 589. For this reason, Brueggemann describes lament as provisional speech (ibid., 592).

²⁷ Westermann, “The Role of the Lament,” 21; so also Walter Brueggemann, “The Rhetoric of Hurt and Hope: Ethics Odd and Crucial,” *ASCE* (1989): 73-92.

victim's cry in the Old Testament *provokes* the divine response. In other words, the cry of the victim "is, par excellence, the thing that humans do that makes God act."²⁸

1.4.3 Lament as Challenge of God's Faithfulness to God's Promises

The cry for help occurs within the framework of a particular relationship and addresses a specific God: the creator, who made all of humanity ("Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" [Gen 18:25]; "Do not abandon the works of your hands!" [Ps 138:8b]); and the God of Israel, who made promises to Israel to bless and protect and be her God. God's self-proclaimed character as a God of *hesed* provides the foundation for the lament. Israel asserts her claims based on God's prior covenant promises.²⁹

It is this relationship—trust in YHWH's faithfulness, and YHWH's responsibility toward those whom God created, with whom God covenanted, and over whom God reigns—that enables the cry for help and that underwrites the particular complaint of lament when God seems to be hidden or silent in the face of pain. All the situations of trouble that give rise to cries for help are matters in which humanity's or Israel's "relation to God is at stake."³⁰

Lament thus depends on the idea that attacks from enemies, illness, and so forth are not merely wrong in a general sense, but that they violate something about this relationship with this particular God; suffering disrupts God's promises to be a faithful

²⁸ James L. Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 109-36, quotation p. 120; cf. Ellington, 177, who describes the same phenomenon in the New Testament, in the examples of Rachel and the Canaanite woman. See also Exod 15:24-25; Num 20:16; Judg 10:12; Isa 19:20; Pss 12:5; 34:17; 79:11; 88:1-3; 102:19-20; 145:18-19; Job 34:28; Neh 9:27.

²⁹ Brueggemann, "The Psalms in Theological Use," 591. For James Mays it is not the covenant per se but God's identity as king that characterizes the prayer of lament (Mays, 6). Israel's "prayers for help" (Mays's term for the laments) arise out of various situations (primarily physical suffering and affliction especially sickness, social conflict and alienation, and warfare), but are all the prayers of servants appealing to their king (*ibid.*, 27, 34).

³⁰ Mays, 44.

God to this people and to bring salvation to them. As Terence Freitheim notes, “In the midst of the great gulf between [Israel’s] past and the future, the only hope is in a certain kind of God” (Isa 43:18-19; Lam 3:20-32; Ps 79).³¹

1.4.4 The Problem of God’s Silence and the Perseverance of Hope

Because of this, God’s apparent silence or hiddenness in the face of suffering is a particularly sharp dilemma – perhaps even the fundamental problem that prompts the lament (Ps 13:1; 22:1-2; 42:9-10; 89:46; cf. Isa 45:15). The Old Testament lament contains within it the genuine possibility that God might *not* be faithful to God’s promises (Ps 89:39; Lam 5:22). Yet these texts presuppose not divine absence but divine faithfulness: “it is only because of the belief that God does characteristically so act that they complain that he has not acted in their own case and insist that he must.”³²

The most fundamental request underlying the petitions of lament is for God to be present – for God’s presence and saving activity to be manifest in the midst of illness, enemies, and exile. This longing is perfectly expressed in Isaiah’s prayer, “Oh that you would tear open the heavens and come down!” (Isa 64:1). The implicit complaint in

³¹ Terence E. Freitheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 27. Ellington likewise proposes that “lament is God’s response to choices and actions that threaten his relationship with humanity”; the human prayer of lament is therefore “a god-like response to circumstances that threaten or damage our relationship with God” (Ellington, 51).

³² Richard Bauckham, “Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 50; citing Walter Brueggemann, *Abiding Astonishment: Psalms, Modernity, and the Making of History* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 52. Ellington writes, “In the context of the biblical prayers of lament God is the particular problem. . . . At the heart of biblical laments are the twin experiences of profound loss and the silence of God. . . . To lament, though, is to refuse to accept things as they are, to protest God’s continued silence, and to press God for deliverance” (Ellington, xi).

Isaiah's petition is precisely that God seems to be remaining silently in the heavens at the time of Israel's great need.³³

But (the *waw* adversative, the ἀλλά), Israel continues stubbornly to trust in God's faithfulness. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego declare that they will remain loyal to God, and believe in God's saving power, even if God does not rescue them from the furnace (Dan 3:16-18). Habakkuk ends his prophecy by affirming, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Hab 3:17-19). And Job, who hurls his angry protest at God, declares, "Though he slay me, I will yet hope in him" (Job 13:15).³⁴

In the New Testament, the question of God's hiddenness is a powerful motif in Jesus' laments, especially through his quotation of Psalm 42 in the Garden of Gethsemane and Psalm 22 from the cross.³⁵ Just as Israel's laments presume but dare to test God's faithfulness, the question of God's faithfulness to Israel and to the Son undergirds the laments of Jesus and the other laments of the New Testament.

³³ A similar appeal to a God who seems to be missing in a time of trouble occurs in the Synoptic Gospels, when Jesus sleeps in the stern of a boat during a storm and the disciples cry out to him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38; cf. Matt 8:25; Luke 8:24).

³⁴ Admittedly, this verse is very difficult to translate. In a way, all these texts prefigure the New Testament's emphasis on faithfulness in the face of suffering, even though they each contain very different views on the nature and purpose of suffering.

³⁵ These texts occur only in Mark and Matthew, but the problem of God's silence in the face of Jesus' suffering and death is apparent in all four Gospels; see my Chapter 2.

1.5 Defining Lament in the New Testament

As my working hypothesis, I suggest a fundamental continuity between the Old and New Testament with regards to the prayer of lament, and I derive my basic working definition of lament in the New Testament from the Old Testament pattern.

Lament is a persistent cry for salvation to the God who promises to save, in a situation of suffering or sin, in the confident hope that this God hears and responds to cries, and acts *now* and *in the future* to make whole. Lament trusts that despite the pain of the world, God acts in the present through Jesus' resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, and that God will act in the future through the ultimate redemption and restoration of all creation. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and his death and resurrection signify the proleptic end of lament: Jesus prays lament, provides God's answer to Israel's long-prayed cries of lament, and guarantees the ultimate cessation of lament in the eschaton. Elsewhere in the New Testament, the church joins Jesus' laments in longing for the completion of what Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection began – the return of Christ and the consummation of God's kingdom.

For this reason, New Testament lament is a liminal practice, one that participates in the tension of the “now” and the “not yet.” According to the New Testament witness, Christians pray lament in light of the cross—God's self-giving love revealed in Jesus—and in light of the resurrection—God's defeat of death and inauguration of the new age. Israel cried out for God to rend the heavens and come down; for the New Testament, God *has* rent the heavens and come down, in the person and ministry of Jesus. Still the new

age remains to be consummated; so the church continues to pray for Christ to return in glory.³⁶

1.5.1 Categories of Lament in the New Testament

Because the pattern of lament intertwines so closely with the passion of Jesus, and extends into the eschatological longing of the church, it is an integral part of the gospel. However, especially when compared to the Old Testament, there are few explicit lament texts in the New. I use three main categories for considering lament in the New Testament. The first category comprises quotations or allusions to Old Testament lament texts. The second and third categories warrant attention because of my working definition of lament, as described above.

1. *Quotations of the lament psalms.* Most relevant to my purposes are direct quotations or obvious allusions to the complaint and petition sections of lament psalms. Even the praise and trust sections, however, may evoke the wider context of the lament as a whole, as in the quotation of Psalm 31 in Luke 23:46. The preponderance of these quotations occurs in the Gospels, and within the Gospels they are concentrated in the passion narrative, where either Jesus directly speaks them or they provide descriptive details of Jesus' passion, from his betrayal and arrest to his crucifixion. In other words, this category of lament appears primarily in the words and actions of Jesus: through his suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus both prays and enacts the pattern of lament. (This is the subject of Chapter 2.)

³⁶ Bauckham suggests that Jesus' crucifixion in Matthew and Mark mirrors the dialectic created by the "literature of dissent" in the Old Testament (Job, et al); see Bauckham, 50. The resurrection anticipates "eschatological closure" to the problem of "unassimilable evil" (ibid., 50-1).

2. *New prayers of lament.* For this category, I look for the form of lament as drawn from the standard definition for Old Testament lament and as I define it above. By this definition, there are no newly written, full-bodied laments in the New Testament, but only fragments or portions of lamenting prayers: for example, the cry of the martyrs in Rev 6:10 (see my Chapter 6). Paul mourns over the human condition and over Israel's unbelief, but according to my working definition, these are not precisely laments; rather, they fall into category #3, below.

3. *Texts that echo or evoke the function and ethos of lament.* This category includes texts that are not explicitly prayers of lament but that narratively embody the pattern of lament (e.g., petitions in the Gospels asking Jesus for help) or that function to express the longing of lament for God's salvation in the context of the eschatological in-breaking of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry (e.g., Rachel's weeping).³⁷

In the Synoptic Gospels, people often cry out to Jesus for help with the words, “ἐλέησον με” or “ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς” (have mercy on me/us), a petition frequently used in lament psalms in the LXX to ask God for help (Ps 6:2; 9:13; 26:7; 30:9; 40:4; 50:1; 55:1; 56:1; 85:3). In other words, a petition typically directed to YHWH is addressed to Jesus, who hears the cries and provides help by healing, restoring sight, and casting out demons (Matt 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30, 31; Mark 5:19; 10:47, 48; Luke 17:13; 18:38, 39). Two examples illustrate the point: the cries of the Canaanite woman, and the cries of the disciples in the storm at sea.³⁸

³⁷ In the New Testament, prayers of lament “both herald loss and call for newness. The tears of Rachel, the cry of the disciples in the midst of the storm, and the protest of the Canaanite woman all point beyond the immediate circumstance to a growing awareness of the dawning of the messianic kingdom” (Ellington, 180).

³⁸ Martin Ebner also interprets the miracle stories in the Gospels as dramatized lament psalms; see “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im Neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, 81-6. His two examples are the

Gail O'Day proposes that the encounter between Jesus and the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28 is a lament psalm in narrative, embodied form. O'Day traces formal correspondences between Gunkel and Westermann's description of the lament psalm and each stage in the woman's encounter with Jesus.³⁹ The links are clearer in Matthew than in Mark, since the petition "ἐλέησόν με, κύριε υἱὸς Δαβὶδ" occurs only in Matthew's account. The interactive argument between the woman and Jesus is the main disruption in the pattern, since no lament psalm includes a narrated response (indeed, a rebuff!) by YHWH and a renewed effort to obtain divine help.

On the other hand, this argumentative style continues the tradition of prophetic intercession that I will describe in Chapter 4, section 4.5.1. Like Moses, the Gentile woman persists in her petitions until she receives a hearing. She embodies Jesus' instructions in Luke 18:1-8 to pray persistently for God's justice, and her persistence has a faint echo in Rachel's ongoing weeping: Rachel refuses to be consoled until God hears *her* petition. Just as Rachel's weeping precedes and prompts the arrival of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, so the Canaanite woman's cries for mercy arouse Jesus' compassion (and, perhaps, his admiration for her persistence) and lead to the healing of her daughter. The healing itself is a sign of the arrival of God's kingdom; the healing of a *Gentile* woman's daughter may also indicate the fulfilling God's promise in Isaiah that Israel would be a light to the nations.

The story of the disciples in the boat during the storm (Mark 4:35-41//Matt 8:23-27) can be seen as another narrative lament, complete with complaint, petition, and

raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:38-40) and the raising of the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-15). For Ebner, both stories show the crucial connection between lament and resurrection hope.

³⁹ See Gail O'Day, "Surprised by Faith: Jesus and the Canaanite Woman," *Listening* 24 (Fall 1989): 294, 300 n.11.

rescue. A fierce windstorm arises while the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee, threatening to swamp their boat – but Jesus was sleeping.⁴⁰ The disciples frantically seek to rouse him, with the note of complaint stronger in Mark’s account (“Teacher, is it of no concern to you that we are perishing?”) and the petition more explicit in Matthew’s (“Lord, save! We are perishing”). Jesus wakes, asks the disciples why they are afraid (have they such little faith?), and calms the storm. The narrative is rich in biblical resonances. In Psalm 107, when “they cried to the Lord in their trouble...he delivered them from their distress; he made the storm be still, and the waves were hushed” (Ps 107:23, 29).⁴¹ Jesus fills the role of YHWH by hearing their cries, responding with help, and demonstrating his mastery over the forces of chaos by calming the wind and the waves. The response of the disciples is “great reverent fear” (ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν, Mark 4:41) and amazement (ἐθαύμασαν, Matt 8:27) – natural responses that display the disciples’ confusion over Jesus’ true identity (but see Jesus’ “reverence” toward God in Hebrews 5:7).

Both narratives depict a partial enactment of the pattern of lament. A petitioner cries out for help; Jesus fills the divine role of hearing the cry and providing the help. In both cases, the cries for help prompt Jesus toward actions that reveal more of God’s kingdom in their midst. In this way, the petitions for help in the Gospels often function in

⁴⁰ It is easy to read this detail as an evocative metaphor for divine absence or hiddenness in the midst of trouble, especially since God’s silence provokes so much lament in the psalms (and see Ps 121:4!). Here, however, Jesus’ sleeping seems to function simply as the prompt for the disciples’ desperate cries for help, not as a commentary on Jesus’ neglect of his followers and their needs, but it does fit with the “hiddenness” of Jesus’ true identity.

⁴¹ Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 196. Other possible allusions include Jonah 1:4-10; Psalm 104:7; Psalm 106:9; and Psalm 89:10, which declares, “You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.”

a manner similar to Rachel's weeping – as that which prompts divine help and the in-breaking of the kingdom through Jesus' actions.

In similar fashion, Rachel's weeping in Matt 2:16-18 functions as an anguished complaint to God, which the Lord answers through the promise in Matt 5:4 (“blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”) and through the dawning of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry. I discuss Rachel's weeping as a form of lament in greater detail in my Chapter 6, section 6.3.1. Other examples of lament-like texts include the groaning of humanity and all creation in Romans 8 (see my Chapter 5, section 5.5, for the Holy Spirit's role in creation's lament), and the eschatological petition “your kingdom come” in the Lord's Prayer (see my Chapter 6, section 6.3.4).

1.6 Overview of Chapters 2-7

Chapter 2: The Laments of Jesus in the Fourfold Gospel. In Chapter 2, I describe Jesus' appropriation and embodiment of the individual lament psalms in all four Gospels by examining three scenes: the Garden of Gethsemane, the raising of Lazarus, and Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus' prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane (a prayer echoed in John's Gospel) display the typical anguish of lament (distress, fear), a cry for help (“if it is possible, take this cup”), and an expression of trust (“but not my will, but yours”). Likewise, Jesus' prayers from the cross encompass the full range of lament, including humiliation, anguish at God's apparent absence, longing for God's presence, and trust in God's provision. While each Gospel appropriates different lament psalms, they nonetheless each use lament for Jesus' final words. In conclusion, I question the common narrative of the historical “trajectory” away from lament in the Gospels (from Mark to John).

Chapter 3: Jesus Laments as a Human Being. In this chapter, I consider Jesus' laments in their universality and particularity, as the laments of a human being and the laments of a Jewish male praying the prayers of Israel. As a universal human phenomenon, lament is voiced mourning and protest against suffering and injustice; and it arises especially from social locations of oppression and marginalization. Drawing on the work of Dorothee Sölle and others, I describe the way that lament, in various cultures, presses toward change, i.e., toward greater justice. Considering Jesus' laments as those of a Jewish man allows me to suggest that God's apparent absence is the foundational problem of Israel's laments. I also consider the strands of protest and penitence in Israel's prayers and in particular in the penitential psalms, which have played a central role in the Christian tradition.

Chapter 4: Jesus Laments as the Messiah (Priest, King, and Prophet). Not only is Jesus' threefold office deeply rooted in the anointed offices of the Old Testament and in the New Testament's description of Jesus' identity, each of the traditional offices reveals a different function of Jesus' laments. As a king, Jesus prays the royal lament psalms as David; yet his use of these laments in conjunction with his passion reveals the ironic nature of his kingship, through his refusal to rule "as the Gentiles do." As the high priest of the book of Hebrews, Jesus' laments fit him to hear the laments of his brothers and sisters and to provide mercy in time of need, indicating one way that the expected vindication of lament is brought forward into the present. Additionally, through Jesus' intercessory prayer forgiving his enemies from the cross in Luke's Gospel, Jesus' priestly lament reframes imprecation against enemies as desire for God's justice (as in the cry of the martyrs for God's vengeance in Rev 6:10). As a prophet, Jesus fulfills the Old

Testament tradition of the intercessory lament of the prophet-mediator – the prophet who stands before God to intervene on behalf of the people and avert God’s just punishment. Finally, I consider Jesus’ prophetic “laments” over Jerusalem as a form of dirge, and as an act of divine mourning over Jerusalem’s rejection of Jesus and over the coming destruction of the city. This example demonstrates the close connection between prophetic lament and divine grief over Israel’s disobedience.

Chapter 5: Divine Lament. This chapter has three main parts: 1) a brief summary of Old Testament background for the concept of divine lament, which I define as a form of divine mourning that arises from Israel’s rebellion or disobedience; 2) an exploration of the potential Trinitarian implications of Jesus’ laments as the Son of God, in which I argue that the “suffering God” theologians and the theologians who defend impassibility both seek to preserve the unchanging character of God’s steadfast love; and 3) a brief investigation of the Holy Spirit’s ongoing role in Christian prayers of lament in the eschatological tension between the now and the not yet, with a focus on Romans 8.

Chapter 6: Christian Eschatology and Lament. Chapter 6 begins with an exploration of the function of lament in the eschatology of the Second Temple period. I argue that the difference between Christian and Jewish eschatology is not the resurrection per se, but the resurrection of one man, Jesus Christ, in this age, and the in-breaking of the next age into this one through that resurrection. I explore the relationship of an inaugurated eschatology to lament in three ways: 1) I analyze David Kelsey’s exploration of the realized nature of redemption in the “here and now”; 2) I describe how Karl Barth’s conception of realized eschatology leads him to treat lament as a feature of the old age; and 3) I discuss 1 Thessalonians 4:13, and its appropriation by Ambrose of

Milan, as a text that maintains a balance between mourning and hope in a particular cultural context. Finally, I examine the petitions of the Lord's Prayer as a model for inaugurated eschatological Christian lament.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Lament as a Christian Practice. In the final chapter, I explore the implications of lament in the New Testament for a contemporary practice of Christian lament. I suggest that lament in the church is a practice of lament in the company of Israel, in the company of Jesus, and in the company of the catholic church through time and across cultures.

2. The Laments of Jesus in the Fourfold Gospel

2.1 Introduction: The Role and Function of Lament in the Passion Narratives

In the previous chapter, I described three categories of lament texts in the New Testament. Texts in the first category—quotations of and allusions to lament psalms—occur throughout the New Testament, but are concentrated especially in the passion narratives of the four Gospels. Their primary function in the passion narrative is twofold: 1) to describe the pattern enacted by Jesus in his suffering, death, and resurrection (from humiliation to vindication); and 2) to provide the words of Jesus' prayers as he faces the coming eschatological trial (πειρασμός) and his own death.

In this chapter, I describe Jesus' appropriation and embodiment of the individual lament psalms in all four Gospels, by attending to three scenes: the Garden of Gethsemane, the raising of Lazarus, and Jesus' crucifixion. As I describe the role of lament in these scenes, I attend both to the *pattern* of lament, and to the *words* of lament that Jesus speaks. The passion narrative as a whole evokes multiple details from the individual lament psalms.¹ Most importantly, Jesus' passion reflects the motif of the

¹ As James Mays notes, "...the prayers in the psalms furnish the signifying narrative motifs for the story of [Jesus'] passion. In the story Jesus speaks their words, experiences their feelings, undergoes their sufferings"; see James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 3-4. Many scholars have thoroughly catalogued the quotations of and allusions to lament psalms in the passion narratives. See especially Joel Marcus, "The Role of Scripture in the Gospel Passion Narratives," in *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity*, ed. John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 207-9; Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 172-86; Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 95 n.7; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1445-67 and passim; Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1983), 225-300; Craig A. Evans, "Praise and Prophecy in the Psalter and in the New Testament," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint et al. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 551-79; Rikki Watts, "The Psalms in Mark's Gospel," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken

humiliation and subsequent vindication of the righteous one.² The “humiliation” of Jesus contains many themes common to the laments: God’s apparent absence, the betrayal of companions and friends (especially Judas and Peter), slander, the mocking and triumph of enemies, and the righteous one’s ongoing hope in God’s vindication and trust in God’s faithfulness in the midst of trouble. I read the four Gospels together in order to highlight their unique approaches to Jesus’ laments but also to demonstrate that each Gospel closely associates Jesus with the pattern and prayers of the lament psalms.

Jesus speaks very little in the passion narratives³; but many of his final, spare words are allusions to or direct quotations of individual lament psalms.⁴ In the Synoptic

(London: T & T Clark, 2004), 25-45; Maarten J. J. Menken, “The Psalms in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 61-82; Peter Doble, “The Psalms in Luke-Acts,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 83-118; Margaret Daly-Denton, “The Psalms in John’s Gospel,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 119-38.

² God’s faithfulness is also at stake, alongside the faithfulness of the righteous one. Leander Keck argues that “resurrection simultaneously vindicates the ultimate justice of God and the earthly righteousness of the faithful. ... Thus on Good Friday the rectitude of both God and Jesus was on the line, and it stayed there until Easter.” Leander E. Keck, *Who is Jesus?: History in Perfect Tense* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 129.

³ Jesus’ silence itself can be interpreted within the frame of a lament psalm: (“I have become like a man who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply,” Ps 38:13-16); see Juel, 95 n.7. However, interpreters more commonly identify Jesus’ silence before his accusers with the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53:7 (“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”). There are obvious thematic overlaps between Isaiah’s suffering servant and the righteous one of the lament psalms.

⁴ The centrality of the lament psalms to the passion narratives raises the question of whether the so-called historical Jesus prayed the psalms or not. This, in turn, points to the complex relationships between the Old and New Testaments, and between Scripture and history. On the one hand, I do not directly address the historical question of whether Jesus “really” prayed the psalms or whether the early church placed these words in Jesus’ mouth for their own purposes; rather, I read the canonical form of the four Gospels narratively for their portrayals of Jesus and their corresponding portrayals of the role of lament in his passion. On the other hand, dodging the historical question altogether seems disingenuous. As Nils Dahl writes, the total rejection of historical research is a kind of theological Docetism – a denial of creation and incarnation (Nils Alstrup Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah, and Other Essays* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974], 77). Therefore, while adjudicating the question of historicity is not finally essential to the argument I am making, I do not intend to suggest that Jesus’ laments are unhistorical, or that they have no plausible roots in Jesus’ life as a real human being in first-century Galilee and Judea. Mark Goodacre’s description of the relationship between Scripture and history is persuasive: rather than adopting Dominic Crossan’s argument that the passion narrative is “prophecy historicized,” Goodacre argues that following Jesus’ death there was an “intimate interaction” between event, memory, tradition, and Scriptural reflection, a process he describes

Gospels, Jesus' lament in the Garden of Gethsemane concerns his struggle with and resolve to face his approaching eschatological trial (πειρασμός). His prayers are both a cry for help ("if it is possible, take this cup"), and an expression of trust ("but not my will, but yours"). John's Gospel echoes this prayer, but emphasizes trust in God's purposes. In John's Gospel, marks of Jesus' lament (grief and a troubled soul in the face of death) appear at the tomb of Lazarus.

Reading the crucifixion scene in all four Gospels alongside one another reveals that Jesus' prayers from the cross encompass the full range of lament, including humiliation, anguish at God's apparent absence, longing for God's presence, and trust in God's provision. Therefore, I conclude this chapter by questioning the commonly accepted narrative that the "trajectory" of the Gospels leads away from lament.

2.2 Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' lamenting prayers display his struggle with his impending arrest and death, his resolve to face the coming eschatological test

as "scripturalization" (Mark S. Goodacre, "Scripturalization in Mark's Crucifixion Narrative," in *Trial and Death of Jesus*, ed. Geert van Oyen and Tom Shepherd [Leuven: Peeters, 2006], 39-42; cf. Judith H. Newman, *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999]). For Crossan's stance, see John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering what Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998], 520-1. See also Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 63-76; Bird argues similarly that the gospels "Scripturize" the traditions about Jesus. See also Dale Allison's recent work on history, memory, and Scripture in Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 387-433, 435-62; Allison concludes, "our Synoptic writers thought that they were reconfiguring memories of Jesus, not inventing theological tales" (459). See also Brown, 1:14; Brown, 2:1084-88; Moo, 288-9; Rossé, 1-11, 39-45; Dahl, 10-26, 48-89; Ernst Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," *ZThK* 51, no. 2 (1954): 125-53; Marcus, "The Role of Scripture," 213. I find it plausible—on narrative, historical, and theological grounds—that Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew raised by Torah-observing parents and trained in Scripture, would have spoken words from the sacred texts of Israel in his teaching, ministry, and passion, including the lament psalms (see the argument to this effect in Rossé, 1-51) – but this is not a question I finally adjudicate in order to investigate the texts as they stand in the canonical New Testament. See my discussion in section 2.5 regarding the historical "trajectory" of lament in the four Gospels.

(πειρασμός), and his ultimate trust in God's will.⁵ I analyze Jesus' Gethsemane laments in three parts:

1) Matthew, Mark, and Luke describe Jesus' distress using typical lament language, and situate his struggle within the πειρασμός that is at hand.

2) Jesus' prayer "Now my soul is exceedingly sad" (in Mark and Matthew) echoes the refrain of Psalm 41 LXX, a psalm which includes the themes of God's absence and the taunts of enemies.⁶

3) In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus' "two-part petition" contains both a cry for help ("If it is possible, take this cup away") and trust in God's provision ("But, not my will but yours"). In John, Jesus speaks an echo of the two-part petition in a conversation with two of his disciples about the glorification (i.e., the death) of the Son of Man; as part of this echo, Jesus quotes a portion of Psalm 6, another individual lament psalm, in order to reject the idea that he might turn away from his approaching death.

In Matthew, Mark, and John, lament psalms play an important role in giving voice to Jesus' struggle with and acceptance of the Father's will, with Mark placing most of the accent on the struggle, and John on the acceptance. Luke's Gethsemane narrative contains no explicit allusion to a lament psalm, but Luke highlights the eschatological nature of Jesus' struggle to submit to the Father's will and undergo his impending trial.

⁵ For a detailed analysis and comparison of the Synoptic Gethsemane accounts and their theological import, see A. Feuillet, *L'agonie de Gethsémani: enquête exégétique et théologique, suivie d'une étude du "Mystère de Jésus" de Pascal* (Paris: Gabalda, 1977), especially 13-40. Feuillet reads the Gethsemane accounts in light of the suffering servant of Isaiah 52-53. See also David Michael Stanley, *Jesus in Gethsemane* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

⁶ Psalm 43, which most commentators treat as a continuation of Psalm 42, uses the same refrain.

2.2.1 Jesus' Distress and the Coming Πειρασμός

2.2.1.1 Mark and Matthew

In Mark, when Jesus enters the place called Gethsemane with his disciples, he instructs his disciples to “sit here” while he goes to pray. He then takes Peter, James, and John with him and begins to be “distressed and agitated” (καὶ ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν, Mark 14:33b-34a). Similarly, Matthew narrates the same events and says that Jesus begins to be “grieved and agitated” (ἤρξατο λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν, Matt 26:37b-38a). The verb ἀδημονέω (“I am agitated”), which Mark and Matthew have in common, is a relatively rare word that occurs in the New Testament only here and in Philippians 2:26; it indicates anxiety or distress.⁷ The verb ἐκθαμβέω occurs only in Mark (9:15; 16:5, 6); in this context it indicates distress or alarm.⁸ Matthew’s λυπέω means “I grieve” or “I am sorrowful.”⁹

Although neither ἐκθαμβέω nor ἀδημονέω appear in the lament psalms (forms of λυπέω and λύπη do appear), the lamenters of the psalms commonly express similar emotions: their souls are troubled (ταράσσω, Psalm 6:3 LXX; Psalm 30:10 LXX;

⁷ Raymond Brown associates the anguish of ἀδημονέω specifically with a separation from others (Brown, 1:152). If so, this would indicate one element of Jesus’ anguish in the Garden: the betrayal by Judas, the forthcoming denial by Peter and the desertion of all the disciples, and Jesus’ separation from the Father on the cross. According to Ulrich Luz, one synonym for ἀδημονέω is ἀγωνιάω, the noun form of which Luke uses to express Jesus’ struggle (Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 395 n.22).

⁸ Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., based on Walter Bauer’s *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 303; cf. Brown, “profound disarray, expressed physically before a terrifying event: a shuddering horror” (Brown, 1:153). In Sirach 30:9, it means alarm or distress.

⁹ The word περίλυπος, a variation of this verb, appears later in Jesus’ prayer (and in Ps 41-42 LXX).

συνταράσσω, Psalm 41:6 LXX),¹⁰ they are weary with crying (Psalm 6:6; Psalm 69:3), they have pain in their hearts (Psalm 13:2).¹¹ The description of Jesus' struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane thus echoes the experiences recorded in the lament psalms that often accompany the prayers for help.

Within the narrative flow of Matthew and Mark, Jesus' distress arises from the approaching events of his passion: his betrayal and arrest, his trial, and his crucifixion. Indeed, he has prepared his disciples for these very events. Jesus has already predicted his betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection three times in Matthew and Mark (and in Luke).¹² As described by Jesus, this basic pattern of the passion reflects the movement of the individual lament psalms from humiliation into vindication; the righteous one faces shame, affliction, betrayal, and slander at the hands of his enemies, but God vindicates the righteous one and rewards him for his faithfulness.¹³

Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane mark the turning point in the Synoptic Gospels' narratives: the time has come for Jesus to enter into his suffering and face his approaching death.¹⁴ Jesus also faces an eschatological struggle with evil (cf. Matt 6:12-

¹⁰ The corresponding Hebrew words are בהל (Ps 6:3); צרר (Ps 31:10); המה (Ps 42:6). John's Gospel frequently associates the verb *ταράσσω* and its cognates with Jesus' "troubled soul" in the face of death, whether that of Lazarus or his own.

¹¹ Of these psalms, Psalm 6 plays a minor role in John 12:27; Psalm 31 appears in Luke's crucifixion scene; and Psalm 69 plays a key role in all four Gospel passion narratives.

¹² Mark 8:31//Matt 16:21//Luke 9:22; Mark 9:30-32//Matt 17:22-23//Luke 9:43-45; Mark 10:32-34//Matt 20:17-19//Luke 18:31-34. Likewise in John, with more symbolic language, Jesus speaks of his inevitable death from the very beginning of his ministry: John 2:19-22; 3:14; 10:11; 12:7.

¹³ Lothar Ruppert suggests that the passion predictions may allude to Ps 34:20 (LXX 33:20): "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Yahweh saves them from all of them" (Lothar Ruppert, *Jesus als der leidende Gerechte? Der Weg Jesu im Lichte eines alt- und zwischentestamentlichen Motivs*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 59 [Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1972], 65-6).

¹⁴ Some scholars suggest that these emotions reflect Jesus' feelings of abandonment by his disciples, rather than abandonment by God or fear at his impending death; see, e.g., Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul: Or, Resurrection of the Dead?: The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1958),

13); from the very beginning, all of the Gospels have placed his life, his ministry, and now his suffering and death into an eschatological context (Matt 3:2-3; Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23).¹⁵ Jesus faces “a great struggle with Evil, the great trial that preceded the coming of the kingdom.”¹⁶

When Jesus tells his disciples, “γρηγορεῖτε” (“Stay awake!” or “Remain alert!” Matt 26:38; Mark 14:38), he is exhorting them not only to stay awake while he wrestles in prayer, he is also echoing previous exhortations to eschatological watchfulness and alertness (Matt 24:42, 43; 25:13; Mark 13:34, 35, 37; Luke 12:37).¹⁷ Likewise, when Jesus instructs them to pray so that they might not enter into temptation, the word *πειρασμός* evokes the period of eschatological testing. The word *πειρασμός* is often translated as temptation, but this is misleading; the approaching era is not primarily that of temptation (i.e., resistance to sin) but is a time of trial, a test of Jesus’ and the disciples’ faithfulness and steadfastness in the face of persecution, arrests, hostile powers,

14. Jesus is betrayed and abandoned by Judas, Peter, and the rest of the disciples, but abandonment is clearly not the primary factor driving Jesus’ distress in the logic of the narrative. Others suggest that he began to suffer or dread the wrath of God at this time – a conjecture generally supported by equating the “cup” that Jesus asks not to drink with the “cup of wrath” poured out in judgment in the Old Testament; see Brown, 1:169; cf. Joel Marcus, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 985. Neyrey suggests that Satan assaults Jesus in a manner similar to his first temptation in the wilderness (Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Absence of Jesus’ Emotions: The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22:39-46,” *Bib* 61, no. 2 [1980]: 153-71).

¹⁵ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 28; Klyne Snodgrass, “Streams of Tradition Emerging from Isaiah 40:1-5 and their Adaptation in the New Testament,” *JSNT* 8 (1980): 24-45. The use of Zechariah 9-14 in the passion narrative also indicate its eschatological framing (Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 159). For Mark’s apocalyptic context, see Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 85-8. See also Dale Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 31-220, for an extended argument that the historical Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet, an emphasis duly preserved in the Synoptic Gospels in particular and in all the first-century Christian documents in general (*ibid.*, 52).

¹⁶ Brown, 218.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 154-6.

and the turbulent signs of the in-breaking end time.¹⁸ Within the framework of lament, as I have defined it, at stake is the faithfulness of both “participants” in the prayer of lament: the faithfulness of the one who laments, and the faithfulness of the One who *hears* lament, to hear and respond with the promised help.¹⁹

Thus the command to stay awake is not simply a request to overcome sleepiness and remain literally awake while Jesus is praying, but it recalls the eschatological instruction to examine the signs of the end and know when the Son of Man is coming. Likewise, the disciples’ failure to stay awake while Jesus prays suggests a failure of eschatological alertness to the nature of the hour, not simply drowsiness (Matt 26:40-41; Mark 14:37, 38; cf. Luke 22:46).²⁰

Jesus’ Gethsemane laments reflect the fear and grief of the lament psalms; and his petitions are those of the anointed one preparing for an apocalyptic trial. Jesus’ resolve to trust God and to do God’s will, even if it means his suffering and death, initiates the passion and provides the turning point of the Synoptic Gospels’ narratives.

2.2.1.2 Jesus’ *Agonia* in Luke

In Luke, these disputed verses come after Jesus’ two-part petition, rather than before it, but I consider them here because they represent a parallel to Jesus’ distress in

¹⁸ Heinrich Seesemann notes that “every *πειρασμός* is an eschatological tribulation or temptation,” but argues that the term in Mark 14:38 (and parallels) refers mainly to the weakness of the flesh rather than to the imminence of the last events; see Heinrich Seesemann, “*πειρα, κτλ.*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:31. Revelation 3:10 also associates the time of testing or trial with the last days; see *ibid.*, 30. Jeffrey Gibson argues that *πειραζόμενος* (being tried) in Mark’s temptation narrative “signified that the temptation was a trial of Jesus’ faithfulness to given covenantal obligations” (Mark 1:13); see Jeffrey B. Gibson, “Jesus’ Wilderness Temptation according to Mark,” *JSNT* 53 (1994): 10-13.

¹⁹ Gibson suggests that the virtues required to withstand testing are *ὕπομονή* (steadfast endurance) and *πίστις* (faithfulness) (Gibson, 12 n.27), two virtues closely connected to lament.

²⁰ This is especially true in Luke, who begins his Gethsemane account with Jesus’ instruction that the disciples pray, so that they might not enter into the time of *πειρασμός* (Luke 22:40); see section 2.3.1.2.

Matthew and Mark's accounts. Although a diverse group of early manuscripts do not contain these verses,²¹ several other manuscripts attest to their early addition and importance in the Lukan tradition.²² Therefore, they represent an influential early tradition, in parallel to Matthew and Mark's accounts, that Jesus struggled in prayer in Gethsemane as he resolved to accept the "cup" of his coming suffering and trial (πειρασμός), and that God strengthened him in the midst of this struggle, confirming his faithfulness. Luke, in comparison to Matthew and Mark, heightens the sense of eschatological urgency by framing his account with two warnings regarding πειρασμός (Luke 22:40, 46), just as the evangelist bracketed Jesus' temptation by Satan in the wilderness with πειράζω and πειρασμός (Luke 4:2, 13).²³

In Luke's account of Gethsemane, when Jesus and his disciples reach the Mount of Olives, Jesus instructs his disciples to "pray that they might not come into the time of trial." He then withdraws from all of them, kneels down, and prays the two-part petition. In the disputed verses, an angel then appears to strengthen him; Jesus prays yet more earnestly, in such ἀγωνία that his sweat becomes like drops of blood.

²¹ Including P^{69(vid)}, P⁷⁵, κ (corrected), A B N T W, 579 and 1071 (original reading), the majority of the lectionaries, f syr^s bo^{pt}.

²² Including κ (original), D L Δ (original) Θ Ψ 0233 and multiple uncials and minuscules. The verses are marked as spurious in Δ (corrected), 0171^{vid}, 892 (corrected). Joel Green argues for their originality; see Joel B. Green, "Jesus on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46): Tradition and Theology," *JSNT* 26 (1986): 35-6. Bart Ehrman argues for their inauthenticity on the grounds that second-century scribes inserted them in order to repudiate docetic Christologies; see Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 188-94. Although I take them to be a slightly later addition, I do not consider them as disruptive to the flow of Luke's narrative as Ehrman does.

²³ Neyrey, 161-3.

Especially if ἀδημονέω and ἀγωνία are roughly synonymous terms,²⁴ this addition to Luke’s account displays Jesus undergoing a struggle similar to the corresponding scenes in Matthew and Mark. Jesus prays “ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ,” in distress or anxiety regarding the approaching trials.²⁵ Jesus’ sweat “indicates the gravity of the ἀγωνία, the intensity of the struggle, and the importance of the event – it is an eschatological combat whose outcome will effect salvation history.”²⁶ The presence of the angel in Luke’s account spells out what Mark and Matthew imply: God strengthens Jesus to face the upcoming test and prevail over his fear.

On the other hand, in Luke’s account Jesus does not quote from a lament psalm (as in Matthew and Mark; see 2.3.2 below). Rather than throwing himself to the ground (in Mark) or on his face (in Matthew), he kneels down; all three positions may indicate prayer, but kneeling suggests a calmness and self-possession that throwing oneself facedown on the ground does not.²⁷

Influences from Luke’s Greco-Roman milieu, especially Stoic philosophy, likely account for some of the differences in Luke’s narrative. Greco-Roman literature displays a marked dislike for “exaggerated sorrow” – a feature discernable in the Septuagint and

²⁴ Luz, 395 n.22.

²⁵ BDAG describes ἀγωνία as “apprehensiveness of mind, especially with faced with impending ills,” Danker, 17. The word occurs in the New Testament only in this one verse in Luke. The Pauline letters occasionally use ἀγών to describe the struggle associated with the gospel or the life of faith (Phil 1:30; Col 2:1; 1 Thess 2:2; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7; cf. Heb 12:1; cf. 1 Clem 47:6). Jerome Neyrey argues for ἀγωνία as a Platonic struggle to master the emotions; Neyrey, 153-71.

²⁶ Ibid., 168.

²⁷ Prostrating typically signaled not emotional distress but humility in prayer (Gen 17:3, 17; cf. Num 22:31; 1 Kgs 18:39; Dan 8:17) (Luz, 396), but cf. Psalm 38:6, a lament psalm ascribed to David (“I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all day long I go around mourning”). Joel Marcus likewise identifies prostration before God as a sign of submission to God’s will, but also suggests an additional eschatological context (cf. 2 Chron 20:24; Ezek 38:20; Amos 3:14; 2 Macc 3:27; Acts 9:4; Rev 6:13; 9:1) and notes a possible parallel with Saul’s falling to the ground in fear upon learning his rejection as the Lord’s anointed (1 Sam 28:20); see Marcus, *Mark*, 977.

some intertestamental literature.²⁸ Origen's clash with the second-century Greek philosopher Celsus illustrates the point. According to Origen, Celsus objected to the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus' death on two grounds: 1) if Jesus were a god, he either would have avoided his suffering and death altogether, or it certainly would not have been painful or grievous to him; and 2) Jesus cries out with "loud laments and wailings" and prays to "avoid the fear of death." Origen answers these objections by emphasizing the full reality of Jesus' humanity and his piety and "greatness of soul," demonstrated in his submission to the Father's will despite his fears. Origen condemns Celsus for only quoting the first part of Jesus' petition: "Father, if this cup could pass by me?", while ignoring the second part, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt."²⁹

Aversion to "exaggerated sorrow" also appears in other contemporaneous accounts of the deaths of martyrs and heroes.³⁰ A virtuous person faced death with calm and courage, not with tears and fears, as exemplified by the well-known account of Socrates' death. Many have noted the striking differences between the death of Jesus (as narrated especially in Matthew and Mark) and that of Socrates, whose calm, cheerful acceptance of death as described in Plato's *Phaedo* had a lasting effect on Greco-Roman society.³¹ Luke clearly presents Jesus' death as a model to other Christians facing

²⁸ See Gen 3:17 LXX; Isa 1:5 LXX, where sorrow is a punishment for sin; and 1 Macc 6:8 (Brown, 157-8).

²⁹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), II.24-25, pages 88-9.

³⁰ Cf., e.g., 2 Maccabees. See Brown, 187-9; Robert Doran, "Narratives of Noble Death," in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison, and John Dominic Crossan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 385-99. But see Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 777, who points out that Jesus' death has important differences from other martyr accounts.

³¹ Cullmann, 12-20; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 754. As Raymond Brown notes, "...hearers/readers imbued with

martyrdom and suffering persecution, and this may lead him to emphasize that Jesus faces death with courage.³²

On the other hand, it is easy to overemphasize Luke's differences from the other Gospels. In none of the Gospels is Jesus a helpless victim; he predicts his death, foretells the betrayal of Judas, and deliberately enters the city where he knows he will die. Nor is Jesus a stoic hero in Luke. In Luke 12:50, Jesus refers to the "baptism" with which he is to be baptized (recalling Mark 10:38-39, where the "cup" and the "baptism" refer to suffering and death) and claims, "how I am constrained [πῶς συνέχομαι] until it is completed!"

2.2.1.3 John: Jesus' Troubled Soul

In John's account, Jesus does not withdraw to pray and strengthen himself for his upcoming trials. Instead, when Jesus and his disciples enter the garden across the Kidron Valley, he is almost immediately arrested. The only hints of Jesus' distress or struggle appear when Jesus says three times that his soul is troubled: at the grave of Lazarus (11:33), just after he predicts that the Son of Man will die and before he speaks the echo of the Gethsemane prayer (12:27), and after he washes his disciples' feet and announces that one of them will betray him (13:21). The context of all three is death (of Jesus or Lazarus); the third occurrence adds the additional theme of a friend's betrayal.

Platonic/Socratic ideals might react disparagingly toward the Mark/Matthew picture of a Jesus distraught and troubled, throwing himself prostrate to the earth and begging God to deliver him" (Brown, 217).

³² In Acts, for example, Stephen's death mirrors Jesus' death (Acts 7:59-60). Like Jesus in the Garden, Stephen kneels down and cries out in prayer (Acts 7:60). In Luke, Jesus calls out to the Father from the cross to receive his spirit; Stephen cries out for *Jesus* to "receive his spirit" (Acts 7:59; cf. Luke 23:46). And also like Jesus from the cross, Stephen asks God to forgive the people who are executing him (Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34). Paul faces the certainty of his own death and arrest with equal calm, kneeling and praying (cf. Luke 22:41) while his companions weep (Acts 20:36-37). Of course, Stephen and Paul do not have to undergo the struggle of ἀγωνία that Jesus does; Jesus' death makes the manner of their deaths possible.

Intriguingly, some of the elements that the Synoptics locate in Gethsemane or at the crucifixion occur in John at the tomb of Lazarus: notably, a troubled soul (John 11:33; cf. Matt 26:37-38; Mark 14:33-34), grief (John 11:35; cf. Matt 26:38; Mark 14:34; and cf. Heb 5:7 for Jesus’ tears), and crying out with a loud voice (John 11:43; cf. Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46); see section 2.3 below.

Like the Synoptics, John frames his passion narrative with eschatological significance, signaled by the use of “the hour” (ἡ ὥρα) as the climactic time of Jesus’ death and subsequent glorification.³³ In John, the “hour” serves as the parallel to the “cup” of Gethsemane.³⁴

2.2.1.4 Jesus’ Sadness and Psalm 42

Table 1: Psalm 41:6a LXX; Mark 14:34a; Matt 26:38a; cf. John 12:27

Mark 14:34a καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· περίλυπος ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου·	Matt 26:38a τότε λέγει αὐτοῖς· περίλυπος ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου·	Psalm 41:6a LXX ἵνα τί περίλυπος εἶ ψυχὴ καὶ ἵνα τί συνταράσσεις με	[John 12:27] ³⁵ Νῦν ἡ ψυχὴ μου τετάρραται
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In Matthew and Mark, following the reports of Jesus’ distress, Jesus speaks to the three disciples with him in words adapted from the refrain of Psalm 42-43: “my soul is exceedingly sad,” he tells them.³⁶ Jesus’ words closely follow the psalmist’s refrain, repeating three words (περίλυπος, ψυχὴ, and a form of the verb εἶμι), except that the

³³ As in John, “the hour” plays a role in Matthew (25:13; 26:45, 55-56), Mark (13:32, 35; 14:41), and Luke (22:53); see Birger Gerhardsson, “Jésus livré et abandonné: d’après la Passion selon Saint Matthieu,” *RB* 76, no. 2 (1969): 206-7.

³⁴ Mark equates the cup with “the hour” by using them as parallel expressions in Mark 14:35-36 (cf. Mark 13:32; 14:25, 30; Rev 9:15). Both the cup and the hour have eschatological resonances; see M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, NTLi (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 397.

³⁵ I include John to note the relative similarity between John 12:27-28 and the Gethsemane scene in Matthew and Mark (see section 2.2.3.2).

³⁶ The word ψυχὴ (soul, or life) translates the Hebrew word נַפְשׁ, which can mean “soul” or more simply, “life,” denoting the whole person (cf. Luke 12:20).

psalmist poses it as a question to himself: “Why are you exceedingly sad, soul, and why are you troubling me?” (Psalm 41:6 LXX).³⁷

The addition of the relatively rare phrase “unto death” (ἕως θανάτου) in Jesus’ prayer does not occur in Psalm 42, but it does appear in Sirach 37:2 in the context of grief over a friend’s betrayal (οὐχὶ λύπη ἔνι ἕως θανάτου ἐταῖρος καὶ φίλος τρεπόμενος εἰς ἔχθραν; “Is it not a grief unto death, when a companion and friend is turned into an enemy?”).³⁸ This description resonates with the passion narrative, since Jesus is about to be betrayed or denied by two close companions (Judas and Peter) and deserted by the rest of his disciples upon his arrest.³⁹

The motif of betrayal features prominently in Psalms 41 and 55, the latter of which plays an important role in John’s passion narrative. Just after Jesus washes his disciples’ feet, Jesus cites Judas’ betrayal as a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9 (Ps 40:10 LXX) (John 13:18).⁴⁰ Bertil Gärtner argues that a faint allusion to Psalm 55 can also be heard in Jesus’ sorrowful refrain in Matthew 26:38 and Mark 14:34, given that the motif of death

³⁷ The word *περίλυπος* occurs in the Psalms only in Psalms 41-42 LXX (Ps 41:6, 12; 42:5 LXX), and elsewhere in the Septuagint only in Genesis 4:6 and Daniel 2:12 (cf. 1 Esdras 8:71, 72). The ethos of the lament psalm fits perfectly with the scene in Gethsemane; and the widespread allusions to psalms in the passion narrative increases the likelihood that this is a deliberate allusion to the psalm rather than a coincidence. See Richard Hays’s seven tests for discerning intertextual echoes in Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29-32; see also Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2008).

³⁸ Likewise, the disciples begin to be “grieved” (*λυπέω*) when Jesus announces that one of them would betray him (Matt 26:22; Mark 14:19). The phrase *ἕως θανάτου* also appears in Jonah 4:9; Sirach 61:6; and 4 Maccabees 1:9. In Jonah 4:9, it is also paired with a feeling of grief, but in that case Jonah is so grieved over God’s destruction of the bush that had been shading him from the sun that he wishes he were dead.

³⁹ Indeed, when Judas arrives to hand Jesus over, Jesus addresses him as “Friend [*ἐταῖρε*]” (Matt 26:50; cf. Sir 37:2).

⁴⁰ Bertil Gärtner sees Judas as a type of Ahithophel (David’s trusted advisor) and suggests that the allusion to Ahithophel in Psalm 41:9 mirrors Judas’ betrayal of Jesus; see Bertil E. Gärtner, *Iscaariot*, trans. Victor I. Gruhn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 30-5. This is one more way in which the New Testament consistently reads Jesus as David, as the speaker and fulfiller of the royal lament psalms.

appears alongside a “troubled soul” in Psalm 54:5-6 LXX (“My heart was troubled within me; and the fear of death fell upon me. Fear and trembling came upon me, and darkness covered me”).⁴¹ Not only does Psalm 55 mention the fear of death and a friend’s betrayal, its motif of darkness plays a significant part in the death of Jesus (Matt 27:4-5; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). In the psalms, darkness is a metaphor for death (Ps 23:4; 88:12; 143:3), separation from God (Ps 88:5-7), and separation from others (Ps 88:18) – themes that feature in the passion as a whole and particularly in the crucifixion scene. Finally, like the three repetitions of Jesus’ petition in Mark and Matthew (Matt 26:44; Mark 14:41), Psalm 55 contains a threefold petition (Psalm 55:17).⁴²

Although Jesus’ words evoke only a small portion of Psalm 42, the rest of the psalm contains two themes that resurface in the crucifixion scene: the taunts of enemies and God’s absence. While Jesus is on the cross, onlookers mock him in words reminiscent of Psalm 42:3, 10.⁴³ The motif of God’s absence occurs explicitly in Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22:1 in Matthew and Mark, and perhaps implicitly in his statement “I thirst” in John.⁴⁴

In the next portion of Jesus’ prayer, Jesus withdraws a short distance from his disciples (perhaps emphasizing his growing isolation or their eventual desertion), and

⁴¹ Ibid., 35-36. John uses the verb for “troubled” (ταράσσω) to describe Jesus’ distress in the face of death (11:33; 12:27) and betrayal (13:21), creating another interesting link between John and the Synoptic Gethsemane accounts on the basis of their shared background in the lament psalms.

⁴² Marcus, *Mark*, 988.

⁴³ The mocking of the bystanders also appears to be drawn from Psalm 69 (verses 6-12, 19-21) and even more directly from Psalm 22:8 (Matt 27:43; Mark 15:31; Luke 23:35).

⁴⁴ “My soul has thirsted” (Psalm 41:3 LXX) is possibly echoed in John 19:28, but the theme of thirst is fairly common in the psalms (see section 2.4.4).

turns to petition, another key component of lament: Jesus asks God if it is possible for the cup to be removed from him.

2.2.2 Jesus' Two-Part Petition

Table 2: Mark 14:36; Matt 26:39, 42; Luke 22:42; cf. John 12:27

<p>Mark 14:36 καὶ ἔλεγεν· ἀββα ὁ πατήρ, πάντα δυνάτα σοι· παρένεγκε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σύ.</p>	<p>Matt 26:39b, 42b καὶ λέγων· πάτερ μου, εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν, παρελθάτω ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο· πλήν οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ' ὡς σύ. πάτερ μου, εἰ οὐ δύναται τοῦτο παρελθεῖν ἐὰν μὴ αὐτὸ πῖω, γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου.</p>	<p>Luke 22:42 λέγων· πάτερ, εἰ βούλει παρένεγκε τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· πλήν μὴ τὸ θέλημά μου ἀλλὰ τὸ σὸν γινέσθω.</p>	<p>[John 12:27] καὶ τί εἶπω; πάτερ, σῶσόν με ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταύτης; ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον εἰς τὴν ὥραν ταύτην.</p>
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2.2.2.1 Synoptic Accounts

In the Synoptic Gethsemane accounts, Jesus withdraws from his disciples to petition his Father (in Mark, the Aramaic *Abba*)⁴⁵ to remove the cup (i.e., his approaching suffering and death) from him, if it is possible. In Matthew and Mark, the cup recalls Jesus' earlier question to James and John (both of whom have accompanied Jesus into the Garden): "Are you able to drink the cup which I drink?"⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The Aramaic word occurs only here and in Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15. For a fuller discussion of the use of *Abba*, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967); Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father': Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions," *JBL* 111, no. 4 (1992): 611-30; Joseph A. Grassi, "Abba, Father (Mark 14:36): Another Approach," *JAAR* 50, no. 3 (1982): 449-58; Marcus, *Mark*, 977-8; I. Howard Marshall, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Stanley E. Porter, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, Bucks, UK: Baker Academic; Paternoster, 2004), 48; Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), esp. 21-34, 56-86.

⁴⁶ Mark 10:38-39, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"; Matt 20:22-23, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?"; cf. Luke 12:50, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!"; cf. John 18:11,

Jesus' request for God to take away the cup appears to be a genuine plea. In Gethsemane, at the moment just before the predicted end begins, Jesus seems to consider the possibility that it could be otherwise, and he pleads with God *if it is possible* to remove the cup of his fast-approaching suffering.

This is the first time that Jesus has expressed uncertainty regarding the events of his passion. In the Synoptic Gospels he has warned his disciples three times that he must suffer and die.⁴⁷ In John, likewise, Jesus hints from the very beginning that his ministry will—indeed, must—end in his death (John 2:19; 3:13-14; 12:23-24, 31-34). At the Last Supper with the disciples, Jesus does not display any obvious fear at the ensuing events. On the other hand, he does speak of the pouring out of his blood (Mark 14:24), the abandonment of his disciples (Mark 14:27), and the betrayal of Peter (Mark 14:30), all of which serve as precursors to Jesus' petition in Gethsemane.

The petition, however, is immediately qualified with an expression of trust: “But” (ἀλλά, in Mark) or “Nevertheless” (πλήν, in Matthew and Luke), Jesus tells the Father, “not what I wish, but [ἀλλά] what you wish.” Jesus' ἀλλά echoes the “*waw* adversative” of the lament psalms, the “but” that can precede the expression of trust in the midst of suffering and God's apparent absence (e.g., Psalm 13:6 MT, “But I trusted in your steadfast love” [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי]; LXX “ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ ἐλέει σου ἠλπισα”).

“Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” On the metaphorical usage of the cup of suffering and judgment in Mark 10:38-39, see Brown, 168-70; Susan R. Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 93; Marcus, *Mark*, 585. In other words, are the disciples able to “take up the cross” and lose their lives for Jesus' sake (Mark 8:34-35; Matt 16:24-25; Luke 9:23-24; cf. John 12:25)?

⁴⁷ Mark 8:31//Matt 16:21//Luke 9:22; Mark 9:31//Matt 17:22-23//Luke 9:44; Mark 10:33-34//Matt 20:18-19//Luke 18:31-33.

Jesus' decision to accept "the cup" marks a key transition point in the gospel narrative. From this time forward, Jesus mainly becomes an object of others' actions rather than a subject.⁴⁸ After Jesus' two-part petition, he does not defend himself, does not argue, does not fight, does not allow his followers to fight on his behalf. In the pattern of lament, he undergoes the humiliation of the righteous one at the hands of enemies. Perhaps he also models the reservation of vengeance to God (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19) by refusing to retaliate or resist his enemies, fulfilling his own teachings regarding the love and blessing of the enemy (see my Chapter 4, section 4.5.2, on the role of imprecation in Christian lament).

In all four Gospels, as the passion begins, Jesus "is handed over."⁴⁹ The repeated insistence that Jesus *is handed over* employs the divine passive, in which God is the implied subject (cf. Rom 8:23; 4:25; 1 Cor 11:23).⁵⁰ On the other hand, the second part of Jesus' petition demonstrates that Jesus chooses to allow himself to be handed over (cf. John 10:17-18; 19:30). Jesus willingly relinquishes both power and certainty, trusting

⁴⁸ W. H. Vanstone describes the abrupt shift from Jesus as subject and actor to object in the passion narrative in W. H. Vanstone, *The Stature of Waiting* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982), 17-29. In some respects, however, Jesus continues to be "the master of what happens" throughout the passion (Luz, 398). This is especially true in John, where Jesus is fully in control of the events of even his arrest; but also in Matthew, Jesus asks, "Do you think I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?" (Matt 26:53).

⁴⁹ The verb *παράδωμι* occurs in the passive (or occasionally middle) voice in Matt 17:22; 20:18, 19; 26:2, 45; 27:2; 27:26; Mark 9:31; 10:33; 14:41; 15:1, 15; Luke 9:44; 18:32; 23:25; 24:7, 20; John 18:30, 35-36; 19:11, 16. In John's Gospel, Pilate "hands over" (*παρέδωκεν*) Jesus to be crucified, and Jesus "hands over" (*παρέδωκεν*) his spirit (John 19:16, 30). In the Septuagint, the psalms sometimes include petitions not to be handed over to death or to the enemy (Ps 26:12; 40:3; 118:121; 139:9), references to being handed over to enemies (Ps 77:61; 105:41), or praise that God has not delivered over to death (Psalm 117:18). Judas is repeatedly called "*ὁ παραδιδούς*" ("the one who hands over"; see *ibid.*, 7-16); the prominent theme of Jesus' betrayal connects to the motif of Jesus allowing himself to "be handed over" to the authorities.

⁵⁰ Gerhardsson, 214-15. Marcus notes that the deliverance of the Son of Man into the hands of sinners (Mark 14:41) is a "striking reversal of Dan 7:13-14," which describes the glory and dominion of "one like a son of man" over all the earth (Marcus, *Mark*, 989); this highlights how Jesus' characteristics as Son of Man and Son of God clashed with prevailing expectations. I explore the role of lament in this clash in my Chapter 4, section 4.3.

God and God’s purposes. This relinquishment, however, only comes after the struggle of lament and petition. As Joel Marcus suggests, even the passion predictions represent not fearless proclamations but “intimations of a hard-won *reconciliation* to divine destiny.”⁵¹ Jesus’ laments play an important role in this reconciliation and his resolve to face the approaching trials.

2.2.2.2 Psalm 6 in John

Table 3: John 12:27; Psalm 6:4-5 LXX; Psalm 41:6 LXX; John 11:33

John 12:27 Νῦν ἡ ψυχὴ μου τετάρακται, καὶ τί εἶπω; πάτερ, σῶσόν με ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταύτης; ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον εἰς τὴν ὥραν ταύτην.	Psalm 6:4-5 LXX καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐταράχθη σφόδρα καὶ σὺ κύριε ἕως τότε ἐπίστρεψον κύριε ῥῦσαι τὴν ψυχὴν μου σῶσόν με ἕωκεν τοῦ ἐλέους σου	Psalm 41:6 LXX) πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐταράχθη διὰ τοῦτο μνησθήσομαί σου...	John 11:33 Ἰησοῦς οὖν ὡς εἶδεν αὐτὴν κλαίουσαν καὶ τοὺς σθνελθόντας αὐτῇ Ἰουδαίους κλαίοντας, ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν
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John’s Gospel reincorporates Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer in a different setting; Jesus speaks an echo of the Gethsemane prayer just after his entry into Jerusalem and before his final prolonged teaching to his disciples before his arrest. Jesus has just predicted the death of the Son of Man, equating it with his glorification (12:23-24). (Shortly after this, Jesus washes his disciples’ feet and predicts Judas’ betrayal.)

Then Jesus tells his disciples, “Now my soul is troubled” (τετάρακται), and asks, “And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour?’” (John 12:27a).⁵² If read

⁵¹ Ibid., 144.

⁵² It is possible to punctuate Jesus’ first phrase as a question: “What should I say?” and the following phrase as a petition: “Father, save me from this hour!”; see Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John; the English text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 528. This reading coheres more neatly with the other three Gospels, but does not flow quite as well with verse 27b, or with Jesus’ calm resolve throughout John’s passion narrative.

alongside the two-part petition of Gethsemane, John renders the first part of Jesus' petition as a rhetorical question, which Jesus immediately answers in the negative: "But [ἀλλά] it is for this reason that I came into this hour."⁵³ Rather than a plea to remove the cup or save him from the hour, Jesus unambiguously declares that the Father's will requires that he drink the cup and face the hour of his suffering and death – which, ironically, are the occasions for his glorification and vindication as God's faithful Son.

Jesus' words in John overlap with several key words from Psalm 6, an individual lament of David: ἡ ψυχή μου, the verb ταρασσώ (perfect passive in John, aorist passive in the psalm), and the petition σῶσόν με.⁵⁴ In the psalm, after the psalmist declares that his soul is troubled, he cries out in petition: "Save me!", whereas Jesus turns the petition into a question: "Should I say, 'Save me'?" Although Jesus' soul is troubled (as in John 11:33 and 13:21), John's account places the emphasis on the second part of the Gethsemane petition ("but not my will but yours") rather than on a request to take the cup away: it is διὰ τοῦτο—for this reason—that Jesus has come to this hour, that he has entered Jerusalem and will allow himself to be arrested (John 18:11).

Psalm 6, like Psalm 42 (used by Jesus in the Synoptic Gethsemane account), is a psalm of the "righteous sufferer." In Greek manuscripts, both psalms begin with the inscription εἰς τὸ τέλος ("unto the end"), which suggests that Septuagint translators may

⁵³ Jesus' use of ἀλλά in John 12:27 creates a small verbal link with the transition between the two parts of Jesus' petition in Gethsemane: Mark 14:36 ἀλλὰ τί σύ; Matt 26:39 ἀλλ' ὡς σὺ; Luke 22:42 ἀλλὰ τὸ σὸν γινέσθω; John 12:27 ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον εἰς τὴν ὥραν ταύτην. Also, Jesus addresses God as Father in John, as in the Gethsemane prayer in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36 "Abba Father"; Luke 22:42).

⁵⁴ Jesus' words in Matthew and Mark echo the sentiment of Psalm 6:3-4: "My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O Lord—how long? Turn, O Lord, save my life"; see Collins, 676.

have understood the Hebrew inscription למנוחה eschatologically.⁵⁵ Both psalms were interpreted eschatologically in Qumran literature and the Targums, increasing the likelihood that interpreters at the time of the New Testament read them this way as well.⁵⁶ These associations increase the eschatological resonances of Jesus' laments. At the moment just before the passion begins, the Gospels display a common pattern of Jesus using the lament psalms to express his struggle over the coming time of eschatological trial as well as his trust in God and his desire to accomplish God's will.

2.3 Jesus Weeps at the Tomb of Lazarus: Lament in John (John 11:17-44)

Jesus does not openly lament over his own death in John as he does in the other Gospels. Instead, he weeps at the grave of a friend. The raising of Lazarus in John 11 complements Jesus' prayer in John 12:27 for several reasons. Jesus' soul is "troubled" (ταράσσω) in both scenes (John 11:33; 12:27).⁵⁷ Just as Jesus cries out with a loud voice before he dies in the Synoptic Gospels, he calls forth Lazarus from the tomb with a loud voice (φωνῆ μεγάλης, John 11:43; cf. Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46); see section 2.4.1 below. Furthermore, Jesus' death and resurrection, and Lazarus' death and

⁵⁵ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 177-8. For a general discussion of the importance of psalm titles in the Hebrew and Greek texts, see Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16, no. 2 (1971): 137-50.

⁵⁶ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 177-9; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary*, ed. J. M. Houston and Erika Moore (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 19-36; Susan Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism," *CBQ* 64, no. 3 (2002): 470-89; Susan Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 5-13; George J. Brooke, "The Psalms in Early Jewish Literature in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 5-24; Watts, 25-45; Waltke, 24-5, 27. See my Chapter 6, section 6.2, for a more detailed discussion of this point.

⁵⁷ As noted above, the description of Jesus as "troubled" in John 11:33 and 12:27 seems to draw from Psalm 6 and perhaps Psalm 42; but the phrase "my soul is troubled" is common in the lament psalms (in the LXX, it occurs in Ps 6:4, 8; 30:10, 11; 37:11; 41:7; 54:4, 5; 76:5; 108:22; 142:4). The phrase is often associated with enemies and sometimes fear of death, and usually precedes or accompanies the crying out to God for help or rescue.

subsequent raising, are both for God's glory (John 11:40; 17:1, 5; cf. 21:19). As Lazarus's raising gives glory to God and confirms Jesus' special relationship to the Father, so Jesus' resurrection (his "lifting up") glorifies God and validates his identity as the one sent from the Father. In these ways, Lazarus' death and raising prefigures Jesus' own death and resurrection.⁵⁸

Also, the distress of Jesus in Gethsemane finds a parallel in Jesus' response to Lazarus' death. When Jesus sees Mary and the other Jews with her weeping, he is moved by powerful emotions: ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν ("He was deeply indignant in his spirit and troubled in himself").⁵⁹ This portrayal of Jesus contrasts his distress in the face of death with his power over death; even death demonstrates God's glory, through God's triumph over it.⁶⁰ The parallels between the deaths of Lazarus and Jesus provide an ironic sting to this scene and to Jesus' weeping: it is the raising of

⁵⁸ Ruben Zimmerman, "Narrative Hermeneutics of John 11," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and R. Bieringer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 78. Allen Verhey notes other correspondences: "In both stories there is a tomb and a stone that must be moved (11:38, 20:1). In both stories the grave clothes are mentioned (11:44, 20:7). But whereas Lazarus came out of the tomb still 'bound with strings of cloth' (11:44), at the resurrection of Jesus the grave cloths were lying in the tomb (20:5). Lazarus had been raised still vulnerable to death (12:9-11), but Jesus came from the tomb triumphant over death"; Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 224-5.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of variants, as well as the meaning of the verbs, see Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 66. The difficult word ἐμβριμάομαι occurs elsewhere in the Gospels only three other times, where it means to rebuke or speak harshly (Matt 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5). The word indicates an intense, strong feeling of concern, often with the implication of indignation: "to feel strongly, to be indignant"; see Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (United Bible Societies, 1988), 25.56 (page 295), 33.320 (page 425), 33.421 (page 436); cf. Danker, 322.

⁶⁰ Jesus' confrontation with death prefigures God's ultimate victory over death through Jesus' resurrection. Karl Barth interprets Jesus' powerful emotions as his vexation at his two "opponents": death and the devil. When Jesus weeps, he demonstrates his solidarity with humanity (Rom 12:15), but he also repudiates "the cause of their and His weeping"; his weeping "is itself a resolute No" to the reality of death. When Jesus approaches Lazarus' tomb, "He is already on the way to banish [death and its terror] from the world." See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), IV.2, 227.

Lazarus that precipitates Jesus' arrest and crucifixion in John's narrative (John 11:45-53; 12:9-11).

Shortly after Jesus' final instructions to his disciples in John, and immediately after Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus hands himself over to be arrested. In many ways, the ensuing scenes are narrative enactments of lament psalms: the betrayal of friends and companies, the surrounding and mocking by enemies, false accusations against the righteous one, and the terror of separation from God. When Jesus laments again, it is from the cross, as he is dying.

2.4 Lament in the Last Words from the Cross

Two lament psalms in particular shape the crucifixion accounts: Psalm 22 and Psalm 69.⁶¹ Both are individual royal lament psalms ascribed to David; the Septuagint prefaces each with the heading “εἰς τὸ τέλος” (“to the end”). Jesus cries out in words from Psalm 22 (in Matthew and Mark) and possibly from Psalm 69 (in John); in Luke's account, he speaks words from another individual lament psalm ascribed to David (Psalm 31). Jesus' last words in the four Gospels display the full range of lament already displayed in the Gethsemane prayers: anguish over God's absence and the triumph of enemies, and trust in God's vindication and ultimately good purposes in the midst of suffering.

First, I argue in this section that Jesus' quotation of the first verse of Psalm 22 should be interpreted as a genuine cry of anguish over God's absence, but also as a cry embedded in the wider context of the psalm as a whole. Second, I argue that Jesus' prayer

⁶¹ As James Mays writes, “The entire psalm [Psalm 22] is viewed as though it were the libretto for our Lord's dying”; James L. Mays, *Preaching and Teaching the Psalms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 108.

from Psalm 31 should be considered a prayer from a lament psalm that emphasizes trust in the midst of great suffering. Finally, with respect to John, I consider the roots of Jesus’ statement “I am thirsty” in metaphors of thirst in the lament psalms and in light of Jesus’ statements regarding living water elsewhere in John; and I suggest that Jesus’ final cry “It is finished!” evokes, whether intentionally or not, the last line of Psalm 22, and signifies the eschatological triumph of God and the vindication of the Son.

2.4.1 Jesus Cries Out with a Loud Voice

Table 4: Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; cf. John 11:43

Matthew 27:50 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν κράζας φωνῆ μεγάλῃ ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα.	Mark 15:37 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείξ φωνὴν μεγάλῃν ἐξέπνευσεν.	Luke 23:46 καὶ φωνήσας φωνῆ μεγάλῃ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν... τοῦτο δὲ εἰπὼν ἐξέπνευσεν.	[John 11:43] καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν φωνῆ μεγάλῃ ἐκραύγασεν· Λάζαρε, δεῦρο ἕξω.
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In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus cries out in a loud voice just before he dies. In John, he bows his head and gives up his spirit (John 19:30); earlier in John’s narrative, Jesus cries out with a loud voice to summon Lazarus out of death. In Matthew and Mark’s accounts, Jesus cries out in a loud voice twice: once in the words of Psalm 22:1 (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34) and a second time in a wordless cry just before he dies (Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37). Given the multiple allusions to Psalm 22 in the crucifixion scene, perhaps the second cry echoes the second “crying out” to God mentioned in the psalm (“he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him,” 22:24 [21:25 LXX]). The psalm nowhere mentions a loud voice; and if it means to suggest that God hears Jesus’ cry at this moment (as God heard the cry of the psalmist), it is a subtle suggestion indeed, and one which stands in tension with the quotation of Psalm 22:1. On the other hand, explicit and implicit allusions to Psalm 22 permeate the entire crucifixion narrative, and it would not be surprising to find another one here.

In the Septuagint, φωνὴ μεγάλη sometimes means simply a loud voice (1 Kings 18:27), but is most often associated with bitter grief accompanied by weeping, usually in the context of death, calamity, or a great loss (Gen 27:34; 1 Kings 18:27; 2 Sam 15:23; 2 Sam 19:4; Ezra 3:12, but cf. 3:13; Esther 4:1; Job 2:12; Ezek 11:13; 1 Macc 13:45; 3 Macc 5:51). In Deuteronomy, the LORD speaks from Sinai in a great voice (φωνὴ μεγάλη) that is accompanied by darkness and other signs (Deut 4:11; 5:22; cf. Isa 29:6, where it is accompanied by thunder and earthquake). In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' loud cry is likewise accompanied by darkness and other signs (an earthquake, the tearing of the temple veil).

Jesus' great voice is likely a cry of mourning rather than an echo of the LORD's mighty voice from Sinai, but this interesting parallel does draw attention to the other eschatological signs that occur in the crucifixion scene. The Synoptic Gospels portray the crucifixion as an eschatological event through the descent of darkness just before Jesus dies (Amos 8:9-10).⁶² Matthew includes the additional signs of an earthquake and the raising of the saints from their tombs at the moment of Jesus' death.⁶³ John's account

⁶² In Dale C. Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), Allison notes that the "parallel between Amos 8:9-10 and Matt 27:45 is substantial..." (80) and argues that precedent exists for interpreting Jesus' death as eschatological: "some thought it fitting to move the language of the *parousia* and the Day of the Lord to the story of the crucifixion. An eschatological interpretation of the passion, in continuity with primitive Christian theology, is perhaps thereby suggested, even though it finds no clear statement in the ancient commentaries I have read" (87-8). Allison suggests that the darkness in Matthew can evoke multiple, non-contradictory connotations, including the eschatological day of the Lord, God's judgment, mourning at Jesus' death, and the darkness of the final plague in Exodus 10:22 (104-5). The darkness functions as a fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic words regarding the signs of the end earlier in Mark 13:24 and Matthew 24:29 that "the sun will be darkened" (in Luke 21:25, there will be "signs in sun and moon and stars").

⁶³ Danker proposes that Jesus' final loud cry from the cross in Mark indicates a final great exorcism and the culmination of Jesus' battle with demonic forces throughout his ministry; Frederick W. Danker, "Demonic Secret in Mark: A Reexamination of the Cry of Dereliction (15:34)," *ZNW* 61, no. 1-2 (1970): 48-69; cf. Joel Marcus, "Identity and Ambiguity in Markan Christology," in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 145-7. This seems unlikely, since κράζω is used for all sort of cries in the Gospels, and given the associations of φωνὴ μεγάλη in Septuagint texts. It is true that in Mark, the only

records no visible eschatological signs at Jesus’ death. According to Craig Koester, however, John 12:31-33 “interprets the crucifixion in terms of conflict and victory in a world dominated by a hostile power...the oppressive power of evil.”⁶⁴ The crucifixion represents the ultimate eschatological πειρασμός, or moment of testing, for which Jesus’ previous laments prepared him.

2.4.2 The Son Forsaken by the Father: Psalm 22 in Matthew and Mark

Table 5: Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46; Psalm 21:2 LXX

<p>Mark 15:34 καὶ τῇ ἐνάτῃ ὥρᾳ ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ· ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι; ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνουόμενον· ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;</p>	<p>Matt 27:46 Περὶ δὲ τὴν ἐνάτην ὥραν ἀνεβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων· ηλι ηλι λεμα σαβαχθανι; τοῦτ’ ἔστιν· θεέ μου θεέ μου, ἵνα τί με ἐγκατέλιπες;</p>	<p>Psalm 21:2 LXX ὁ θεός ὁ θεός μου, πρόσχεσ μοι ἵνα τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;</p>	<p>Psalm 22:2 MT יְהוָה יְהוָה לָמָּה עָזַבְתָּנִי</p>
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In Matthew and Mark, while Jesus is dying on the cross, he cries out in words that seem to be an Aramaic rendering of the first verse of Psalm 22, an individual lament psalm ascribed to David.⁶⁵ Scholars describe Jesus’ final words as a cry of dereliction, a

other occurrences of φωνή μεγάλη outside the crucifixion scene are the cries of demons (Mark 1:26; 5:7), but it seems tenuous at best to suggest that Jesus himself was demon-possessed on the cross.

⁶⁴ Craig R. Koester, “The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John’s Gospel,” in *Life in Abundance* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 149.

⁶⁵ As Birger Gerhardsson argues, it is not by chance that Jesus on the cross remembers and recites from memory, by heart, a perfectly opportune word of Scripture – Jesus has the word of God inscribed in his heart (Gerhardsson, 224). Neither the Aramaic nor the Hebrew of Jesus’ cry perfectly match any known extant version of Psalm 22 (Mark George Vitalis Hoffman, *Psalm 22 (LXX 21) and the Crucifixion of Jesus* [Ann Arbor, MI: U.M.I., 1997], 402), but Mark’s version “corresponds roughly to the Targum on Psalms and the Peshitta of Ps 22:1” (Marcus, *Mark*, 1054). Mark’s saying seems to represent an Aramaic original, whereas the Matthean parallel appears to be partly Hebrew (ηλι ηλι) and partly Aramaic (λεμα; σαβαχθανι) (Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1994], 58, 99-100; see also Luz, 542-3). For establishing the text, see also Moo, 264-71; Moo concludes that both Matthew and Mark “represent an Aramaic cry” that closely reproduces Jesus’ actual words (ibid., 268). Codex Bezae and a few other Western, Old Latin manuscripts substitute ὠνειδισάς for ἐγκατέλιπές με in Mark 15:34 (but not in Matthew 27:46) – a word used in Psalm

cry of judgment, or a cry of final triumph.⁶⁶ The heart of the matter is whether and to what extent Jesus' quotation of verse one evokes the wider context of Psalm 22. The psalm as a whole alternates between lament or complaint (verses 1-2, 6-8, 12-18); praise (verses 3-5, 9-10); petition (verses 11, 19-21); and confident thanksgiving over God's deliverance, goodness, and dominion over all the earth (verses 22-31).⁶⁷

I adopt the view that the quotation of verse one neither stands on its own, lifted from its context in Psalm 22 as a whole, nor merely evokes the victorious conclusion of the psalm without the genuine anguish of the complaints and petitions – especially including the complaint of the verse actually quoted: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” The latter view simply ignores the force of the actual quotation. The former position—that the quotation of verse one does *not* evoke the wider context of the psalm—fails to reckon with the widespread use of other details from Psalm 22 in the rest of the passion narrative.

22:7b and in Psalm 89. Hoffman suggests that the variant is an “attempt to assimilate Jesus’ cry to Ps 22:2a (by use of the appropriate Hebrew) while at the same time attempting to interpret it” through Psalm 89 and to soften it (Hoffman, 333, 339). Ehrman explores the textual variants through the lens of the Gnostic controversy in the early church (Ehrman, 143-5).

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Thomas E. Schmidt, “Cry of Dereliction or Cry of Judgment? Mark 15:34 in Context,” *BBR* 4 (1994): 145-53; James Swetnam, “The Crux at Hebrews 5,7-8,” *Bib* 81, no. 3 (2000): 347-61. For Psalm 22 as expression of trust, see Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markus-Evangelium*, Wege der Forschung 411 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 494-5; Martin Ebner, “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im Neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, ed. Martin Ebner et al., *JBTh* 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 75-9. Hoffman proposes that Luke, not wanting to portray Jesus as abandoned by God, creatively reinterprets the cry of forsakenness from Psalm 22:1 as the sun’s eclipsing in Luke 23:45, using a word play between God/sun (ἡλι, ἔλωι/ἡλι-ος) and abandon/eclipse (ἐγκαταλείπω/ἐκλείπω) (Hoffman, 410-11). While he makes an intriguing observation regarding the potential word play, this is a complicated connection.

⁶⁷ For the structure of Psalm 22, see Bernd Janowski, “Das verborgene Augesicht Gottes: Psalm 13 als Muster eines Klagelieds des einzelnen,” in *Klage*, 46-53; see also Ottmar Fuchs’ detailed analysis of Psalm 22 in Fuchs, *Die Klage als Gebet*.

It is a reasonable assumption that both Jesus and his Jewish hearers would have known the whole psalm,⁶⁸ and the first verse of a psalm could be used to invoke the whole in liturgical settings.⁶⁹ One need only say the words, “The Lord is my shepherd...” to see how one line can open up a wider context. Surely Jesus’ quotation of verse one “brings into view” the wider context of the whole psalm, including the note of vindication and victory at the end.⁷⁰

Furthermore, other allusions to Psalm 22 appear throughout the passion narrative in all four Gospels, demonstrating how foundational the entire psalm—and not just verse one—is to the narrative of Jesus’ crucifixion.⁷¹ The victorious ending of the psalm is not enacted until the resurrection,⁷² unless a hint of it appears in the centurion’s confession of

⁶⁸ It is an obvious irony noted by Matthew and Mark that those who heard completely misunderstood what Jesus was saying. Many have noted the irony in the passion narrative, including Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, SBLDS 31 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1977); and Joel Marcus, “Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation,” *JBL* 125, no. 1 (2006): 73-87.

⁶⁹ Moo, 272; Loren R. Fisher, “Betrayed by Friends: An Expository Study of Psalm 22,” *Interpretation* 18, no. 1 (1964): 23-5. For the psalm as Esther’s prayer see Catherine Brown Tkacz, “Esther, Jesus, and Psalm 22,” *CBQ* 70, no. 4 (2008): 709-28.

⁷⁰ Marcus, “The Role of Scripture,” 180-3.

⁷¹ Verse 7 seems to shape Matt 27:39; Mark 15:29a; Luke 23:35a. Verse 8 appears in Matt 27:40, 43; Mark 15:29b-30; Luke 23:35-37, 39. Verse 18 appears in all four Gospels. Hebrews quotes verse 22, demonstrating that the influence of Psalm 22 was not limited to the Gospels tradition. Verse 29 shapes Matt 27:42 and Mark 15:31 (see Moo, 258-62). Vernon Robbins proposes that Mark’s account of Jesus’ crucifixion recontextualizes scenes from Psalm 22 in reverse order, thus creating a “reverse reading” of Psalm 22 and highlighting the irony of Jesus’ kingship (Vernon K. Robbins, “The Reversed Contextualization of Psalm 22 in the Markan Crucifixion: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis,” in *The Four Gospels 1992*, edited by F. Van Segbroek et al. [Louvain: Peeters, 1992], 1161-83). While Robbins’ proposal does not work perfectly under careful scrutiny, he does draw attention the multiple allusions to Psalm 22. Ebner makes a similar observation about the order of the Psalm 22 references in Mark’s account, in “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung,” 76-7, but does not draw as much significance from it.

⁷² See Moo, 272. Hoffman argues that Matthew 28:20, John 20:17, and Hebrews 2:12 display “an early Christian tradition reflecting on the resurrection and ascension of Jesus which is centered upon Ps 22:23” (Hoffman, 378). Especially in John’s Gospel, Jesus’ crucifixion itself is his exaltation and glorification, but even in Mark his crucifixion can be seen as the revelation of his true kingship (see Marcus, “Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation,” 83-7).

Jesus as the Son of God (cf. Ps 22:27).⁷³ Another tantalizing echo of Psalm 22 appears in the risen Jesus' command to "go and report to my brothers..." (ὕπάγετε ἀπαγγείλατε τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, Matt 28:10); the unusual use of "my brothers" seems to echo Psalm 21:23 LXX, "I will declare your name to my brothers" (διηγήσομαι τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου).⁷⁴

On the other hand, suggestions that Jesus quoted the whole psalm from the cross or intended to use 22:1 simply "as a 'motto' which evoked all the psalm"⁷⁵ have little precedent elsewhere in Scripture. More importantly, moving too quickly to the triumphant ending of the psalm mutes the force of the lament in Jesus' dying words.⁷⁶ Eugene Boring points out that if Luke and John had perceived the cry from the cross as one of trust rather than abandonment they would not have felt it necessary to omit or reinterpret it, as they seem to do.⁷⁷ Jesus' cry hints at the ethos of the two-part petition in the Garden, but in painful reverse order: "My God, my God..." (*But not what I will but*

⁷³ Marcus, "The Role of Scripture," 201. For eschatological interpretations, see Moo, 272-3.

⁷⁴ Claus Westermann notes the parallel between Matthew 28:10 and Psalm 22:23 (cf. Heb 2:11-12), based on the phrase "verkündigt meinen Brüdern" ("declare to my brothers"). Jesus does refer to his disciples as his brothers in Matt 12:49, in the context of who constitutes his true family, but in this context it is a surprising use of the word. See Claus Westermann, *Gewendete Klage; eine Auslegung des 22 Psalms* (Neukirchen: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1957); cf. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 126. Westermann argues that Christ performs the end of the psalm, "Verherrlichen des Namens des Vaters" (glorifying the name of the Father), through his death on behalf of the world (Westermann, *Gewendete Klage*, 64).

⁷⁵ Moo, 271, n.1 and 2.

⁷⁶ Jesus is dying as a condemned criminal undergoing a cruel and painful form of execution; see especially Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). The Gospel writers are thus all faced with the problem of how to narrate a "hero's death by crucifixion" (Goodacre, 34). In my Chapter 4, section 4.3, I explore the role that lament might play in this dilemma.

⁷⁷ Boring, 430.

what you will); “why have you forsaken me?” (*take this cup away from me*).⁷⁸ As Jesus was betrayed and abandoned by his closest friends, now he is separated even from his God and Father.⁷⁹ Jesus’ lament reveals the severing of the close and intimate connection he has enjoyed up to this point in the Gospels with his Father.⁸⁰ (In my Chapter 5, I explore the Trinitarian implications of Jesus’ lament.)

In Luke, Jesus’ last words also draw on the lament tradition. Jesus quotes a verse from a different lament psalm – but in this case Jesus’ words seem to be a peaceful relinquishment rather than an anguished cry.⁸¹

2.4.3 The Son Hands his Spirit over to the Father: Psalm 31 in Luke

Table 6: Luke 23:46; Psalm 30:6 LXX

<p>Luke 23:46b πάτερ, εἰς χειρὰς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου.</p>	<p>Psalm 30:6 (LXX) εἰς χειρὰς σου παραθήσομαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἔλυτρόσω με κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀληθείας</p>
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In Luke’s account, Jesus does not raise his voice in complaint, anguish, or petition; yet he still prays from a lament psalm just before he dies.⁸² Psalm 22:1 and

⁷⁸ See Gerhardsson, pages 212-27, for the claim that Jesus’ cry is a sign of Jesus’ testing as one of God’s chosen.

⁷⁹ Gerhardsson, among others, draws on Deuteronomy 21:23 to highlight that God has withdrawn his blessing from his Son and allowed curses to fall upon him instead (*ibid.*, 221).

⁸⁰ See Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 222.

⁸¹ Many scholars suggest that Luke’s theological purposes lead him not to include Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22, and to use a different lament psalm instead, thereby preserving the tradition that Jesus prays from the lament psalms on the cross. E.g., Richard Hays writes, “...finding Mark 15:34 incommensurable with his Christology, Luke, rather than freely composing some different last words for Jesus, replaces the cry of Ps 22:1 with the trusting declaration of Ps 31:5, another royal psalm of suffering... Thus, Luke ingeniously achieves a reinterpretation of Jesus’ death while abiding within the convention of reading the lament psalms as utterances of Christ” (Richard B. Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul’s Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention,” in *Future of Christology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], 126). It is also possible that Luke seeks to “scripturalize” the tradition that Jesus “gave up his spirit [πνεῦμα]” (Matt 27:50); I am grateful to Mark Goodacre for this latter suggestion.

Psalm 31:6 leave their respective hearers with very different impressions about Christ's approach to the hour of his death. Psalm 22 presents us with the dilemma of whether or not to hear the hopeful note of the psalm's conclusion; Jesus' quotation of Psalm 31 in Luke presents the opposite problem: to what extent ought verse six evoke the lamenting cries of verses 9-13 and 22b?

Above, I argued that the cry "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" should be taken seriously as a cry expressing anguish over God's apparent absence, but within the context of Psalm 22 as a whole, which alternates between complaint, petition, and praise. Likewise, I argue that the prayer "Into your hands I commit my spirit" should be read as a genuine prayer of trust, but in the midst of great suffering as indicated both by the narrative setting of the crucifixion and the prayer's wider context in Psalm 31.

Like Psalm 22, Psalm 31 is an individual lament ascribed to King David. Several themes in Psalm 31 resonate with the passion and the crucifixion scene: "...they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life" (Psalm 31:13b); and verse 22 echoes Jesus' sense of separation from God, as in Psalm 22:1 – "I had said in my alarm, 'I am driven far from your sight.'"⁸³ Scholars sometimes argue that Psalm 31:6 was a common refrain of evening prayers for Jews, but it is difficult to prove that this practice was ongoing at the time of Jesus. Furthermore, even if this were the case, interpreting Jesus' prayer as *merely* a recitation of an evening prayer ignores the prayer's setting (Jesus

⁸² Scholars sometimes describe Luke's avoidance of Psalm 22:1 as indicative of a larger anxiety within early Christianity itself regarding Jesus' capacity for lament or God's supposed abandonment of God's Son. "Obviously this sentence [the quotation of Psalm 22:1] was already difficult for people in earliest Christianity" (Luz, 542).

⁸³ Another possible allusion to Psalm 31 (the insults of the adversaries) occurs in Mark 15:29 (Gérard Rossé, *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study* [New York: Paulist Press, 1987], 59). Hoffman argues that there are enough parallels between Psalms 22 and 31 to establish potential but not close connections between them (Hoffman, 410; see also his section 4.16.3 for a more thorough treatment).

dying a painful death on a cross) and the way that these other details from Psalm 31 resonate with Luke's narrative context.⁸⁴

Instead, "into your hands I commit my spirit" functions as one feature of the pattern of lament: trust in God's provision in the midst of trouble, in the presence of enemies, and even in the face of God's apparent absence. Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 in Matthew and Mark expresses the terrified complaint and petition of lament (much as the first part of the Gethsemane prayer "take this cup away" does the same), whereas Jesus' quotation of Psalm 31:6 intensifies the second part of the Gethsemane prayer: "but not my will but yours."

2.4.4 The Word Thirsts; the Son Completes his Task: Psalm 69 and Psalm 22 in John

In John's account of the crucifixion, Jesus also speaks words drawn from the lament tradition when he says, "I thirst" (John 19:28). John notes that Jesus says this in order "to fulfill the Scripture" – the Scripture of Psalm 69:21, to be exact.⁸⁵ Psalm 69 is another royal lament psalm—that is, an individual lament ascribed to David, like Matthew and Mark's Psalm 22 and Luke's Psalm 31—that contains pleas for deliverance

⁸⁴ For the claim that Jews recited Psalm 31:6 at evening prayer, see Rossé, 32; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 876; Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (New York: Knopf, 1960), 142. Most of the primary sources cited by Stauffer are rabbinic texts.

⁸⁵ See Robert L. Brawley, "An Absent Complement and Intertextuality in John 19:28-29," *JBL* 112, no. 3 (1993): 436-9, for the complex interplay between Psalm 69 and John 19:28-29. Verhey suggests that Jesus refused the drink not because he did not wish to lessen the pain (so Brown, 2:941-2) but because "It is not for kings to drink wine" (Prov 31:4), since it is the duty of kings to "speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute" (Prov 31:8); Verhey, 248-9. Ignace de la Potterie argues that the phrase "so that the Scripture should be fulfilled" goes with the preceding phrase, "all was now completed"; see Ignace de la Potterie, "L'emploi dynamique de εἰς dans Saint Jean et ses incidences théologiques," *Bib* 43, no. 3 (1962): 366-87, quotation p. 260. G. Bampfylde interprets the two clauses likewise, arguing that the statement "I thirst" does not fulfill any Scripture but only functions as a "paradoxical contrast" to Jesus' cry "It is finished"; see G. Bampfylde, "John 19:28: A Case for a Different Translation," *NovT* 11, no. 4 (1969): 247-60.

from death (Psalm 69:15) and from enemies (Psalm 69:13, 18-19). Like Psalm 22, Psalm 69 ends on a triumphant note: “For God will save Zion...” (verse 35). Psalm 69:21 plays a key role in all four passion narratives (Matt 27:48; Mark 15:36; Luke 22:36; John 19:28-29), making Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 the two central lament psalms of Jesus’ dying.⁸⁶

Aside from the more explicit reference to Psalm 69, the words “I thirst” have other resonances in John’s context. For one thing, the words are surprisingly material (for a Gospel sometimes accused of bordering on Docetism); they are surprisingly mundane.⁸⁷ They emphasize Jesus’ humanity in a Gospel that more often emphasizes Jesus’ glory (cf. John 4:6; 11:35).

Even more so, however, Jesus’ thirst reflects the tradition in the psalms of a “soul” (נַפְשׁוֹ, ψύχη) thirsting after God or crying out for lack of God’s presence. Psalms 69 and 22 both contain complaints about thirst, although neither uses Jesus’ word for thirst (διψᾶω). In Psalm 69:3, the psalmist complains, “my throat is parched” (in the LXX, “I am weary of crying out; my throat has become hoarse”), and in Psalm 22:15 he writes, “my tongue is glued to my throat.” Two other psalms do contain the verb διψᾶω – Psalm 42, a lament and prayer for healing (quoted by Jesus in Gethsemane in Matthew and Mark); and Psalm 63, a psalm of David that opens with lament but is mainly characterized by

⁸⁶ John 2 uses Psalm 69:9 to frame Jesus’ actions in the temple (John 2:17, “Zeal for your house will consume me”) – a key scene early in John that inaugurates Jesus’ conflict with the Jerusalem authorities and even presages his death and resurrection (John 2:19-22). Psalm 31, of course, plays a central role in Luke by supplying Jesus’ final words on the cross; and Douglas Moo suggests that Matthew 26:3-4a alludes to Psalm 31:13 (Ps 30:14 LXX) (Moo, 234-5).

⁸⁷ Verhey, 245. Ehrman argues that a third-century papyrus omits the clause that Jesus said he was thirsty “in order to fulfill the Scripture” in order to make the point that Jesus really *was* thirsty (i.e., a flesh-and-blood human being) abundantly clear; see Ehrman, 194.

trusting praise.⁸⁸ In these two psalms, the motif of thirst indicates an ardent desire for God (Psalm 62:2 LXX) or the painful absence of God (Psalm 41:2-4 LXX). Jesus' thirst thus subtly evokes God's absence, admittedly in a much more subtle way than the cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"⁸⁹

Of course, Jesus' cry that he is thirsty may be intended simply to expand on the Synoptic account of the offering of drink to Jesus on the cross.⁹⁰ Yet thirst and living water play important roles elsewhere in John, when Jesus asks a woman at a well for a drink, and then offers himself as living water to her (4:7-10). When he invites all who are thirsty to come to him, he again refers to living water (7:37-38). On the cross, the living water, the one who promised *you will never be thirsty again* – this one thirsts.⁹¹

Just before Jesus draws his final breath, he says one more word: "τετέλεστα" ("It is finished," 19:30). Perhaps this evokes the "τέλος" of the inscription in the Greek title of Psalm 22 (εἰς τὸ τέλος ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀντιλήμψεως τῆς ἑωθινῆς ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ; Psalm 21:1 LXX).⁹² Although the echo would be faint, the widespread use of the Septuagint in

⁸⁸ Psalm 63 and Psalm 22 begin with the same phrase: Ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός μου (Oh God, my God).

⁸⁹ Mark Spurrell reads the two sayings as analogous; J. M. Spurrell, "Interpretation of 'I thirst,'" *CQR* 167, no. 362 (1966): 12-18. Leonard Witkamp notes the "remarkable structural homogeneity" between Mark 15:34-37 (and par.) and John 19:28-30, a structure which would pair "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" with "I thirst," and Jesus' loud cry from the cross with "It is finished!"; Leonard Theodor Witkamp, "Jesus' Thirst in John 19:28-30: Literal or Figurative?," *JBL* 115, no. 3 (1996): 507-8.

⁹⁰ Donald Senior and Raymond Brown suggest that the reference to thirst proves that Jesus is willing to drink the cup the Father has given him (John 18:11); see Maurits Sabbe, "The Johannine Account of the Death of Jesus and its Synoptic Parallels (Jn 19:16b-42)," *ETHL* 70, no. 1 (1994): 61-2, 61. Senior takes Jesus' thirst as a *positive* thirst for God (rather than a thirst that indicates God's absence): "Jesus thirsts for God and he thirsts out of love for 'his own in the world'"; Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 117.

⁹¹ In an additional irony, after Jesus' death, when a soldier pierces his side with a spear, blood *and water* come out (John 19:34). I am grateful to Klyne Snodgrass for this observation.

⁹² Hoffman proposes that John draws on the LXX title "For the end, concerning the support of the morning" as indication of Jesus' ultimate triumph in resurrection (at dawn), drawing on the potential verbal link between τέλος and Jesus' cry τετέλεσται (Hoffman, 426), which Hoffman admits is a "weak and ambiguous connection" (ibid., 427 n.37). Cf. John 4:34; 5:36; 17:4.

the passion narrative makes it possible. John does quote from Psalm 22 (verse 19 of the psalm appears in John 19:24 and drives the narrative of verses 23-24), so it is certainly possible that he has other elements of the psalm in mind.

Jesus' proclamation that "it is finished" also resonates intriguingly with the Hebrew ending of Psalm 22: "he has done it!" (הִשָּׁמַח). This is likewise a very faint echo. Even if the evangelist himself did not intend the allusion, however, it provides a satisfying *canonical* frame to the allusions to Psalm 22, beginning with the first verse in Matthew and Mark and concluding with the final verse in John. It is possible that John, like Luke, has attempted his own creative modification of Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 due to his Christology (cf. John 16:32, "I am not alone because the Father is with me").⁹³ In any case, Jesus' final word in John's account completes the full movement of lament in the crucifixion scene by evoking the trust and praise of the lament pattern, and signifying the vindication of the righteous one.

2.5 The Trajectory of Lament and the Fourfold Gospel

The standard historical-critical interpretation of lament in the four Gospels reads Jesus' laments along a historical continuum, from an earliest Mark to a latest John. Using this strategy, the two later Gospels inevitably appear to mute Jesus' anguish and lament.⁹⁴ In other words, Mark is assumed to be the "closest" to Jesus and thus the most historically accurate, with John at the farthest remove and the one who has most tempered Jesus' laments for his own purposes. (Hebrews 5:7 complicates this picture by

⁹³ Ibid., 426.

⁹⁴ Rossé, e.g., is so intent on the earliest historical record of Jesus' death that he focuses almost exclusively on Mark and regards Psalm 22:1 as "the *only* utterance of Jesus on the cross" (Rossé, 328 n.2).

reflecting a tradition more akin to Matthew and Mark than to Luke or John. Hebrews, of course, is notoriously difficult to locate either in time or in place.)

Although the church has traditionally read the passion narrative as one story, interwoven from the four Gospels into “a single multicolored tapestry,”⁹⁵ modern scholarship has tended to separate the strands and accentuate their differences rather than their similarities. This impulse can yield valuable insights into the unique emphases of each Gospel on the question of lament.

I argue, however, that the model of a historical trajectory of lament is fundamentally flawed, inasmuch as it obscures the crucial role lament plays in each of the four Gospels. As I have argued repeatedly, the trajectory is not as neat as it first appears.⁹⁶ Despite their significant differences—which I do not seek to downplay—all four Gospels preserve the tradition that the pattern of Old Testament lament decisively shaped Jesus’ final actions and words. A canonical reading reveals precisely this pattern: the full, fourfold picture of Jesus as one who wept at the grave of a friend, struggled with and submitted to God’s will, experienced fear and separation from his Father, thirsted for God’s presence, and commended his soul into God’s hands as he died. In the lament psalms as in the four Gospels, Jesus prays lament: agony mingled with trust, petition paired with praise, complaint rooted in hope.

⁹⁵ Koester, 141.

⁹⁶ The incarnation hymn of Philippians 2 provides one obvious counterpoint. Scholars such as Larry Hurtado have vigorously defended evidence for a very early high Christology within the Christian tradition, rejecting the simple association of Mark with a low Christology and John with a high Christology; Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth did Jesus Become a God?: Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 134-78.

2.6 Conclusion

As we have seen, the pattern of lament shapes Jesus' final hours, from his humiliation into vindication – and also displays the vindication of God's faithfulness. A consideration of the wider contexts of Psalms 22, 31, and 69 has revealed that the theme of God's apparent absence is a central motif of Jesus' laments in all four Gospels, explicitly in Matthew and Mark and more subtly in Luke and John. Jesus' laments fit into the stream of lament I have described as protest prayer rather than penitence; he cries out to God from a situation of distress, *but* trusts in God in the midst of his suffering. Finally, Jesus' laments occur in a unique eschatological context: the in-breaking kingdom of God. When Jesus laments in Gethsemane, he prepares himself to face with resolve the coming eschatological trial (πειρασμός) of his betrayal, suffering, and death.

Jesus' laments have universal, particular, and unique significance. As universal, they give voice to common human longings for God's presence and help in the midst of trouble. They arise from the particular tradition of Israel's worship, and from a specific pattern of prayer, petition, and praise. Because of Jesus' identity as the only Son, the one sent from the Father whose suffering and death is uniquely redemptive, his laments take on a special function and meaning. The next three chapters consider the question of the significance of Jesus' unique identity for his laments through a threefold lens: Jesus laments as a human being; as the Davidic Messiah-King, high priest, and prophet; and as the divine Son of God.

3. Jesus Laments as a Human Being

3.1 The Significance of Jesus' Identity for Lament

In the previous chapter I argued that lament in the passion narrative centers around Jesus, who prays the full movement of lament (complaint, petition, and trust), and enacts the pattern of lament from humiliation into vindication. God's faithfulness to God's promises is at stake in the prayer of lament; at the cross, both Jesus' righteousness and God's faithfulness are tested and proved.

The Gospels establish Jesus' identity as the Son of David and the suffering righteous one in part through closely associating Jesus with individual lament psalms, especially those ascribed to David. The earliest Christian traditions identified Christ not simply as one foreshadowed by the psalms, but as the one who prays them in all their fullness.¹ Thus the psalms of lament reveal something about Jesus, but Jesus in turn reveals something about the lament psalms and about the prayer of lament more generally.

Lament in the New Testament is in material continuity with Israel's practice of lament as found in the Old Testament, but it is also shaped by Jesus. When Jesus prays lament, he takes up the prayer of Israel both as a faithful Israelite and as the one whose life, death, and resurrection fulfill that prayer. My next three chapters (3, 4, 5) build on the foundation I laid in the previous chapter by considering the significance of Jesus' unique identity for his laments and for Christian lament more broadly. To accomplish

¹ Harold W. Attridge, "Giving Voice to Jesus: Use of the Psalms in the New Testament," in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 101-112; Richard B. Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul's Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention," in *Future of Christology*, edited by Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 122-36.

this, I read Jesus' laments through three lenses: Jesus laments as a human being, as the Davidic Messiah-King and prophet sent to Israel, and as the divine Son of God.

3.1.1 Jesus Laments as a Human Being

Jesus' human laments have two basic elements. First, Jesus' laments arise from his sharing in the universal mortality, frailty, and contingency of human life. Second, Jesus laments as a Jew, using the prayers and patterns of that tradition.

As a universal human phenomenon, lament gives voice to pain and protest regarding injustice and suffering. It takes shape as embodied political protest against unjust systems, as existential protest against the limitations and vicissitudes of mortal life, and as the communal sharing of burdens. Through this lens, Jesus' laments in the passion narrative reveal his common humanity and the way he shares in mortality and contingency. Jesus wept, Jesus wondered if God had deserted him, Jesus was tortured and condemned at the hands of an unjust political process, Jesus knew pain and betrayal and the sting of death. In other words, Jesus was and is a fellow-lamenter with all humanity. This stretches the definition of lament out of its particular pattern in Israel's tradition and sets it in a wider, universal context. As one who sings the song of grief and mortality, Jesus joins in with the lament of all humanity across time and cultures. People who often claim Jesus as a fellow oppressed sufferer typically do so on the grounds of his human suffering and his human lamentation, demonstrating the importance of reading lament through this lens, particularly in socioeconomic settings of oppression or marginalization.

As Nancy Lee notes, all laments arise from a common human impulse—the impulse to give voice to pain—but then form into different “genres and lyrics.”² That is, all laments are also particular to a tradition, to a specific time and place. Jesus laments not only as a human being but as a first-century Jew, not only as a son of Adam but also as a son of Abraham and a son of David. His laments are formed by the prayers and patterns of the Old Testament lament, especially the psalms.

The psalms reveal that Israel directed her lament to a particular God within the context of the covenant relationship. God made promises to Israel, to bless and prosper and dwell with the people; God declared the essential divine characteristic to be long-suffering love, *hesed*. Lament demands that God keep these promises and be true to that character. When the people of Israel suffer drought, or defeat at the hands of enemies, or sickness, or sorrow, they raise their voice to God, because God is the one who hears cries and has the power to help and rescue. Within this framework, the apparent hiddenness or silence of God is one of the central themes of the lament psalms, and connects to human experience of God’s absence more broadly.

3.1.2 Jesus Laments as Prophet, Priest, and King

Although Jesus prays from the Psalms as any other Jew of his time, he also prays them in an entirely unique way because of his identity as the promised redeemer of Israel. Jesus not only prays but also *fulfills* the Jewish Scriptures; his laments signify the end of lament.³ When Jesus laments, he laments as priest, king, and prophet: the high priest who

² Nancy C. Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 5.

³ Or, in more precise terms, the beginning of the end – the inauguration of lament’s end. In a way, they also represent the *telos* of lament: the ultimate hope of final redemption toward which lament presses.

receives the prayers of the suffering (as seen particularly in the book of Hebrews), the Davidic Messiah-King (seen especially in the passion narrative), and the prophet of the God of Israel (seen in Jesus' prophetic mourning over Jerusalem). While these three roles often overlap in Jesus' life and ministry, reading Jesus' lament through the lens of these identities yields various insights.

As the high priest, Jesus' human experience of pain, loss, and death informs his risen life and qualifies him to hear the cries of those who suffer. That is, the one who lamented can now receive the prayer of lament in heaven and extend mercy in time of need. Jesus' intercession for his enemies—and his commands to bless those who persecute—reorients lament away from imprecation and toward intercession for the other, while still leaving room for longing for God's justice to be done (as in Rev 6:10).

As the Davidic Messiah-King, Jesus' laments underscore the fulfillment of the Davidic psalms in his ministry and passion, but with an ironic edge: the expected deliverer of Israel exercises his power in weakness and vulnerable love. As laments set within an eschatological context, Jesus' messianic laments display the promised, proleptic end of exile. Rachel's tears will be dried; the one who mourns will be comforted. This points to the eschatological end of lament: the wiping away of all tears at the fulfillment of the eschaton that Jesus' resurrection inaugurated. It is all the more striking, then, that Jesus participates in the weeping for which he himself promises comfort (Matt 5:4).

Finally, as the prophet of the God of Israel, Jesus' prophetic laments represent a form of dirge—mourning over God's judgment and the fall of the holy city—as well as a form of divine grief. Embedded within the prophetic lament are the laments of God; the

prophet conveys not only his own pain over Jerusalem's disobedience, but God's own pain in relation to the people to whom God has "held out God's hands all day long" (Isa 65:2; cf. Rom 10:21; see also Jer 18). Jesus' laments as a prophet therefore provide a bridge to his lament as a form of divine mourning.

3.1.3 Jesus Laments as the Divine Son of God

The third and final lens is that of Jesus' divinity. Jesus' laments are the prayers of the Son of God, the "unique one from the Father" (John 1:18). Through Jesus' laments, the laments of humanity are taken up into the life of the Triune God. In Chapter 5, I reflect on Jesus as the God who laments for and with God's people and the world. I begin with the tradition of divine mourning in the Old Testament and then explore the Trinitarian implications of Jesus' cry from the cross. I propose that the "suffering God" theologians (represented by Jürgen Moltmann) and theologians who defend God's impassibility (represented by David Hart) converge on the same principle: God's steadfast love for humanity. Finally, I explore Romans 8 to describe the Holy Spirit's ongoing role in Christian prayers of lament in the eschatological tension between the now and the not yet.

3.2 Introduction: Human Lament

In this section, I consider Jesus' laments as the laments of a human being. As a universal human phenomenon, lament is mourning over or protest against suffering and injustice, and arises especially from social locations of oppression and marginalization. Drawing on the work of Dorothee Sölle and others, I describe the way that lament, in various cultures, presses toward change, i.e., toward the transformation of the person or

community who suffers, as well as toward the alleviation of conditions that create suffering and toward greater justice.

3.3 Lament as a Universal Human Phenomenon

According to anthropologist Ruth Finnegan, the lament or dirge is one of three traditional songs that occur universally in every human culture.⁴ Just as suffering is universal to the human experience, lamenting or giving voice to suffering is likewise a shared human impulse, which takes shape in various ways in different cultures.⁵

Jesus' laments arise first from his humanity. "And the Word became flesh [σάρξ] and lived among us" (John 1:14).⁶ In this simple claim lies the profound and paradoxical assertion of the incarnation: the divine Word took on finite, frail, mortal flesh.⁷ Jesus experienced many of the events that prompt human beings to lift up their voices in complaint or protest: physical pain, thirst, grief, weakness, loneliness, the sting of betrayal, the shadow of death. Jesus' laments provide a key witness to his life as an embodied human being – to his sharing in the universal human experience of suffering, weakness, and mortality.⁸

⁴ Lee, 7. The other two songs are the lullaby and the wedding song.

⁵ Ibid., 21-48. Much of contemporary American culture seems devoted to the avoidance of suffering and death. Lament is the opposite: it faces the reality of suffering and death, refusing either to ignore them or to give them the last word.

⁶ The Hebrew word underlying the Greek σάρξ is *basar* (בָּשָׂר), which refers to the physical body but is also used in special conjunction with humanity's "creatureliness, his absolute dependence on God, his earthly nature, and his weakness, inadequacy, and transitoriness" (N. P. Bratsiotis, "בָּשָׂר," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975], 2:328). *Basar* can also indicate relationship, the social nature of human bodiliness (ibid., 319, 326).

⁷ It is all too easy to miss the revolutionary nature of this claim: "...the OT always emphasizes that God is not *basar*" (ibid., 330).

⁸ Christian interpreters in the first four centuries after Christ preserved the tradition of Jesus' laments in Gethsemane and on the cross as powerful signs of his full and even exemplary humanity. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 398-401; and Gérard Rossé, *The Cry*

3.3.1 Jesus' Laments: Anthropological and Christological

Discussions of Jesus' laments in the Christian tradition tend to emphasize either their anthropological character or their Christological character. That is, taking Jesus' laments as anthropological focuses on their fundamental character as the laments of a human being, which is precisely the intent of this chapter. In this model, Jesus joins in the lamentation of all humanity and suffers in solidarity with us. On the other hand, those who read Jesus' laments primarily as Christological take Jesus' lament as a unique feature of his sinless nature and read them alongside his atoning death. In this view, the arrow of participation is reversed: humanity joins in *Christ's* laments and participates in them, as Christ laments on behalf of the world and of sinful humanity.⁹

These two emphases map rather neatly onto the question of whether lament is primarily for suffering or for sin – that is, whether lament is mainly a form of protest or a form of penitence. The anthropological interpretation trades on lament's function as protest against injustice and oppression, whereas the Christological interpretation

of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 73-100. Rowan Greer argues that the Antiochene theologians likewise interpreted Hebrews 5:7 as evidence of Jesus' full humanity; see Rowan A. Greer, *The Captain of our Salvation: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 15 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973), 300.

⁹ According to Eva Harasta, for example, Christ's lament on the cross is a lament of justification, taking "the pain of godforsaken laments upon himself" and thus into God's life; it is also a "'lament of love,' arising from [Christ's] grief about the fallen mortal creation." See Eva Harasta and Brian Brock, eds., *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 211. What Harasta calls the "lament of love," I identify as divine grief (see Chapter 5). Thomas Aquinas understood Psalm 22 as a sinner's plea for mercy, based on a Vulgate rendering of Psalm 22:1 that reads, "The outcry of my sins puts me far from my salvation." On this basis, Aquinas concludes that a sinless Jesus laments in the words of Psalm 22 not for himself but for all humanity in their sinful state. See Bruce D. Marshall, "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 260-3; Paul Gondreau, "St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, 245. Richard Bauckham argues that Mark's Jesus cannot "credibly" express a cry like Psalm 22:1 on his own behalf, because he knows that it is God's will that he die (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34, 38) and why (Mark 10:45; 14:24); therefore he must pray it on behalf of others; see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 261-2.

depends on understanding lament primarily as penitence for sin.¹⁰ In the current chapter, I study lament's function as protest and as solidarity with the suffering. In section 3.4.2 below, I consider the strands of protest and penitence in the Jewish lament tradition.

I seek to emphasize neither the anthropological at the expense of the Christological, nor vice versa; rather, I seek to demonstrate that both are at work in Jesus' laments, when considered through the lenses of his humanity, his unique threefold office, and his divinity. Indeed, the traditional Chalcedonian definition of Jesus as fully human and fully divine suggests that Jesus' laments have both anthropological and Christological force. Jesus' laments do participate in the common, universal practice of giving voice to pain, and as such demonstrate solidarity with all those who suffer. In this respect, Jesus joins in human lament.¹¹ Yet Jesus' laments are also unique, inasmuch as they occur in the setting of a suffering, a dying, and a rising that are unique. Therefore, Jesus also laments on behalf of all humanity, for human sins (and human suffering), and we join in Christ's laments.

Those who interpret Jesus' laments anthropologically typically acknowledge that Jesus is not one human being among many, but is somehow representative of all other humans. For example, Christian tradition has sometimes claimed that Jesus' suffering

¹⁰ See, e.g., Jonas Bauer, "Enquiring into the Absence of Lament: A Study of the Entwinning of Suffering and Guilt in Lament," in *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock (New York; London: T&T Clark International, 2009), 25-43; Oswald Bayer, "Zur Theologie der Klage," in *Klage*, ed. Martin Ebner et al., JBTh 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 289-300; Ottmar Fuchs, "Unerhörte Klage über den Tod hinaus! Überlegungen zur Eschatologie der Klage," in *Klage*, 347-79; Stephen Lakkis, "'Have You any Right to be Angry?': Lament as a Metric of Socio-Political and Theological Context," in *Evoking Lament*, 168-82; Stefan Ark Nitsche, "Vor der Antwort käme die Frage: Die Psalmenrezeption im Evangelischen Gesangbuch," in *Schweigen wäre gotteslästerlich: Die heilende Kraft der Klage*, ed. Georg Steins (Würzburg: Echter, 2000), 133-53.

¹¹ Alan Lewis represents this view when he writes, "In the death cry of Jesus of Nazareth there resonates the ageless, universal protest of human suffering, affronted by the crookedness of human life, whereby the innocent are tortured and the diabolic flourish"; Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 56.

encompasses all the world's suffering, or that Jesus' laments represent the full breadth of human mourning. Jesus did not endure the Holocaust or taste the particular struggles of African American women or bear the profound wounding of childhood sexual abuse. Jesus never lost a child or lived through the slow death of a marriage or underwent chemotherapy for terminal cancer. Nonetheless, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "No single human being can pray the psalms of lamentation out of his own personal experience; what these psalms unfold before our eyes is the anguish of the entire community throughout all times, experienced to the uttermost by Jesus Christ alone."¹²

3.3.2 Lament and Social Location

Lament arises from a situation of relative powerlessness.¹³ Individuals and families grieve the shock of a cancer diagnosis or the devastating loss of a child.¹⁴ Communal laments give collective voice to national or local tragedies: war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, earthquakes in Haiti, genocide in Rwanda, the collapse of the Twin Towers in New York City.¹⁵ To be sure, laments are not the exclusive possession of the poor or socially marginal – but sustained communal lament typically flowers in settings of

¹² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 16-17.

¹³ Hermann Steinkamp explores experiences of powerlessness in laments; see Hermann Steinkamp, "Ohnmacht und Klage," in *Klage*, 323-45.

¹⁴ For examples of contemporary individual laments, see Ann Weems, *Psalms of Lament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987); Debbie Perlman, *Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing and Praise* (Wilmette, IL: RadPublishers, 1998).

¹⁵ Lee, 1-2, 57-8, 62-4, 68-70, 163-79; Kimberly Wedeven Segall, "Lamenting the Dead in Iraq and South Africa: Transitioning from Individual Trauma to Collective Mourning Performances," in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, ed. Nancy C. Lee and Carleen Mandolfo (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 177-94; Clyde Fant, "A Lament for New Orleans," in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, 215-17. Paul Ferris studies ancient communal laments in Paul Wayne Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, SBLDS 127 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

dispossession. For example, Jewish and Christian theologians have studied lament in the context of the Holocaust; among African Americans, especially women; and in situations of sexual violence.¹⁶

Jesus himself lamented from the margins: he had no home or fixed income, he was a Jew in an occupied nation under the oppressive thumb of the Roman Empire, and he was executed as a criminal. His laments in the midst of his suffering thus provide evidence of God's solidarity with the oppressed, a theme that plays an important role in various liberation theologies. The Old Testament laments have likewise played a critical role in times of national crisis and especially in settings of oppression. The laments of Job, David, and Jeremiah have helped to shape the "liberation-justice traditions" of present-day oppressed communities in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.¹⁷

The cross of Jesus, while it has been viewed as a liberative force, has also been a problematic symbol, especially for feminist and womanist theologians – one that represents redemption through violence or the passive acceptance of suffering.¹⁸ Others, however, have appropriated the cross as a symbol of nonviolent resistance to hostile

¹⁶ E.g., Eliezer Berkovits, *With God in Hell: Judaism in the Ghettos and Deathcamps* (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1979); Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, "African-American Spirituals: Confronting and Exorcising Evil through Song," in *Troubling in My Soul*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993); Emilie M. Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care* (New York: Continuum, 1998); Denise Ackermann, "On Hearing and Lamenting: Faith and Truth Telling," in *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*, ed. H. Russel Botman and Robin M. Peterson (Cape Town, South Africa: Human & Rousseau, 1996); Theresa Snorton, "The Legacy of the African-American Matriarch: New Perspectives for Pastoral Care," in *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). Marc Ellis discusses the role of mourning in the theologies of Elie Wiesel and Richard Rubenstein in Marc H. Ellis, *Reading the Torah out Loud: A Journey of Lament and Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 20-5.

¹⁷ Lee, 3.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Choan-Seng Song, "Christian Mission toward Abolition of the Cross," in *Scandal of a Crucified World*, ed. Yacob Tesfai (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 130-48.

powers or as solidarity in suffering.¹⁹ Jesus' participation in human suffering, his marginalization, and his prayers of lament have provided fertile ground for theologies that focus on God's solidarity with the oppressed.

Furthermore, lament itself, especially as a communal practice, has the capability to create solidarity among those who suffer. Of course, in some respects, suffering is unique to a person or a community,²⁰ but the honest expression of lament can make us "deeply aware of a common vulnerability and anguish—a sense of shared *humanity*—that helps us place our suffering in a larger context and experience a new sense of connection with other suffering human beings amidst our own pain."²¹ In other words, lament can teach us to weep with those who weep (Rom 12:15). (I explore this point further in my Chapter 7.)

3.3.3 Who Hears Lament

As a universal human practice, lament is simply "the cries of those who suffer."²² That is, they are voiced cries of pain or protest. Lament expresses the universal need to give voice to pain, and to be heard. It is one of the ways that the one who suffers "makes

¹⁹ Arthur C. McGill, *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "Is There a Feminist Theology of the Cross," in *Scandal of a Crucified World*, 87-98; and Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), especially the essays "Theology in a Suffering World," "The Crucified Peoples," and "Yahweh's Suffering Servant Today."

²⁰ Wolterstorff, 72.

²¹ Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore, *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1999), 123.

²² Patrick D. Miller, "Heaven's Prisoners: The Lament as Christian Prayer," in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 15-26. According to Miller, lament is "the primary mode of *conversation* between God and the human creature. It begins not in ritual, not in Israel, not in any particularity, but in our being human" (ibid., 16). Recovering lament as "our universal human prayer" leads Miller to resist the idea that the laments are either communal or intended for worship: "They arise out of human pain in all sorts of situations, not out of liturgical movement" (ibid., 17, 18). I respectfully disagree; in my Chapter 7 I discuss the importance of lament as a communal practice.

sense” of his suffering. Warren Reich and Dorothee Sölle both describe three stages of suffering (or the process whereby one makes sense of suffering)²³:

- 1) *Mute suffering*, in which suffering renders one unable to express one’s pain; “the weight of unbearable suffering” renders one helpless, silent, numb, and isolated.²⁴ For Reich, the transition from the first to the second stage occurs when the person who suffers comes to believe that a change is possible.
- 2) *Expressive suffering*, in which the one who suffers finds a way to communicate her suffering. Both Reich and Sölle locate lament in this second stage. For Reich, expressing suffering can take shape as lament, as a reconfigured story, or as an interpretation of the suffering. Sölle points to lament’s function as truth-telling when she describes lament as the moment when the one who suffers finds “a language that at least says what the situation is.”²⁵ For both Reich and Sölle, the second stage “is an element that presses beyond itself: it does not merely express how things are for the sufferer, it points to and evokes change.”²⁶
- 3) *Change*. Sölle describes the third phase as change, by which she means concrete social action; Reich names it as a particular change *within* the sufferer: a new

²³ Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 68-78; Warren T. Reich, “Speaking of Suffering: A Moral Account of Compassion,” *Soundings* 72, no. 1 (1989): 83-99; cf. the discussion of Reich in Allen Verhey, *Reading the Bible in the Strange World of Medicine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 111-14. Reich names three stages of compassion that correspond to the three phases of suffering: silent compassion (i.e., presence); expressive compassion (helping the sufferer discover a new voice or renarrate her story); and change (within the caregiver, through identification with the one who suffers) (Reich, 93-9). Audre Lorde similarly describes naming a painful experience as an agent of transformation (Emilie M. Townes, “Living in the New Jerusalem: The Rhetoric and Movement of Liberation in the House of Evil,” in *Troubling in My Soul*, 84).

²⁴ Sölle, 69.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁶ Reich, 90.

identity with a voice of one's own. (See section 3.3.4 below for a discussion of the way that lament calls forth change.)

In the second stage, when suffering is expressed through lament, there are at least three potential hearers of the lament: the community, the one who caused the pain, and the divine.

The first hearer of lament is the community. When members of the community hear the lament, they have the potential to respond in solidarity and support. They may be others who suffer and can join their own voices to the lament or attest to its truth. Or, they may be hearers willing to sit on the mourning bench, in solidarity with the one who suffers. In Reich's model, "expressive compassion" is the appropriate response to expressive suffering; in other words, those who hear the lament can help the one who laments to find her voice and to express the fullness of her lament.

The next potential hearer is the enemy. This may be an "intimate enemy" (a neighbor, friend, or family member who has caused distress) or a political enemy.²⁷ The oppressor hears the lament (whether he wants to or not!) as a challenge and a protest, to change the conditions that led to the suffering. I offer below two examples of embodied lament directed toward the oppressor as a protest calling for change. I consider these to be embodied forms of human lament because they present in public a specific complaint, which arises from pain and anger, and demand a change that will alleviate suffering.

Rather than expressing the lament through word or story, the embodied lament gives "voice" to the lament by using human bodies as visible symbols of mourning and protest.

²⁷ W. Derek Suderman, "Are Individual Complaint Psalms Really Prayers? Recognizing Social Address as Characteristic of Individual Complaints," in *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation*, ed. Randall Heskett and Brian Irwin (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 153-70. Suderman builds on the work of Norman K. Gottwald and Gerald T. Sheppard to argue that laments are "meant to elicit social as well as divine response" (163).

In 2003, thousands of Christian and Muslim women in war-torn Liberia joined together to demand a peaceful end to the conflict between the warlords and Charles Taylor's government. They staged silent protests outside the presidential palace, wearing white T-shirts as a sign of their solidarity (and threatening to remove their clothes to shame the men when the peace talks stalled). Eventually, their public, visible protest forced a peace deal that culminated in the exile of Charles Taylor and the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first female head of state.²⁸

For over forty years, the women of the Black Sash movement in South Africa gathered to stand silently in public places wearing black sashes to protest apartheid. Like the women of Liberia, they used their bodies as a visible, public, embodied form of lament and protest against injustice.²⁹ While neither movement used lament as speech, they embodied a form of lament that can be considered expressive suffering – moving from mute suffering to a public expression of grief and anger that pressed toward change. The women of the Black Sash movement were also practicing expressive compassion (in Reich's terms), inasmuch as many of them were white Englishwomen who stood in solidarity with the suffering of their black African sisters.³⁰

²⁸ The story of this movement is recorded in the documentary "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" (<http://www.praythediabacktohell.com/synopsis.php>) and in organizer Leymah Gbowee's memoir: Leymah Gbowee, *Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War: A Memoir* (New York: Beast, 2011).

²⁹ Ackermann, 53; <http://blacksash.org.za/>.

³⁰ It is notable that the practitioners of both of these embodied forms of lament are women. So also the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, the mothers and grandmothers who stood vigil for 40 years on behalf of the disappeared victims of the Argentinian war. Perhaps women tend to employ lament as a form of power more often than men because they typically do not have as much access to the same streams of power as men. The relationship of gender to lament is a theme that deserves further exploration; for example, Kathleen Corey explores the roles of women in early Christian funeral rites in Kathleen E. Corley, *Maranatha: Women's Funerary Rituals and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

The third “hearer” of lament is the divine, who receives the lament as petition for help or presence in the midst of pain.³¹ The divine hearer, presumably, has power to help or to heal, and may punish the oppressors and bring about justice. For the Old Testament laments, the certainty of a divine hearing is foundational to the practice of lament as prayer. In section 3.4.3 below, I describe the God of Israel as the first and foremost “audience” of Jewish lament. Once suffering is expressed, lament necessarily becomes more particular: how pain finds a voice, and in what shape; to whom the singer of lament directs her song; and toward what type of change lament presses.

3.3.4 Protest and Change

Of course, not all lament expects or hopes for concrete change. When Nicholas Wolterstorff laments the death of his son, he writes, “For that grief, what consolation can there be other than having him back?”³² Yet lament often “presses beyond itself, toward change.”³³ Inherent in the longing of lament is the pain of a world that should, or could, be otherwise. For Sölle, the third phase of lament is change – organizing and joining with others in solidarity, liberation, and action.³⁴ It is this third phase that Sölle values the most, because of the potential for human action to effect change and ease suffering.³⁵ On these terms, the purpose of lament is not simply to give voice to pain, not simply to be heard by others or even by the divine, but to bring about a change that will lessen or ease

³¹ Lee notes briefly that the gods play different roles in lament but does not explore this point further (Lee, 28-9). Of course, lament as a universal human cry does not always presume a divine hearer.

³² Wolterstorff, 31.

³³ Sölle, 72; see also Ackermann, 54.

³⁴ Sölle, 72-4.

³⁵ For Sölle, God’s action “to wipe away all tears...can no longer be accepted in a direct sense” (ibid., 173). This represents a loss of faith in God as the one who hears and responds to lament.

the suffering. When Reich describes the change effected by lament as a change that occurs within individuals—those who lament and those who hear the lament—he names a more subtle change. In this case, the lament does not seek to topple an oppressive ruler or right a structural injustice; but it can help to place the sufferer within a new story, one that opens up hope, or courage, or peace.³⁶

Perhaps in some cases it is enough to be heard. But even then, a small but powerful change has been effected: the person who suffers may receive solace or support from the community, or empowerment, or may simply feel relief at having told the truth of her story and the magnitude of her pain. The sufferer may learn to tell a new story about himself and his suffering. The community that weeps over a communal loss may experience solidarity or see its way forward into a new future or gain a new identity. For example, Walter Brueggemann has studied the way lament can guide a community through Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of grief.³⁷ Emilie Townes, likewise, describes “the formfulness of communal lament”: “by putting words to their suffering, the community could move to a pain or pains that could be named and then addressed. . . . Communal lament, as a corporate experience of calling for healing, makes suffering bearable and manageable *in* the community.”³⁸ For Townes as well as for Sölle, lament moves toward a concrete change: for Townes, that of greater healing and justice in the contemporary American health care system.

³⁶ David Kelsey uses similar language within a Christian framework in David H. Kelsey, *Imagining Redemption* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 21-41. He suggests that one of the ways Jesus redeems us in the here and now is by creating a new and promising context for our suffering – a context that depends on God's promise to create a new community and new creation. See my Chapter 6, section 6.3.2.1

³⁷ Walter Brueggemann, “Formfulness of Grief,” *Interpretation* 31, no. 3 (1977): 263-75.

³⁸ Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death*, 23, 24.

Many contemporary laments press toward such concrete changes: the rectifying of an injustice, the undoing of an unfair law, the cessation of violence. Human beings throughout history have used lament to “[process] painful tragedy, and in so doing have found the hope *to join together in transforming society* with calls for change and justice, appealing for human and divine intervention...”³⁹ This raises the unavoidable question of what causes suffering. In the case of lament as political protest, the lamenter identifies human agents or systems as the causes of suffering. Sometimes the cause of suffering is “natural”: disease and illness, tornados and tsunamis. In this case there is no action to take (besides, perhaps, researching a cure for a disease or building better storm-warning systems and earthquake-resistant buildings), but lament has an edge of protest nonetheless. *Things are not as they should be*. Hundreds of children should not drown in the sea; the people we love should not die slow and painful deaths from cancer. In this respect, the universal human lament echoes the longing of Christian lament for the coming of God’s kingdom in peace and justice, and the wiping away of all tears.

3.4 Jewish Lament: The Particularity of Human Lament

Jesus is a son of Adam (Luke 3:38) and a “son of man,”⁴⁰ but he is also a son of David and a son of Abraham (Matt 1:1). Jesus sings human lament, but he also sings *Jewish* lament. He laments almost exclusively through the medium of the psalms of Israel, which are themselves unflinching human prayers that express the full depth of rage, loneliness, sorrow, confusion, and depression. Early Christian tradition linked these

³⁹ Lee, 5, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ For “son of man” as a reference to Jesus’ humanity, see Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth did Jesus Become a God?: Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 290-306; and Joel Marcus, “Son of Man as Son of Adam,” *RB* 110, no. 1 (2003): 38-61; “Part II: Exegesis” in *RB* 110, no. 3 (2003): 370-86.

psalms so closely to the person of Jesus that the New Testament portrays Jesus as *the* pray-er of the Psalms.⁴¹

In this section, I consider Jesus' laments as the prayers of a Jewish man. First, I argue that Israel's laments, like human lament in general, arise from social locations of marginalization or powerlessness. Next, I identify the strands of protest and penitence in Israel's prayers and in particular in the penitential psalms, which have played a central role in the Christian tradition. Then, I address the question of "who hears lament" by naming God as the primary hearer of the lament, which necessarily means that lament tests God's faithfulness, and that God's apparent silence in the face of trouble is often the foundational problem addressed by Israel's lament. Finally, I return to the question of lament and change to describe the kind of change toward which the laments of Israel press.

3.4.1 The Social Location of Jewish Lament

I argued above that human laments arise from various forms of powerlessness. Israel's laments similarly occur in settings of defeat, exile, and helplessness in the face of loss. They range from national laments over collective calamity to individual complaints about sickness and enemies. For example, the Book of Lamentations combines the form of the dirge (public mourning for the fallen city) with the communal lament (complaint toward God about the destruction). Its context is social and political: defeat at the hands of enemies, the fall of the holy city, the exile into Babylon. At stake is God's faithfulness, God's covenant promises to God's people. The Book of Job, on the other hand, is an extended individual complaint and a defense of one man's righteousness in the face of

⁴¹ Hays, 122-36; Attridge, 101-112.

apparently senseless loss and suffering. But at stake again is God’s faithfulness (does Job suffer “for no reason” at God’s hand?) – as well as Job’s faithfulness. Like the psalmist who praises God “from the depths,” and like the prophet Habakkuk who rejoices in God in spite of the evidence (Hab 3:17-19), Job stubbornly refuses to let go of God.⁴²

Walter Brueggemann argues that for the Jews the “primal habitat” for lament is exile. In exile in Babylon, Israel laments the loss of land (home, security, material well-being), king (self-rule rather than subjugation under foreign rule), and temple (the place of God’s presence and blessing). The exile forced Israel to question whether or not God would keep the covenant promises that God made to Israel at Sinai after the Exodus.

For Christians, the primal habitat for lament is the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.⁴³ Like the embodied protests described above, Jesus’ laments too occur within a political context. The Gospels narrate his arrest and death as the result of Roman imperial power and the Jewish authorities’ collusion with that power (“We have no king but Caesar,” declare the chief priests in John 19:15). Jesus was crucified *under Pontius Pilate*, locating lament both as “a theological protest against divine abandonment” (see section 3.4.4 below) and as “a political protest against an empire that executes the righteous.”⁴⁴ Jesus laments from this social location of (apparent)

⁴² Allen Verhey notes that Job bears witness to a fidelity that is “neither prudence nor pragmatism.” Rather, Job addresses God “from the edge of hell.” His lament turns him toward God, and “that turning toward God—even if only for the sake of confronting God, even if only for the sake of accusing God—turned him away from the place where God was not”; Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 341. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan uses Job and Habakkuk to demonstrate that one can protest God’s silence yet not lose faith in the midst of injustice and pain (Kirk-Duggan, 161).

⁴³ Walter Brueggemann, “Lament as Wake-Up Call (Class Analysis and Historical Possibility),” in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, 225-6; cf. Ebner, “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im Neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, 80, 86-7. Brueggemann draws an analogy between exile and Jesus’ crucifixion; Ebner between the Exodus event and resurrection hope.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

powerlessness: under the shadow of an oppressive Roman Empire that dominated everyday life and that arrested him under cover of darkness, tried him on false charges, and executed him as a criminal. Jesus' laments do not directly protest this unjust system, but they do subvert it, as the ironic truth of the sign above his cross testifies: Jesus is the true King. (I discuss lament and its relationship to power in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.)

3.4.2 Protest and Penitence

The lament tradition of Israel encompasses both protest and penitence. In the Old Testament, lament intertwines with the tradition of wrestling with God in prayer. The lament of Israel is fundamentally a protest, calling on God to account for the way things are wrong in the world, and demanding that God listen and respond – to set right what is wrong, mend what is broken, and bring light to the darkness – just as it is God's essential character to do so. God is a God of mercy: let there be mercy! God is a God of justice: let there be judgment on the enemy and the evildoer! When Israel and Jesus lament, it is God's faithfulness to God's promises that are at stake.

Yet Israel's laments also have a penitential character. Moses admits Israel's wrongdoing while still protesting God's plan to destroy Israel. The psalmist regularly confesses his sin and begs for God's mercy in the midst of lament. In a prose parallel to the penitential psalms, Daniel dons sackcloth and ashes to confess Israel's sin and plead for God's mercy, so that Israel's desolation would not last 70 years (Dan 9:1-19). In each case, the lamenter repents or confesses sin, while also petitioning God for change.

The Christian tradition, however, has tended to appropriate lament as penitence rather than as protest.⁴⁵ This is true both for its appropriation of the laments of Israel in general, and the laments of Jesus in particular. This tendency stems in part from a theological emphasis on Jesus' atonement for sin. For example, according to the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, Jesus dies in order to atone for humanity's sins and to appease God's rightful wrath; if his laments were to play a role in this model, they would likely function as mourning over humanity's sin. Claus Westermann and Patrick Miller, however, argue that because the lament psalms provide the interpretive key to Jesus' death on the cross, Jesus laments for the suffering of humanity as much as for its sin.⁴⁶ As Westermann writes,

[Jesus'] suffering is a part of the history of those who have suffered, who have found their language in the Psalms of lament. With his suffering and dying, therefore, Jesus could not have had only the sinner in mind; he must also have been thinking of those who suffer. If, as in the New Testament, the work of Christ is described as salvation from sin and death, then (following the Old Testament understanding) by "death" we mean not only the cessation of life but the power of death at work within life which people experience in all types of suffering.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Oswald Bayer describes the Kyrie Eleison as the Christian lament par excellence; Oswald Bayer, *Leibliches Wort: Reformation und Neuzeit im Konflikt* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 347. See also Nitsche, 133-53; Nitsche argues that including the psalms of lament in the Lutheran Hymnal reduces lament to penitence and is a typically Protestant approach to lament. Claus Westermann claims, "we can say that in a certain sense the confession of sin has become the Christianized form of the lament" (Claus Westermann, "Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament," *Interpretation* 28, no. 1 [1974]: 33).

⁴⁶ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 275; Patrick Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 324; Miller, "Heaven's Prisoners," 20-22.

⁴⁷ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 275. Miller writes, "The lament [of Jesus] is also critical for understanding *the work of God* in Jesus Christ, for it is our chief clue that Christ died not simply as one *of us* but also as one *for us*, both *with us* and *in our behalf*. As we hear our human voice of lament on the lips of the dying Jesus, it now become crystal clear: Jesus died for our *suffering* as much as for our *sins*" (Miller, "Heaven's Prisoners," 21, emphasis original).

The church's emphasis on Jesus' atoning death for human sin corresponds to the disproportionate popularity of the penitential psalms in the Christian tradition compared with other lament psalms. Beginning in the fifth or sixth century, the church began designating seven psalms as penitential psalms: Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. Of these, Psalms 51 (Miserere) and 130 (De Profundis) have played especially prominent roles in church worship and music. They play negligible roles, however, within the New Testament itself and in Jesus' laments. With the exception of Psalm 6, a portion of which Jesus quotes in John's Gospel, Jesus does not pray from the penitential psalms in the Gospels.

While church liturgy treats the penitential psalms as occasions for confession of sin and repentance, they are still fundamentally laments – i.e., they include a complaint or description of suffering (whether that suffering results from sin or from other external factors, or both) and a cry to God for help. Furthermore, many of the penitential psalms contain strands of protest within them as well.

A closer study of the penitential psalms reveals their essential character as psalms of lament. Psalms 6 and 102 refer to God's anger but contain no explicit confession of sin or request for forgiveness. Psalm 38 contains a plaintive plea of innocence just after an admission of guilt and sin ("Those who repay my good with evil lodge accusations against me, though I seek only to do what is good" Ps 38:20). While the author of Psalm 143 asks God not to "bring your servant into judgment," he also begs for rescue from enemies. When the psalmist prays "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord," these depths (MT עמק; LXX βάθος) could easily be the deep places of pain as well as of sin. No neat division exists in the lament psalms between penitence, petition, protestation, and

complaint. As Brueggemann likewise notes, “the three great penitential prayers of the postexilic period [Ezra 9:9; Neh 9:36-37; Dan 9:18-19]...are *complaints* that anticipate restoration.”⁴⁸ Like the protests of Israel, the petitions of Israel call upon God to be faithful to God’s promises – to save, bless, help, protect, and dwell with Israel.

3.4.3 Who Hears Israel’s Laments

Above, I named the three potential hearers of lament as the community, the powerful or the oppressor, and the divine. God is the primary hearer of Israel’s laments; the laments of Israel are grounded in the covenant relationship between Israel and God. Israel (and Jesus) cries out precisely because Israel’s God is one who hears cries, has compassion, rescues out of slavery, brings home from exile, and delivers out of death.

This is critical because it places lament within a particular covenantal relationship between YHWH and humanity. Even before the establishment of the covenant on Sinai, God’s creation of Adam and Eve places an obligation on God.⁴⁹ God makes promises to Noah (never to destroy again) and to Abraham (to bless all the nations of the earth through him). When Abraham’s children fall into slavery, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob hears their cries of pain and responds (Exod 2:24-5).⁵⁰ This is “God’s ultimate self-revelation to Moses [Exod 34:6]: I am by nature *hannum* and *rahum* (despite all

⁴⁸ Brueggemann, “Lament as Wake-Up Call,” 226; emphasis added; contra William Morrow, who writes that complaints against God are not usually a part of penitential prayers (William S. Morrow, *Protest against God: The Eclipse of a Biblical Tradition*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 4 [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006], 168, cf. 152-3).

⁴⁹ “Do not forsake the work of your hands” (Psalm 138:8); cf. 4 Ezra’s impassioned complaint that God has no right to create humanity and then subject them to such suffering (see my Chapter 6, section 6.2.3, for a discussion of the lament in 4 Ezra).

⁵⁰ Brueggemann, “Lament as Wake-Up Call,” 231.

evidence to the contrary). I hear the cry of the victim; I can't help it."⁵¹ Old Testament lament calls on God to *be* this God, the One who hears and delivers.

In the covenant with Israel, God promises *hesed*, and Israel pledges loyalty and obedience. Much of Israel's lament arises from a rupture or perceived lapse in the covenant relationship. Israel laments her disobedience and the corresponding judgment of God. Likewise, God mourns the disobedience of Israel and God's decision to punish (see my Chapter 5, section 5.2, for a discussion of divine mourning). Israel also laments in cases when God appears not to be upholding God's part of the bargain – to protect, bless, and be with Israel. In this respect, the change that Old Testament lament expects is the repairing and maintaining of the covenant relationship – the keeping of the covenant promises.⁵²

The laments of Israel are also heard and overheard by the community. Even the individual laments in the Old Testament were communal prayers, voiced as a part of public worship. The sorrow of one individual became the prayer of all. As in other human laments, the community of Israel was an important participant in and co-hearer of lament. Although Israel's laments were not often "heard" by the powerful oppressor, strictly speaking, they were sometimes directed in anger to the enemy or the oppressor (e.g., Psalm 137:8-9).

In keeping with the character of Israel's laments, Jesus' laments were directed toward and heard by God. They were also heard by a number of others in the narrative of

⁵¹ James L. Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 135-6.

⁵² For Jews, faith is "not the affirmation of a transcendental truth but the living of the life of the covenant here and now. ... [The] "man of faith...makes demands by virtue of the life of the relationship in which he stands. ... [I]t is conceivable that the more intimate the relationship between and God, the greater the urge to question the ways of the divine partner" (Berkovits, 125, 126).

the Gospels – and they continue to be heard by the community of faith through time whenever the Gospels are read or preached. The community who hears Jesus’ laments includes the disciples in Gethsemane and the women disciples from the cross, and the people of Jerusalem, some of whom mourn his death (Luke 23:48). Stepping outside the narrative of the gospels, the community of faith, the readers of the gospels in which Jesus’ laments have been recorded, continue to hear Jesus’ laments. The “powerful,” or those who contribute to Jesus’ suffering, also hear (or overhear) his laments: the Roman soldiers, the Jewish authorities, and the bystanders who mock him as he dies. Finally, Jesus’ laments were addressed to and heard by his God and Father (Heb 5:7). God hears Jesus’ prayer and responds through resurrection, vindicating the faithful Son.⁵³

3.4.4 When Lament is Not Heard: God’s Absence

“He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants him” (Matt 27:43).⁵⁴ With these mocking words, the bystanders at Jesus’ crucifixion challenge whether God will truly hear and respond to Jesus’ lament. “If he wants” (εἰ θέλει) is a haunting echo of Jesus’ Gethsemane lament: “not as I want, but as you want” (οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ’ ὡς σὺ; Matt 26:39). In Jesus’ lament from the cross, as in Psalm 22, the complaint is God’s apparent hiddenness or silence. Immediately after the line that Jesus prays (“My God,

⁵³ Additionally, the Gospels provide other more subtle signs that God has heard Jesus’ petition: e.g., the strengthening angel in Luke 22:43. The darkness that accompanies Jesus’ death most likely evokes Amos 8:9-10, in which God declares, “I will turn...all your songs into lamentation...I will make [that day] *like the mourning for an only son*” (emphasis added). In Mark’s account of Jesus’ death, divine mourning is also represented by the tearing of the temple veil (Joel Marcus, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 1066). Of course, although God hears and vindicates through resurrection, Jesus’ Gethsemane petition seems to go unanswered: God does not take the cup of suffering and death away. In my Chapter 6, I argue that Israel’s laments typically expected vindication in *this* life, but that laments in the postexilic and intertestamental period began to extend the expected vindication into the next life.

⁵⁴ This is an allusion to Psalm 22:8 (“‘He trusts in the LORD,’ they say, ‘let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him’”), the same psalm that Jesus quotes at the moment of his death in Matthew and Mark, and that frames so much of the passion in all four Gospels.

why have you forsaken me?”), the psalmist continues, “Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest” (Ps 22:1b-2).

God’s absence, silence, or hiddenness is a central theme in Jesus’ laments, just as it is in the lament psalms.⁵⁵ In addition to the quotation of Psalm 22:1, in Matthew and Mark Jesus prays from Psalm 42-43, which expresses grief over God’s absence and longing for God’s presence. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, at the moment of Jesus’ crucifixion there is darkness – a metaphor in the psalms for death (Ps 23:4; 88:12; 143:3) as well as for separation from God (Ps 88:5-7). And in John, Jesus thirsts, a motif that typically indicates a desire for God (Ps 63) or the absence of God (Ps 42:2-3).

The basic assumption of biblical lament, however, is not absence; it is God’s presence and God’s faithfulness. Lament *presumes* God as an active hearer. Because the psalmist is attentive to God, he is painfully aware of the silence or hiddenness of God. Lament about this lost sense of presence depends on trust (if wounded trust) in God’s presence and faithfulness. The one who despairs no longer directs lament toward God.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Brian Doyle, “Where is God When You Need Him Most? The Divine Metaphor of Absence and Presence as a Binding Element in the Composition of the Book of Psalms,” in *Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger (Leuven; Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010), 378-90. For the theme of God’s absence in the psalms, see Samuel E. Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 45-65.

⁵⁶ However, Kathryn Greene-McCreight reminds us that even despair does not put one outside the reach of God, especially for those who are mentally ill. She writes, “Affect and desire may change, but no matter how fickle our heart and mind are, God is constant. ... [D]espair is not the chief sin for the mentally ill. Despair is a reaction to evil, evil as the forces that work against God’s good creation and providence. Despair may even be involuntary, caused by a brain disorder; it may be voluntary, caused by giving up. But it is always a reaction to some form of evil, some deprivation of the good, and therefore understandable as such. This is an exceedingly important lesson: *despair can live with Christian faith*. Indeed, having despair while knowing in your heart that God has conquered even that is a great form of faith, for it is tried by fire. ... And the counterpart to despair is hope. ... Christian hope looks to the future, to God’s promise of the resurrection, which is God’s act alone, the turning around of all things to God. ... It is this future that redeems our present and allows us to have hope beyond mere optimism” (Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness* [Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006], 160-1).

As Clifton Black says, the spine of lament is hope: “the deep and irrepressible conviction, in the teeth of present evidence, that God has not severed the umbilical cord that has always bound us to the Lord.”⁵⁷

In the lament psalms prayed by Jesus, the dual themes of God’s faithful, saving presence and God’s apparent absence are stubbornly held together.⁵⁸ Within the context of the lament psalms, the theme of God’s hiddenness refers not to doubt in God’s existence, but to a break in relationship with God.⁵⁹ As noted above, what is at stake is God’s faithfulness. When God raises Jesus from the dead, this vindicates not only Jesus’ righteousness, but it vindicates God and God’s promises as well.

When William Sloane Coffin preached the funeral sermon for his son Alex, he proclaimed, “I know all the ‘right’ biblical passages, including, ‘Blessed are those who mourn,’ and my faith is no house of cards; these passages are true, I know. But the point is this: While the words of the Bible are true, grief renders them unreal. The reality of grief is the absence of God – ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’”⁶⁰ The witness of the gospel suggests that the darkness in which humans often find themselves is not to be dismissed as lack of faith.⁶¹ But according to Jesus’ laments, neither does this

⁵⁷ C. Clifton Black, “The Persistence of the Wounds,” in *Lament*, 54.

⁵⁸ In Psalm 42-43, for example, “The inner dialogue is the expression of an inner drama, which in turn corresponds to the polarity of the psalmist’s experience of God. ... At the upper or immediate level the psalmist feels God painfully absent; at the deeper level he dimly perceives his presence” (Luis Alonso Schökel, “The Poetic Structure of Psalm 42-43,” *JSOT* 1 [1976]: 8).

⁵⁹ Doyle, 383.

⁶⁰ William Sloane Coffin, “Alex’s Death,” in *This Incomplete One: Words Occasioned by the Death of a Young Person*, ed. Michael D. Bush (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 57-8.

⁶¹ Piet Zuidgeest’s study of Christians in “situations of mourning” suggests that Christians have learned to interpret their situations of mourning through the theme of God’s presence, but “they are far less accustomed to assimilating the experience of God’s absence”; Piet Zuidgeest, *The Absence of God: Exploring the Christian Tradition in a Situation of Mourning* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 128-40. Zuidgeest notes that the experience of God’s absence is common in a situation of mourning—more

darkness mean God's abandonment. The context of Psalm 22 demonstrates that even in the midst of Jesus' feeling of forsakenness by God, "he remains the cherished offspring of a loving father."⁶²

The question of God's absence in the world has been raised anew in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with special urgency, in light of the staggering losses of the Shoah; genocidal civil wars in Rwanda and Darfur; and the horrific suffering of women and children at the hands of poverty and sexual violence. But the gospel witness rejects any theology that proposes God's abandonment of creation.⁶³ Instead of interpreting Jesus' cry as a genuine abandonment by God, Christ's suffering has also been interpreted as his identification (and thus God's identification) with the oppressed and lowly and his corresponding empowerment and liberation of the weak and downtrodden.⁶⁴

common than the experience of God's presence—and that people's desire to explore that experience increased when they read Psalms together as a group (ibid., 87-9, 122-4.) Through engagement with the Psalms, mourners "discover that the experience of God's absence is intrinsic to that tradition and the lament provides a form in which they, as believers in a relationship with God, can endure that absence" (ibid.). Of course, neither Old nor New Testament laments content themselves with *enduring* God's silence; rather, they protest it, they grieve in the midst of it, they demand that God show himself, they persevere in hope that God is faithful and will act.

⁶² Marcus, *Mark*, 1062.

⁶³ For example, Jürgen Moltmann's single-minded focus on God's identity as the Father of Jesus leaves little room for the Creator God's continuing presence in and relationship with the world; see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); cf. Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Crucified God (Review)," *RelEd* 71, no. 5 (1976): 544-6. In *Facing the Abusing God*, David R. Blumenthal approaches contemporary Jewish theology from a "post-holocaust, abuse-sensitive theological stance" and argues that an attitude of "protest and suspicion...distrust and challenge" must characterize any theology done in the face of the evils of the holocaust and child abuse (David R. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993], xxi; see also 249-67). For an alternative to Blumenthal, see Joel Marcus, *Jesus and the Holocaust: Reflections on Suffering and Hope* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 212-20.

3.4.5 Lament and Change

If, as I have argued, Old Testament lament calls upon God to repair, uphold, or remember the covenant—and correspondingly to hear, rescue, heal, protect, and deliver God’s people—what do Jesus’ laments expect to achieve? Toward what change do they press? Jesus prays, “If it is possible, take this cup,” petitioning God to spare him from the suffering and death to come; but he also prays, “your will be done,” putting himself trustingly into God’s hands as the lament psalms always do. Jesus cries out, “Why have you forsaken me?”, calling on God to be present with him; and he also says, “Into your hands I commend my spirit,” again trusting his life and his death to God’s keeping. The Gospels, of course, are post-Easter narratives. When we read Jesus’ laments in the gospels, we know the end of the story: God raises the Son Jesus from the dead. Yet lament itself dwells in the space between Good Friday and Easter, when Jesus’ protest (“why have you forsaken me?”) hangs in the air, and his trust and praise (“it is finished”) still only anticipate the promised vindication.

The ultimate change expected by New Testament lament is resurrection: the final defeat of death and sin and suffering, and the transformation of the old creation into a new heaven and a new earth. In the New Testament imagination, principalities and powers are at work opposing God’s good purposes, but God has defeated them in Jesus’ resurrection, and will finally put them to rest for good at the eschaton. Death, writes Paul, is the last enemy to be defeated (1 Cor 15:26; Rev 20:14). My Chapter 6 takes up the question of the effect of Christian eschatology on the prayer of lament.

3.5 Conclusion

When Jesus laments as a human being, his laments share in an expression of universal human protest over suffering. As a protest, human lament arises from social settings of dispossession; is heard by the community, the powerful, and the divine; and presses toward change. As Jewish lament, Jesus' laments participate in the particular problem of the absence of the God of Israel.

Jesus' humanity, including his laments, informs his risen life and his role as the high priest who receives cries for help (i.e., laments) in the heavenly throne room, and provides mercy in time of need (the response of the divine to the cry for help). In the next chapter, I study the significance of Jesus' unique identities—as priest, prophet, and king—on the role of lament in the New Testament.

4. Jesus Laments as the Messiah (Priest, King, and Prophet)

4.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to explore what Eva Harasta and Brian Brock call “the meaning and normative force of Christ’s lament,”¹ through considering how Jesus’ unique messianic identities inform and shape his laments and the subsequent laments of his followers. First, I name pain and trust as the shared roots of messianic hopes and lament. Then, I discuss the role that the three offices of king, priest, and prophet played in the Old Testament, Jewish messianic hopes, and Christian traditions about Jesus’ identity. The remainder of the chapter explores the significance of Jesus’ laments as the messiah through the lens of this threefold office.

As Israel’s king, Jesus fulfills the prayers of the royal lament psalms, and in so doing provides a somewhat unexpected answer to Israel’s long-suffering cries for help: a King who laments and dies in lonely shame. Jesus’ rejection of royal despotism and refusal to rule “as the Gentiles do” shows the relationship of lament to the divine mode of power, and highlights the role of lament as protest against unjust suffering and trust in God’s justice and deliverance.

As the high priest of the book of Hebrews, Jesus offers the sacrifice of his lament with a loud cry and tears, which equips him to hear the lamenting prayers of his brothers and sisters. Hebrews 5:7 uses many of the key components of the pattern of lament, including language echoing Psalms 22 and 116.

¹ Eva Harasta and Brian Brock, eds., *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 5.

As a prophet, Jesus' laments fulfill the tradition of the lament of the prophet-mediator as described by Claus Westermann. His prayer for his enemies from the cross in Luke—and his commands to bless rather than curse the enemy—turn lament away from imprecation and toward intercession for the other, but in a way that does not relinquish the desire for God's justice, as displayed in the lament of the martyrs in Revelation. Jesus' prophetic mourning over Jerusalem represents not the lament per se but a form of the dirge and divine grief over Jerusalem's rejection of Jesus and the coming fall of the city.

4.2 The Role of Lament in Messianic Hopes

Laments and messianic longings arise from the same root of pain and hope.² Like lament, messianic hope—for a triumphant Davidic King, for a new high priest, for an anointed eschatological prophet in the line of Elijah and Moses—arises from a fundamental dissatisfaction with the way things are in light of God's promises, and a corresponding longing for God to act, to restore, to save, to redeem, to judge. Like cries of lament, messianic expectations contain pleas for freedom from oppression, for the end of exile, for the overthrow of the enemies. Hopes for the restoration of the Davidic

² See, e.g., Jonathan A. Goldstein, "How the Authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees Treated the 'Messianic' Promises," in *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 69-70. See also Howard Clark Kee on social structures and messianic/redemptive hope, in Howard Clark Kee, "Christology in Mark's Gospel," in *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, 192-95. For a dissenting voice, see William Scott Green, "Introduction: Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question," in *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, 1-13, who argues that most ancient Jewish texts have no interest in the messiah, and that the primacy of the messiah as an object of study arose not from Judaism but from early Christianity's forging of continuity between Jesus and the Hebrew scriptures (4-5). Green suggests that the term "messiah" was used only in a few texts and in diverse ways at the time of Christianity's emergence (6); "future hope" was not, in fact, "the driving force of ancient Judaism" (7). Green, however, never identifies what he sees as the driving force of ancient Judaism, and although he makes helpful cautionary points about the diversity and sparseness of messianic expectations at Jesus' time, he seems to understate the strength of Israel's hopes for redemption and the end of exile, which included but were not limited to messianic hopes.

dynasty or redemption from oppression sometimes mixed with painful heart-searching over God's apparent silence in the face of Israel's subjugation to foreign powers.³

Hope for the arrival of a definitive and divinely appointed redeemer figure, or for his return to finish the job, is in ancient Jewish and Christian sources invariably tied to discontent about the order of the world as it is: its enforcement of injustice and oppression, its seemingly unanswerable resentment or mockery of the biblical God and his people.⁴

Discontent about the order of the world as it is: herein lies the force of both Israel's lament and Israel's hopes for a deliverer. At the time of Jesus' birth, some Jews remained scattered in the Diaspora, and others had returned to the land, but the pain of the exile remained the "primal habitat" for Israel's laments.⁵ Hopes for true political freedom and economic flourishing remained unmet.

Cries of lament and messianic hopes thus arose not only from theological foundations but also took root in particular social contexts of political domination.⁶ In some cases, Israel's longing for restoration manifested itself in direct revolutionary action, most notably in the Maccabean revolt and later in the Zealot movement. God's saving activity and human saviors are, of course, not mutually exclusive: the God of Israel often worked in history through leaders like Moses and David and even Cyrus of

³ For example, 4 Ezra, written shortly after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E., contains just this mix of angry lament and apocalyptic hope, including a Messiah figure and a vision of Zion's eschatological transformation from a weeping woman into a restored city.

⁴ Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget, *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (London; New York: Clark, 2007), xxi, emphasis added.

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, "Lament as Wake-Up Call (Class Analysis and Historical Possibility)," in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, ed. Nancy C. Lee and Carleen Mandolfo (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 225.

⁶ Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Messianic Ideas in the Apocalyptic and Related Literature of Early Judaism," in *Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 91. According to John Collins, messianic hope was notably absent in large part from most of Second Temple Judaism, but revived in the first century BCE "largely in reaction to the flawed restoration of Jewish kingship by the non-Davidic Hasmoneans" (John Joseph Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 50).

Persia. But in post-exilic times, some Jewish groups placed their messianic hopes in present-day institutions and leaders, while others channeled their primary hopes into future apocalyptic redemption or divine intervention.⁷

4.2.1 The Roots of the Threefold Office

Of course, not all Judaism at the time of Jesus hoped for a messiah, and the content of messianic hope was far from uniform where it did appear.⁸ However, the traditional understanding of Jesus's threefold office as prophet, priest, and king has deep roots in Scripture and in Jewish and Christian theological reflection, especially vis-à-vis messianic expectations.

John Collins defines a messiah simply as an eschatological figure who falls into four basic paradigms: king, priest, prophet, and heavenly messiah. The fourth – the heavenly messiah – differs from the first three since it refers to form rather than function and often overlaps with one or more of the other paradigms. In the first three messianic paradigms, then, we find a hint of the *munus triplex*, or the traditional threefold office of Christ. According to Collins, a messiah fulfilled one or more of these Jewish expectations

⁷ Sean Freyne writes, “As with the varied responses of the Maccabees and the *maskilim* to the crisis of Antiochus Epiphanes, two centuries later Jewish resistance to Roman imperialism was split between the freedom fighters and those who were awaiting God’s imminent vindication, it would seem” (Sean Freyne, “The Herodian Period,” in *Redemption and Resistance*, 42). The story of Esther can also be read in the same manner: the people resort to their own tactics in order to secure their continued existence as a people (see Samuel Wells’ treatment of Esther in the forthcoming volume Samuel Wells, *Esther*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible [Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, forthcoming]).

⁸ For discussions of the diverse messianic expectations in Judaism at the time of Jesus, see Géza Vermès, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 129-59; William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998); Stanley E. Porter, *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*; Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); and Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: vier Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

of “a Davidic king, of an ideal priest, of an eschatological prophet.”⁹ Likewise, Géza Xeravits finds three main functions attributed to the various “positive eschatological protagonists” in the Dead Sea Scrolls: “*royal*, that is martial-judicial; *priestly*, that is cultic; and finally, *prophetic*.”¹⁰

Although Jesus’ messianic identity is notoriously complex, he clearly fits into all three of these paradigms in the New Testament, and all three functions have a bearing on his laments. The New Testament documents assign Jesus multiple titles, including Messiah (χριστός), Lord, Son of Man, and Son of David. To use the *munus triplex* as a summary of Jesus’ messianic identities is not to ignore this diversity, but rather to adopt a useful heuristic device that points to three primary functions of Jesus’ identity as God’s anointed one, particularly as they relate to his laments.¹¹ These three functions reflect the three main “offices” or roles of God’s anointed intermediaries in Israel’s life. The term Messiah or Christ (Anointed One) is the overarching term under which all Jesus’ other titles stand. Franz Hesse notes the connection of the messianic title to lament when he describes the title מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה (*meshiach yhwh*; the anointed of the LORD) as a “concealed

⁹ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 18. See also George MacRae, “Messiah and Gospel,” in *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, 165-89, for a discussion of the New Testament use and conception of Jesus as Messiah.

¹⁰ Géza G. Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet: Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 205. Xeravits concludes that while there was great interest in these figures, they did not play any crucial or definitive role in the community’s life (228).

¹¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg critiques the concept of the threefold office in the New Testament and argues that one cannot apply any of the three offices to the earthly work of the pre-Easter Jesus, except perhaps some aspects of the prophetic (Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968], 208-225, especially 221). For Pannenberg, Jesus was King and Messiah only after his resurrection (224).

petition...an urgent if indirect appeal to Yahweh to come and help (Lam 4:20; Hab 3:13).”¹²

The מִשָּׁח or χριστός includes characteristics from the three anointed offices in Israel: the prophet, the priest, and the king. The king’s anointing represents YHWH’s selection and approval of the king, and designates the conferral of power onto the new king. David is the exemplar for the royal anointings in Israel.¹³ In post-exilic Judah, the high priest was the successor of the Davidic dynasty: “an equally authorised and empowered high-priest who possesses כבוד like the descendent of David and who is thus anointed in order to have a share in it.”¹⁴ Not all prophets were anointed, but for prophets the gift of the Spirit and anointing seem to accomplish the same conferral of power (cf. 1 Kings 19:16 and Isa 61:1). This can also be the case for the king’s anointing; in 1 Samuel 16:1-13, YHWH’s anointing of David and the gift of the Spirit on David occur together.¹⁵

The central role of these three anointed offices continues in intertestamental literature, especially Sirach, and develops into various messianic expectations.¹⁶ In the New Testament, Jesus takes on the characteristics of the messianic king, the messianic high priest, and the prophet in the line of Moses.¹⁷ Clearly, the three roles of prophet,

¹² Walter Grundmann, “χρίω, κτλ.,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 9:503.

¹³ 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 15:1, 17; 16:3, 12f.; 2 Sam 2:4, 7; 5:3, 17; 12:7; Ps 89:20; 1 Kings 19:15f.; 2 Kings 9:3, 6, 12; 1 Chron 11:3; 14:8; 2 Chron 22:7; see *ibid.*, 498-9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 500, 505.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 501.

¹⁶ For Sirach, see *ibid.*, 511-12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 539-40.

priest, and king connect and overlap with one another in the Old Testament, in later Jewish writings, and in the New Testament.¹⁸

4.2.1.1 Messiah as King

Jesus is the “King of the Jews” primarily in the passion narrative of all four Gospels, in explicit fulfillment of texts like Zechariah 9:9, and in continuity with the eschatological hopes attached to the royal lament psalms, of a coming Davidic King-Messiah who would restore the Davidic dynasty and reign over Israel forever. Jesus is connected specifically to David through the title Son of David 10 times in Matthew, three times in Mark, three times in Luke, and obliquely in Rom 1:3. Jesus’ designation as a shepherd further fulfills this expectation, relying on the identification of the shepherd as the ruler of the people, and on David as the preeminent model of the shepherd-king (Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; cf. Matt 2:6; 9:36; Mark 6:34; John 10:11-18).¹⁹

In some later Old Testament texts and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the figure of the king became more closely aligned with that of the priest by the close association of the king with the temple (Zech 6:12; 1 Chron 22-23, 28) or with the priesthood (1 Sam 2:35; Ps 110). In the vision recounted in Zechariah 4, the two “anointed ones” are the high priest Joshua and the king Zerubabel. In the New Testament, Hebrews 7 applies the royal priesthood of Melchizedek described in Psalm 110 to Jesus’ high priestly status (cf. Heb 2:17; 3:1).

¹⁸ The following is a very brief and incomplete sketch of Jesus as prophet, priest, and king in the New Testament. For more on Jesus as *χριστός* in the Gospels, see *ibid.*, 527-40, 566-9.

¹⁹ For more in-depth exploration of Jesus’ connection to David in the New Testament, see Bird, 107-9, 133-6.

4.2.1.2 Messiah as Priest

Hebrews 5-7 contains a sustained description of Jesus as a high priest, but Jesus' priestly function has precedent within the Gospels as well. In Mark, for example, Jesus has the power to heal, cleanse, forgive, minister on the Sabbath, and interpret the food laws – all actions normally administered by a priest in the Old Testament.²⁰ In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the priestly messiah or eschatological high priest is (like the eschatological prophet) a teaching figure – an interpreter of the law and a teacher of righteousness (4QFlor 6-11; CD 7; 4Q540-541; 4Q542, 2:1-2).²¹ Here again we see the overlap between the various roles, since teaching and preaching are normally prophetic roles. As a teacher and the definitive interpreter of the Torah (especially as portrayed in Matthew), Jesus fulfills both these prophetic and priestly expectations. The Community Rule of the Dead Sea Scrolls apparently expected an eschatological, prophetic lawgiver along with the priestly and royal messiahs at the end time (“until the coming of the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel,” 1QS 9.11).²² Later rabbinic writings also identify the prophet Elijah as a high priest, showing further interweaving of the three anointed offices.²³

²⁰ Edwin Broadhead looks at the priestly portrait of Jesus in Mark 1:39-45; 2:1-13; 2:23-28; 3:1-7a; and 7:14-23 as part of Mark's larger Christological tapestry, including the theme of religious controversy. See Edwin Keith Broadhead, “Christology as Polemic and Apologetic: The Priestly Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,” *JSNT* 47 (1992): 21-34.

²¹ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 126-8, 141.

²² Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 144. A later parallel may occur in a rabbinic commentary on Genesis 49:14 that describes Elijah's coming along with two Messiahs, a Son of Joseph and a Son of David; see Howard Merle Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, JBLMS 10 (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1957), 5.

²³ Haenchen, 6-8.

4.2.1.3 Messiah as Prophet

The Old Testament associated the prophet with the anointing of the Spirit (Isa 61:1). As God's messenger, the prophet typically announced the coming of the Lord or of the anointed one, but was not himself a messiah. On the other hand, some precedent exists in Jewish writings, beginning in the intertestamental period and extending into the rabbinic era, for an eschatological prophet who either preceded the coming of the messiah or himself embodied some messianic characteristics (e.g., perhaps, 1 Macc 4:46; 14:41).²⁴ Several New Testament texts describe Jesus as the prophet who is to come, attesting to a similar expectation.²⁵ Two prophets figured prominently in these expectations: Elijah and Moses.²⁶

Although the New Testament rejects the identification of Jesus with a second Elijah, Matthew in particular presents Jesus as the new Moses.²⁷ In the prophetic books, for example, the Exodus is the pattern for the end of exile and for eschatological

²⁴ For a discussion of the eschatological prophet in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 128-41.

²⁵ Matt 21:11; Luke 7:16; John 6:14-15. The John text uses the titles "prophet who is to come into the world" and "king" interchangeably.

²⁶ Elijah and Moses are, of course, closely associated with one another at the transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36; cf. the two witnesses in Rev 11:3-13, often identified as Moses and Elijah). The New Testament tentatively associates Elijah with John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-8; 9:11-13; cf. John 1:19-21). For Elijah's association with the end times, see Mal 4:5-6 (cf. 1 Enoch 90:31; 4 Ezra 6:26; 4Q558 frg. 1, 4; 4Q521). For Elijah in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet*, 184-90; Géza G. Xeravits, "Wisdom Traits in the Qumranic Presentation of the Eschatological Prophet," in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. Florentino García Martínez (Leuven: University Press; Peeters, 2003), 183-92. Hosea 12:14 calls Moses a prophet, and other texts imply Moses' status as a prophet (e.g., Deut 18:15; 34:10); later tradition amplifies Moses into the prototypical prophet-deliverer.

²⁷ Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). For Jesus and Elijah, see Matt 11:14; Matt 16:14//Mark 8:28//Luke 9:19; Matt 17:10-12//Mark 9:11-13; Mark 6:15//Luke 9:8; John 1:19-21.

redemption (Hos 2; cf. Matt 2).²⁸ However, the view that Moses would return or that a prophet like Moses would come as a messianic deliverer has little or no attestation until the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁹ The expectation of a prophet-deliverer like Moses occurs in 1QS 10:11 and 4Q175 1-8, which quotes Deuteronomy 18:18-19. The book of Acts, likewise, cites the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15 in the Messiah Jesus (Acts 3:22; 7:37). The Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran was presented as a second Moses,³⁰ and 4Q377 (*Apocryphon of Moses C*) seems to refer to Moses as the Lord's Messiah or anointed one (2:4-6).³¹ Strikingly, in his *Life of Moses*, Philo presents Moses in four offices: the ideal king, lawgiver, high priest, and prophet,³² reflecting again the threefold office (with the addition of the lawgiver, a role usually subsumed under the prophet or the priest).³³

4.2.2 History of the Threefold Office in the Christian Tradition

Christian tradition from the time of the New Testament identified Jesus as the messianic king, high priest, and prophet in the line of Moses, but these three identifications were not systematized into the formal *munus triplex* until the

²⁸ For the theme of return from exile as the new Exodus in Isaiah and in Mark, see Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

²⁹ Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet*, 174-84.

³⁰ Teeple, 51-58.

³¹ Paul Edward Hughes, "Moses' Birth Story: A Biblical Matrix for Prophetic Messianism," in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 12-13. In the Jerusalem Talmud, a comment on Exodus 12:42 associates Moses' return with the King-Messiah (Teeple, 45-6).

³² Teeple, 34-8.

³³ The Servant of Second Isaiah can be seen as embodying the ideal features of both prophet and king. See also John 1:19-21, where John the Baptist rejects that he is an eschatological prophet like Elijah, but takes up the mantle of a precursor in the tradition of Isaiah 40:3.

Reformation.³⁴ The threefold office, however, has deep roots in the Old Testament and subsequent Jewish traditions, as we have seen, and appears occasionally in Christian writings throughout history. It even has some possible precedent in Jewish tradition at the time of Jesus; Josephus describes John Hyrcanus as holding the “three highest honors of his people”: rulership (kingship), the high-priestly office, and the gift of prophecy.³⁵

Perhaps the earliest occurrence of Christ’s threefold office comes from Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-339), who links the three offices to the common act of anointing.³⁶ Another early description of Christ’s relationship to the anointed offices appears in Pseudo-Clementine’s *Recognitions*, tentatively dated to the late second or early third century.³⁷ Like Eusebius, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) connects the three offices through the common act of anointing.³⁸ In 1530, Andreas Osiander argues for the

³⁴ The following account of the history and background of the threefold office depends on information from Fred Guyette, “Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King: John Wesley and the Renewal of an Ancient Tradition,” *WTJ* 40, no. 2 (2005): 88-101; A. Krauss, “Das Mittlerwerk nach dem Schema des munus triplex,” *JDT* 27 (1872): 595-655; Pannenberg, 212-25; Bird, 164-6; Anna Maria Schwemer, “Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester: Das munus triplex und die frühe Christologie,” in *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: vier Studien*, ed. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 165-230; and John Frederick Jansen, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: J. Clark, 1956).

³⁵ Pannenberg, 214-5, 224; Rudolf Meyer, “Προφήτης, κτλ., ‘The Ruler with the Threefold Office,’” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:825-7.

³⁶ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Roy J. Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church*, v. 19 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953, 1955), Book 1, Chapter 3, 46-51.

³⁷ Bird, 164-5.

³⁸ Aquinas cites the anointings of Aaron, David, and Elisha (Guyette, 90). Aquinas writes, “Wherefore, as to others, one is a lawgiver, another is a priest, another is a king; but all these concur in Christ, as the fount of all grace. Hence it is written (Is. 33:22): ‘The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our King: He will come and save us’” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province; Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981], Part III, Q.22, Article 1).

threefold office of Christ on the grounds that prophets, kings, and high priests were anointed, and that Christ as the Anointed One holds all three offices.³⁹

Although some argue that Osiander was the first systematically to describe the threefold office, that honor is usually given to John Calvin.⁴⁰ In the Geneva Catechism of 1542, Calvin writes that the “force of the name Christ...signifies that he was anointed by the Father to be a King, Priest, and Prophet.”⁴¹ In his *Institutes*, Calvin discusses the threefold office at greater length.⁴² Calvin follows earlier precedent by connecting all three offices to the act of anointing with oil, and argues that “the title ‘Christ’ pertains to all three offices.”⁴³

Christ’s threefold office, then, helps to illumine his multiple and overlapping messianic identities as the “anointed one” – God’s answer to Israel’s lamenting cries and hopes for restoration. The Christian tradition of the *munus triplex* did not connect Christ’s offices to his laments, but this threefold structure provides a helpful road map for exploring the intersection of Jesus’ laments with his messianic identities. First, I explore Jesus as the Davidic King of Israel to describe how Jesus’ laments continue the tradition of the royal lament psalms. Next, I attend to the relationship between Jesus’ priestly identity and his laments in Hebrews. Finally, I look at the prophetic force of Jesus’

³⁹ Quoted in Pannenberg, 213.

⁴⁰ See Jansen, 26-38.

⁴¹ Catechism of the Church of Geneva, available online at www.reformed.org/documents.

⁴² Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. Ford Lewis Battles and John T. McNeill, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.15.1-6, pages 494-503.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.15.2, page 495. The Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 summarizes Calvin’s views on the primary roles assigned to each office in response to the question, “Why is he called ‘Christ,’ meaning ‘anointed’?” See also Calvin, 2.15.2, page 496; 2.15.4, page 498; 2.15.5, page 500.

laments by describing the intercessory lament of the prophet-mediator, who uses a form of lament to intercede with God on behalf of the people.

4.3 Lament and the King of the Jews

In this section, I explore the role that lament plays in Jesus' identity and mission as the Davidic King of Israel, as displayed in the Gospels and in particular in the passion narratives. Jesus' laments as a messianic king contribute to the ironic, unexpected mode of Jesus' kingship, both vis-à-vis Jewish expectations (the blending together of the suffering righteous one of the lament psalms with a kingly Messiah) and the Roman imperial cult. From the social location of oppression under Roman rule, lamenters cry out to God for a deliverer, protest against oppression, and call on God to redeem; and the laments of Jesus Messiah shed light on *how* this God redeems, through the giving of Godself.

4.3.1 The King Laments

The pattern of lament reveals Jesus' unique identity as the suffering righteous one, the deliverer of Israel who dies a shameful death as an apparent failure. The scandal of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth prompted his followers to search the Jewish Scriptures to interpret his ministry and death.⁴⁴ To describe Jesus' unique identity in the light of his suffering and death, early Christians drew on at least two disparate strands of contemporary Jewish tradition: a suffering righteous figure from Second Isaiah and the lament psalms, and an eschatological, kingly messiah in the line of David. In their

⁴⁴ Nils Alstrup Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah, and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974); and Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), see esp. 131. On the scandal and shame of death by crucifixion, see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

interpretation of Jesus' ministry and passion, early Christian traditions merged these two strands in an almost entirely unprecedented way.⁴⁵

They did so with clear continuity – for example, drawing on Jewish tradition to portray Jesus as a royal figure. Yet there is discontinuity as well: Jesus does not look particularly royal.⁴⁶ The New Testament uses and transforms traditional terms and expectations from contemporary Judaism and the Old Testament to describe Jesus' redemptive mission.⁴⁷ As the Son of David, as the King of the Jews, Jesus fulfills the Davidic covenant, but he also “rewrites popular notions of kingship.” This transformation of kingly traits is especially acute in the passion narrative, where the coming king enters the city on a donkey (cf. Zech 9:9) but then relinquishes power and authority and becomes the object rather than the subject of all the action (as noted in my Chapter 2, section 2.2.3.1).

⁴⁵ Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 193; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 142; Albert Vis, *The Messianic Psalm Quotations in the New Testament: A Critical Study on the Christian “Testimonies” in the Old Testament* (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1936), 39. A possible precedent for conflation of the Messiah and the suffering righteous one occurs in 1 Enoch's Book of Parables (see 1 Enoch 49:2-4), where the Chosen One seems to have attributes of the Deutero-Isaianic Servant, the Danielic Son of Man, and the Messiah; see George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Salvation Without and With a Messiah: Developing Beliefs in Writings Ascribed to Enoch,” in *George W. E. Nickelsburg in Perspective, Volume 1* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 73-77; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 223; James H. Charlesworth, “From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects,” in *Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 241. No clear precedent exists in the Dead Sea Scrolls for a suffering or dying messiah; see Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 19, 141-8. A righteous sufferer appears in Wisdom 2-5 and 1 QH 3:19-36, but not as a messiah figure (Fritz Stolz, “Psalm 22: Alttestamentliches Reden vom Menschen und neutestamentliches Reden von Jesus,” *ZThK* 77, no. 2 [1980]: 145). Israel Knohl, however, argues that “Jesus was regarded as the heir and successor to the Messiah described in the Dead Sea Scrolls”; see Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), quotation from page xii. In 4 Ezra 7:29-30, the Messiah dies, along with all other humans, but the event is noted with little comment and serves to mark the passing of the present age; see Stuckenbruck, 103.

⁴⁶ Juel, 2.

⁴⁷ Kee, 206.

The passion narrative goes to great lengths to portray Jesus as the king who suffers – a deeply ironic portrait.⁴⁸ Jesus’ laments in the passion narrative deepen the discordant picture of the King of the Jews facing humiliation, abandonment, and death.⁴⁹ In the New Testament, lament becomes part of the Messiah’s mission; the Messiah-King *answers* the prayer of lament (being sent from God as the deliverer of Israel); and he takes on the role of the righteous sufferer of the psalms, *participating* in and *embodying* the prayer of lament.

The Gospels associate Jesus with the “righteous sufferer” of the lament psalms.⁵⁰ The motif of the suffering righteous person, with its pattern of innocent suffering and subsequent exaltation, is not confined to the psalms and Second Isaiah but appears also in Job, in Jeremiah’s confessions, and in the stories of Joseph, Daniel, and Esther.⁵¹ For the Gospels, however, the individual lament psalms (along with Isaiah 52-53) provide the

⁴⁸ “The king has become the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (cf. Matt 8:17; 12:17-21)” (Dale C. Allison, “The Embodiment of God’s Will: Jesus in Matthew,” in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus*, ed. Richard B. Hays and Beverly Roberts Gaventa [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008], 123). See also Joel Marcus, “Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation,” *JBL* 125, no. 1 (2006): 73-87.

⁴⁹ Donald Juel argues that the allusions to Psalm 22 and 69 “have an established place in a coherent story...they contribute to the irony.” See Juel, 97; see also Dahl’s essay “The Crucified Messiah” in *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays*.

⁵⁰ Of course, not all individual lament psalms are those of a “righteous” sufferer – see, e.g., Psalm 51. Lothar Ruppert and C. H. Dodd describe the close connections between the Suffering Servant and the righteous sufferer: Lothar Ruppert, *Jesus als der leidende Gerechte? Der Weg Jesu im Lichte eines alt- und zwischentestamentlichen Motivs*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 59 (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1972), 19-20; C. H. Dodd, *The Old Testament in the New* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 13-14. Stephen Ahearne-Kroll argues that Mark portrays Jesus primarily as a suffering royal figure (the David of the lament psalms), but limits his study to LXX Psalms 21, 40, 41-2, 68; and, wrongly in my view, treats the lament psalms as conditional thanksgivings: David will praise God only if God delivers. See Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, *The Psalms of Lament in Mark’s Passion: Jesus’ Davidic Suffering*, SNTSMS 142 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a study of all possible references to the suffering righteous one in Mark, see Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markus-Evangelium, Wege der Forschung* 411 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 13-15. For the tradition of the suffering righteous figure and its reception in Paul, see Karl Theodor Kleinknecht, *Der leidende Gerechtfertigte: die alttestamentlich-jüdische Tradition vom “leidenden Gerechten” und ihre Rezeption bei Paulus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1984).

⁵¹ John Joseph Collins, “Der leidende Gerechte: Eine motivgeschichte Untersuchung zum Alten Testament und zwischentestamentlichen Judentum,” *CBQ* 36, no. 2 (1974): 294-5; Stolz, 144-5.

key texts for understanding the Messiah's ignominious death.⁵² Jesus is righteous; he suffers for God's sake; God vindicates and exalts him.

By identifying Jesus as the righteous sufferer of the lament psalms, Jesus becomes the "true and ultimate speaker of Israel's laments and praises," for both Paul and the Gospels.⁵³ Jesus fulfills the psalms by enacting their pattern in his passion and praying the lament psalms as their true speaker alongside David.⁵⁴ For the New Testament writers, Jesus does not simply *quote* the psalms, he speaks them, and lives them, as if they were his own.

This is particularly true of Psalm 22, which provides not only Jesus' final words from the cross in Mark and Matthew, but also the framework for multiple details of the passion narrative. As with the other lament psalms, there is no evidence that anyone regarded Psalm 22 as a messianic text before Christianity, other than its identification as a Psalm of David.⁵⁵ Superscriptions in the Masoretic text suggest that interpreters by at least the Second Temple period saw David as the author of many of the psalms, including Psalm 22.⁵⁶ Later Jewish tradition further associated Psalm 22 with Esther, a royal figure

⁵² For the extensive use of the lament psalms in the passion narrative, see my Chapter 2, especially section 2.1, n.1.

⁵³ Richard B. Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul's Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention," in *Future of Christology*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 129.

⁵⁴ "The man who prays in his psalms is certainly David himself, but in him and with him Christ too is praying" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*, ed. Eberhard Bethge [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970], 5).

⁵⁵ Mark George Vitalis Hoffman, *Psalm 22 (LXX 21) and the Crucifixion of Jesus* (Ann Arbor, MI: U.M.I., 1997), 12, 346.

⁵⁶ Esther Menn, "No Ordinary Lament: Relecture and the Identity of the Distressed in Psalm 22," *HThR* 93, no. 4 (2000): 313-6. See also Rolf Rendtorff, "The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 53-64, who argues that the name David in the psalms and superscriptions can mean the "historical" King David but more often refers to the Davidic dynasty.

and savior of her people, in a manner strikingly similar to Christianity's identification of Jesus with David.⁵⁷

For the Gospels, Psalm 22 provides one of the central patterns that frames and makes sense of Jesus' death.⁵⁸ In turn, it is Jesus himself who makes sense of the psalm. As Fritz Stolz writes, "*Nur Jesus – so der Tenor der gesamten neutestamentlichen Passionsüberlieferung – hat das tatsächlich verwirklicht, was in Ps 22 gemeint ist.*"⁵⁹ From the very beginning, Christians read the lament psalms as the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the King of the Jews, even though there was no precedent in the Jewish tradition for messianic reading of these texts.⁶⁰ In the passion narrative, the Gospels emphasize Jesus' royal status while weaving the lament psalms deeply into the details of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, suffering, and death.⁶¹

Precedent certainly exists for interpreting the royal psalms as messianic, especially Psalms 2 and 110.⁶² But the lament psalms, alongside the royal psalms,

⁵⁷ Gilles Dorival and Christian-Bernard Amphoux, *David, Jésus et la reine Esther: Recherches sur le Psaume 21 (22 TM)* (Paris; Sterling, Va: Peeters, 2002); Menn, 313-6; Catherine Brown Tkacz, "Esther, Jesus, and Psalm 22," *CBQ* 70, no. 4 (2008): 709-28; Bettina Wellmann, *Von David, Königin Ester und Christus: Psalm 22 im Midrasch Tehillim und bei Augustinus* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007). Rabbinic associations of Esther with Psalm 22 almost certainly postdated Christian reflections on Jesus and Psalm 22 (see Tkacz, 713-14).

⁵⁸ All four Gospels quote or allude to Psalm 22 at least twice. Collectively, the Gospels use Psalm 22 more than any other psalm to narrate details of Jesus' passion. Furthermore, the Gospels interpret the *lament* sections of the psalm messianically, not just the praise and thanksgiving sections (Hoffman, 355).

⁵⁹ "Only Jesus – such is the overall tenor of New Testament passion tradition – has actually effected what is meant in Psalm 22" (Stolz, 147).

⁶⁰ Juel, 90.

⁶¹ Juel follows Nils Dahl in arguing that the New Testament most frequently portrays Jesus as Messiah-King in the passion narrative, where he "looks least like the expected ruler from the line of David" (*ibid.*, 2).

⁶² Joachim Schaper, "The Persian Period," in *Redemption and Resistance*, 4-6, 10; Erich Zenger, "'Es sollen sich niederwerfen vor ihm alle Könige' (Ps 72,11): redaktionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Psalm 72 und zum Programm des messiansichen Psalters Ps 2-89," in "*Mein Sohn bist du*" (Ps 2,7), ed. Eckart Otto and Erich Zenger (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002); Mays, "The Portrayal of

provide an additional, critical key to Jesus' mission and identity. Many lament psalms are also royal psalms; that is, they are ascribed to David, opening a door to reading them as the lament of the historical King David as well as the king who represented the continuation of the Davidic dynasty according to God's promise. Psalms 22, 31, 42, and 69, which play such central roles in Jesus' passion, are all psalms of David, and all describe "the unjust suffering of the righteous king and celebrate the hope, or experience, of God's deliverance of the sufferer."⁶³ Eschatological readings of the psalms (both royal and lament psalms) and of God's promises to David (e.g., 2 Samuel 7) enabled early Christians to understand Jesus' suffering within the context of God's ultimate vindication of Israel.

Thus the royal lament psalms could be read "as paradigmatic for Israel's corporate national sufferings in the present time, and their characteristic triumphant conclusions would be read as pointers to God's eschatological restoration of Israel."⁶⁴ Just as the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah is a symbol of all Israel, the David of the Psalms becomes both "a symbol for the whole people and—at the same time—a

the Messiah in the Psalms," in *The Lord Reigns*, 99-107. Mays treats a number of psalms (Psalms 2, 3, 18, 72, 89, 110, 132) as part of the "vision" of the Messiah that is in the background of the New Testament's Christology (see especially pages 108-116). For Psalms 2 and 110 in the New Testament, see Rikki Watts, "The Psalms in Mark's Gospel," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 26-32, 36-41; and Harold W. Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 197-99. For Psalms 110 and 118 in the New Testament, see Craig A. Evans, "Praise and Prophecy in the Psalter and in the New Testament," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint et al. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005); 555-65. Fitzmyer treats the royal psalms (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144:1-11) but not lament psalms, and argues that it is anachronistic and misguided to treat them in their "original literal and religious sense" as messianic. In later Judaism and Christianity, however, they were interpreted allegorically or typologically (Fitzmyer, 25; cf. 19-25, 43-7, 77-8, 144). The "original" (historical) meaning of the Psalms was not messianic, but both Christians and Jews of their time read them as so – or, according to Albert Vis, misread them thus; see Vis, 11-12, 59.

⁶³ Hays, 127. Not all the lament psalms important to the passion narrative are ascribed to David (e.g., Psalm 42), but most are (especially Psalms 22 and 69).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

prefiguration of the future Anointed One (ὁ χριστός) who will be the heir of the promises and the restorer of the throne.”⁶⁵

Unique to Christian interpretation was the belief that the sufferings of the king (and thus of all Israel) had “been accomplished in an eschatologically definitive way by Jesus on the cross, *and* to see the vindication of Israel accomplished proleptically in his resurrection. Thus, the movement of the royal lament psalms from suffering to triumph is correlated hermeneutically with the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection.”⁶⁶ This movement in the lament psalms from suffering to triumph, from cry to vindication, echoes a pattern embedded in the Old Testament and exemplified in the Exodus: the people cry out to God from a situation of trouble; God hears their cries and remembers the covenant; and God acts to rescue the people (Exod 2:23-25).

In Second Temple Judaism and at the time of the New Testament, Jewish interpreters drew on multiple scriptures for descriptions of messianic hope, including Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:17, Isaiah 11:1, Daniel 7, and Zechariah 4:14; and the royal Psalms 2 and 110.⁶⁷ Christianity used much of the same constellation of texts, but they also used lament psalms and other texts about the “righteous sufferer” as a central lens for interpreting the identity of their Messiah. Jesus is both the answer to Israel’s cries for help and the one who participates in and enacts her laments in his life, death, and resurrection. As the Messiah who dies, as the king who laments, Jesus embodies both the plea and the hope of lament.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 131.

⁶⁷ Craig A. Evans, “The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments: A Response,” in *Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 231; Schaper, 4-6.

4.3.2 The Relationship of Lament to Power

As I have argued previously (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.2), lament typically arises from a situation of powerlessness and appeals for change to the one who has the power to help. What happens, then, when the *king* laments – the one who ought himself to have power? Although lament is sometimes viewed as a passive practice, I suggest in this section that Jesus’ kingly laments reveal the true nature of God’s power, in direct opposition to worldly power, and that lament is thus a genuinely powerful and subversive practice of hope in an unjust world.

As the LORD’s representative, Israel’s king was associated with justice, with judging rightly (e.g., Psalm 72:1). The king was responsible for protecting the powerless, speaking up for those who could not speak for themselves, and defending the rights of the poor and needy (Prov 31:8).⁶⁸ The ambivalence in the Old Testament regarding the office of the king reveals that Israel’s kings were meant to be different from all the other nation’s rulers, in the way that they exercised their power, protected the weak, and submitted to God’s ultimate authority.

When Jesus laments as a king, as the fulfillment of the Davidic hopes, his laments point to the ironic, even subversive, nature of his kingship. He is not the king that some expected – the one who would overthrow Roman rule and restore Israel’s political independence (Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6). Jesus’ kingly identity stands in even more direct contrast to the kind of power exercised by Caesar.⁶⁹ In the context of the Roman Empire,

⁶⁸ I am indebted to Allen Verhey for this point.

⁶⁹ Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001); Judith Lieu, “Messiah and Resistance in the Gospel and Epistles of John,” in *Redemption and Resistance*, 105; Hans Dieter Betz, “Plutarch’s Life of Numa: Some Observations on Graeco-Roman ‘Messianism,’” in *Redemption and Resistance*, 44-61. As Betz writes, early Christianity emerges in the midst of Hellenistic Judaism’s confrontations with the emperor-cult, and when the church

Jesus' claims to Lordship rewrote prevailing understandings of the exercise of power (Phil 2; Matt 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-48; Luke 22:24-27; cf. John 13:12-17; 1 Tim 6:15).⁷⁰ Revelation provides the sharpest contrast of Jesus' Lordship with Roman power through narrating Jesus' identity as the slaughtered lamb upon the throne, a jarring juxtaposition of weakness and power, defeat and triumph.⁷¹ Luke-Acts emphatically denies the emperor's ultimate lordship in its juxtaposition of the two Lords: κύριος Caesar, and κύριος Jesus. This juxtaposition "does not simply reveal a substitution of names—whereas we used to think that the Roman emperor was Lord of all atop the pyramid of powers, we now know that it is actually Jesus—but instead discloses a basic contradiction

"expands into the Gentile world, the fundamental antagonism emerges between the central figure of Christ and the Roman ruler-cult" (61). Gerbern Oegema proposes that messianic expectations from 63 BCE to 70 CE were colored by political critique of the Roman emperors and their domination of Palestine, evidenced in Philo, Paul, the Parables of Enoch, and the Zealots (Gerbern S. Oegema, *The Anointed and his People: Messianic Expectations from Maccabees to Bar Kochba* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 194-5). See also Christopher Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 99-101, 105-115. For Jesus' relationship to revolutionary movements, see Markus Bockmuehl, "Resistance and Redemption in the Jesus Tradition," in *Redemption and Resistance*, 65-77. New Testament scholars differ widely on how to characterize Jesus' relationship to Jewish revolutionary movements such as the Zealots, but the contrast I am noting does not depend on the precise nature of that relationship. As Bockmuehl points out, "virtually *all* known Jewish groups were in some theological (and at least to that extent political) sense opposed to Rome; and despite his repudiation of violence Jesus was presumably no exception" (ibid., 73). As many so-called Third Quest historical Jesus scholars have noted, a historically plausible Jesus must also be "crucifiable" – that is, he must have done something that merited his crucifixion at the hands of the Roman Empire (see N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996], 106-9, 540-611).

⁷⁰ This should not be viewed as a New Testament innovation. Precedent existed in the Old Testament for subversive and counter-cultural modes of power, including the "trickster" tactics of Abraham, the persistent elevation of the second-born over the firstborn, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, and the creative resistance of Daniel. See also Richard Bauckham, "Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 51. As Bauckham writes, the biblical narrative "breaks the cycle by which the oppressed become oppressors in their turn" (e.g., Lev 19:34, and then supremely in the cross) (ibid., 52).

⁷¹ See Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Brian K. Blount, *Can I Get a Witness?: Reading Revelation Through African American Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Paul Spilsbury, "The Apocalypse," in *Redemption and Resistance*, 136-46, esp. 144.

in terms of the content of universal lordship.”⁷² Jesus’ lordship, his kingship, redefines the nature of power. Jesus’ way of exercising power looks like weakness, but it is true power: power exercised through service, witness, and self-giving love.

Jesus’ laments occur within this context of apparent powerlessness: submission to God’s will, acceptance of the path of suffering and death, and the self-giving love of the cross. It is precisely here that the practice of lament encounters objections, if it appears to valorize suffering or commend patience rather than active resistance to suffering. Some theologians reject a theology of the cross or of servanthood as irredeemably oppressive to marginalized peoples, and likewise have little use for lament as a passive practice.⁷³

Lament, however, is not passive, but is characterized by protest (against injustice and God’s silence), trust (in God’s justice), and solidarity (with those who suffer). Below, I delineate and address several feminist and womanist challenges to the concepts of submission and obedience, and a theology of the cross more broadly; and suggest the role that lament might play in addressing these challenges and reframing Christian understandings of servanthood and power.

4.3.3 Feminist Critiques of Submission and Servanthood

Feminist theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza quotes Hebrews 12:1-11 (along with 1 Peter 2:18-23) to demonstrate that the New Testament operates within a “kyriarchal frame of reference” that finds redemption through freely chosen suffering. Thus the early Christian interpretations of Jesus’ death—i.e., the canonical Gospels and

⁷² Rowe, 106-7.

⁷³ Choan-Seng Song, “Christian Mission toward Abolition of the Cross,” in *Scandal of a Crucified World*, ed. Yacob Tesfai (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994); Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989).

other New Testament documents—are not liberating on their own terms but must be reconstructed and relocated within a different frame of reference, which for Schüssler Fiorenza is the “open space of the empty tomb.”⁷⁴ The liminal space of the empty tomb, with its mixture of fear and joy, of disbelief and hope, provides a hospitable place for lament; but this schema dismantles the essential pattern of lament, which moves through humiliation into exaltation.

Like Schüssler Fiorenza, Emilie Townes aims her critique at the acceptance or valorization of suffering: “...a womanist ethic must be dedicated to eliminating suffering on the grounds that its removal is God’s redeeming purpose.”⁷⁵ Suffering is never God’s will; rather it is always “an outrage.” She quotes preeminent black theologian James Cone: “Christianity has to do with fighting with God against the evils of this life.”⁷⁶ Like other womanist theologians, the beginning place for Townes’s theology is the historical and present-day experience of African American woman. From this vantage point, she condemns “the moral valuing of loss, denial, and sacrifice” within Christian thought.⁷⁷ Yet for Townes the empty tomb and the cross are positive symbols of God’s victory over evil, injustice, and oppression: “...true suffering has been removed through the redemptive event of the resurrection. ... The resurrection is God’s breaking into history to transform suffering into wholeness – to move the person from victim to change

⁷⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 127.

⁷⁵ Emilie M. Townes, “Living in the New Jerusalem: The Rhetoric and Movement of Liberation in the House of Evil,” in *Troubling in My Soul*, 84.

⁷⁶ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), 94.

⁷⁷ Townes, 78.

agent.”⁷⁸ Lament as a practice of protest accords with Townes’s view that suffering is an outrage – one that prompts the sufferer to voice distress to God and ask for change. As I explored in my Chapter 3 (see sections 3.2.4 and 3.4.5), lament presses toward change. Townes points to God’s transformative action but also, like Sölle, names the sufferer as an agent of change as well.

Similarly, Rosita deAnn Mathews proposes that evil ought to be actively resisted, undercutting a view of obedience as passive acceptance of suffering. But, she argues, we must resist evil “Jesus’ way.” One must not be passive in the face of evil, but neither may one “use evil to fight evil.” Rather, resisting evil means using a different kind of power, one that refuses “to employ the aggressor’s methods.”⁷⁹ In other words, Christians “fight” evil the way Jesus did. Mathews accepts the exhortation to resist that which causes suffering but then “overaccepts” it⁸⁰ as “resisting evil Jesus’ way,” not through passivity but through creative resistance and public witness to Jesus’ way of loving enemies and returning good for evil. This coheres with the style of kingship that Jesus exercises in the Gospels. Lament fits well into this pattern as well, when one recalls the potential of lament for nonviolent, powerful public protest (see my Chapter 3, section 3.3.3).

Jacquelyn Grant explores the concept of “servanthood” as a problematic category from the perspective of black women, who are often the “servants to the servants”; for

⁷⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁹ Rosita deAnn Mathews, “Using Power from the Periphery: An Alternative Theological Model for Survival in Systems,” in *Troubling in my Soul*, 93.

⁸⁰ See Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004). Wells uses terms from the improvisation of actors to describe overaccepting as neither blocking (refusing) nor accepting (simply receiving the terms one has been offered), but rather “accepting in the light of a larger story” – the story of God’s creation and redemption of the world. The one who overaccepts is able creatively “to take a challenging starting point and transform it by placing it into a dazzlingly larger context” (131, 132).

them, service has meant not empowerment but servitude.⁸¹ Grant suggests discipleship as a more inclusive, empowering paradigm for the Christian life. Grant describes discipleship as an inclusive network of disciples that includes the quest for justice: “Justice means that some will give up, and some will gain; but all will become disciples; that is, simultaneously, oppressors must give up or lose oppressive power, as oppressed people are empowered for discipleship.”⁸² The practice of lament could contribute to this portrayal, inasmuch as lament gives voice to mute suffering, truthfully names the trouble (including the nature of the oppression), and begins to press toward the change that is God’s justice.

On the other hand, Grant does not explore the texts in which Jesus subverts the concept of servanthood in his own cultural context by resisting the dominating power of the Greco-Roman world (Matt 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-48; Luke 22:24-27; cf. John 13:12-17). Jesus’ refusal to exercise dominating power signals Jesus’ opposition “to all powers that victimize, to all the energies of violence that rage through this world.” Rather, “Jesus sets himself in contrast to the Gentile lords in terms of his relation to *human weakness and need*. . . . Jesus makes clear that the divine power in him vindicates its powerfulness in the face of human need in just the opposite way. It does not dominate, threaten, or impose violence; it *serves*. . . . The distinctive mark of God’s power is service and self-giving.”⁸³

⁸¹ Jacquelyn Grant, “The Sin of Servanthood and the Deliverance of Discipleship,” *Other Side* 30, no. 5 (1994): 209.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸³ Arthur C. McGill, *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 61, 62, 63.

Michael Gorman suggests that Philippians 2 makes the same counter-cultural point: Paul deliberately portrays Christ's voluntary humbling in direct contrast to "Rome's *cursus honorum*, the elite's upward-bound race for honors."⁸⁴ Philippians 2 is not a praise song to humility but is the story of a dramatic reversal similar to the reversals revealed in Mary's Magnificat, the Beatitudes, Jesus' sayings about the first and the last in the kingdom of God, and the Gospel of John's claim that Jesus' crucifixion as King of the Jews is his exaltation (e.g., 12:23). It is a text that highlights the ironic mode of Jesus' kingship, his "ironic enthronement" on the cross as a condemned criminal.⁸⁵

Lament can play a role in addressing the feminist critiques of suffering and submission, inasmuch as it is a practice that never grants the ultimate rightness of suffering. As a prayer of pain and hope, lament is a practice of both power and vulnerability: power, in that it empowers those who suffer by giving truthful voice to pain in the midst of the community, and demands a change; and vulnerability, in that it refuses the world's mode of domination and oppression and opens itself to God's transforming action. Theresa Snorton identifies this tension between strength and vulnerability when she writes specifically about pastoral care for African American women; for these women, who are the "strong" members of their community, "the image of the lamenting Christ who embodies vulnerability in strength will be more meaningful...than being told

⁸⁴ Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 16. See also Sarah Coakley, who proposes a feminist reading of Jesus' *kenosis* in Philippians 2 as "power-in-vulnerability." She interprets the content of Jesus' self-emptying as his avoidance of arrogance and his servant-like demeanor, culminating in the events of the cross. Sarah Coakley, "Kenōsis and Subversion: On the Representation of 'Vulnerability' in Christian Feminist Writing," in *Swallowing a Fishbone*, ed. Daphne Hampson (London: SPCK, 1996), 82-111.

⁸⁵ See Marcus, "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," 73-87. These texts have imperative as well as revelatory force. Susan Eastman writes, "Paul expects the presentation of Christ's downward mobility and divine exaltation to have an effect on the Philippians, just as that same divine action has affected his own life"; Susan Eastman, "Philippians 1:6-11: Incarnation as Mimetic Participation," *JSPL* (forthcoming).

of her ‘need’ or ‘right’ to lament. It is *in the company of Jesus* that there is safe and restorative authorization to lament.”⁸⁶

My previous chapter demonstrated ways in which public lament can be part of active resistance to injustice without recourse to violence (Chapter 3, section 3.3.3). Jesus’ obedience to his Father’s will in the Gethsemane prayer, in Hebrews 5:7-9, and in Philippians 2 does not entail the glorification of suffering in general as redemptive; nor does it advocate passive submission to injustice. Jesus’ advocacy of servanthood is, in fact, creative resistance to the dominating powers of the empire in his own day. As king and κύριος of all, Jesus refused to use dominating power to achieve God’s ends, and refused to fight evil with evil; this mirrors the lamenter’s decision to trust God to bring salvation and render justice.

Lament tells the truth about the extent of the suffering and those who might have caused it. It gives voice to suffering that otherwise might have been left mute or unnoticed, and in this way expresses solidarity with those who suffer. Finally, it coheres with a view of servanthood as a self-giving love that creatively and collectively resists evil by overcoming it with good, while simultaneously calling on God to deliver justice and defeat evil.

4.4 Lament of the Great High Priest: The Witness of Hebrews

The author of Hebrews portrays lament as integral to Jesus’ role as a priest. The one who lamented now hears the prayer of lament and can provide mercy to help in the

⁸⁶ Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore, *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1999), 96-9, emphasis added. The quotation is Billman and Migliore’s, with reference to the work of Teresa Snorton, “The Legacy of the African-American Matriarch: New Perspectives for Pastoral Care,” in *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 50-65.

time of need. This places Jesus in the dual role of the paradigmatic human lamenter, and the divine one who hears and responds to laments.

In Hebrews, Jesus' full experience of humanity, including suffering and grief, is an indispensable part of his priesthood (2:5-18; 4:14-5:10). Hebrews cites Jesus' enfleshed existence as an essential element of his qualification to be high priest in heaven (2:14). Moreover, Jesus' embodiment continues after his death. David Moffitt argues that Hebrews describes Jesus after his resurrection and ascension as a flesh-and-blood being who carries with him into heaven the redeeming sacrifice of his own blood (Heb 9:11-12; 10:19-20).⁸⁷ Likewise, the Gospels affirm that Jesus is still embodied (if uniquely) even after his resurrection (Luke 24:40-43; John 21:12-13), and that his body still bears its scars (Luke 24:39-40; John 20:20, 27). Jesus carries his wounds with him into resurrection and into heaven, where, according to Hebrews, he hears the prayers of his suffering brothers and sisters.

Hebrews bases Jesus' sharing in the embodied mortality of "the children" (παῖδια, i.e., humanity, fellow-children of God) on two Old Testament texts: Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17-18. Psalm 22, of course, plays a central role in the gospel passion narrative. In Hebrews 2:12, Jesus speaks the words of Psalm 22:22, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." The psalmist's promise in Psalm 22 to praise God's name to "my brothers" in the "assembly" (עֲדָתָם; LXX ἐκκλησίας) follows a series of imperative pleas for help ("do not be far from me... come quickly to help me... deliver me... rescue me... save me") and marks the turn in the psalm

⁸⁷ David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, NTSS (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

from lament and petition to vows of future praise and assurance of help.⁸⁸ Unlike the quotation of Psalm 22:1 in the passion narratives of Matthew and Mark, in Hebrews Christ speaks a portion of the psalm dedicated to praise rather than to lament. (Additional echoes of Psalm 22 may appear in his lament in Hebrews 5:7; see below.)

Through the quotation of Psalm 22:22, Jesus the Son identifies himself as the brother of the other sons whom God has brought into glory (2:10). It is for this reason that Jesus is not ashamed to call the other sons, or the children of 2:14, his brothers. In other words, Hebrews presents Jesus as representative of all humanity.⁸⁹ He has tasted death for all (2:9), and shares in the flesh and blood of the sons (2:14). Because of this sharing, he is able to “free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death” (2:15). Through his quotation of Isaiah 8:18, Jesus further declares his kinship with his “brothers” by declaring that God has given the “sons” to him, hinting at the priestly and intercessory role Jesus will fulfill in heaven.

God has given the sons to the Son so that Jesus can help them (2:16), specifically, so that he can free them from the fear of death and from sin as their merciful and faithful high priest (2:17; cf. 9:28). Jesus not only shares fully in the humanity of his brothers and sisters, he accomplishes what they cannot do: endure the same testing, share in the same things, taste the same death – but without sin, so that he might set them free. Jesus’ temptations and tears fit him for his life as mediator and intercessor in heaven. Through

⁸⁸ A possible allusion to Psalm 22:22 occurs in Matt 28:10, in Jesus’ instruction to go and tell “my brothers” to go to Galilee. Jesus does refer to his disciples as his brothers in Matt 12:49, in the context of who constitutes his true family, but it is a somewhat surprising use of the word in this context. See Claus Westermann, *Gewendete Klage; eine Auslegung des 22 Psalms* (Neukirchen: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1957); cf. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 126.

⁸⁹ Moffitt, 152.

subjection to temptation and death, Jesus *becomes* the high priest who knows human weaknesses and trials and can extend “grace to help in time of need” (4:15-16).⁹⁰ In other words, Jesus’ full humanity qualifies him to hear prayers for help (i.e., laments) and to provide mercy in the time of need (the expected divine response to the lament).

While lament does not yet play an explicit role in Hebrews’ explanation of Jesus’ high priestly qualifications, both the citation of Psalm 22 and the evoking of Jesus’ suffering and dying (2:10, 18) hint at its presence. Jesus bears suffering for the sake of the congregation, the ἐκκλησία, in his unique role as the pioneer of salvation. As the representative and exemplar of all the other sons, he prays not only for himself but for all his siblings as well.⁹¹

4.4.1 Jesus’ Lament in Hebrews 5:7

The role of lament in Jesus’ identity as the high priest appears in Hebrews 5, which revisits the themes of Jesus’ flesh-and-blood existence, his suffering, and his qualification to be the perfect(ed) high priest.

...ὃς ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ δεήσεις τε καὶ ἰκετηρίας πρὸς τὸν δυνάμενον σῶζειν αὐτὸν ἐκ θανάτου μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρῶν προσενέγκας καὶ εἰσακουσθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας, καίπερ ὢν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ἀφ’ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν...

...who, in the days of his flesh, offered both prayers and supplications, to the one able to save him from death, with a mighty cry and tears, and having been heard from his reverence, although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered... (Heb 5:7-8)

⁹⁰ In Moffitt’s words, “...the way the author [of Hebrews] employs and explicates Ps 8 indicates that it is the Son’s humanity—his flesh and blood—that gives him the right to sit at God’s right hand and reign over the other heavenly beings” (ibid., 173).

⁹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “Jesus Christ has brought before God all the needs, all the joys, all the thanks and hopes of mankind” (Bonhoeffer, 3, 16-17).

Scholars debate whether Hebrews 5:7 reflects Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane,⁹² his cries from the cross,⁹³ a more general tradition that Jesus lamented in prayer during his passion,⁹⁴ or an independent witness to "Jesus' disposition in the face of death."⁹⁵ I treat it as a broad tradition that Jesus lamented in the face of his suffering and death, one that resonates with elements from both Gethsemane and the crucifixion. The content of Jesus' prayer is not reported, but in other ways it conforms to the basic pattern of lament: Jesus cries out to God in the face of trouble (the threat of death), and God hears and helps him.

Three phrases in 5:7 contribute to an understanding of the nature of Jesus' lament in Hebrews and its connection to the gospel tradition: First, Jesus' mighty cry and tears (κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων) displays the anguish of lament, as in the Synoptic Gethsemane scenes and from the cross in Matthew and Mark; and the verb προσφέρω indicates that Jesus' laments seem to be part of his priestly offering to God. Second, God is the one who has the power to save Jesus ἐκ θανάτου, which signifies "out of death" (i.e., through resurrection) rather than "from death." Finally, Jesus was heard ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας (from his reverence), a description that conforms to the lamenter's trust in God in the midst of suffering.

⁹² As one of many examples, see André Feuillet, "L'évocation de l'agonie de Gethsémane dans l'Épître aux Hébreux (5,7-8)," *Esprit et vie* 86 (1976): 49-53.

⁹³ E.g., Mathis Rissi, "Die Menschlichkeit Jesu nach Hebr. 5:7-8," *ThZ* 11 (1965): 28-45.

⁹⁴ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993), 286.

⁹⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 145.

4.4.1.1 A Mighty Cry and Tears: Lament as Priestly Offering

In the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane, Jesus prays in anguish (in Matthew and Mark, and in a slightly later addition to Luke), but no loud cries or tears are explicitly reported. Jesus gives a loud cry from the cross in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; each Gospel chooses a different verb for the cry, but all three use the expression "with a loud voice," φωνῆ μεγάλῃ). Perhaps Hebrews' mighty (or loud) cry (κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς) is analogous to this expression. Apart from Hebrews, only John mentions Jesus' tears together with a loud voice, when Jesus weeps at Lazarus' grave and then calls him forth from the tomb with a loud voice (φωνῆ μεγάλῃ).

Structurally, the Gethsemane tradition matches the pattern of Hebrews 5:7; in both, Jesus prays (Mark 14:35), with great emotion (Mark 14:33), in the context of saving him from death (Mark 14:36a), and despite his earnest petition willingly (with "reverence") submits to the Father's will (Mark 14:36b). In a way, the two phrases "a mighty cry and tears" and "reverent fear" (rendered "reverent submission" by the NRSV) capture the two parts of Jesus' petition in Gethsemane (take this cup away; but your will be done). However, Hebrews 5:7 contains more linguistic points of contact with Psalm 22 than it does with the Synoptic Gethsemane accounts, which creates a link from the Hebrews text to the crucifixion accounts.

Earlier in 2:12, the author of Hebrews quoted Psalm 22, as noted above, and it is possible to see hints of Psalm 22 in 5:7 as well. Like Hebrews 5:7, Psalm 22 mentions both cries for help (Ps 22:5) and God's actions to save and to hear (Ps 22:24).⁹⁶ Hebrews

⁹⁶ Ellingworth, 285; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 128.

5:7 and Psalm 21:25 LXX share a common vocabulary: δέησις (supplication) and εισακούω (to hear), as well as different forms of the word for crying out (κράζω and κραυγή).⁹⁷ Another psalm, Psalm 115 LXX (Psalm 116 MT), also resonates with Hebrews 5:7.⁹⁸

In Psalm 115 LXX, the psalmist cries out in distress and “the anguish of the grave” (verse 3), calls on God to save him (verse 4), and praises God because “he heard my voice” (εισακούσεται, verse 1) and delivered him from death (ἐκ θανάτου, verse 8).⁹⁹ Psalm 115 LXX and Hebrews 5:7 use the same verb for hearing (εισακούω)¹⁰⁰ and the same expression for deliverance from death (ἐκ θανάτου),¹⁰¹ making this psalm a promising candidate for the background to Jesus’ lament in Hebrews 5:7. Hebrews has one other possible allusion to Psalm 116 (in 13:15), strengthening the connection between the two texts. On the other hand, Hebrews’ earlier citation of Psalm 22 suggests that the author associates Jesus with Psalm 22 in a manner congruent with other early Christian traditions, especially the Gospels. The author is certainly familiar with Psalm 22, and likely with Psalm 116, and he shapes 5:7 according to the general pattern of lamenting prayer displayed in multiple lament psalms: an experience of trouble and

⁹⁷ James Swetnam, “The Crux at Hebrews 5,7-8,” *Bib* 81, no. 3 (2000): 354. See also Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, Études bibliques (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952), 113.

⁹⁸ Psalm 116 is usually classified as a hymn of praise or thanksgiving, rather than a lament, because the psalmist reports his distress in the past tense and offers praise for God’s deliverance; but it is sometimes identified as a psalm of the “righteous sufferer” alongside the laments. Psalm 116 does not play a large role in the New Testament, but Paul cites verse 10 (LXX 115:1) in 2 Cor 4:13.

⁹⁹ George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 97-8.

¹⁰⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson argues that the verb εισακούω “suggests a responsive hearing” on the part of God (Johnson, 146).

¹⁰¹ The participial phrase ἐκ θανάτου also occurs in Psalm 32:19 (LXX) and 55:13 (LXX), neither of which have other significant overlaps with Hebrews 5:7-9.

suffering (in this case especially the “anguish of the grave”), crying out to God, receiving God’s deliverance, and responding with praise.

Along with his tears, Jesus “offered” (προσενέγκας, a form of προσφέρω) prayers and supplications to God. Just a few verses earlier, the author twice uses the verb “offered” (προσφέρω) to describe the sacrifices offered by the high priest for sins (5:1, 3). While most scholars argue that the word has no such sacrificial connotations in verse 7, despite this preceding context,¹⁰² Albert Vanhoye makes the case that this offering of prayer parallels the offering of gifts and sacrifices by the high priest in 5:1, 3.¹⁰³ Rather than offering sacrifices, Jesus offers a “priestly oblation” of prayer out of his own weakness, demonstrating the depth of his solidarity with humanity. This offering parallels the ideal of Hosea 6:6 adopted by Jesus in the Gospels (Matt 9:13; 12:7; cf. Mark 12:33): “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.” Jesus’ oblation fulfills this text, because “elle a été l’acte de miséricorde le plus généreux qui soit.”¹⁰⁴ Although Hebrews does not quote Hosea 6, the author invokes a similar ethos by describing doing good and sharing (εὐποιΐας καὶ κοιωνίας) as sacrifices that are pleasing to God (13:16). Furthermore, the author urges the congregation to offer (from the verb ἀναφέρω), through Jesus, a “sacrifice of praise” (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως) to God (13:15), suggesting that the author can construe prayer as sacrifice.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Bruce, 126-7, n.43.

¹⁰³ Albert Vanhoye, “L’oblation sacerdotale du Christ dans l’épître aux Hébreux,” *Didaskalia* 14 (1984): 13.

¹⁰⁴ “It was the most generous act of mercy there is,” *ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ The same phrase—θυσίαν αἰνέσεως—occurs in Psalm 115:8 LXX (and in Psalm 49:14, 23; 106:22); cf. Lev 7:12, 13 LXX, where the “sacrifice of praise” is a material offering.

Many thanksgiving psalms and lament psalms include a vow to offer a thanksgiving sacrifice accompanied by public praise (Psalm 22:22, 25; 27:6; 54:6; 56:12; 61:8).¹⁰⁶ The vow to praise God accompanies the psalmist's certainty that God will hear and respond.¹⁰⁷ Several lament psalms also attest to the ethos of Hosea 6:6 that God requires the offering of praise rather than literal sacrifices (Psalm 40:6; 51:15-17; 69:30-31). In Hebrews 5:7, Jesus' offering takes the form of lament. It is not unreasonable to suggest a link between Jesus' lament and his priestly activity, as Vanhoye does; thus lament, the offering of supplications with cries and tears, expresses part of Jesus' priestly vocation.¹⁰⁸ Hebrews construes Jesus' death as occurring on behalf of all his brothers and sisters, setting Jesus' lament into a setting where his suffering takes place for the sake of others. The end result of his lament is his equipping to be high priest, also for the sake of his brothers and sisters, since he can then hear and respond to their laments.

4.4.1.2 Rescued Out of Death

The phrase ἐκ θανάτου can mean either rescue from death, or rescue out of death, that is, through raising Jesus from the dead.¹⁰⁹ The assertion that God heard Jesus' prayer

¹⁰⁶ For the character of the thanksgiving offering or freewill offering in the psalms, see Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 199-200, 209-11. According to Gunkel, later thanksgiving songs, including the ones attached to lament psalms, began to exclude the literal sacrifice and understand the sacrifice metaphorically, as a form of praise.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁰⁸ One thinks of a similar theme in the lament of Psalm 51, a central penitential psalm, except that David offers sacrifices to atone for his sin, whereas in Hebrews (unlike all the other high priests) Jesus offers sacrifices for the sins of the people; being without sin, he does not need to offer atonement on his own behalf (4:15).

¹⁰⁹ See the detailed discussion in Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 150-2. See also Swetnam, 347-61. Swetnam argues that Jesus asks God to allow him to die, rather than intervening through Elijah to save him, but this depends on Hebrews' use of this tradition about Elijah, which is difficult to prove.

suggests the latter. After all, Jesus died; he was *not* saved from death. Some argue, however, that Jesus prayed to be spared from dying, which, of course, creates a problem for the claim that Jesus' prayer "was heard." Adolf Harnack famously emended the text to read "was *not* heard," a proposal adopted by several interpreters despite its complete lack of textual evidence, and despite the way this reading overturns the biblical pattern of lament.¹¹⁰

In the lament psalms, the psalmist typically calls on God to act *hic et nunc*: defeat the enemies, restore to health, remove the suffering – just as God has done in the past on behalf of Israel and the righteous. On the other hand, Judaism had begun to interpret many of the lament psalms as eschatological by the time of Jesus. The laments display yearnings for future redemption as well as present rescue – and it is not always easy to distinguish between the two (Ps 69:35; 102:16; 126:4-6; 130:5-6).¹¹¹

God rescues Jesus not from dying but from the power of death.¹¹² Jesus' death likewise frees his siblings from their enslavement to death's power (Heb 2:14-15). The followers of Jesus, flesh and blood mortals that they are, will still die, just as Jesus did; but they need not fear death because the pioneer of their salvation forged a path through death and into the eternal Sabbath rest.

¹¹⁰ Harnack's emendation was adopted by Rudolf Bultmann, among others; see Bruce, 128 n.53.

¹¹¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 517-18. Childs continues, "However one explains it, the final form of the Psalter is highly eschatological in nature. It looks forward to the future and passionately yearns for its arrival" (ibid., 518). See my Chapter 6, section 6.2.2, for a more sustained discussion of this point.

¹¹² Ellingworth, 219; Bruce, 128 n.51.

4.4.1.3 Heard from his Reverence

The word εὐλάβεια can either mean reverence (for God) or fear (of death).¹¹³ The second option connects to Heb 2:14, where Jesus frees his fellow humans from their slavery to the fear of death. If one adopts this second meaning, however, in conjunction with the claim that Jesus' prayer was heard, this leads one to believe that God saved him from his fear, which seems to run against the grain of the context.¹¹⁴ The first meaning, reverence, links thematically to the Son's obedience in the immediately following context (5:8). Hebrews' only other use of the noun (in 12:28) clearly means reverence for God. Thus it seems that God hears Jesus' prayers and supplications from (or because of) his reverence.¹¹⁵ The NRSV supplies "reverent submission," and this is the way most exegetes take the word, alongside 5:8; Jesus' reverence was his obedient acceptance of the suffering that led to his perfection.

The lamenters of the Psalms, Job, and the prophets are more well-known for their boldness than for their "reverent submission." Indeed, it is importunity in prayer that Jesus himself commends (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8). Yet reverence does not imply quietism or a piety that buries any expression of distress. Those who lament, including the widow in Luke 18, are bold in prayer *because of* their reverence for God, that is, their confidence that God is a God of steadfast love, a God who makes and keeps promises to save and bless. In Hebrews, εὐλάβεια entails not meek submission but Jesus' confidence in God to

¹¹³ Cf. the longer discussion of the two options in Ellingworth, 289-91. See also Rudolf Bultmann, "εὐλαβής, κτλ.," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:751-4.

¹¹⁴ See, e.g., Johnson, 146.

¹¹⁵ Although Hebrews never uses ἀπό causally elsewhere, it is grammatically possible, and most agree that it makes the most sense of the context; see, e.g., Ellingworth, 290.

keep God's promises and be faithful to the Son. It points to Jesus' obedience and faithfulness even in the face of suffering and death, the same kind of faithful endurance commended to the author's congregation (10:32-39). (See my Chapter 6, section 6.3.2.4, for the relationship between lament and patient endurance.)

Jesus is equipped through his human experiences to hear cries for help and to respond with mercy. Jesus' refusal to abandon or disobey God even in the midst of his trials is an important component of lament: the stubborn refusal to yield to the belief that God no longer hears, and the persevering trust, in the midst of pain, in a God who saves.

4.5 Prophetic Lament

"Prophetic lament" entails either 1) the intercessory complaint of the prophet expressed to God on behalf of the people, in order to avert God's punishment; or 2) a form of the prophet's (and/or God's) grief over Israel's unfaithfulness and the resultant punishment. I examine Jesus' laments through both lenses: first, Jesus completes rather than continues the Old Testament tradition of prophetic intercessory lament. Furthermore, Jesus' command to love and bless the enemy, and Jesus' forgiveness of his own enemies from the cross in the midst of his laments, reorients Christian lament away from imprecation and toward intercession, although room remains for lament's longing for justice (as displayed in the lament of the martyrs under the throne in Revelation). Second, I propose that Jesus' "laments" over Jerusalem are not properly laments but are rather a form of the dirge (mourning over the fall of Zion) as well as an example of the way that prophetic grief merges with divine grief.

4.5.1 Intercessory Lament of the Prophet-Mediator

In the Old Testament, the prophet's most basic role is to deliver God's word to the people. Hebrews portrays Jesus as this kind of prophet when it describes Jesus as the last in a line of prophets through whom God has spoken (Heb 1:1-2). The prophet often reverses this role by also speaking to God on behalf of the people in intercession. God's message of judgment, delivered by the prophet, prompts the prophet to perform this role: the prophet delivers God's word of judgment to the people, but in turn advocates for the accused people back to the heavenly court through intercessory prayer.¹¹⁶

As an intercessor, the prophet addresses the Lord on behalf of Israel in order to change God's mind regarding God's anger over Israel's sin.¹¹⁷ To do so, the prophet invokes the Lord's own fundamental characteristics of mercy, steadfast love, and justice in order to convince God to avert judgment or relent from punishing. Sometimes, but not always, this takes the form of a lament, because the intercessor calls upon God, presents the complaint (God's punishment), and asks God for help (i.e., for God to forgive and relent from punishing).

¹¹⁶ Yochanan Muffs, *Love & Joy: Law, Language, and Religion in Ancient Israel* (New York, NY; Cambridge, MA: Jewish Theological Seminary of America; distributed by Harvard University Press, 1992), 9. Michael Widmer explains, "It is only when the intercessor has insight into the divine will and council that he can, on the one hand, participate and influence the divine decision-making process, and on the other hand, instruct or rebuke the people with divine authority. It is for this reason that the Old Testament ascribes intercession primarily to people with prophet-like prerogatives" (Michael Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer: A Study of Exodus 32-34 and Numbers 13-14* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 330).

¹¹⁷ Samuel Balentine and Mark Biddle both argue for defining prophetic intercession more precisely. Samuel E. Balentine, "The Prophet as Intercessor: A Reassessment," *JBL* 103, no. 2 (1984): 161-73; Mark E. Biddle, *Polyphony and Symphony in Prophetic Literature: Rereading Jeremiah 7-20* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 58, especially n.30. Balentine suggests that intercession was a secondary function of the prophets, and one not confined to the prophetic role. Nehemiah and Hezekiah, for example, both intercede on behalf of the people (Neh 1:6; 2 Chron 30:18). Interestingly, the Old Testament never attributes the intercessory role to the priests (Balentine, 164). Franz Hesse describes a shift from prophetic to priestly intercession, first from the prophet to angelic beings, and then to the high priest (cf. Joel 2:17) (Widmer, 33).

Claus Westermann identifies the lament of the prophet-mediator as a special form of lament exhibited throughout the Old Testament, from Moses through the later prophets, including Elijah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, and Second Isaiah's Servant.¹¹⁸ On form-critical grounds, the "lament of the mediator" is a special variation of the lament. It does contain the three constitutive features of lament as defined by Westermann: a lamenter, God, and a problem (what Westermann calls an enemy). In this case, the problem is always the same: the question of God's justice and God's mercy in relationship to Israel or to all humanity, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is direct speech to God – less prayer than sustained argument, and even dialogue. The prophet-mediator usually argues directly with YHWH, and its desired outcome is the averting of God's anger, or the modification of God's decision to destroy the people. Just as intercession persuades YHWH to keep the covenant and to act according to God's own character, the lamenter of the psalms often petitions God to save according to God's defining *hesed* (Ps 25:7; 51:1; 69:16; 109:26).

Remarkably, God hopes and even expects that the prophet will intercede for Israel so that God may exercise mercy: "God allows the prophet to represent in his prayer His

¹¹⁸ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 196. For the character of the mourning prophet, or the lamenting court-prophet, see Ferdinand Ahuis, *Der klagende Gerichtsprphet: Studien zur Klage in der Überlieferung von den alttestamentlichen Gerichtsprpheten* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1982). Biddle challenges the idea that Jeremiah is a mediator; he argues that Jeremiah obeys God's command *not* to intercede for the people by serving as God's representative to the people rather than as an intercessor for them (see Biddle, "Polyphony and Symphony"). The Servant of Second Isaiah intercedes by suffering on behalf of the people rather than by prayer per se (Isa 53:12; cf. Isa 59:16) (Balentine, 164), and for this reason he is an important figure when considering Jesus' laments as the lament of a prophet-mediator. Beginning in the first century BCE and continuing through later rabbinic Judaism, the potential dangers of intercessory prayer were noted, and limits began to be imposed on it; see Lane Belden C. Lane, "Hutzpa K'lapei Shamaya: A Christian Response to the Jewish Tradition of Arguing with God," *JES* 23, no. 4 (1986): 579-81.

own attribute of mercy.”¹¹⁹ For example, when YHWH considers destroying the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he wonders whether he should hide his plan from Abraham, implying that Abraham might convince YHWH to change his mind (Gen 18:17).¹²⁰ In Exodus 32:10, YHWH seems to present Moses with the opportunity to change YHWH’s mind: perhaps “YHWH seeks to ‘provoke’ Moses to prayerfully subvert His plan to destroy Israel.”¹²¹ In Ezekiel 22:30-31, God looks for someone who would “stand before me in the breach on behalf of the land” in order to avert God’s wrath.¹²² Most strikingly, in Jeremiah, God instructs the prophet *not* to intercede on behalf of the people, demonstrating the finality of God’s judgment (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; 16:5-9).

In this respect, the complaint of the intercessory lament is that God is *not* keeping God’s promises or acting according to God’s *hesed*. Even more importantly, this form of lament conforms to God’s own desire to maintain the covenant and save the people from destruction in the face of Israel’s unfaithfulness. God’s justice demands punishment for disobedience; God’s mercy looks for a prophet who will wrestle with God in order to

¹¹⁹ Muffs, 33. “Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing the secret to his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7; cf. Jer 23:18, 22).

¹²⁰ In Gen 18:7-22, for example, the question “Shall I hide from Abraham...?” and God’s decision to “stand before Abraham” (in an alternate text) suggest that the question regarding justice for the city “is God’s agenda before it is Abraham’s”; see Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 49.

¹²¹ Widmer, 348. Gary Anderson observes that YHWH provides Moses with “the most formidable argument that can be used against him” by reminding Moses of the promise he made to Abraham to make of him a great nation (Gen 12:2; cf. Exod 32:9-10); see Gary A. Anderson, “Moses and Jonah in Gethsemane: Representation and Impassibility in their Old Testament Inflections,” in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 219.

¹²² See also Christoph Schroeder, “‘Standing in the Breach’: Turning Away the Wrath of God,” *Interpretation* 52, no. 1 (1998): 16-23. The prophet’s role is both to stand in the breach between the people and God, wrestling with God in prayer to protect the people from God’s anger; but also to repair the damage by calling the people to repent and return to right relationship with YHWH (Ezek 13; 22:1-31) (Widmer, 103-6).

protect Israel from total destruction. Examples abound of prophets and other figures interceding for the people: Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.¹²³ I examine the character of the lament of the prophet-mediator by looking briefly at the examples of Abraham, Moses, and Daniel; in this light, I then consider Jesus' laments as the lament of a prophet-mediator.

Genesis 18 contains Abraham's famous bargaining session with God over the fate of Sodom.¹²⁴ The story opens with YHWH, Abraham, and the two angels who have just delivered the news of Sarah's pregnancy. The angels leave to go to Sodom, to investigate the extent of the sin there, but Abraham remains standing before YHWH. (In an alternate Hebrew text, it is YHWH who remains standing before Abraham, as if to hear what Abraham will say about God's plan.) Abraham begins to bargain for the fate of the city, implying that it is not right for God to kill the righteous along with the wicked. "Will not the judge of all the earth do justice?" he asks, placing the decision squarely onto God's identity as a righteous judge, who renders justice.¹²⁵ What if God found fifty righteous people there? God relents: for fifty righteous people, the city would not be destroyed. Abraham presses on: forty-five? Forty? Thirty? Twenty? Ten? Each time, YHWH agrees.

¹²³ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper, 1962), 51, 275-7; Balentine, 170. Gary Anderson suggests that Jonah is the perfect example of what happens when the prophetic mediator fails to fulfill his intercessory role: God makes sure that the prophet becomes an intercessor whether he likes it or not. "In fact," Anderson notes wryly, "God had the system rigged from the beginning" (Anderson, "Moses and Jonah in Gethsemane," 226).

¹²⁴ Gerald Janzen presents a provocative reading of Job as a lamenting mediator on behalf of all suffering humanity, and argues that Job follows the tradition of Abraham in Genesis 18 by standing before God to persuade God to judge rightly; see J. Gerald Janzen, *Job*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985). The Ezra of 4 Ezra also has many of the characteristics of a prophet-mediator who laments on behalf of both Israel and all humanity, charging God with not behaving according to God's own justice.

¹²⁵ For obvious reasons, Abraham's intercession does not draw on the covenant relationship, appealing instead to God's justice. In some ways, Israel's election marks a decisive shift in the nature of intercession, which thereafter always takes place within the covenant relationship. Like Moses and other intercessors, however, Abraham invokes God's own character—and God's relationship to all humanity—as the grounds for his petition.

At ten, Abraham rests his case – strikingly, before YHWH ever refuses Abraham’s request. Abraham’s intercession is ultimately unsuccessful; he fails to avert God’s judgment, and the city is destroyed.¹²⁶

Moses repeatedly argues with God on behalf of Israel from within the context of God’s covenant promises. Moses intercedes at length for Israel at two pivotal moments, in Exodus 32-34 and Numbers 13-14.¹²⁷ In both cases, Israel has committed a grave sin: respectively, the worship of the golden calf, and unbelief and rebellion against God’s plan. Both times, Moses’ intercession prevents YHWH from completely destroying or abandoning Israel. Moses uses God’s own promises and character as evidence against God; he beseeches the Lord to remember the promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and points out that YHWH’s reputation among the other nations would suffer if God destroyed God’s own people (Exod 32:11-14; Num 14:17-19; Deut 9:7-29).

After the Israelites worship the golden calf, YHWH tries to distance himself from the people, but Moses firmly reminds YHWH of his ownership of Israel. YHWH informs Moses that “*your* people...have become corrupt” (Exod 32:7, emphasis added), but Moses asks God why God’s anger should “burn hot against *your* people, whom you brought out of Egypt” (Exod 32:11, emphasis added). Moses does not dispute that Israel sinned against God by worshiping the golden calf, but he calls upon God to be faithful to God’s covenant, quoting back to YHWH God’s own promises to Abraham in Genesis 17:1-8. Likewise, Moses’ intercessory prayer in Numbers 14:17-19 appeals to the

¹²⁶ However, YHWH granted Abraham’s petition on the grounds on which Abraham prayed it.

¹²⁷ Widmer selectively surveys recent works on Old Testament intercessory prayer that reference Moses (Eichrodt, Hesse, Scharbert, Aurelius, Muffs, Balentine, Miller, Seitz) (Widmer, 28-56).

revelation of YHWH's name in Exodus 34:6-7, and requests that God act accordingly, "just as you have declared" (Num 14:17).¹²⁸

Psalm 106:23 invokes the image of Moses as one who "stands in the breach" between a sinful people and an angry God, as in Ezekiel 22:30. The psalm celebrates that Moses' intercession kept God from destroying Israel despite Israel's sin. In a rabbinic tradition about Moses' death, God wonders, "Who shall protect Israel in the hour of My anger? ... And who will speak for them when they sin against Me?"¹²⁹ Moses is the intercessor *par excellence*, who adroitly uses this special form of lament to convince God to continue in covenant relationship with the people.

Daniel makes use of a somewhat different form of intercessory prayer, one more akin to the penitential lament psalms (e.g., Psalm 51). In Daniel 9, he prays a lengthy intercessory prayer in which he pleads with God in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes (9:3). Daniel openly describes Israel's sin and rebellion, and asks God "in keeping with your righteous acts" to turn away his anger. Like Moses, Abraham, and some of the lamenting psalmists, Daniel invokes God's merciful character as the reason for his petition: "We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy" (9:18). He then concludes with a series of imperative petitions: Listen (הִשְׁמָעוּ)! Forgive (סְלַח)! Hear (הִשְׁמָעוּ)! Act (עֲשׂוּ)! Do not delay

¹²⁸ Widmer suggests that Numbers 14:11-35 is an innerbiblical commentary on Exodus 34:6-7; *ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁹ Muffs, 33 (see also n.11 on p. 47). Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu, in a commentary on Exod 32:9-10, points out, "From this verse you may infer that the Holy One, blessed be He, is suggesting to Moses that he should plead for mercy in their behalf. ..." (Samuel A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* [Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing, 1996], 603).

(אַל־תִּצְטַחַר) (9:19). Like Moses, he suggests that God's reputation is at stake (9:16b, 19b). While Daniel is still praying, the angel Gabriel arrives to assure Daniel that his prayer was heard; God will respond to heal, save, rescue, and restore.

Although the interceding lament of the prophet is widespread in the Old Testament, it seems infrequent or absent in the New Testament. If it appears anywhere, it manifests itself in the actions and prayers of Jesus Christ. Westermann argues that Jesus' cry from the cross "stands in continuity" with the Old Testament history of the lament of the mediator, and "can be viewed as the goal of that history."¹³⁰ Yet Jesus does not continue this tradition so much as he represents its culmination and fulfillment.

Jesus' laments are not strictly the intercessory laments of a prophetic mediator. He does not argue with God on behalf of Israel. Rather, God sends his beloved Son *to* Israel. Jesus does not complain to God about Israel's exile or suffering and demand that God act justly; Jesus *is* the display of God's justice and the one who announces the end of Israel's exile. In the New Testament, the prophet no longer needs to intercede continually between the people and God in order to avert God's wrath; rather, Jesus Christ has permanently "stepped into the breach" between humanity and God. Whereas God expected the prophets to intercede for the people and call forth God's mercy in the face of sin, according to the gospel God has sent this final prophet-intercessor for the people and, in some New Testament traditions, for the whole world.¹³¹

On the other hand, Jesus' laments on the cross stand in continuity with the Old Testament tradition of the lamenting prophet-mediator because of the way he dies on

¹³⁰ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 276.

¹³¹ Furthermore, the link between suffering and God's punishment, already challenged in the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Job, is largely broken in the New Testament (e.g., John 9:3).

behalf of “the many” (Matt 20:28; 26:27; Mark 10:45; 14:24), and because of the way he prays for others as he dies (e.g., Luke 23:34). In this way, Jesus’ laments can be viewed as the goal of the Old Testament tradition of the prophet-mediator because Jesus is the ultimate mediator for all Israel and all humanity.¹³²

4.5.2 From Imprecation to Intercession

Jesus mediates for sinful humanity and forgives his enemies within the context of his laments. Because of this, Patrick Miller argues that Jesus’ cross and resurrection has fundamentally transformed Christian lament into intercession for the other. Christians learn to pray the way Jesus prayed, which means interceding even in the midst of lament (Luke 23:34).¹³³ Claus Westermann, likewise, proposes that Christ’s entering into human suffering changes the nature of the lament itself: “complaints about enemies no longer have to lead to petitions directed against these enemies. Into the place formerly occupied by petitions against enemies comes, as the passion story indicates, intercession *for* them.”¹³⁴

¹³² Paul’s laments in Romans 9-11 are similar to the laments of a mediator. Romans 9 opens with Paul’s anguish over his people Israel. His sorrow over Israel’s non-acceptance of Jesus as Messiah is so great that he even wishes he might be accursed and cut off from Christ for their sake (9:3). Rather than complain to God or question God’s faithfulness, Romans 9-11 present a sustained argument that God’s word has *not* failed (9:6) and that God’s ultimate plan for both Jew and Gentile will not be thwarted. In this respect, Paul argues not on behalf of the people, but on behalf of God, defending God’s righteousness in the face of contrary evidence. Both Old and New Testament scholars, however, have noted the similarity between Romans 9:3 and Moses’ request in Exodus 32:32 (Widmer, 131; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC 38B [Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988], 532). Jesus also intercedes in John 17, a section of John often designated Jesus’ “high priestly prayer,” when he prays publicly for protection for his disciples and for all those who would come to believe in him. Jesus intercedes with God on behalf of others not because of God’s anger, but because of the evil one and the hatred of the world (John 17:14-15). In this case, Jesus’ prayer fits the form of intercession but not the intercessory complaint of the mediator.

¹³³ Patrick D. Miller, “Heaven’s Prisoners: The Lament as Christian Prayer,” in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 23.

¹³⁴ Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content and Message* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 125.

This does not mean that Christians no longer lament. As Miller writes, "...in the Christian experience of Christ's cross and resurrection, our suffering does not disappear, nor does it mean there can be no lament, but it is the case that the suffering of our neighbor matters more than our own."¹³⁵ The implication of the shift into intercession for the suffering neighbor—even when that neighbor is an enemy—raises the question of whether imprecation remains a viable part of the lament for Christian practice.

Laments in the Old Testament, especially in the psalms, frequently include petitions against the enemy. Complaint about enemies is so central to lament that Westermann names it as one of the three constitutive features of the lament.¹³⁶ Imprecatory psalms, which focus on the cursing or punishment of the enemy, are the psalms that pose the most difficulty to the Christian tradition because of Jesus' teachings about loving and blessing the enemy. Lectionaries tend to avoid or truncate the imprecatory psalms (e.g., instructing the reading of all of Psalm 139 except verses 19-22).¹³⁷

The church has typically adopted two disparate approaches to the imprecatory strand of lament: to avoid it altogether, arguing that Jesus' commands to love the enemy definitively rule out voicing imprecatory texts like Psalm 137; or to pray imprecation through the lens of Christ's self-giving sacrifice on behalf of all, taking up anger against

¹³⁵ Email correspondence, 11/26/10.

¹³⁶ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 169. The three components are God, the lamenter, and the enemy.

¹³⁷ In a contemporary example, Nan Merrill rewrites the psalms to remove violent language and replace references to "enemies" with words like "fear," in order to create prayers that are "more applicable" to contemporary life situations; Nan C. Merrill, *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness* (New York: Continuum, 1996). On the one hand, this is an understandable attempt to appropriate difficult pieces of Scripture for present-day prayer; it is also, however, a telling illustration of how troubling the imprecations in the lament psalms can be for Christians.

the enemy as a form of righteous indignation against injustice while reserving vengeance for God. The latter option finds surer footing in the New Testament, when one considers the scope of the lament texts.

The lament texts of the New Testament reveal a certain tension between two commitments: forgiveness and blessing for the enemy, as represented by Jesus' prayer from the cross in Luke 23:34; and trust in God's justice and longing for the punishment of evil, as represented by the lamenting cry of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-10. While the Old Testament lament texts lean toward the latter commitment, rather than the former, it is easy to overstate the differences between the two Testaments on this point. For example, Gary Anderson observes the remarkable rejection of retributive justice in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers.¹³⁸ The New Testament itself does not shy away from woes on those who burden God's people (Matt 18:6-7; 23:13-33) or from descriptions of judgment on evildoers (Matt 13:41-42, 49-50; Luke 13:24-28).

Both Old and New Testaments reserve vengeance for God (Deut 32:35; Ps 94:1; Isa 63:4; cf. Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30).¹³⁹ God's vengeance is closely related to the prayer of lament because it reveals "God's zeal for 'his' purposes of justice and freedom... (cf. Isa 55:6-9)."¹⁴⁰ The lament of the martyrs in Revelation aptly displays the close connection between God's vengeance, justice, and lament (see section 4.5.2.2 below).

Whereas the lament psalms uniformly call on God to defeat and destroy the enemy, accusation against the enemy recedes in the Servant Songs of Isaiah, in which the

¹³⁸ The cycle of sacrifices was broken by Judah's willingness to step in and offer himself in the place of his younger brother (Gary A. Anderson, "Joseph and the Passion of Our Lord," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003], 198-215).

¹³⁹ See Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1982), 70-3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

Servant as a mediator bears the sins of others and intercedes for the transgressors (Isa 53:12).¹⁴¹ Jesus takes up the role of Isaiah's Suffering Servant by bearing the sins of many, and by making intercession for the transgressors when he prays from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).¹⁴² Also in fulfillment of Isaiah, Jesus embodies Israel as a light to the nations; the Gentile nations are no longer the enemy but are included into God's kingdom.¹⁴³ Those who persecute Jesus and his followers are not enemies either but potential friends and fellow-disciples (Rom 12:14-21). In this way, Jesus' laments amplify the theology of Second Isaiah by petitioning God not only for his own trouble but for others as well, including enemies as the others for whom he prays. Despite this continuity with Isaiah, the forgiveness of the enemy signals a genuine shift within the pattern of lament in the New Testament, from imprecation toward intercession.

4.5.2.1 Lament and Forgiveness of the Enemy

Daniel Bell and John Swinton provide two different accounts of the relationships between forgiveness and suffering, and forgiveness and lament, respectively. Together, their accounts demonstrate that Jesus' laments forge a direct relationship between lament and forgiving the enemy.

¹⁴¹ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 278.

¹⁴² Several important early manuscripts lack this verse, including P⁷⁵, B, and D; it is the original reading of κ , but is rejected in a later correction. It is plausible that a scribe omitted it in anti-Judaic resistance to the image of Jesus forgiving the Jews who crucified him. No significant variant exists for Acts 7:60, where Stephen prays a kind of parallel prayer; because of the multiple parallels between Jesus' and Stephen's deaths, this strengthens the possibility that Luke 23:34 was an original tradition. Moreover, it coheres with Luke 6:27-28 and offers one more example of Jesus fulfilling his own teaching. The teaching to forgive enemies and persecutors has multiple and widespread attestation in Luke and in the wider New Testament.

¹⁴³ Harris Birkeland proposes that the enemies in the psalms are foreigners – i.e., the Gentiles. See Harris Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms* (Oslo: I kommisjon hos J. Dybwad, 1955).

Bell defines forgiveness as “the refusal to cease suffering by shifting that suffering onto another by taking up the sword of justice.”¹⁴⁴ While he recognizes that practicing forgiveness could indicate passivity, he argues that forgiving is not resignation but is an active practice of “crucified love” within a space made possible by Christ’s suffering and death.¹⁴⁵ Forgiveness does not celebrate suffering, but “is about entering into suffering, bearing it, *in the hope of bearing it away*.”¹⁴⁶ Bell’s definition of forgiveness overlaps with two features of lament noted in my Chapter 3 (see sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.4): the potential of lament to enter into the other’s suffering in solidarity; and the way that lament presses toward change and therefore the removal of suffering. Of course, lament and forgiveness are two distinct practices; but Bell demonstrates the way that these practices could reinforce one another. Bell wagers everything on forgiveness as an act of hope in God’s ultimate power to remove suffering. Forgiveness witnesses to God’s action in Christ to overcome sin through forgiveness rather than through distributive justice: those who forgive “are wagering that God is who the Gospel proclaims God to be, the one who defeats sin and wipes away every tear...”¹⁴⁷

Lament, too, is a wager on God that stakes everything on God’s promise to hear cries and to redeem, rescue, and help. While Bell does not name lament as a practice in tandem with forgiveness, his account of forgiveness as an act of trust resonates with the lament as an act of ultimate trust in God and as intercession on behalf of the other,

¹⁴⁴ Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001), 149. Bell is interested in forgiveness as “a fount of resistance to the capitalist order” (161).

¹⁴⁵ Bell borrows this concept from liberation theologians such as Jon Sobrino and Leonardo Boff.

¹⁴⁶ Bell, 193, emphasis added.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

including the enemy. In Bell's account, forgiveness, like lament, is an active practice within a community and has the power to effect real change. Because Bell finds justice a problematic and inadequate category, however, his account attends less well to the central role of justice in the Old Testament tradition of calling upon God to act justly according to God's own righteous character.

Swinton deals more directly with the relationship between lament and forgiveness. In his book on "Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil" (the book's subtitle), he deliberately places chapters on the practices of lament and forgiveness back-to-back. He describes lament as a practice of resistance to and deliverance from evil, and describes its potential to move those struggling with anger into healing and hope.¹⁴⁸ Swinton bridges from the practice of lament to forgiveness by suggesting that the act of lamenting—by handing evil over to God, relinquishing vengeance, and trusting God—enables one to move from bitterness to forgiveness of the "perpetrators of evil."¹⁴⁹ By giving voice to anger, and by trusting God to bear that anger and to deal decisively with evil, lament can facilitate a turn toward forgiveness to the perpetrator of evil. Swinton proposes a role for even imprecation in the Christian prayer of lament.

The imprecatory psalms "may point to a way out of the slavery of revenge and into the freedom of forgiveness," because they "[enable] us both to express and hand over our rage to the crucified God."¹⁵⁰ He draws here on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who writes that

¹⁴⁸ John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). I am largely in agreement with Swinton's characterization of lament, but I am concerned that his focus on the "catharsis" of lament leans toward treating lament as therapy, i.e., as an instrument to move one towards forgiveness, rather than as an important practice in its own right. This characterization may be due in part to Swinton's focus on victims and perpetrators.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 174, quoting Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 175.

the enemies of the lament psalms are the enemies of God's cause, and thus vengeance is always entrusted entirely to God (cf. Rom 12:19). Furthermore, "I cannot by myself forgive God's enemies, only the Crucified can do that, but through him I may do it too."¹⁵¹ Lament does not relinquish hopes for justice; nor does it expect the one suffering to forgive her enemies on her own power. Rather, as in Bell's account, it relies on God's act in Christ to overcome enemies not with evil but with self-giving love, and it too stakes everything on God's ultimate victory over evil, sin, and death.

Using imprecatory psalms to express rage and pain over hurt has a clear pastoral function. Yet as Swinton and Bonhoeffer suggest, imprecation also plays a theological role. If imprecation is at its heart an angry cry for God's justice in the face of evil, while yet turning active vengeance over to God, then imprecation remains a key part of lament in the New Testament, as demonstrated in the book of Revelation.

4.5.2.2 Lament as Longing for God's Justice (Rev 6:9-10)

Just such a prayer for justice appears in the lament of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-10. In Revelation 6, the angel opens the fifth seal, and John sees under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered¹⁵² because of the word of God and their testimony to it. They cry out with a loud voice (φωνῆ μεγάλῃ, which echoes Jesus' cry with a "loud voice" from the cross, Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46). After they invoke God's name (*sovereign Lord*) and God's character (*holy and true*), they pray in the typical words of a lament: *How long?* (ἕως πότε; which appears in the LXX in Pss 6:4; 12:2, 3; 73:10; 78:5; 79:5; 81:2; 88:47; 89:13; 93:3).

¹⁵¹ Bonhoeffer, 21-22.

¹⁵² Using the verb σφάζω, the same word used to describe the "slaughtered" Lamb (Rev 5:6, 9, 12).

The content of their petition is simple: they ask God to judge and to avenge their blood. In verse 11, they receive a response (the passive suggests a divine response): they are given white robes (signs of their sinlessness or purity; cf. Rev 7:14) and told to remain a little while longer. In other words, God has heard their cries, and although the angel never specifically reports that God *will* avenge them, the answer implies that the martyrs will be vindicated as soon as the time is completed or fulfilled, whenever their other fellow-servants and brothers have also been killed (Rev 6:11). This fits with the overall message of Revelation that the wicked will be judged, the righteous will be vindicated, and God will finally destroy even death and come to dwell with God's people forever: the longing of lament for ultimate vindication. The distress of the martyrs occurs in the context of persecution under the Roman Empire, returning us once more to the theme of lament's social location in settings of stress, suffering, and oppression. The martyrs do not pray for those who persecute them, nor do they ask for their forgiveness; they cry out for justice. This does not necessarily negate Jesus' instructions to love the enemy and pray for the persecutor, but it brings to the forefront the problem of justice in relation to forgiveness.

In Romans 12, where Paul echoes Jesus' teaching to bless those who persecute, the apostle also quotes Deuteronomy to argue that vengeance belongs to God alone, and to assure that God will bring justice (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19). Because it is God who deals with evil, the congregation can renounce their own revenge and overcome evil with good rather than with evil. Likewise, the martyrs in Revelation appeal to God's justice, to his role as a judge, and cry out to the Lord to avenge their blood.¹⁵³ As Bruce Chilton

¹⁵³ In Abraham's bargaining session with God over the fate of Sodom, he also appeals to God as the "judge of all the earth" and asks whether God will do justly. In Gen 12, however, for God to do justly

notes, the lament of the martyrs in Revelation “articulates a deeply human response to injustice, a sense of rage and pain at one and the same time.”¹⁵⁴ This is an integral part of lament, after all: a prayer that protests injustice and evil in all its forms, and demands help in the form of God’s justice (toward evil) and God’s mercy (toward the suffering).

The Revelation lament demonstrates that New Testament lament encompasses cries for justice alongside the ethic of enemy-love and forgiveness. Cries of anger and pleas for justice play a role in petitioning God for redemption, especially in settings of oppression or widespread suffering at human hands. Far from being incommensurable with the New Testament witness, imprecatory psalms illumine God’s commitment to justice and compassion for the suffering.¹⁵⁵ Yet the New Testament’s injunctions to bless and love even the enemy provide a powerful check or counterbalance to vengeful desires to hurt the enemy in the course of securing God’s justice.

4.5.2.3 Weeping with Those Who Weep

After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit assumes an intercessory and intermediary role for Jesus’ followers (John 14:16-17, 25; 16:13-15; Rom 8:26-27). Likewise, the responsibility to intercede for one another becomes the role of all

means *not* to exercise the judgment he has planned and to show mercy instead, because punishing the wicked in Sodom would mean punishing the righteous along with them.

¹⁵⁴ Bruce D. Chilton, “The Revelation of John: Lament and Praise,” *Living Pulpit* 11, no. 4 (2002): 8. See also the chapter on vengeance in Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms*.

¹⁵⁵ I am not proposing their indiscriminate use in worship. As John Thompson cautions, they have been misappropriated in the past as anti-Jewish polemic, and they can provide convenient vehicles for uncritically identifying and condemning present-day enemies. See John Lee Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead: What You can Learn from the History of Exegesis that You Can’t Learn from Exegesis Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 68-70. Yet these psalms can be appropriated in thoughtful ways to allow people to express rage and grief in God’s presence and within the community. During a study of Psalm 137 with a small group in a congregation, one participant said, “I hope I never need this prayer, but if I ever do, I’m glad to know it’s there.”

Christians and not just one prophetic mediator (Rom 15:30; Phil 1:19; Eph 6:18).¹⁵⁶

Lamenting even on behalf of the enemy reconfigures the enemy from an adversary to be defeated, into a potential neighbor in need of God's justice and God's mercy.

The image of enemies rejoicing over the misfortune of their adversary occurs frequently in Scripture.¹⁵⁷ Friends and companions, on the other hand, always share in the lamenter's distress (Psalm 35:13-14; Job 2:11-13). To rejoice in another's pain is to become an enemy.¹⁵⁸ To rejoice at another's happiness and to mourn with them in their sorrow is to become a friend and a neighbor (cf. Rom 12:15). The intercession of lament takes on the suffering of the other and lifts it up to God in complaint and petition, asking that God help the one who suffers. To mourn with another in their sorrow is not simply to shed tears with them, but to enter into their pain such that one laments on behalf of the suffering other, demanding God's justice and mercy on their behalf – turning even the suffering enemy into a potential friend and neighbor.

4.5.3 Jesus' Prophetic Mourning over Jerusalem

The second form of prophetic lament is more precisely a form of the dirge, which is the mourning of the prophet over the misfortune of Israel or more specifically the fall of Jerusalem. For example, Lamentations opens with a heartfelt dirge over Zion's ruin,

¹⁵⁶ The church is, in fulfillment of Exodus 19:6, a kingdom of priests (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10). Scharbert, in *Die Fürbitte in der Theologie und Die Fürbitte im Alten Testament*, argues that the Old Testament intercessory prayer developed from an exclusive prayer to an inclusive one. In the exclusive prayer, the mediator is separate from the people, consecrated to mediate for them; but in the later inclusive prayer, the intercessor includes himself in the sin of the people and prays for "us" (e.g., Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah) (Widmer, 40-41). After Christ, the perfect mediator, only inclusive intercession is possible (ibid., 42).

¹⁵⁷ 1 Sam 2:1; 2 Sam 1:20; Isa 14:29; Ezek 25:6; 35:14; 36:5; Mic 7:8; Obad 12; Ps 35:15, 19, 24, 26; 38:17; 58:11; 89:43; Prov 17:5; 24:17; Job 31:25; Lam 2:17; 4:21; Esth 5:14; 2 Chron 20:27. Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 93.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 94.

with the mourner alternating between an unknown speaker (perhaps a prophet, or Jeremiah as in the Septuagint text) and Zion herself. Similarly, an angel in Revelation 13 speaks a dirge for the coming fall of Babylon (i.e., Rome). This kind of “lament” is an act of mourning for present or future, inevitable, destruction. Occasionally, the grief of the prophet or the people merges with divine grief as God mourns God’s own punishment of the elect people.

Divine mourning signifies God’s anger or pain over Israel’s breaking of the covenant, and God’s subsequent judgment (see Chapter 5, section 5.2). It is closely related to the first form of prophetic lament, the prophetic intercession, because it reveals God’s longing not to bring disaster on the people (or God’s grief at the destruction that has already occurred), and thus forms the basis for God’s hope that the prophet will intervene to turn aside God’s wrath through intercession. This form of prophetic lament, then, is related to divine mourning over the people’s disobedience and downfall.

Jeremiah 8-9 contains the most striking examples of this kind of divine grief. Identifying the speaker throughout the book of Jeremiah is exceedingly difficult.¹⁵⁹ In many of the so-called laments of Jeremiah, it is not clear whether it is God or the prophet who speaks words of lament (i.e., dirge) over Jerusalem regarding her destruction and the people’s exile. An example of this ambiguity occurs in Jeremiah 8:18-9:3. The prophet seems to be the speaker in 8:18, and most commentators assume that his speech continues through 9:2. If this is true, Jeremiah’s barrage of questions addressed to God sound like *Anklage*, or accusatory lament. “Isn’t the Lord here? ... Isn’t Israel’s king in Jerusalem? ... The summer is ended, and we are not saved. ... Is there no balm in Gilead?” In Jeremiah 9:3,

¹⁵⁹ See, e.g., Biddle, “Polyphony and Symphony”; Kathleen M. O’Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

however, the text identifies the LORD as the speaker. Where has the transition occurred? Is it Jeremiah or the LORD who wishes that his eyes were a fountain of tears, so that he could weep day and night for his slain people? The prophet's tears merge and mingle with God's tears.¹⁶⁰ The LORD also weeps over the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in Jeremiah 9:9-11; 13:15-17; and 14:17-18.

Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem fits into this second type of prophetic mourning, in that it represents both a type of dirge over the city, and God's grief over Jerusalem's unwillingness to accept Jesus as her true prophet. Although Matthew and Luke record Jesus' grieving over Jerusalem in nearly identical words, they place it into different contexts. In Luke, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (13:22)—a detail fraught with theological rather than merely geographical significance—and he has just taught about the narrow way of salvation and the feast of the kingdom of God, bringing a sense of eschatological urgency to the forefront. Just then some Pharisees come to warn Jesus that Herod is trying to kill him, but Jesus insists that he must go to Jerusalem and indicates that he knows he will die there, a comment that foreshadows the stoning and killing of the prophets in his ensuing "lament." In Matthew, Jesus' "lament" occurs at the end of a polemical series of woes pronounced on the scribes and Pharisees, which (among other things) set up the accusation that Jerusalem stones the prophets sent to her.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ I am grateful to Samuel Wells for bringing this feature of the text to my attention.

¹⁶¹ Matthew's phrase "murders from Abel to Zechariah" refers to the first and last murders in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 4; 2 Chron 24); see W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 319. Ulrich Luz suggests that the harshness of Matthew's polemic is due to the community's recent, painful separation from the synagogue (Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989], 170-2).

Both contexts emphasize in their own way the death of Israel's prophets, and foreshadow the death of Jesus as a prophet in Jerusalem. Like other prophets who suffered because of their vocation as God's messenger, Jesus faces suffering and death because of his role as God's anointed one.¹⁶² As other prophets (and the Lord) mourned over Israel's disobedience, Jesus grieves over Jerusalem's unwillingness to be gathered "under his wings" (ὕπὸ τὰς πτέρυγας, Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). The image of resting under the wings of a mother bird occurs in the book of Ruth, in a blessing Boaz gives to Ruth: "may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!" (2:12). A similar text, portraying YHWH as a bird who hovers over its young and carries them in its pinions, appears in Deut 32:11-12: "As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the LORD alone guided him [his people/Jacob]; no foreign god was with him." The "young" of Deuteronomy echoes the "children" of Luke and Matthew (τὰ τέκνα, Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). As a mother eagle or hen protects her young, the Lord spreads the wings of protection over God's children – i.e., all Israel, the people for whom YHWH feels parental, even maternal, affection (Isa 49:15; 66:13; Hos 11:1-4). The safety, help, and mercy that Israel finds under the shadow of God's wings is a fairly frequent metaphor in the Psalms (17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; cf. 2 Baruch 41:3; 4 Ezra 1:30). Jesus' mourning expresses God's own longing to gather God's people; their rejection of Jesus entails resistance to God's intentions.

¹⁶² Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 277. "In the intertestamental sources, the link between prophet and martyrdom becomes almost fixed, and 'the fate of the prophet' is typically violent death" (Davies and Allison, 1:465). For "all the prophets," see Luke 13:28; 24:27. For the suffering of the prophets, see Luke 4:24; 6:23; 11:47-52; Acts 7:52; cf. Matt 21:35. For the idea that the true prophet must suffer see Luke 13:31-33; Matt 5:11-12//Luke 6:22; Matt 23:34-36//Luke 11:49-51.

Jesus' desire to "gather" (ἐπισυνάγω) the children echoes God's desire to restore the people (cf. Psalm 106:47; 147:2; Isa 27:12). God has sent Jesus to restore Israel, to regather the exiles and enact the kingdom of God, but they are not willing. Two desires compete in deliberate, stark contrast: Jesus' desire to gather Jerusalem's children together (ἠθέλησα), and their desire *not* to be gathered (οὐκ ἠθελήσατε). Just as the children function as a trope for all Jerusalem, rather than as literal children, the city of Jerusalem is "a cipher for Israel as a whole," in both Matthew and Luke.¹⁶³ Jesus' longing reflects precisely God's longing for God's people, and his weeping mirrors the dirges of other prophets and God's own weeping over the fall of Zion.

Jesus concludes with the enigmatic prophetic pronouncement "ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν" (Matthew adds the word "desolate" – ἔρημος). This phrase may suggest God's judgment and desertion of the temple, i.e., the *Lord's* house.¹⁶⁴ Matthew's subsequent context makes this possibility explicit: just after announcing that God will abandon the temple, Jesus leaves the temple and goes to the Mount of Olives, paralleling a text in Ezekiel where YHWH performs the same actions (Matt 24:1-2; Ezek 10:18-19; 11:23).¹⁶⁵

Jesus then says, with minor variations in the two accounts, that they will not see him again until they say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord," a direct quotation of the extant LXX text of Psalm 117:26 (Ps 118 MT). Of course, in both Matthew and Luke, people *do* say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the

¹⁶³ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 537.

¹⁶⁴ The judgment language is drawn from Jer 12:1-7; 22:5; Deut 32:11; Ps 91:4; Isa 31:5. The following verse in the Psalm 118 quotation also supports this reading with its allusion to the temple as "the house of the Lord."

¹⁶⁵ Luz, 2:158.

Lord” (Matthew preserves the exact quotation; Luke inserts ὁ βασιλεὺς after ἐρχόμενος) – when Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem for the first time in the narratives. Yet in neither case do the residents of Jerusalem or the religious leaders quote Psalm 118. In Luke, it is “a great crowd of disciples” who shout the words of the psalm, and the Pharisees immediately tell Jesus to rebuke them. (In Matthew, the indignation of the chief priests and scribes comes shortly after Jesus arrives in the city and begins healing in the temple; see Matthew 21:14-15.) In Matthew, a large crowd spreads branches and cloaks on the road and calls out the verse from the psalm. This crowd, however, apparently comprises pilgrims accompanying Jesus on his way into Jerusalem for the festival rather than residents of the city (Matthew 21:10-11 differentiates the crowds from the whole city).

Still, the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy in the triumphal entry suggests that some have, in fact, “seen” him and recognized him as the Son of David, the Messiah—in Luke, the king—while others see him but fail to recognize or understand who he is (Matt 21:10; Luke 19:39).¹⁶⁶ Indeed, in Luke, immediately following the shouts of acclaim from Psalm 118 and the Pharisees’ rebuke, Jesus once again weeps over the city as he approaches it: “If in these days you—even you—had known the things that make for peace! But now it is hidden from your eyes.” Then he predicts the defeat of Jerusalem by her enemies and

¹⁶⁶ T. J. Lang suggests that the key to the saying about “seeing” Jesus comes in Luke 17:22: “The days are coming when you will desire one of the days of the Son of Man to see, and you will not see”; T.J. Lang, ““You will desire to see and you will not see [it]”: Reading Luke 17:22 as Antanaclasis,” *JSNT* 33, no. 3 (2011): 281-302. Lang proposes treating the two occurrences of ὁράω as antanaclasis; that is, Jesus predicts that the disciples will long to “see” (as in witness) the days of the Son of Man, but that they will not “see” (as in comprehend) these days when they do arrive. The disciples cannot perceive the days of the Son of Man because they fail to understand that suffering is central to Jesus’ identity as the Son of Man. In Matt 23:39 and Luke 13:35, it is “Jerusalem” rather than disciples who will not “see” Jesus again until they speak the blessing of Psalm 118, but the same double-meaning of “seeing” Jesus and understanding his true identity rings true in these contexts as well.

the devastation of the city (the verb ἐδαφίζω provides a faint but ominous echo of Psalm 136:9 LXX).

Jesus' weeping foreshadows his own death; the text subtly implies that if Israel had allowed God to gather her under God's wings, and had interrupted her long history as the one who killed God's messengers, then perhaps Jesus would not have died in Jerusalem but would have been welcomed as the coming king by the whole city and not just by his disciples or other Galilean pilgrims.¹⁶⁷

By using language reflecting God's own desires for God's people, Jesus speaks a dirge over Jerusalem's rejection and her coming destruction, and he participates in a form of divine grief. Similarly, when Jesus laments from the cross, his identity as the Son of God means that the divine self, the Trinity, somehow participates in his human laments. The meaning and function of divine lament is the subject of my next chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Joel Green argues that Jesus' death is "at the same time the act of those who oppose him and an event grounded in God's purpose and intended by Jesus himself"; see Green, 536 n.78; see also John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 68-9. When Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, perhaps he grieves indirectly over the necessity of his own death as well.

5. Divine Lament

5.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters explored the significance of Jesus' identity—as fully human and as the Messiah of the God of Israel—for the role that lament plays in the New Testament and by inference how this might shape a Christian practice of lament. This chapter considers one final aspect of Jesus' identity and how it intersects with the practice of lament: Jesus' divinity or oneness with God.

This chapter has four parts: first, I offer a brief summary of the Old Testament background for the concept of divine lament, which I define as a form of divine mourning that arises from Israel's rebellion or disobedience, and whose ultimate goal is always the restoration of Israel.

Second, I briefly consider the question of divine lament in relation to the doctrine of divine impassibility by summarizing the arguments of the “suffering God” theologians (represented by Jürgen Moltmann), and the arguments of theologians who seek to defend God's impassibility (represented by David Hart). I propose that, for all their differences, the two sides converge at the point of God's steadfast love for suffering humanity.

Third, I explore the Trinitarian implications of Jesus' laments as the Son of God by reading Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 as a true divine lament: God the Son laments to God the Father. As divine lament, Jesus' cry continues and transforms the Old Testament tradition of divine mourning by taking up human lament into the divine life. I suggest that two wider contexts—the whole of Psalm 22 and the crucifixion scenes of Luke and John—press us toward interpreting Jesus' cry as a manifestation of God's passionate

involvement with the world *and* of God's steadfast love, mirroring the convergence between Moltmann (et al.) and Hart (et al.).

Finally, a brief investigation of Romans 8 reveals the Holy Spirit's ongoing role in Christian prayers of lament, in the eschatological tension between the now and the not yet.

5.2 Divine Mourning in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the God of Israel repents, grieves, changes God's mind, becomes frustrated, and expresses indignation and anger. God, of course, is not a human being, any more than God is a rock or an eagle. As Abraham Heschel wryly paraphrases, "My pathos is not your pathos" (cf. Isa 55:8f.).¹ God repents and suffers in ways that are continuous with, but not identical, to human repentance and human suffering.² The Old Testament's vivid description of God's "emotions" signals God's passionate involvement with humanity.³

According to the definition of lament that I adopt in this project, God does not lament. Lament is a prayer to God for help; God never addresses such a plea to Godself.⁴

¹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 276. For Heschel's discussion of God's pathos, see pages 221-31; see also pages 247-67 for the discomfort of later Jewish and Christian theologians with God's pathos, and pages 268-78 on the challenge of anthropopathy and anthropomorphism. See also Ulrich W. Mauser, "Image of God and Incarnation," *Interpretation* 24, no. 3 (1970): 336-56. For the rabbinic debates over God's Klage, see Beate Ego, "Israels Not und Gottes Klage: zu einem Theologumenon der rabbinischen Literatur," in *Klage*, ed. Martin Ebner et al., JBTh 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 91-108.

² Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 8.

³ Heschel, 226, 231. Identifying God's pathos as relationality rather than changeability becomes important in the debate over God's impassibility (see section 5.3 below).

⁴ Of course, the only possible exception to this rule occurs in the New Testament, in the form of Jesus' "Trinitarian" laments, which I discuss below. Some scholars refer to God's lament, but others avoid the term in relation to YHWH. Erhard Gerstenberger refers to the "lamenting character" of some of God's speeches (Erhard Gerstenberger, *Suffering*, ed. Wolfgang Schrage [Nashville: Abingdon, 1980], 98-102). In

Therefore, I use the terminology of divine mourning or divine grief rather than divine lament. God's mourning, however, is related to the human prayer of lament. When YHWH mourns, the divine grieving invokes God's compassion and turns the heart of God toward the same responses prompted by human lament – God turns from judgment to mercy, relenting, healing, and rescuing. Just as God's faithfulness is at stake in human lament, it is human *unfaithfulness* that elicits God's mourning. The goal of God's mourning is always to restore Israel back to covenant relationship.

5.2.1 God Grieves over Israel's Unfaithfulness

As I proposed in Chapter 1, God's faithfulness provides the basis for Israel's lament. That is, the one who suffers cries out to God because God is the faithful one who hears and responds to cries. When the Lord appears to be silent in the face of injustice or suffering, Israel complains that the Lord is not keeping God's own promises or being true to God's own character.

The basis for God's commitment to humanity and to Israel arises out of God's identity: first as creator and sustainer of all humanity, and second as the God who rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt and called them to be YHWH's special people. Divine mourning arises from a rupture in one of these relationships, either with reference to humanity as a whole or (more often) with reference to Israel. When *humans* lament, they protest God's silence or mourn over their sinfulness, hoping to move God to be merciful and restore harmonious relationship with them. When *God* mourns, God grieves over Israel's rebellion and sin despite God's steadfast faithfulness, and is moved to restore Israel to right relationship.

The Suffering of God, Terence Fretheim describes the differences and similarities between divine lament and human lament; this section is indebted to his helpful account.

In Genesis 6:5-6, for example, God observes how wicked human hearts are, and God grieves over the whole creation, expressing regret that God made humankind. God resolves to destroy and remake creation, preserving only the righteous Noah and his family. After the flood, however, God promises never to destroy the earth or living creatures again. According to Terence Fretheim, the promise in Genesis 9:8-17 never to respond to human sin in this destructive manner again “*necessitates* divine suffering,” because it means that God has decided to open God’s heart to a wicked world, taking up personal suffering “upon God’s own self.”⁵

After the Exodus and the covenant with Israel, YHWH grieves and even complains when Israel has been unfaithful despite God’s steadfast love to the people. In Micah, for example, God asks Israel, “My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me! I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery” (Mic 6:3-4a). Just as the human lamenter sometimes uses examples of God’s past faithfulness to call upon God’s help in the present, YHWH recalls the past acts of YHWH’s own redemption to draw attention to God’s faithfulness and God’s corresponding dismay over Israel’s unfaithfulness.

Another correspondence between divine grief and human lament occurs in the motif of human cry and divine response: the lamenter calls and God answers.⁶ In examples of divine grief, God calls, and the people do not answer.⁷ This lack of responsiveness, despite God’s blamelessness, prompts God’s wounded outrage.

⁵ Fretheim, 112.

⁶ Ibid., 118-9. See Ps 4:3; 17:6; 138:3; cf. Ps 27:7; 141:1. Sometimes the complaint is that God does not answer, as in Ps 22:2; 69:3; 88:9.

⁷ Ps 81:8; Isa 65:1-2; Isa 42:18, 23; 48:12, 18; 65:12; 66:4; Isa 50:2; cf. Mic 6:3.

God's grief, anger, and accusation are multiple aspects of the same divine response to human sin or rebellion.⁸ The divine mourning arises out of a sense of betrayal; God has been faithful and has kept the covenant, but Israel has not.⁹ Most of the texts expressing divine mourning occur in the prophets, demonstrating once again the intermingling of prophetic speech with divine speech, as in my previous chapter.¹⁰ Other examples appear in the Pentateuch, also in connection with the intercession of the prophet-mediator. God's mourning is a form of divine speech because YHWH never keeps God's grief to Godself, but shares it with the prophets and with the people in the hopes of prompting repentance.

Like human lamenters, the Lord asks "Why?" and "How long?" but always with reference to Israel's unfaithfulness (Jer 4:14; 13:27; Hos 8:5; Jer 2:31; 8:5; 8:19c; cf. 2:14b; 30:6; Isa 5:4; 50:2). *Why* has Israel turned away from YHWH? *How long* will it be until they repent and return? During Israel's wandering in the wilderness, when the people murmur against Moses and Aaron, God turns to the prophet Moses with God's own exasperated complaint: "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?" (Num 14:11; cf. Num 14:27; Exod 16:28).¹¹ Similarly, God's constant plaintive

⁸ Grief and accusation together constitute God's anger. "Lament is always an integral aspect of the wrath of God" (ibid., 110). Claus Westermann also notes the connection between God's wrath, judgment, and lament, but treats it as the paradox of "an incomprehensible God, one who judges and also mourns" (Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* [Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981], 280).

⁹ The link between God's "lament" and accusation means that the closest correlation between human and divine lament occurs in the lament psalms when the psalmist complains of being falsely accused by enemies (e.g., Psalms 4, 17, 109). In God's case, however, the "enemy" is Israel, and the problem is the broken relationship with Israel (Fretheim, 109-10).

¹⁰ For examples, see ibid., 109, 116-7, 135.

¹¹ Ibid., 121.

refrain to the prophet Jeremiah is “My people have forgotten me” (2:13; 3:21; 5:7; 13:25; 16:1; 17:13; 18:15; 19:4). The first chapter of Isaiah contains a mixture of divine grief and accusation, a combination of God’s judicial complaint against Israel and God’s grief over their disobedience.¹²

5.2.2 God Mourns over Israel’s Suffering

Israel’s disobedience also arouses God’s justice, and the Lord punishes or threatens to punish the rebellious people. Israel’s sin calls forth God’s judgment, but YHWH then often grieves over God’s own punishment.¹³ God’s grief over the pain of the people leads God to relent from punishing and to restore Israel.

God’s expectation that the prophet will intercede to turn aside God’s anger and arouse God’s mercy indicates that YHWH longs not to punish Israel, but rather to restore her. When Israel’s disobedience does occasion judgment, the prophetic texts often display a divine struggle or anguish over that judgment (Hos 6:4; 11:8; Jer 5:7, 9; 9:7). When God sees Israel’s destruction, God grieves the very thing that God has wrought, not because the decision to punish was unjust, but because Israel belongs to God and is God’s beloved child (Jer 31:20; Hos 11:1-11). God intends to bless, not to curse. God always hopes to prompt repentance, either before the moment of judgment, so that God can withhold punishment altogether, or in the midst of it, so that YHWH may bring

¹² Ibid., 110-114.

¹³ Westermann identifies these as the two types of divine lament in Claus Westermann, “Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament,” *Interpretation* 28, no. 1 (1974): 37-8. Paul Fiddes rejects the notion of an internal struggle within God in the Old Testament prophetic texts, and invokes the permissive will of God to suggest that instead of punishing God simply turns away and allows the natural consequences of sin to occur (Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* [Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1988], 23-5). See also Mauser, 349.

“judgment without annihilation.”¹⁴ For example, in Hosea, God announces judgment (5:14), but then God waits for repentance (5:15), so that God may bind up their wounds (6:1). Similarly, God hopes for a prophet to “step into the breach” and argue on behalf of Israel in order to avert God’s anger (see my Chapter 4, section 4.5.1). Second Isaiah’s Suffering Servant, and ultimately the figure of Jesus in the New Testament, illustrate the furthestmost outworking of this point: “God, as the God of judgment, suffers for his people.”¹⁵ If the cause of divine grief is broken relationship, its end result is the restoration of covenant relationship and the healing of Israel’s wounds.

5.2.3 God’s “Repentance” as a Function of God’s *Hesed*

In the Old Testament, God “repents” (נָחַם) 27 times; yet God “does not repent” nine times.¹⁶ The affirmation that God does not repent almost always concerns the irrevocability of God’s unconditional promises. When God does repent (i.e., relent, or change God’s mind), it is concerning the disaster or destruction the Lord had planned to bring (e.g., Jer 26:3, 13). With a few rare exceptions (Gen 6:6-7; 1 Sam 15:11; Jer 18:10), God never repents of good or of mercy, only of judgment and punishment.¹⁷ Psalm 106:44-5 captures the grounds for God’s repentance by relating it directly to Israel’s distress and their “cry” to the Lord: “Yet he took note of their distress when he heard

¹⁴ Fretheim, 55; so also Heschel: “Even ‘in the moment of anger’ (Jer 18:7), what God intends is not that His anger should be executed, but that it should be annulled by the people’s repentance” (Heschel, 224-5).

¹⁵ Westermann, “Role of the Lament,” 38.

¹⁶ John T. Willis, “The ‘Repentance’ of God in the Books of Samuel, Jeremiah, and Jonah,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 16, no. 2 (1994): 156.

¹⁷ In Gen 6:6-7, God is grieved and regrets (נָחַם) that he made humanity, but after the flood God promises never to destroy all life again (Gen 8:21; 9:11-17). In 1 Sam 15:11, 35 he regrets making Saul king; and in Jer 18:10 he threatens that he will relent of the good he had intended for a nation if they do evil in his sight – the flip side of God’s resolve to relent and *not* inflict disaster if a nation were to repent of its evil (Jer 18:8).

their cry; for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.” Likewise, Jonah 4:2 and Joel 2:12-13 equate God’s relenting from sending calamity with God’s essential character as a God of steadfast love who forgives iniquities (Exod 34:6-7; cf. Ps 103:9).¹⁸ In this respect, God repenting and *not* repenting are two sides of the same coin: God’s *hesed*. God relents because of God’s compassion, because “I am God and not a man” (Hos 11:9).¹⁹

The impulse of divine mourning toward Israel’s repentance and restoration manifests itself in the figure of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53-54, whom God appoints to bear the sin of many and to make intercession for the transgressors (Isa 53:12b).²⁰ In Terence Fretheim’s words, God’s grief “becomes embodied in the world in the life of the servant.”²¹ This embodiment of God’s mourning, and God’s desire to heal rather than to punish, further manifests itself in the New Testament in the incarnation and in the person of Jesus. In this way, the New Testament continues the tradition and pattern of divine mourning, in that the incarnation and the cross represent God’s ongoing and

¹⁸ Willis, 166; see also Thomas B. Dozeman, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Yahweh’s Gracious and Compassionate Character,” *JBL* 108, no. 2 (1989): 207-23.

¹⁹ Cf. Num 23:19 and 1 Sam 15:29, where God does *not* repent or lie, also because God is not human; these texts equate repenting with lying, and demonstrate the irrevocability of God’s promises. Unlike humans, God’s purposes cannot be thwarted, and God’s promises will not be broken. See Mauser, 348; and R. W. L. Moberly, “‘God is not a human that he should repent’ (Numbers 23:19 and 1 Samuel 15:29),” in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). The tension between God relenting and God not relenting correlates to the middle ground I seek to find between the theologians who emphasize God’s suffering and those who emphasize God’s unchanging nature; see section 5.3.

²⁰ The Suffering Servant sometimes appears to be Israel as a whole, and at other times to be one righteous individual. See, e.g., Allen S. Maller, “Isaiah’s Suffering Servant: A New View,” *JBQ* 37, no. 4 (2009): 243-9; Peter Wilcox and David Paton-Williams, “The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah,” *JSOT* 42 (1988): 79-102; *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. William H. Bellinger, Jr., and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1998).

²¹ Fretheim, 113.

inextinguishable desire to restore broken relationship with Israel and all humanity.²²

Jesus' laments themselves, however, signify not only a continuation of divine grief, but also a divine participation in the cry of human lament, the incorporation of human lament into the Trinitarian life of God.

5.3 Excursus: Divine Impassibility

The Old Testament tradition of God's passionate involvement in creation and human history takes new shape in the incarnation and culminates in the crucifixion. The doctrine of the incarnation and the claim of the New Testament that "God was in Christ" (2 Cor 5:19) prompt us to read Jesus' laments from the cross as divine cries. Yet this raises the theological question of whether or not God *as Godself* laments—and suffers—on the cross.

Both the Old Testament tradition of divine mourning and the New Testament tradition of the Son of God's laments pose a potential challenge to the doctrine of divine impassibility, or *apatheia*.²³ Do these two traditions contradict divine impassibility? On

²² "Thus faith in the incarnation of God is the legitimate heir of prophetic faith in the Old Testament which saw Yahweh as participant in Israel's plight and the prophet as his image" (Mauser, 356).

²³ For reflections on Jesus' suffering and divine impassibility, see (among others) *Der leidende Gott: eine philosophische und theologische Kritik*, ed. Friedrich Hermanni and Peter Koslowski (München: Fink, 2001), especially Jan Rohls, "Der leidende Gott in der Theologie des 20. Jahrhunderts," Marco M. Olivetti, "Mit-Leiden und Theodizee. Die religiöse Aneignung des Problems des *malum*," and Ekkehard Mühlenberg, "Der leidende Gott in der altkirchlichen Theologie"; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); *Diskussion über Jürgen Moltmanns Buch "Der gekreuzigte Gott"*, ed. Michael Welker (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1979); Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965); David B. Hart, "No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility," *ProEccl* 11, no. 2 (2002): 184-206; Robert W. Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, and Exegesis," in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 43-59; Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus, God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968); Arthur C. McGill, *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); Ellen F. Davis, "Vulnerability, the Condition of Covenant," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 290-3; William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994); Heschel, 221-323; John W. de Gruchy, *Standing by God in his Hour of Grieving: Human Suffering*,

the one hand are those who say that it does, but that the doctrine of *apatheia* was an unfortunate act of intellectual borrowing from Hellenistic philosophy, which forced the passionate God of the Bible into the mode of a Stoic deity who could not suffer and therefore could not love. On the other hand are those who say that it does not, but that the doctrine of divine impassibility is necessary to preserve God's essential nature as perfect *agape*.²⁴ I want to agree with what I take to be the fundamental point of each side. Those who question the necessity of the doctrine of *apatheia* rightly draw attention to the deep and compassionate involvement of God in the life and suffering of the world. Those who defend impassibility note that critics sometimes misunderstand the doctrine, and argue that it entails the unchanging nature of God's fundamental faithfulness rather than God's lack of care. Indeed, despite their differences, the two sides converge on just this point: the absolute necessity of God's unbreakable love for and involvement with the world, especially the human creation.

In what follows, I briefly describe the revival of Luther's *theologia crucis* in the twentieth century as a response to the traumatic and horrific suffering of World War II, which was subsequently extended into other contexts of deep suffering. Then, I

Theological Reflection, and Christian Solidarity (Pretoria: C.B. Powell Bible Centre, Faculty of Theology, University of South Africa, 1986); Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*; Yacob Tesfai, ed., *The Scandal of a Crucified World: Perspectives on the Cross and Suffering* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), especially 69-162, 197-57; James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, eds., *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009); Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), IV/1, 458-9; II/1, 490-506; II/2, 94-9. I have found Daniel Castelo's account helpful for seeking a middle ground between divine impassibility and God's passionate involvement with the world, through a reconfiguration of the nature of the Triune life; see Daniel Castelo, *The Apathetic God: Exploring the Contemporary Relevance of Divine Impassibility* (Milton Keynes, UK; Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2009).

²⁴ The notion of a God who suffers has obvious overlaps with process theology, a theme I do not address in this project. Fiddes identifies four strands that contribute to theologies of a suffering God: the German Protestant *Kreuzestheologie*, American process philosophy (modified by Karl Barth's insights on the freedom of God), the "death of God" movement, and classical theism; see Fiddes, 12-15.

summarize representative views of these “suffering God” theologians alongside theologians who seek to protect the traditional doctrine of impassibility, in order to demonstrate the commonality of both positions regarding God’s steadfast love for humanity.

5.3.1 Revival of Luther’s *Theologia Crucis* after World War II

In the midst of the upheaval of the Reformation, Martin Luther developed his influential *theologia crucis* in opposition to what he called the *theologia gloriae*.²⁵ He posited that God reveals Godself in the world not in glory but in weakness, in suffering, in ways counter-intuitive to the world’s thinking: the *Deus absconditus* or hidden God. This stream of theology revived and took on new urgency in the twentieth century, through the work of theologians such as Abraham Heschel, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Kazoh Kitamori, Jürgen Moltmann, James Cone, and writers in South Africa and other Two-Thirds-World settings. Of these figures, Moltmann has had perhaps the greatest prominence for his influence in both the English- and German-speaking worlds, but all are in their own ways indebted to Luther.²⁶

The concrete historical setting of World War II shaped the way that many of these theologians conceived of God’s suffering in relation to suffering humanity. Bonhoeffer developed his concept of the powerlessness of God under the Nazi regime in Germany and finally from prison as he awaited execution. Heschel wrote in the aftermath of the massacre of Jews, including his mother and sisters, in his native Poland. Japanese

²⁵ See especially the Heidelberg Disputation, Theses 19-24, available at <http://bookofconcord.org/heidelberg.php>. For a detailed discussion of Luther’s *theologia crucis*, see Alister E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1985).

²⁶ Fiddes identifies Moltmann as the key representative of *Kreuzestheologie*, a strand of contemporary reflection about God’s suffering indebted to Barth (Fiddes, 12 n.36).

Lutheran theologian Kitamori developed his theology of “the pain of God” in the wake of the nuclear destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Moltmann’s experience as a prisoner of war helped lay the foundation for his theology of the crucified God. In the years 1948-9, Moltmann explains, “a theology which did not speak of God in the sight of the one who was abandoned and crucified would have nothing to say to us then.”²⁷

The twentieth-century *theologia crucis* took special root in South Africa in the soil of suffering under apartheid. John W. de Gruchy and Simon Maimela, among others, note that the cross and suffering cannot be abstract or academic matters in such situations of widespread human pain and oppression.²⁸ James Cone, preeminent black theologian, describes the same phenomenon in North America as well:

As black theologians have reread the Bible in the light of the struggles of the oppressed, the idea of the “suffering God” has become important... Our theological imagination has been stirred by Jürgen Moltmann’s writings about “the Crucified God” as well as Luther’s distinction between the “theology of glory” and the “theology of the cross.” But it has been the actual suffering of the oppressed in black and other Third World communities that has been decisive in our reflections on the cross of Jesus Christ. ... [W]hen the poor of North America and the Third World read

²⁷ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 1. Moltmann ends *The Crucified God* with two chapters on the psychological and political liberation of humanity, revealing his overarching concern for the church’s “religio-political relevance” in the modern world (ibid., 324). Billman and Migliore also note the correspondence of Moltmann’s concern with a passionless God and his concern with an apathetic and indifferent society, in Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore, *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1999), 68.

²⁸ “In the light of this excess of suffering which surrounds us, directly affecting men, women and children as a fact of daily personal experience, it seems almost obscene to discuss it in an academic manner” (de Gruchy, 2). De Gruchy continues, “In relation to the tragic pain and anguish which has been experienced in South Africa during these past months, and for many years previously by black people in particular, it is also a serious question whether a white theologian like myself can make any contribution to the project” (ibid.). So also Simon Maimela, who writes, “...as black South Africans, the questions of the cross and suffering are not issues that we can discuss in an abstract and theoretical way. For black people, the cross and suffering are experienced daily as a concrete and existential communal way of being in the white-dominated world” (Simon S. Maimela, “The Suffering of Human Divisions and the Cross,” in *Scandal of a Crucified World*, 36).

the passion story of the cross, they do not view it as a theological idea but as God's suffering solidarity with the victims of the world.²⁹

For these present-day theologians of the cross, their understandings of God's suffering arose from reflection on the cross in the light of concrete settings of human pain and injustice, whether occasioned by war or racism and oppression. The world's pain demanded either accepting that God had abandoned the world or believing that God was deeply involved in its suffering.³⁰ God's suffering means most of all God's solidarity with all who suffer in the midst of these concrete situations – a truth displayed preeminently in the cross of Jesus Christ.

5.3.2 God Suffers in the Person of Jesus: Solidarity with All Who Suffer

Jürgen Moltmann is the most influential theologian representing the position that both God the Father and God the Son genuinely suffered in Jesus' lamenting cry from the cross in Mark and Matthew (Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46). More precisely, according to Moltmann, God the Father truly abandoned God the Son on the cross; the suffering and death of Jesus constituted an event within the life of the Trinity to the extent that one can speak of a "death within God."³¹ Corresponding to Jesus' God-forsakenness is God's identification with all the "godforsaken," achieved through Jesus' suffering, abandonment, and death. Paradoxically, the depth of God's suffering love for humanity necessitated Jesus' real rejection and abandonment.

²⁹ James H. Cone, "An African-American Perspective on the Cross and Suffering," in *Scandal of a Crucified World*, 58.

³⁰ "The pain of humanity has demanded that God be either completely cast aside or that he be drawn closer, into the midst of our hurt. Either God has abandoned his creation to its fate, so that he is no longer relevant to our lives, or he bleeds and dies along with us as one of us" (Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* [Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008], 34).

³¹ I explore the various options for the Trinitarian implications of Jesus' cry from the cross in more detail below.

Like Moltmann, Kitamori connects the Father's suffering to the Father's love,³² but unlike Moltmann, he sees this as an outworking of the tension between God's wrath and God's love.³³ Kitamori distinguishes between his notion of the pain of God and Luther's *Deus absconditus*: "In the case of the 'hidden God,' he exercises love through his wrath; whereas, in the 'pain of God,' he exercises love by overcoming it."³⁴ This notion of the pain of God reflects the Old Testament tradition of God grieving over God's own judgment and turning away from anger out of compassion and love, and Kitamori does in fact draw extensively on Jeremiah 31:20 (from whence he draws the phrase "the pain of God") and on Isaiah 63:15.³⁵ Perhaps also unlike Moltmann, he is careful to preserve analogical distance between human suffering and divine suffering: "Man's pain and God's pain are qualitatively different... Man's pain is unproductive; it is darkness without light. God's pain is productive; it is darkness with the light of salvation."³⁶

Other theologians have sought to develop a *theologia crucis* without a godforsaken Jesus and a corresponding disruption in the Trinitarian life. Arthur McGill, for example, argues that the cross demonstrates the radical fullness of divine self-giving.³⁷ Luther's own *theologia crucis* depends upon neither a radical break in the Trinity nor God's passibility per se.³⁸ William Stacy Johnson is surely right to insist that

³² Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 243; Kitamori, 16, 114-6.

³³ Kitamori, 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 151-67.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

³⁷ McGill, 93-8.

³⁸ Moltmann himself insists that his theology is not patripassionist, but is rather Trinitarian reflection on the Son's death in relation to the Father (Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 243).

God is always for us and with us in Christ, even and especially on the cross, and that this actually leads to the same end for which Moltmann argues, God's (and our) identification with the suffering neighbor: "Precisely because God did *not* abandon Jesus in his time of trial, we come to see that God draws near in grace to all who are poor, weak, defeated, or lost."³⁹

Kitamori and Moltmann, in their own ways, both resist what they see as a stream of liberal theology that shies away from the cross.⁴⁰ For Kitamori, God's pain (i.e., the cross) springs out of necessity from God's love and justice. For Moltmann, a suffering God is the only way past both theism (in which God cannot love, because God cannot suffer) and protest atheism à la Ivan Karamazov.⁴¹ For both of them, and for other theologians like them, if God does not suffer, God simply does not love.⁴²

This is precisely the point at which defenders of the tradition of God's impassibility protest. Although they accept that Jesus' lament can be considered a form of divine "lament," inasmuch as Jesus laments from the cross as the incarnate Son of God and the second member of the Trinity, they object that this truth in no way necessitates the suffering of (and therefore change within) God.

³⁹ William Stacy Johnson, "Jesus' Cry, God's Cry, and Ours," in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 90.

⁴⁰ Kitamori, 24; cf. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 214-6.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 220-30.

⁴² Castelo identifies the roots of this claim in the British debates over impassibility in the early twentieth century (Castelo, 122-3).

5.3.3 The Trinity Loves, but only Jesus Suffers

Theologians defending impassibility acknowledge that Jesus—Son of God, the incarnate Word, second member of the Trinity—did in fact suffer, lament, and die. Attempts to maintain God’s *apatheia* in the face of this difficulty occasioned a good deal of creative and seemingly paradoxical theology in the patristic era, including statements like “the impassible suffered” and Christ “was in the crucified body appropriating the sufferings of the flesh to himself impassibly.”⁴³

According to David Hart, Christians adopted the term *apatheia* from Hellenistic philosophy, but transfigured it to mean divine love, utter *agape*.⁴⁴ (Moltmann himself concedes that in ancient Judaism and Christianity, *apatheia* could be seen as an “enabling ground” for true divine *agape*.⁴⁵) *Apatheia* is the essence of the divine life inasmuch as it means “the absolutely inexhaustible vehemence of infinite love,” displayed in the life of the Trinity (God as “infinite gesture of self-outpouring love”) and expressed in the incarnation of the Son in an act of “self-divesting love.”⁴⁶

Ellen Davis follows Hart in defining divine *apatheia* not as detachment, but as the mode of God’s involvement in history. The doctrine of *apatheia* affirms that God is not like the fickle gods of Mesopotamia or Greece, and can never become fully estranged from humanity; it means affirming “that God can be genuinely involved in events that happen in time, in human events, without being either formed or diminished by them.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Quotations by Melito of Sardis and Cyril of Alexander, respectively; quoted in Hart, 200.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 193-7.

⁴⁵ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 269.

⁴⁶ Hart, 197, 201; see also Placher. Arthur McGill describes the Trinity in a very similar manner, but with no mention of impassibility; see McGill, *Suffering*.

⁴⁷ Davis, 292.

Davis points to the Old Testament concept of God's covenant with Israel as a manifestation of this truth.

Covenant is the stabilizing mechanism that allows God to remain profoundly involved in the contingent events of history, responding in various ways to the often distressingly unstable human situation and heart, yet without *essential* change in either the divine being or the divine disposition toward those whom God has made.⁴⁸

Likewise, Paul Gavrilyuk argues that the sharp distinction between the apathetic God of Hellenistic philosophy and the "emotional" biblical God fails to do justice to either.

Instead, the patristic tradition affirmed that God's impassibility was fully compatible with God's care and compassion for the world, and that "God, remaining fully divine, freely accepted all the consequences of his becoming man, including suffering and death on the cross."⁴⁹

For these theologians, then, divine *apatheia* signals not God's withdrawal from history but the very mode of God's commitment to continual involvement in that history. God's apathetic *agape* means that God will not abandon or destroy humanity despite God's just judgments on sin, evil, and injustice. For both the suffering God theologians and these representatives of the impassible God theologians, God's steadfast love leads inexorably to incarnation and finally to the cross.

The insistence that God cannot suffer originally rested on the Platonic notion of perfection as changelessness and self-sufficiency. God cannot change, because this would detract from God's perfection. Therefore God cannot suffer, because suffering entails change within the life of God. The suffering God theologians dismiss this argument as

⁴⁸ Ibid. This is similar to Karl Barth's description of God's "holy mutability" in Barth, II/1, 496. Barth contrasts God's holy mutability with "the unholy mutability of men"; see *ibid.*, 490-506. Barth prefers the term "constancy" (*Beständigkeit*) to "immutability" (*Unveränderlichkeit*).

⁴⁹ Gavrilyuk, 20.

resting on philosophical rather than biblical grounds. God *must* suffer, because only a suffering God is capable of love. The theologians who wish to defend God's *apatheia* argue that this is a misunderstanding of impassibility: only a God who does *not* suffer—who is not at the mercy of intemperate emotional swings—can properly exercise truly divine and constant love. At this point, Moltmann and other suffering God theologians might object that they have little time for such academic hair-splitting in the face of the concrete fact of staggering human pain. On the other side, David Hart (for example) replies that a suffering God is incapable of transforming humanity but instead simply provides metaphysical warrant for human suffering.⁵⁰

5.3.4 God's Steadfast Love in the Face of Suffering

I have no desire ultimately to adjudicate this debate and solve the thorny puzzle of which persons of the Trinity suffer on the cross and how. I shall leave to one side the question of whether collapsing the distance between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity is a good theological move or a disastrous one, or whether theologians have knelt too eagerly at the altar of Hegelian Trinitarian metaphysics.⁵¹ Instead, I will briefly summarize the arguments that *apatheia* entails divine love rather than God's distance or indifference in order to demonstrate the crucial overlap between the suffering God theologians and the theologians of impassibility: the desire to preserve God's

⁵⁰ Hart writes, "This 'Hegelian' God is not transcendent—truly infinite—in this way at all, but only sublime, a metaphysical whole that can comprise us or change us extrinsically, but not account for or transform us within our very being. And this is a fearful thought, especially if, like Moltmann, one seeks in the passions of the divine an explanation for the suffering of creatures: what a monstrous irony it would be if, in our eagerness to find a way of believing in God's love in the age of Auschwitz, we should in fact succeed only in describing a God who is the metaphysical ground of Auschwitz" (Hart, 192, cf. 206).

⁵¹ For a discussion of Moltmann and Hegel, see Castelo, 82-5.

steadfast love for the world in the face of overwhelming human sin and suffering.

Clearly, these two camps have otherwise irreconcilable differences.

The suffering God theologians draw attention to God's passionate involvement in the world and narrate the cross as God's solidarity with the suffering. A God who suffers demonstrates that "the life of God...is intimately tied to the suffering of people" and becomes identified through the cross with victims of oppression and injustice.⁵² Latin American theologian Jon Sobrino, for example, draws a direct connection between Jesus on the cross, a crucified God, and the "crucified peoples" today.⁵³ These theologians take with the utmost seriousness Jesus' cry of forsakenness as a divine cry of lament, resisting the temptation to explain its anguish away or to jump anxiously to the triumphant end of Psalm 22 or to the resurrection.

On the other hand, Moltmann in particular fails to reckon seriously enough with the full context of Psalm 22, especially as it appears in the passion narratives themselves. Similarly, the single-minded focus of many suffering God theologians on the so-called cry of dereliction in Mark and Matthew's account finds no place for Luke and John's accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, which are inevitably dismissed as non-historical or as later attempts to soften Jesus' cry of abandonment (see section 5.4.1 below).

⁵² Yacob Tesfai, "Introduction," in *The Scandal of a Crucified World*, viii. See the essays in *The Scandal of a Crucified World*, especially Cone; Maimela; Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "Is There a Feminist Theology of the Cross." Many of these theologians also recognize the dangers of a theology of the cross and the way it has been used to dominate rather than liberate (e.g., Walter Altmann, "A Latin American Perspective on the Cross and Suffering," in *The Scandal of a Crucified World*, 75-86; Moltmann, 48-49; Tesfai, 4-5; Choan-Seng Song, "Christian Mission toward Abolition of the Cross," in *Scandal of a Crucified World*, 130-48; Maimela, 37-9; Moltmann-Wendel, 87-98).

⁵³ "Crucified peoples" is a characteristic phrase of Jon Sobrino, but it is also used by South African writers; see Tesfai, 10.

The theologians who defend God's *apatheia* demonstrate the importance of preserving God's unwavering *hesed*. In their work, we see a God who is responsive rather than reactive to the world, and one who is deeply involved in human history without being at its mercy. To be sure, efforts to protect God's unchanging nature face the danger of downplaying God's passionate identification with the vulnerable or treating Jesus' lament as if it were not a genuine cry of pain.⁵⁴ Furthermore, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the preponderance of theologians from minority or Two-Thirds-World contexts have chosen the path of a suffering God rather than an impassible one. This is not to suggest that the apathetic God theologians are merely "ivory-tower" thinkers who are detached from settings of pain, but to note that, in general, they have paid comparatively less attention in their arguments about *apatheia* to concrete contexts of contemporary oppression and injustice. This troubling point might lead to a greater consideration of how arguments regarding God's *apatheia* might "touch the ground" in contemporary settings of deep suffering. Davis, for example, demonstrates that it is possible to speak of God's *apatheia* while still maintaining concrete contact with real places of human suffering.

The two sides of this debate reveal the same essential feature of God's character uncovered by my earlier investigation of divine mourning – God's covenant love and resolve to remain in relationship with humanity. God repents (relents of anger) and does *not* repent (does not alter in faithfulness) because of God's *hesed*, because "I am God and

⁵⁴ For example, some interpreters suggest that Jesus' quotation of the first verse of Psalm 22 intended to evoke the entire psalm and therefore indicates a cry of trust and triumph rather than a fearful cry of abandonment; see Thomas E. Schmidt, "Cry of Dereliction or Cry of Judgment? Mark 15:34 in Context," *BBR* 4 (1994): 145-53; Gérard Rossé, *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 101-7.

not a man” (Hos 11:9). Taken together, these two groups of theologians represent two sides of the coin of lament: a God who has entered into the prayer of lament remains the God who hears and responds to lament. The God who enters fully into human suffering is yet a God who has the power to work within, and redeem, that suffering. The prayer of lament calls upon God not fundamentally to change but to be steadfast, to be true to God’s own promises to protect, heal, rescue, and redeem. Christ’s prayers of lament indicate that now God is implicated in both sides of the lament, as the one who cries out and the one who hears, the one who requests deliverance and the one who delivers, the one who paradoxically mourns God’s hiddenness at the very moment of God’s greatest identification with suffering humanity.

5.4 Jesus’ Lament as Divine Lament

Jesus’ prophetic mourning over Jerusalem can be considered a form of divine grief (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.3). Only Jesus’ “cry of dereliction,” however, is a genuine example of divine lament. Because of Jesus’ unique identity as the incarnate one, the Son of God sent from the Father, Jesus’ lament from the cross may be read as divine lament: God the Son laments to God the Father.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Jesus’ lament in the Garden of Gethsemane is also sometimes considered under the umbrella of divine lament. This prompted a quarrel beginning sometime around the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.) over whether or not there was a divergence of wills between Jesus and God the Son, or between the Father and the Son – or whether the two wills somehow remained in harmony. Robert Jenson accuses Moltmann of suggesting such a divergence, but Moltmann himself insists on a “deep conformity” between the will of the Father and the Son (Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 243-42; Jenson, 53-4). David Lauber, however, notes that Moltmann contradicts himself on this point, writing in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* that Jesus’ prayer “Not what I will, but what thou wilt” is the restraining of Jesus’ will by the overpowering will of the Father; see David Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell: God, Atonement and the Christian Life* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 119-20. For a discussion of the issues, see Jenson, 43-59; Paul Gondreau, “St. Thomas Aquinas, the Communication of Idioms, and the Suffering of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane,” in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 222-39.

As divine lament, Jesus' cry from the cross is indeed a lament – the suffering of Israel and humanity taken up into the divine life, in continuity with and in transformation of the Old Testament tradition of divine mourning. As divine lament, Jesus' cry is an articulation not of God's abandonment of Jesus—leading to a rupture within the Trinity—but a radical expression of God's *hesed*, God's commitment always to be for and with Israel and humanity, and never against them. This interpretation of Jesus' cry depends on reading the cry within the wider context of Psalm 22—a move authorized by Mark and Matthew—and within the wider canonical context of Luke and John, seeking to give equal weight to all four gospels and their accounts of Jesus' lament from the cross. Finally, Jesus' lament as divine lament points to a God who mourns and yet remains a God – i.e., a God who joins in the human cry of lament, complaint, and suffering, and still remains the God who can hear and respond to cries for help.

5.4.1 God Laments to God: Why Have You Forsaken Me?

There are two primary options for interpreting Jesus' cry from the cross as a Trinitarian event: first is to see it as an act of God *against* God; the Father forsakes the Son, and the Son laments God's real absence at the moment of his death. This path, taken by Moltmann, has proven influential in the twentieth century, particularly in settings of deep suffering, and it does full justice to Mark's account of Jesus' final cry as a truly anguished lament.⁵⁶ The second option interprets Jesus' cry as an expression of his full

⁵⁶ Others, even those committed to the idea that God is capable of suffering, object to Moltmann's portrayal of a Father who abandons the Son to death as a form of theistic sadism; see Dorothee Sölle, "'Gott und das Leiden,'" in *Diskussion über Jürgen Moltmanns Buch "Die Kreuzigte Gott,"* ed. Michael Welker (München: Kaiser, 1979), 111-17; Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 26-32. Sölle takes an option that is, in some ways, even more radical than Moltmann's: she collapses the Father and the Son into the person of Jesus ("God is not in heaven; he is hanging on the cross"), which renders God incapable of rescue and redemption ("God has no other hands than ours"); see *ibid.*, 148, 149.

humanity (so Ambrose, Augustine), and as an expression of his piety, since he quotes Scripture in his final words (so Chrysostom).⁵⁷ In other words, as discussed earlier, only Jesus, the incarnate Word, laments and suffers, rather than the second member of the Trinity. Because Christ “suffered impassibly,” his laments are grounded in real human suffering, but create no essential change within the divine life. The Christian tradition has occupied itself with variations of this second path throughout much of the church’s history, and contemporary theologians committed to God’s *apatheia* continue to defend it.

While the gospel accounts clearly make no claims regarding divine impassibility as such, the wider context of Jesus’ cry in Psalm 22 and in all four gospels implies that God was hidden but not absent at the crucifixion, and that God heard and answered Jesus’ cry. Therefore, the narratives themselves are more hospitable to the second path of interpretation – that Jesus’ cry as a divine lament reveals not a break in the Trinity but the uttermost act of God’s determination to redeem humanity from both sin and suffering.⁵⁸

5.4.1.1 The Cry in the Context of Psalm 22

Treatments of Jesus’ cry from the cross as an “expression of the most profound horror” tend to detach Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22:1 from the rest of the psalm and

⁵⁷ Ambrose, *Of the Christian Faith* 2.7.56, in *Mark*, vol. 2 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament*, Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds. (Chicago; London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998), 233; Augustine, *Letters*, 140 to Honoratus 6, in Oden and Hall, 234; Origen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Homily 88.1, in *Matthew 14-28*, vol. 1b of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Manlio Simonetto, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 295.

⁵⁸ Viewed through this lens, the cross—and Jesus’ lament—is the final outworking of the logic of the incarnation. “[I]n Christ’s suffering we see *historically* a genuine human who suffers in a true way, and yet *theologically* the nature of this suffering takes the double aspect of 1) being assumed voluntarily 2) for the purpose of redemption. ... God’s constancy and eternal resolve to reach out to humanity is given a wondrous expression as a child born in the humblest and most vulnerable of circumstances” (Castelo, 128).

therefore from its grounding within the lament tradition of Israel.⁵⁹ However, all of the Gospels, including Mark, weave multiple allusions to Psalm 22 into their passion narratives, especially the crucifixion scene (see my Chapter 2, especially 2.4.2). The entire psalm, not simply verse one, is crucial to the evangelists' understanding of Jesus' identity and the meaning of his death. Allusions to the end of the psalm—alongside the confession of the centurion, the empty tomb narratives, and the witnesses to the resurrection—indicate that God does hear Jesus' cry and vindicate him.⁶⁰

What Moltmann correctly sees, however, is that Jesus' cry of abandonment, when read as a form of divine lament, is a unique and unprecedented expression of loss: the Son's separation from the Father.⁶¹ He interprets this event as necessitating a rupture within the Trinity. The unique unity of Jesus and the Father turns Jesus' cry "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" into "My God, why hast thou forsaken *thyself*?"⁶²

⁵⁹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 146-7. Moltmann, in fact, dismisses even the particular words of Psalm 22:1 as "an interpretation of the church after Easter," although he concedes that its sentiment is "as near as possible to the historical reality of the death of Jesus."

⁶⁰ See Johnson, 81-2. Richard Bauckham notes that Moltmann fails to do justice to the interpretive context and intertexts of Jesus' cry from the cross, and seeks to rectify this in "God's Self-Identification with the Godforsaken: Exegesis and Theology," in Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 254-68. For a detailed discussion of the appearances of Psalm 22 and other lament psalms in the passion narrative, see my Chapter 2.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 150. Interestingly, Moltmann's description seems to merge John's portrayal of Jesus (Jesus' oneness with the Father) with Mark's crucifixion scene.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 151, 152, 192. Bruce Marshall wryly notes, "One person of the Trinity presumably knows when another is near at hand, and cannot be mistaken on this score" (Bruce D. Marshall, "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009], 247). Calvin views the Apostles' Creed's statement that Christ descended into hell as an interpretation of the cry of forsakenness; see Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. Ford Lewis Battles and John T. McNeill, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), II.xvi.11, page 517; cf. Lauber, 11. Moltmann follows Luther in taking the descent into hell as Jesus' passion, which begins in Gethsemane (God's rejection of Jesus' request to take away the cup) and culminates on the cross in the cry of abandonment (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981], 77; cf. Lauber, 114).

Yet Jesus' cry of forsakenness at the crucifixion need not entail God's "hostile withdrawal."⁶³ God's absence or hiddenness is a central theme in Jesus' laments, just as it is in the lament psalms.⁶⁴ The basic assumption of Israel's lament is not God's absence, but God's covenantal presence; this is what makes God's withdrawal or hiddenness an occasion for complaint or grief.⁶⁵ Psalm 22, for example, intersperses sorrow over God's silence with trust in God's goodness and salvation.

As a cry set firmly within the lament tradition of Israel, Jesus' lament from the cross indicates both the darkness and loss surrounding Jesus' death, and the affirmation of trust that God never truly abandoned the Son any more than God finally abandoned Israel or any other lamenter. God is hidden, turns God's face away, reveals only God's backside, and falls silent; but God does not break God's covenant or abandon humanity or creation. (The theologians who defend impassibility highlight God's unchanging nature in this regard.) Indeed, while God the Son laments as he dies, subtle clues in the text suggest that God the Father simultaneously mourns the death of the Son. "As 'Rachel' weeps at the slaughter of her children in Bethlehem, so God himself seems to

⁶³ Matthew Boulton, "Forsaking God: A Theological Argument for Christian Lamentation," *SJTh* 55, no. 1 (2002): 61-2. Boulton takes God's absence in Psalm 22 as a "hostile withdrawal, abandonment, effectively handing the psalmist over to evil powers." However, Boulton goes on to say that lament clings to the trust "that the God who has not delivered but handed over the psalmist to evil powers does and will deliver nonetheless" (*ibid.*, 76).

⁶⁴ Brian Doyle, "Where is God When You Need Him Most? The Divine Metaphor of Absence and Presence as a Binding Element in the Composition of the Book of Psalms," in *Composition of the Book of Psalms* (Leuven; Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010), 378-90; Samuel E. Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 45-65. See also my Chapter 1, section 1.4.3, for a more detailed discussion of the theme of God's absence in the lament psalms.

⁶⁵ Doyle, 383. See also Bauckham, 254-68. Bauckham claims that the actual experience of God's abandonment is a rare but extreme form of lament, found in Psalm 71:11 (which is a taunt by enemies rather than a complaint by the psalmist), Psalm 88:5, and Lamentations 5:20. Psalm 88 and Lamentations 5 are arguably the only texts in Scripture containing laments that end on notes of complaint or grief rather than the characteristic turn to praise. Unlike Psalm 88, which is uniformly bleak, Lamentations as a whole interweaves statements of trust and praise with lament.

mourn at the death of Jesus, ripping the curtain of the Temple from top to bottom as human mourners rip their clothes in a gesture of grief.”⁶⁶ (In this regard, the suffering God theologians properly emphasize God’s personal involvement in human grief and pain due to God’s compassion.)

5.4.1.2 The Cry in Canonical Context

References to Jesus’ lament or cry from the cross inevitably function as shorthand for his quotation of Psalm 22:1 in Mark 15:34 and Matt 27:46: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Placing exclusive emphasis on Psalm 22:1 ignores Luke and John’s accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion, typically due to convictions that they are historically less accurate.⁶⁷ David Hart represents an opposing tendency when he writes, “And the terrible distance of Christ’s cry of human dereliction, despair, and utter godforsakenness—‘My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?’—is enfolded within *and overcome by* the ever greater distance and always indissoluble unity of God’s triune love: ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.’”⁶⁸ Whereas Moltmann privileges Mark, Hart privileges Luke. These two readings—Hart’s and Moltmann’s—represent not only a difference in emphasis between the suffering God theologians and the *apatheia* theologians, they reveal a tension within the biblical accounts themselves regarding the presence and role of God at Jesus’ death and thus in Jesus’ laments.

⁶⁶ Joel Marcus, *Jesus and the Holocaust: Reflections on Suffering and Hope* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 123. The rending of the temple veil “transfers the place of God’s presence from its hiddenness in the holy of holies to the openly godforsaken cross of the dead Jesus,” making God uniquely present (rather than absent) at Jesus’ death, and therefore uniquely present with all the “godforsaken” (Bauckham, 267).

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Marshall, 248.

⁶⁸ Hart, 205, emphasis added.

A canonical reading of Jesus' lament as divine lament must seek to give the kind of serious weight to Mark's account that Moltmann does, while also considering the import of Jesus' prayers from the cross in Luke and John. If "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" may be considered a form of divine lament (the Son grieving to the Father in the midst of suffering and death), then "Into thy hands I commit my spirit" is also properly a form of divine or Trinitarian "lament": an inner-Trinitarian affirmation of trust, also in the midst of suffering and death. If all genuinely Christian theology is an answer to Jesus' question, "My God, why have you forsaken me?"⁶⁹, perhaps Christian theology must hear this anguished question alongside Jesus' plea, "I thirst"; Jesus' humble prayer, "Into your hands I commit my spirit"; and Jesus' declaration, "It is finished."

A canonical reading of the gospel narratives cannot read Mark's (and Matthew's) account of Jesus' final words as divine lament, and disregard Jesus' laments from the cross in Luke and John. Of course, this type of reading almost may not downplay the genuine differences between the four accounts. However, as I noted in Chapter 2, Jesus speaks words from the pattern of lament in all four Gospels. In Luke, he speaks a trusting prayer, rather than a complaint or protest or expression of pain, but one that is still framed by a lament through the wider context of Psalm 31. In John, contrary to the dominant portrayal of John's Gospel as lacking lament, Jesus does speak a lament: "I am thirsty"; and his final words ("It is finished"), with their faint echo of the end of Psalm 22, provide a satisfying canonical frame to the fourfold passion narrative, bringing the quotation of the first verse of the psalm in Matthew and Mark to its trusting conclusion in John. All of

⁶⁹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 4.

these final words of Jesus, when read through the lens of divine lament, are inner-Trinitarian dialogue, which represent both the terror of the apparent absence of the Father at the hour of the Son's death,⁷⁰ and the affirmation that the bond of the Trinity is strained but not broken, as the Son chooses to trust the Father in the face of suffering, even in the face of death.

5.4.2 Lament Taken up into the Divine Life

On the one hand, lament had always been part of the divine life, as an essential element of the covenantal relationship between God and humanity.⁷¹ When the Israelites cry out to God from captivity in Egypt, God hears their groaning, remembers God's covenant, sees the sons of Israel, and knows (יָדָע) them (Exod 2:24-25). God then seeks out Moses and tells him that God knows (יָדָע) the pain of God's people (Exod 3:7). The verb *know* implies not just abstract knowledge but God's intimate experience of their pain, and it is this *knowing* that prompts God to deliver them. As Walter Brueggemann claims, "The startling affirmation of biblical faith is that *this God accepts the groan, takes it into God's own person, and speaks it back to hurting Israel as promise from on high.*"⁷²

Similarly, the intertwining of prophetic lament and divine mourning demonstrates how closely God is implicated in the lament, grief, anger, and pain of God's people in the

⁷⁰ Samuel Wells writes of Jesus' cry from the cross, "This is the most poignant and terrifying moment in all history. ... The Son is not *with* the Father, even though he desperately wants to be. The Father is not *with* the Son, breaking our whole notion of their eternal presence one with another. This is the most vivid picture of hell we could imagine: not just our being separated from God, but God being separated from God, God being out of God's own reach" (Samuel Wells, "Why Have You Forsaken Me?", sermon preached in Duke Chapel, April 22, 2011, available at <http://www.chapel.duke.edu/sermons.html>).

⁷¹ Bauckham, 51-7.

⁷² Walter Brueggemann, "The Rhetoric of Hurt and Hope: Ethics Odd and Crucial," *ASCE* (1989): 79.

Old Testament. God joins in human grief over sin; God likewise protests against human injustice through the prophets, primarily in the form of anger at oppression or misuse of power within Israel (Amos 4:1-5; 8:4-6; Isa 10:1-3; 58:3-10; Ezek 22:6-13). The cross is not ultimately an innovation in God's sharing in lament, but the outcome of God's love for humanity, God's justice regarding sin, and God's solidarity with those who suffer. Thus Charles Allen Dinsmore can rightly claim, "There was a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside Jerusalem."⁷³

On the other hand, the cross of Jesus introduces an element of "radical novelty" into God's identity—a God crucified. When Jesus the Son laments, the human prayer of lament is taken up into the divine life in a new and unprecedented way. As Eva Harasta writes, "[O]n the cross, Christ brought lament into the reality of God in that he himself as incarnate God uttered a lament..."⁷⁴

5.4.3 A God Who Mourns and Yet Remains God⁷⁵

Read through the lens of divine lament, Jesus' prayers incorporated human lament into God's life in a radically new way. The God who hears lament has now prayed lament in the flesh. God has joined in and participated in human suffering—and in the protest regarding human suffering—in a way that invites a reimagining of how God works in the world. For some, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, this means the revelation of God's weakness

⁷³ Charles Allen Dinsmore, *Atonement in Literature and Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906), 232; quoted in D. M. Baillie, *God was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1948), 194. Baillie writes that the essence of God's life is "the love of God bearing the sin of the world" (Baillie 194). Similarly, Fiddes writes, "the cross is an actualization in our history of what is eternally true of God's nature" (Fiddes, 29).

⁷⁴ Eva Harasta, "Crucified Praise and Resurrected Lament," in *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2009), 206. For Harasta, the significance of Christ's lament is in God's justification of the godless on the cross; Christ's lament becomes a "substitutionary lament" in which believers may join (210-11).

⁷⁵ Barth writes, "God is always God even in His humiliation" (CD IV/1, page 179).

and powerlessness in the world as the mode of God's involvement with humanity.⁷⁶

Within the terms of the lament, the God to whom the lamenter prays is not only the one who *hears* cries, but the one who responds to cries and is able to help – to deliver, to save, to redeem.

Jesus' laments reveal a God "who can be the greatest sufferer of all and yet still be God... a God who suffers and yet remains a God who can fulfil his purposes."⁷⁷ In terms of lament, this is a God who can participate in the prayer of lament and yet remain the God who hears and answers that prayer. Through incarnation and the cross, God joins human suffering, and God redeems human suffering, and God promises ultimately to end all suffering, injustice, and evil. A God who joins in the human cry of lament and protest at evil demonstrates God's solidarity with those who suffer – the ultimate act of God's "preference" for the poor and downtrodden. Yet a drowning world does not need God to jump in and drown, too; it needs a rope and a life raft.⁷⁸ In other words, humanity needs a God who can still fulfill God's purposes – who can still answer the prayer of lament. In Dale Allison's poignant words regarding Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet:

If our wounds never heal, if the outrageous spectacle of a history filled with cataclysmic sadness is never undone, if there is nothing more for

⁷⁶ "The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15:34). ... He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us"; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: SCM Press, 1971), 360. See also Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God*.

⁷⁷ Fiddes, 2, 3. See also Ellington, 37, who argues that in Luther's *theologia crucis* God was hidden but never helpless; and Alister McGrath: "Where the unbeliever sees nothing but the helplessness and hopelessness of an abandoned man dying upon a cross, the theologian of the cross (*theologus crucis*) recognizes the presence and activity of the 'crucified and hidden God' (*Deus crucifixus et absconditus*), who is not merely present in human suffering, but actively works through it" (McGrath, 175; cf. 149-50). Daniel Castelo likewise writes that a God who is both passible and impassible is "a God who is in solidarity with us" and "a God who can redeem us" (Castelo, 4).

⁷⁸ David Kelsey critiques a fellow-sufferer as an inadequate portrait of Christ, in David H. Kelsey, *Imagining Redemption* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 54-5.

those who were slaughtered in the death camps or for six-year-olds devoured by cancer, then let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. If in the end there is no good God to calm this sea of troubles, to raise the dead, and to give good news to the poor, then this is indeed a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing.⁷⁹

God's apparent silence in the face of tremendous suffering can be deafening. How can one worship "a God who hides at a time when God is needed"⁸⁰: the very God identified in Jesus' lament from the cross? Yet God is revealed in both cross and resurrection; the cry from the cross and the hope of resurrection shape each other.⁸¹ Lament may be a Good Friday prayer, but it makes no sense without Easter. In cross *and* resurrection, in lament *and* vindication, God is both with us and for us.

God answers Israel's long-prayed cry of lament in both the cross and in resurrection.⁸² God's incarnational participation in human suffering answers the cry for God to rend the heavens and come down (Isa 64:1 KJV), and the resurrection of the Son promises and points toward the end of lament (21:4). In the mean-time, however, prayers of lament still rise to heaven; and the resurrection provides the certainty of a hearing and of a response. After Jesus' ascension, in the midst of the continuing hiddenness of God in the world, God continues to participate in the prayers of human lament through the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁹ Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 219.

⁸⁰ Tesfai, 14-15.

⁸¹ Harasta, 208-9, 213-5.

⁸² Patrick Miller writes, "Jesus' death is universal in that Jesus' death is...a full identification with the human reality of death and suffering. It is distinctive in that it is for us, taking all our suffering and death into God's reality and in so doing overcoming it" (email correspondence, 11/26/10). J. Louis Martyn argues that God's defeat of the hostile powers required God's invasion of the powers' territory through the incarnation and cross; see J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 97-105.

5.5 The Holy Spirit's Role in Lament (Romans 8)

While not a form of divine mourning or divine lament as such, the Holy Spirit's ongoing intercessory role in human lament testifies to one final, important aspect of lament and the divine life. In Romans 8, the Holy Spirit assists in the laments (i.e., the groaning, στεναγμός) of the believers in the eschatological tension between the now and the not yet. Romans 8 does not contain a formal lament, but suggests a threefold role of the Holy Spirit in human lament: providing the grounds of assurance that the Father hears the prayers of the believers to their *Abba*; assisting believers in their "groaning" along with all creation; and joining with them as they wait with steadfast hope for the final redemption, indicating the further participation of the divine in the prayer of human lament.

5.5.1 Abba: Assurance of a Hearing

...ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας ἐν ᾧ κράζομεν· ἀββα ὁ πατήρ (We received a spirit producing adoption, by which we cry, "Abba, Father!") (Rom 8:15)

The Spirit's first role in the ongoing prayer of lament in the Christian community is to provide the assurance of being heard through the surety of kinship with the Father. The community has received not a spirit of fear but the Spirit that produces their adoption into God's household as God's children. The image of God's people as God's own children has deep roots in the Old Testament and occurs alongside the people's "groaning" in at least one key text, when God hears the groaning of the "sons of Israel" in Exod 2:23-25 (cf. Jer 31:20; Hos 11:1-11). In this sense, adoption is analogous to covenant, to God's irrevocable decision to enter into special relationship with a group of people. It is out of this covenantal relationship that lament arises and has its foundation.

Through the Spirit, the believers cry, “Abba, Father!” The verb for cry (κράζω) is used in the Septuagint for the cries of fervent prayer or appeals to God for help (Num 11:2; Judg 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6, 7; 10:12; Pss 4:3; 16:6; 17:6; 21:2, 5, 24; 27:1; 30:22; and multiple other psalms). The New Testament uses the verb for cries for help directed to Jesus (Mark 9:24; Matt 14:30; 15:22; 20:30; Luke 18:39); and for Jesus’ final anguished cry from the cross (Matt 27:50).⁸³ In this context, the term refers to the cries of fervent prayer that are assisted by the Spirit. In conjunction with κράζω, the word αββα draws a potential connection to Jesus’ own anguished prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark.

The Aramaic term αββα occurs in the New Testament only here and in Mark 14:36 and Gal 4:6.⁸⁴ All three texts pair the Aramaic word with its Greek translation. As in Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6 describes the role of the Spirit in relation to God’s children. In Galatians, God sends the Spirit into the hearts of the congregation *because* they are children (in Galatians, υιοί, sons), and it is the Spirit who cries out, “Abba, Father.” In Romans, the Spirit bears witness “to our spirits that we are children [τέκνα] of God,” but it is the children (Christians) who cry, “Abba, Father,” by the Spirit. In both cases, the

⁸³ It is also used for the act of shouting (Mark 11:9; Matt 27:23) or crying out (John’s typical use – John 1:15; 7:28, 37; 12:44); and for the cries of demons or the demon-possessed (Mark 5:7; 9:26; Luke 9:39). See Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Roy David Kotansky, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 498-9.

⁸⁴ Joachim Jeremias popularized the view that Jesus’ use of αββα was a striking innovation indicating unprecedented, intimate familiarity with God; see Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 57-65. More recent scholarship has discredited or, at least, nuanced this proposal; see, e.g., James Barr, “Abbā isn’t ‘Daddy,’” *JThS* 39, no. 1 (1988): 28-47. See also Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Abba and ‘Father’: Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions,” *JBL* 111, no. 4 (1992): 611-30; Joseph A. Grassi, “Abba, Father (Mark 14:36): Another Approach,” *JAAR* 50, no. 3 (1982): 449-58; Joel Marcus, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 584, 977-8; I. Howard Marshall, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Stanley E. Porter, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, Bucks, UK: Baker Academic; Paternoster, 2004), 48.

Spirit functions as confirmation of kinship for those who believe.⁸⁵ The Spirit appeals on behalf of the saints “κατὰ θεόν” (according to God).⁸⁶ That is, not only does the Spirit guarantee the adopted kinship of the saints with God as God’s children, the Spirit intercedes for them and assures that their prayers accord with God’s will, the accomplishing of God’s purposes.

5.5.2 The Groaning of Humanity and All Creation as Lament

...ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν... (and we ourselves are groaning within ourselves) (Rom 8:23b)

...αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις... (the same Spirit intercedes with wordless groans) (Rom 8:26c)

Paul writes that he and the Roman Christians are groaning while awaiting adoption (υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι), which Paul equates with the redemption of their bodies (τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν). They are sighing while they wait *because* they have the firstfruits, that is, the Spirit. In other words, lament itself can be seen as a result of the indwelling of the Spirit. In verse 15 they have already received adoption – the Spirit bears witness that they are children of God (v.16). Here they await the adoption that means their full, bodily redemption – the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Paul thus sets their “groaning” into the context of eschatological waiting. Their adoption and subsequent redemption have been guaranteed by the “firstfruits” of the Spirit, but they still wait for their full redemption along with all creation. Three key words frame the ethos of prayer in this passage: *groaning* (v. 22, 23, 26), *waiting* (v. 19, 23, 25), and *hope* (v. 20, 24-25).

⁸⁵ Other connections between these two texts include the theme of slavery (set in opposition to adoption or children) and the dwelling of the Spirit in the heart.

⁸⁶ This short phrase establishes a potential connection with Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer (in the Synoptic Gospels) that the Father’s will and not his own will be accomplished.

Related words for groaning occur three times in Romans 8:15-27: the verb στενάζω in 8:23 (the saints groan with creation while awaiting adoption and redemption); the related verb συστενάζω in 8:22 (the creation groaning-with and suffering labor pains together⁸⁷); and the noun στεναγμός in 8:26 (the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints with unspoken or inarticulate groans).⁸⁸ In the Septuagint, στενάζω indicates especially “distress of spirit” which leads to prayer and often occurs along with prayer (cf. Mark 7:34).⁸⁹ Just as κράζω often refers to praying or crying for help, the act of groaning is itself sometimes a synecdoche for crying out in lamenting prayer (e.g., Ps 6:6, 8-9).⁹⁰ Groaning appears fairly frequently in the lament psalms (Ps 31:10; 37:10; 38:9; 101:21; 102:5) and in laments over Jerusalem’s destruction (Lam 1:4, 8, 11, 21-22). Groaning and cries for help are also associated with the suffering and subsequent deliverance of the Exodus (Exod 2:24; 6:5; cf. Judg 2:18; Acts 7:34).⁹¹

Paul uses στενάζω in one other place, also in an eschatological context, to describe the groaning of the believers in their “earthly tents” while they long to be clothed with the heavenly body (2 Cor 5:2, 4). As in Romans 8, the use of στενάζω in 2

⁸⁷ The words στενάζω and ὠδίνω are linked in the LXX in Gen 3:16; Isa 35:10; 51:11; Jer 4:31; 22:23. See Markus Öhler, “To Mourn, Weep, Lament and Groan: On the Heterogeneity of the New Testament’s Statements on Lament,” in *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2009), 162.

⁸⁸ Jewett describes “ἀλαλήτοις” (inarticulate/wordless/unutterable) groans as “human vulnerability at its depth” (Jewett, 524).

⁸⁹ Johannes Schneider, “στενάζω, κτλ.,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:600; Heinrich Greeven, “εὐχομαι, κτλ.,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:786.

⁹⁰ For more on κράζω in Romans 8, see Sylvia C. Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Maarten J. J. Menken and Steve Moyise (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 149. Keesmaat also explores the connections between Psalm 44 and Rom 8; *ibid.*, 150.

⁹¹ See Simon Légasse, *L’épître de Paul aux Romains*, *Lectio divina Commentaires* 10 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 527.

Corinthians 5 connects the saints' groaning with their urgent longing for *bodily* redemption and for the new creation. The Spirit also plays a similar role in 2 Corinthians 5, not as the firstfruits of Romans 8 but as the ἀρραβών (downpayment), the guarantee of the future hope that God has prepared for them. Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 5 confirm what Isaiah promised: there will be no more groaning in the Lord's redeemed world (Isa 35:10).⁹² While groaning and lament are not the same act, Paul uses groaning to signify a kind of longing, lamenting prayer, assisted by the Holy Spirit and set in the context of the guaranteed new age, for which the saints wait in hope.⁹³

5.5.3 Patient Endurance and Hope

Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν... (And likewise even the Spirit helps alongside us in our weakness) (Rom 8:26a).

The unusual word συναντιλαμβάνομαι signals that the Spirit joins *with* those who pray, bearing the burden of their weakness along with them.⁹⁴ Their “weakness” (ἀσθενεία) indicates not simply that they require assistance in their prayers but points to the vulnerable condition of the believers in the time before the redemption of their bodies.⁹⁵ How does the Spirit help alongside the saints? The Spirit helps (συναντιλαμβάνεται) through interceding for (ὑπερεντυγχάνει) by means of wordless or inarticulate groans (v.26c), and through appealing (ἐντυγχάνει) on behalf of the saints (v.

⁹² For a detailed study of στενάζω and related words in the New Testament as they relate to lament, see Öhler, 154-64.

⁹³ It is precisely because of the eschatological context that the groaning is a demonstration of hope: Julius Schniewind, *Nachgelassene Reden und Aufsätze, mit einem Vorwort von Gerhard Heinzelmann*, ed. Ernst Kähler (Berlin: Tüpelmann, 1952), 85.

⁹⁴ The word occurs also in the LXX in Exod 18:22, Num 11:17, and Ps 88:22; cf. Rom 8:26. See Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 523; Jewett, 521.

⁹⁵ Jewett argues that “In our weakness” refers to “the vulnerable position of believers caught between the two ages” (Jewett, 522); see also Schniewind, 83-48.

27c). Whereas the author of Hebrews presents Jesus as the intercessor for the faithful in heaven, Paul in Romans ascribes this role to the Spirit, who assists in intercession in the hearts of the saints.⁹⁶ Just as God's salvation is both *with* humanity and *for* them, the Spirit's intercession joins with humanity in prayers of lament and appeals for them.

The saints wait for what they do not see, with ὑπομονή (Rom 8:25). The word ὑπομονή connotes not simply patience but faithful perseverance, a persistent and active endurance that presses in hope toward God's promised future (Heb 12:1; Rom 2:7).⁹⁷ The Spirit not only comes alongside the believers in their weakness, in order to help them endure, but guarantees God's promised future: as the "firstfruits," the Spirit is the firm link between the "already" of the saints and their "not yet."⁹⁸

The hope of the "not yet" shapes and directs the protest and pain of groaning, and evokes the lament, "How long?"⁹⁹ The conclusion to Romans 8:14-27 arrives in verses 28-39, in Paul's insistence that "God works all things for the good of those who love him" and that nothing, nothing whatsoever, can separate the saints from the love of God in Jesus Christ. This is the hope that undergirds and makes possible lament as a prayer – as a form of trust and hope, and not despair.

The New Testament as a whole ends with a similar type of longing prayer, which also mentions the Spirit. The two promises of the Alpha and Omega (identified as Christ)

⁹⁶ Jewett describes the Spirit's intercession with God as God's internal self-communication: "God communicates with God's self" (Jewett, 525; cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC 38A [Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988], 479-80).

⁹⁷ So Jewett, 521.

⁹⁸ Moo, 509.

⁹⁹ C. Clifton Black, "The Persistence of the Wounds," in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 54. Schniewind describes the prayer in Romans 8:24ff. as "ein Stöhnen, ein Klagen, ein sehnsüchtiges Warten, eine Hoffnung... [A moan, a lament, a wistful waiting, a hope...]" ; Schniewind, 83.

that “I am coming soon” (Rev 22:12, 20a) are followed by the cry, “Come!” (Rev 22:17, 20b).¹⁰⁰ In the first cry, the Spirit says “Come” along with the bride, the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). In the second, John concludes his revelation with the prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus!” By itself, “Come!” is not a lament, but alongside the cries of the martyrs under the throne (Rev 6:10) and within the apocalyptic context of Revelation, calling on the Lord to *Come!* gives voice to the same longing contained in Romans 8, and as expressed in texts like Isaiah 64:1: “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down!” The resurrection of Jesus and his awaited parousia place Christian lament within the unique eschatological tension between the “now” and the “not yet.”

5.6 Conclusion

The Holy Spirit’s role in the church’s ongoing prayer of lament demonstrates the essential character of divine lament revealed in Jesus’ own prayers: the groaning prompted by the apparent silence of God and by the continuing “un-redemption” of the world; and the firm hope that God’s unwavering compassion led God fully to enter into the world’s suffering and sin in order to redeem it. This points to the eschatological character of Christian lament, and its setting within the new age inaugurated by Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection. The next chapter explores the effect of the Christian eschatological timeline on the role of lament in the New Testament.

¹⁰⁰ For example, Adolf Schlatter writes, “Maranatha wurde leicht ein *stenagmos*” (see Schniewind, 96).

6. Christian Eschatology and Lament

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the effect of Christianity's unique eschatological timeline—the inaugurated but not fully realized kingdom of God—on the prayer of lament. First, I briefly describe the connections between lament and Jewish eschatology in Second Temple and Dead Sea Scrolls literature. Jewish writings in the Second Temple period had already begun to associate lament with eschatological hopes through its eschatological reinterpretations of the lament psalms and the Davidic promises. In the majority of Jewish literature in this time period, vindication began to be expected in the next age rather than in the present.

Next, I describe Jesus' ministry as the inaugurated vindication of lament – the promised consolation of Israel. In a Christian, proleptic eschatology, vindication is both *now*, in the present time, and *not yet*, in the future at Christ's return and the full manifestation of God's kingdom. To make this argument, I describe Jesus' ministry as the promised consolation for Rachel's weeping. Then, I compare the role of lament and redemption in the eschatological frameworks of David Kelsey and Karl Barth. I describe 1 Thessalonians 4:13 as a text that maintains a balance between mourning and hope, and that points to the relationship between lament and patient endurance. Finally, I narrate the petitions of the Lord's Prayer as lament-like, longing prayers for God's kingdom fully to come.

6.2 Lament and Eschatology in Second Temple Literature

In this section, I sketch the function of lament in representative Second Temple literature. Lament takes on a new eschatological character in this time period, largely

through eschatological interpretations of the psalms and the extension of the Davidic promises from an earthly dynasty to a messianic or apocalyptic rule. Jewish literature after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE continues this tendency. For example, in a time period roughly coterminous with the writing of the New Testament, the laments of 4 Ezra draw from the canonical psalms and prophets within an apocalyptic context. Postexilic and Second Temple authors adopt different strategies regarding lament's function as theodicy, as demonstrated in my comparison of Job, 4 Ezra, and the Dead Sea Scrolls in section 6.2.3 below.¹

The setting of lament in eschatological or apocalyptic contexts during the Second Temple period and the early first century provides essential background for the New Testament's use of lament. A brief investigation of lament and eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls reveals a precedent for the realized and future eschatology in the New Testament, but a different use of lament. Examining literature from the Second Temple period helps us to trace the shift from this-worldly vindication, to a two-ages eschatology where rescue occurs in the next age, to a now-and-not-yet eschatology where vindication is initiated but awaits full consummation in the future.

6.2.1 Eschatological Interpretations of the Royal Lament Psalms

During the Second Temple era (516 BCE-70 CE), the exile and the continued hardships of the people of Israel precipitated a potential crisis of faith for Israel. For those who remained dispersed and those who had returned to the land, the painful distance

¹ My study of the Dead Sea Scrolls is largely restricted to the Community Rule (1QS) and the Hôdayôt (1QH^a), since lament plays a more prominent role in these documents. See Esther G. Chazon, Ruth Clements, and Avital Pinnick, eds., *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), esp. Adele Berlin, "Qumran Laments and the Study of Qumran Literature," 1-17.

between biblical promises and present reality led in part to a reevaluation and adaptation of Scripture, including eschatological interpretations of the Psalms.² Interpreters began to read the Davidic promises in the royal lament psalms as referring to an eternal rule rather than an earthly dynasty.

Evidence that Judaism had begun to interpret the psalms eschatologically occurs as early as the Septuagint and is confirmed in the Dead Sea Scrolls.³ In the Septuagint, additional superscriptions strengthened the association of David with the Psalter (from 73 in the Hebrew text to 85 in the Septuagint), at the same time as the Davidic promises took on new meaning indicating future eschatological restoration.⁴ Additionally, the Septuagint renders the psalm heading למנצח as εις τὸ τέλος (“to the end” or “for the end”), perhaps indicating that the Septuagint translators understood these psalms eschatologically.⁵ Furthermore, it is possible that the Psalter’s organization itself reflects growing interest in David as a messianic figure.⁶

² Bruce K. Waltke, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary*, ed. J. M. Houston and Erika Moore (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 20-1. Hermann Gunkel refers to a set of psalms (mainly enthronement psalms) as eschatological, but he uses eschatology more broadly to mean any kind of future hope or to indicate prophetic elements in the psalms; see Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms; a Form-Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 251-92. See also Mowinckel’s critique of Gunkel’s use of eschatology in Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI; Dearborn, MI: Eerdmans; Dove Publishers, 2004), 64. Mowinckel claims that eschatological or future hope elements in the psalms arise from postexilic settings (ibid., 291).

³ This section is indebted to Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 177-9; Waltke, 19-36; Susan Gillingham, “From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism,” *CBQ* 64, no. 3 (2002): 470-89; Susan Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 5-13; George J. Brooke, “The Psalms in Early Jewish Literature in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Maarten J. J. Menken and Steve Moyise (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 5-24; and Rikki Watts, “The Psalms in Mark’s Gospel,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 25-45.

⁴ Waltke, 24-5, 27.

⁵ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 177-8.

⁶ Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries*, 7-8. According to Gerald H. Wilson, certain royal psalms, especially 2, 72, and 89, were intentionally placed at the “seams” of the first three books (Psalms 2-89) “in

Additional evidence for eschatological readings of psalms appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which ascribe eschatological meaning to multiple psalms, including to Psalm 22.⁷ Just as the Septuagint may betray a stronger interest in David's association with the Psalter, the collections of Psalms discovered at Qumran suggest an interest in Davidic messianism.⁸ A similar phenomenon appears in other Second Temple literature, including the Psalms of Solomon, which draw on the canonical psalms and the prophets to proclaim future salvation through a Davidic Messiah.⁹ These prophetic readings embedded the prayer of lament in an eschatological framework, which shifted expectations regarding God's redemption of Israel and the righteous. Rather than expecting God's rescue in this life, many Second Temple interpreters envisioned the promised vindication of the psalms and in prayers of lament as occurring in the next life.¹⁰

order to shape the understanding of those segments of the Psalter as an Exilic response to the loss of the Davidic monarchy"; see Gerald H. Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the Shape of the Psalter," in *Book of Psalms*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Jr. Patrick D. Miller (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005), 391. See also Gordon J. Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 333-49.

⁷ Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries*, 10-11. In *The Way of the Lord*, Joel Marcus discusses eschatological and messianic readings of Ps 37, 22, 2, 118, 110; see Marcus, 60-3, 133-7, 178-9. Matthew Mitchell very tentatively suggests that the Qumran community developed a messianic reading of Psalm 89 that looked forward to a future anointed "David," a speculation based on the fragment of Psalm 89 discovered at Qumran (4Q236=4QPs89); see Matthew W. Mitchell, "Genre Disputes and Communal Accusatory Laments: Reflections on the Genre of Psalm LXXXIX," *VT* 55, no. 4 (2005): 521. For prophetic adaptation of "psalmsody" in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy," 482-7; and Waltke, 28-32. For eschatological interpretations of Psalm 22 in the DSS, later Targum, and midrash, see Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 179. See also Hartmut Gese, "Psalm 22 und das Neue Testament: der Älteste Bericht vom Tode Jesu und die Entstehung des Herrenmahles," *ZThK* 65, no. 1 (1968): 1-22; but see Juel's critique of Gese in Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 99-101.

⁸ Brooke, 10.

⁹ For the use of Psalms in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, see Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy," 487-8; and Waltke, 34-6.

¹⁰ Becker and Waltke argue that the eschatological interpretation of the psalms arose naturally from a prophetic impulse already present in the original intent of the psalm, whereas Begrich argues that eschatological interpretation was an innovation in the Second Temple period (Waltke, 28, esp. n.39). The Psalms were interpreted as prophecy in the New Testament (John 19:23-24; Acts 2:25-36; 4:25-26; Heb

6.2.2 Vindication Extended into the Next Age

“The dead do not praise the Lord,” declares the psalmist (Ps 115:17; cf. Ps 30:9; Isa 38:18). With this pointed observation, the psalmist cries for rescue from impending death. Although Psalm 30 declares that the Lord has “brought up my soul from Sheol” and “restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit,” these statements are typically understood as praise for rescue from grave illness rather than as reference to resurrection (cf. Ps 28:1). With one or two tentative exceptions, the psalmists and other lamenters typically expect (and often receive) God’s hearing, vindication, and rescue in this life, prior to death.¹¹

In Second Temple literature, however, the righteous sufferer might not escape death. The one who suffers expects and receives not immediate divine intervention but vindication in the next life. Although significant variation exists regarding the nature of the eschaton, the future vindication often expresses itself as resurrection. In some cases, confirmation that the martyrs were righteous appears precisely in the event of their suffering and death, through their courageous suffering and unwillingness to renounce God or Torah in the face of persecution or torture. Three examples from the Apocrypha

1:1-14) and in the Qumran community (11QPs^a) (ibid., 28). Gillingham refers to “the prophetic bias” within the Psalter, visible in the Psalter’s compilation and its translation in the LXX (Gillingham, “From Liturgy to Prophecy,” 476-81). She explains, “...earlier prophets used psalmody primarily in a hortatory and didactic way to build up the faith of the present community, whereas the later prophets also used the psalms as prophecies concerning a golden age soon to be inaugurated by Israel’s God. ...[T]his future-oriented use of psalmody is similarly evident in the compilation of the psalms and in the Greek translation of the psalter: this suggests that the eschatological interpretation of psalmody was not a phenomenon unique to the Prophets” (ibid., 470-1).

¹¹ For hearing and saving before death, see the discussion about Hebrews 5:7 in William R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 99–104.

demonstrate this post-mortem vindication: Wisdom 2-5; 2 Maccabees 7; and 1 Enoch 94-104.¹²

Wisdom 2:1-20 offers an extended meditation on the finality of death from the perspective of the ungodly. Given their belief that “there is no return from death,” the wicked boldly oppress the righteous, the widow, and the elderly; and they taunt the righteous man, “Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God’s child, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries” (Wisd 2:17-18; cf. Ps 22:8; Matt 27:43). But the author of the Wisdom of Solomon reveals the foolishness of the ungodly; instead of destruction, the righteous will receive immortality as their reward (Wisd 3:2-8). After death, at God’s judgment, the ungodly bewail their ignorance of God’s secret purposes; they perish while the righteous live and reign forever with the Lord (Wisd 5:14-16). The author has modified the typical Jewish wisdom tale; in his narrative, the righteous are rescued *after* death rather than rescued from death.¹³

Similarly, in 2 Maccabees 7, the righteous brothers are rescued through their resurrection to everlasting life (2 Macc 7:9, 11, 14). In a setting of religious persecution, the righteous person becomes the martyr: the one who willingly endures even death for the sake of God. Like the righteous and the oppressed poor in the Wisdom of Solomon,

¹² Although difficult to date, Wisdom is usually placed between 220 B.C.E.–100 C.E.; 2 Maccabees between 160–100 B.C.E.; and 1 Enoch (chapters 94-105) sometime in the first century C.E.

¹³ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, revised and expanded ed., Harvard Theological Studies (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 88; cf. Gérard Rossé, *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 54. Nickelsburg suggests that persecution of the Jews (between Second Isaiah and Antiochus) “fostered an interpretation of Isaiah 52-53 as a scene of the post-mortem exaltation of the persecuted ones and the (impending) judgment of their persecutors” – see Daniel 12, Testament of Moses 10; 1 Enoch 104; 2 Baruch 49-51; Parables of Enoch; 1 Enoch 108; and Wisdom of Solomon. In 3 Maccabees the vindication is this-worldly, to describe the historical situation in Alexandria (Nickelsburg, 107-118).

the brothers do not receive their reward in this life. In fact, their lot in the present life is that of misunderstanding, mockery, and physical pain – a direct challenge to the standard deuteronomistic framework in which God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. The brothers' willingness to endure suffering at the hands of enemies becomes a sign of their righteousness, and their resurrection is the vindication of their obedience (2 Macc 7:23).¹⁴ Although the brothers' calm embrace of death differs significantly from Jesus' struggle in the Synoptic Gospels, their endurance of suffering for God's sake and their vindication in resurrection have obvious resonances with the Gospel passion narratives.

First Enoch 94-104 likewise overturns the notion that the righteous will always be blessed in *this* life, but in a social context of wealth and poverty rather than religious persecution. In 1 Enoch, the sinners prosper while the poor are oppressed (cf. 1 Enoch 103:5-6).¹⁵ Like the Maccabean martyrs, and like the poor and the righteous in the Wisdom of Solomon, God rewards the righteous ones in Enoch in the next life by raising them to new life. Despite some variations, shaped by the different social and political contexts of the respective writings, each example demonstrates that God hears the cry of those who suffer and vindicates them in the next life rather than in the present one.

In George Nickelsburg's survey of intertestamental Jewish teachings on resurrection, immortality, and eternal life, he concludes that while most of the beliefs in this timeframe move toward post-mortem judgment and vindication, especially through the resurrection of the body, a minority conservative element retains or returns to belief

¹⁴ Nickelsburg, 120-1.

¹⁵ Ibid., 142-7.

in this-worldly punishment and reward (e.g., 1 Enoch 22:10; and 2 Maccabees 9, where Antiochus suffers a violent and premature death).¹⁶

Lothar Ruppert identifies this transformation of the “righteous sufferer” motif, within the theological context of apocalyptic eschatology and the sociopolitical context of martyrdom, as the background for the New Testament’s narration of Jesus’ suffering.¹⁷ Like the texts discussed above, as well as other first century Jewish literature like 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, the New Testament presents the idea “that the righteous one *must suffer on account of* his righteousness but that he will be *glorified at the eschaton*,” unlike the Psalms where a person suffers *in spite of* his righteousness and calls for God to destroy his enemies in *this* life.¹⁸ In Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.2, I addressed the issue of whether or not God heard Jesus’ prayer from the cross and rescued him (Heb 5:7). Within this Second Temple framework, it makes perfect sense that God hears Jesus, rescues him *after* his death, and vindicates him through resurrection.

If vindication through resurrection provided one solution to the theological problem of the exilic and postexilic suffering of Israel and of the righteous at the hands of the wicked, the question of God’s presence, absence, or agency in the midst of that

¹⁶ Ibid., 216-7. Nickelsburg proposes that particular historical experiences helped to shape Jewish beliefs in postmortem judgment and vindication. For example, in Daniel, belief in vindication through resurrection arose from “a specific theological problem”: Hasidic Jews who had died because of their piety and obedience to the Torah, whereas the “Hellenizing Jews” had survived through what Hasidic Jews viewed as disobedience. The concept of vindication through resurrection addressed this problem, drawing on texts such as Isa 26:19 and Isa 66:24 for scriptural support (ibid., 32); cf. parallels in Testament of Moses 10, Jubilees 23, and Testament of Judah 25, which address the same historical setting and theological dilemma with the same answer – resurrection as vindication (ibid., 42-59).

¹⁷ Lothar Ruppert, *Jesus als der leidende Gerechte? Der Weg Jesu im Lichte eines alt- und zwischentestamentlichen Motivs*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 59 (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1972), esp. 9-13, 42-71.

¹⁸ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 177.

suffering remained pressing in the Second Temple period and through the first century after the second fall of the temple.

6.2.3 The Theodicy of Lament: Job, 4 Ezra, and the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁹

The question of theodicy—i.e., of God’s relationship to suffering, evil, and the triumph of Israel’s enemies—became especially pressing after the fall of the two kingdoms of Israel, the destruction of the temple, and the exile. In relation to lament, different strands of the Jewish tradition typically approached the problem on a spectrum that stretches from accusation to penitence. At one end of the spectrum lies *Anklage*: lament as accusation or protest. This form of theodicy appropriates lament as anguished complaint and accusation toward the Lord regarding the divine treatment of God’s own creation and God’s own people. Job and 4 Ezra are examples of this form of exilic and postexilic lament. At the other end of the spectrum lies an approach that shifts lament toward its penitential form; it tends to acknowledge evil but places the blame for it on either the evil inclination within humanity or an external enemy such as Belial, or both. The Dead Sea Scrolls represent this approach to lament and theodicy in the Second Temple period.

¹⁹ I compare Job, 4 Ezra, and 1QS for their mutual use of Psalm 8, and for their use of lament – since lament is relatively rare in the Second Temple literature. E.g., Adele Berlin notes that “Jerusalem laments” (e.g., those in Lamentations, which I call the dirge) appear very rarely if at all in the Second Temple literature (Adele Berlin, “Qumran Laments and the Study of Qumran Literature,” in *Liturgical Perspectives*, 10). Adele Berlin describes 4Q179 and 4Q501 as poems of alienation rather than mourning (ibid., 12-17). 1QH^a Col. XIII, 20-39 is a hymn that contains multiple allusions to the lament psalms and Jeremiah, often appropriating lines and metaphors for its own purposes. 1QH^a Col. XVII, 4-7 also has resonances with multiple lament psalms, including the characteristic turn to praise: “The breakers of death [surround me,] Sheol is upon my bed, my couch breaks into a lament, [...] a sighing sound; my eyes are like the smoke in an oven, and my tears like streams of water, my eyes yearn for rest... As for me, from ruin to annihilation, from sickness to disease, from pangs to labours, my soul reflects on your wonders; you, in your kindness, have not rejected me...”. While Job is not Second Temple literature, and is difficult to date, I believe that it represents theology from the exilic period, and it provides a helpful companion to 4 Ezra (et al.) due to its wide-ranging influence on 4 Ezra and subsequent Jewish thought regarding theodicy.

Job, 4 Ezra, and 1QS provide a fascinating base of comparison for their approaches to lament and theodicy in part because they each appropriate the anthropology of Psalm 8 within a framework of lament. Each text uses Psalm 8 to prove a different point: Job to charge God with injustice regarding God's treatment of humanity and of Job in particular; 4 Ezra to provoke God to show mercy to God's own frail creation; and 1QS to describe humanity as unworthy and corrupt.

In one of his laments over his undeserved misfortune, Job appropriates Psalm 8, subverting it not for praise but for complaint:

What (מָה) is man (אֲנוֹשׁ) that (כִּי) you raise him up, and that you put your mind on him? You take account of him (וַתִּפְקְדֵנִי) every morning, and test him continuously. (Job 7:17-18)

What (מָה) is man (אֲנוֹשׁ) that (כִּי) you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you take him into account (וַתִּפְקְדֵנִי)? (Ps 8:4 [v.5 MT])

Psalm 8 continues, "You have established him by the work of your hands, and placed everything under his dominion," whereas Job goes on to agonize over God's malevolent attention: "Will you not look away from me for a while, let me alone until I swallow my spittle? If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity? Why have you made me your target? Why have I become a burden to you?" (Job 7:19-20). In Job, the attentiveness of God toward humanity has become a curse and a burden rather than a blessing, and he reworks Psalm 8 accordingly from a hymn of praise into a lament.²⁰

²⁰ See Samuel E. Balentine, "'What are human beings, that you make so much of them?': Divine Disclosure from the Whirlwind: 'Look at Behemoth,'" in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 259-78; Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1985), 285; J. Gerald Janzen, *Job, Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 83, 107, 209, 245-6. Other ironic reversals in Job include Proverbs 1:28 in Job 7:21b; Proverbs 10:28b in Job 14:19b; Psalm 34:7 in Job 19:12b; and perhaps Psalm 104:23 in Job 24:5 and (Dion Paul-Eugène Dion, "Formulaic Language in the Book of Job: International Background and Ironic Distortions," *SR* 16, no. 2 [1987]: 191-2).

Ezra also appropriates Psalm 8 as a bitter complaint against God, in the midst of a plea for God to be merciful to sinners. Ezra argues that the righteous will surely be rewarded, but that God will be regarded as merciful if God goes further and pardons those who have sinned. To make his case, he asks why God is angry with what God himself has made: “But what is man, that you are angry with him; or what is a mortal race [Lat. *genus corruptibile*], that you are so bitter against it?” (4 Ez 8:34).²¹

Unlike Job, who laments on his own behalf and wishes to escape God’s devastating attention, Ezra faces God as an intercessor on behalf of all humanity, in the tradition of Abraham, Moses, and other Old Testament prophets who use lament to intercede on behalf of others (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.1). He argues that God should be merciful toward a people whom God knows are mortal and have been infected with evil hearts from the creation of Adam (cf. Gen 8:21). Ezra reminds God that humans are God’s own creation and that they are made from dust – they are a sinful people, but the *yēšer* has been in them since Adam, and they deserve their creator’s mercy. Ezra complains along with Job that “humans are creatures targeted for destruction, not for special care and exaltation.”²² Like Job’s friend Eliphaz, Ezra admits that all human beings have sinned (8:35); but while Eliphaz uses this truth to justify God’s judgments

²¹ Cf. 2 Baruch 48:14. For 4 Ezra’s use of Psalm 8, see Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 275; and G. H. Box, *The Ezra-Apocalypse* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman, 1912), 183, who notes the “bitter parody” of Psalm 8 in 4 Ezra 8:34. While some argue that 4 Ezra 8:34 subverts Jewish prayer, I argue that it continues the tradition of intercession that includes Abraham’s petitions for Sodom and Moses’ intercessions for Israel after the golden calf incident; see Stone, 89. See also Jeffrey H. Tigay, “What is man that you have been mindful of him (on Psalm 8:4-5),” in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East* (Guilford, CT: Four Quarters, 1987), 169-71; Alden L. Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil in the Theodicy of IV Ezra*, SBLDS 29 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977). For Ezra as a prophetic intercessor, see also Earl Breech, “These Fragments I have Shored against My Ruins: The Form and Function of 4 Ezra,” *JBL* 92, no. 2 (1973): 271.

²² Balentine, 262.

(and by implication to explain Job's suffering), Ezra brandishes it as just cause for God's mercy toward a fallible and mortal people.

The scroll known as the Rule of the Community alludes to Psalm 8 in order to emphasize humanity's unworthiness in the face of God's holiness (cf. Job 15:14-15; 25:4-6; cf. God's response to Job in 38:1-21; 40:8-14):

However, I belong to evil humankind, to the assembly of unfaithful flesh; my failings, my iniquities, my sins, [...] with the depravities of my heart, belong to the assembly of worms and of those who walk in darkness. ... Beyond you [my God] there is no-one to oppose your counsel, to understand any of your holy thoughts, to gaze into the abyss of your mysteries, to fathom all your marvels or the strength of your might. Who can endure your glory? *What, indeed, is the son of man, among all your marvelous deeds?* As what shall one born of woman be considered in your presence? Shaped from dust has he been, maggots' food shall be his dwelling; he is spat saliva, moulded clay, and for dust is his longing. What will the clay reply and the one shaped by hand? (1QS Col. XI, 9-11, 18-22, emphasis added)

The author of the Community Rule appropriates Psalm 8 to support his contention that all humanity, including the author himself, is evil and unworthy. The theme of humanity as frail clay and dust also appears repeatedly in the Hodayôt, or the Qumran psalms known as the Hodayôt (see, e.g., 1QH^a Col. VII, 24-25; Col. XVIII, 3-4; Col. XI, 23-24; Col. XII, 28-37; Col. XX 24-28, 32; cf. Job 40:4-5; 42:6).²³

Thus the main occasion for lament in the Dead Sea Scrolls differs from both Job (a personal lament over apparently undeserved suffering) and 4 Ezra (an intercessory plea for mercy on behalf of all humanity). In the Hodayôt, the author laments primarily over his own guilt and over the guilt and sinfulness of humanity, but offers no plea for mercy;

²³ "The sectarian still lives in an evil world and laments the humanness of his existence" (Nickelsburg, 193). For similar laments regarding humanity as "dust," "ashes," "clay," and "flesh," see J. Licht, "The Doctrine of the Thanksgiving Scroll," *Israel Exploration Journal* 6, no. 1 (1956): 10-11; Helmer Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 94-100.

the Lord has already divided the world into the sons of truth and the sons of wickedness. The Qumran psalmist is convinced of all humanity's unworthiness but also of his special status and God's blessing on him and the other members of the community. If he prays lament at all, it is within the penitential strand of the tradition, but without the usual petition for help or forgiveness.²⁴

For example, 1QH^a Col. XII, 28-37 contains resonances of the lament in Psalm 22:14, but whereas the canonical psalmist laments, "For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me" (Ps 22:16), the Qumran psalmist laments, "for I have remembered my guilty deeds with the unfaithfulness of my ancestors." Similarly, 1QH^a Col. XV, 1-5 contains a graphic lament over evil and violence ("my heart is horrified at evil schemes...my bones have been disjointed, my entrails heave..."). In this passage, the author seems to be making a general observation over humanity's evil rather than a complaint about specific violence directed toward himself (as is the case with many lament psalms), and there is no plea for God to help; instead, he lays the blame for the evil on Belial ("for Belial is present when their destructive inclination becomes apparent").²⁵ The Qumran psalmist laments (like Ezra) over the evil inclination that is in humanity (1QH^a Col. XIX, 19-27); but instead of using this as an occasion to plead for God's mercy, as Ezra does, he prophesies that the inclination of injustice will someday be no more (1QH^a Col. XXI, 10). As Michael Moore writes, "*Hodayot*, as a general rule,

²⁴ In the Dead Sea Scrolls, "[t]he lament for Jerusalem, in and of itself, seems to have diminished in the post-exilic period, and to have been absorbed into penitential prayer" (Berlin, 11). Of course, in both Job and 4 Ezra, God responds to the laments in dramatic fashion, and the laments are resolved.

²⁵ For the connections between 1QH and Jeremiah's laments, see Michael S. Moore, "The Laments in Jeremiah and 1QH: Mapping the Metaphorical Trajectories," in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen*, ed. John Goldingay (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 251. See, e.g., the uses of healing/saving and "incurable pain" in Jer 15:18 and 1QH 13.26, 28; 16.28; where Jeremiah tends to blame God for his pain, the author of 1QH typically blames the men of Belial (*ibid.*, 247).

never challenges the deity's motives..."²⁶ This tendency of the Qumran literature distances it from the challenging, accusatory lament tradition of Job and 4 Ezra, and thus puts it at variance with many of the canonical lament psalms as well.²⁷

The New Testament, likewise, has no figure like Job or Ezra, that is, no anguished lamenter who arraigns God in the heavenly court.²⁸ Because of Jesus' identity as Son of God, he serves as both accuser and accused in the court of lament. Like these three post-exilic texts, the book of Hebrews also appropriates Psalm 8, but as neither complaint nor statement of humanity's lowliness. Rather, Hebrews reinterprets Jesus as the "son of man" whom God crowned with glory and honor (Heb 2:5-9). The "lowering" of Jesus just below the angels – i.e., his flesh-and-blood mortality – is cause for rejoicing rather than lament, since it accomplished the redemption of all humanity from death.

In terms of the spectrum between *Anklage* and penitence, texts in the New Testament display both characteristics. For example, several texts, while not full-bodied laments as such, include mourning over sin in a manner similar to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Paul "evocatively echoes the penitential Psalm 51" in Romans 3 by contrasting human guilt with God's blamelessness.²⁹ The litany of human unworthiness in Romans 3:10-18

²⁶ Ibid., 249.

²⁷ The Christian tradition displays this tendency as well. Matthias Wüthrich identifies two types of the suppression of lament in systematic theology: an Augustinian type, and a "suffering God" type. Augustinian theodicy tends to exonerate God by incriminating humanity; evil is a problem of human free will and sin. In the suffering God model, God is incapacitated; evil is no longer a theological challenge but an anthropological problem (Matthias D. Wüthrich, "Lament for Naught? An Inquiry into the Suppression of Lament in Systematic Theology: On the Example of Karl Barth," in *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock [New York; London: T&T Clark International, 2009], 64-5).

²⁸ For the limited reception of Job in the New Testament, see Ernst Dassmann, "Die verstummte Klage bei den Krichenvätern," in *Klage*, ed. Martin Ebner et al., JBTh 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 136.

²⁹ Sylvia C. Keesmaat, "The Psalms in Romans and Galatians," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 145; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 50.

collects quotations from Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Proverbs, and multiple psalms, several of which are laments (Psalm 5; 10; 140).³⁰ According to Paul's catena, the whole world is sinful and stands under God's just judgment. In short, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Paul uses the language of lament to build a case for the equal culpability of Jew and Gentile before God, but also for God's faithfulness and justification of both Jew and Gentile.³¹ Paul applies lines from lament psalms that originally applied to the "enemies" or to the wicked, and applies them to all humanity; in so doing, he appropriates part of the lament pattern for penitential purposes. For him, the descriptions of the laments indict sinful humanity and vindicate God's righteousness. In this way, Paul's use of penitential lament is similar to that of the Hôdayôt.

Other texts connecting "lament" to penitence in the New Testament largely concern grief or sorrow rather than lament itself. For example, in 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 Paul explains that godly grief (ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη) produces repentance, but worldly grief (ἡ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη) produces death (cf. Rom 7:24; Jas 4:8-10). James likewise connects mourning to repentance and penance (5:1).³²

Other New Testament texts link lament to its function as protest or complaint against God, although none do so with as much bitter force as Job or 4 Ezra. As the

³⁰ Psalms 14, 36, and 53 are often considered laments, but they function more as hymns of condemnation than as lament per se. The dirge, likewise, often contains both mourning and judgment.

³¹ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 47-54; Keesmaat, 141-9. For lament in Romans 9-11, see Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 64, and Keesmaat, 152ff. In Romans 9-11, lament plays a role in the questioning of God's justice and faithfulness, but for Paul the question has been decisively answered in the affirmative – i.e., God is certainly just and faithful (so Rom 15:7-13).

³² Markus Öhler, "To Mourn, Weep, Lament and Groan: On the Heterogeneity of the New Testament's Statements on Lament," in *Evoking Lament*, 152-3. For wailing and gnashing of teeth at judgment, see Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:50. Cf. Luke 6:24-25, which is Luke's reversed pair to "blessed are you who mourn," connecting weeping to judgment; see also Matt 24:30 and Rev 1:7 for wailing and mourning at the coming of the Son of Man.

speech of Jesus, lament associates more closely with suffering and evil than with repentance.³³ Jesus' laments also evoke the problem of God's hiddenness through their use of Psalms 22, 42, and 69 (I discuss Jesus' laments in detail in Chapter 2, and revisit the theme of God's absence in Chapter 3, section 3.4.4).

6.2.4 Lament and Eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls

For the most part, Second Temple literature operates with what we might call a two-ages eschatology: the present world, and the world to come. Apocalyptic literature in particular draws a strict division between the two ages. The Qumran writings, however, contain evidence of a more complex eschatology in which the future world intervenes into and overlaps with the present age. For the purposes of understanding the function of lament within Christian eschatology, the Qumran eschatology is significant for its highly realized character and its lingering "not yet" dimension.

In the Hôdayôt, for example, the blessings of the eschaton are a present reality. Entrance into the community signifies the passage from death into life, but the realm of wickedness remains: "the full consummation of salvation belongs to the future."³⁴ Because participation in the community entails genuine participation in "the blessings and privileges of the new life," death and future resurrection are less central concerns. At the same time, the Qumran author never forgets that the community still exists within a wicked and perverse world, and is confident that God will punish the wicked, bring evil to an end, and accomplish the destruction of the world and the vindication of the sons of

³³ In Arthur McGill's *Suffering*, he poses a challenge to his own construal of Jesus' crucifixion: can any theology rightly give priority to evil (i.e., the demonic) over sin? See Arthur C. McGill, *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 128. The Lord's Prayer, significantly, deals with both sin (*forgive us*) and evil (*deliver us*).

³⁴ Nickelsburg, 190-1.

truth.³⁵ The Community Rule displays a similar form of highly realized eschatology, but still retains the “not yet” dimension of God’s future destruction of evil and purification (1QS III.13-IV.26).

Despite the “not yet” dimensions, Nickelsburg argues that the Dead Sea Scrolls express no pressing need for post-mortem adjudication or vindication, as is the case in other Second Temple literature. God has already delivered or vindicated, or will do so in the immediate future. Death itself is rarely of interest, except in the *Hôdayôt*. Continuity between eternal life now and in the future renders physical death of small significance.³⁶

The eschatology of the Dead Sea Scrolls has some overlap with Christian eschatology, but there are also important differences. Both share a belief that the promises and blessings of the next age have begun in the present age, through participation in a community. For the New Testament, however, the promise of Christ’s return and the future resurrection of the dead are at the heart of the gospel. Furthermore, while lament in the Dead Sea Scrolls seems to have assumed an almost entirely penitential character, some laments in the New Testament retains lament’s function as complaint or protest.

The expected vindication in the New Testament is similar to the majority of Jewish intertestamental literature: vindication through resurrection and eternal life in the next age. The New Testament presupposes existing Jewish beliefs about resurrection and

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 192-3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 205-6. Markus Bockmuehl challenges Nickelsburg on this point, noting that Nickelsburg’s study confined itself to 1QS and 1QH. Bockmuehl argues that other writings, especially those from Cave 4 such as Pseudo-Daniel and Pseudo-Ezekiel, describe significant future hopes, including resurrection from the dead (Markus Bockmuehl, “Personal Afterlife in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Pauline Literature,” Lecture at Duke University, March 20, 2012). It is not always easy to distinguish realized blessings from future eschatological blessings in the Qumran literature; it seems that the former mirror and prefigure the latter.

eternal life,³⁷ and transforms them through the conviction that God inaugurated the eschatological end times by raising Jesus from the dead.³⁸ Jesus' resurrection vindicates him by making sense of his scandalous crucifixion; it effects Jesus' exaltation as Lord; and it promises resurrection and eternal life to his followers. Although Jesus' passion follows the familiar pattern of the exaltation of the righteous one, as in the narratives of Joseph, Esther, and Daniel (cf. Wisdom 5), it exceeds the pattern in an unprecedented way, through a deeper humiliation (into literal death) and a more exalted vindication (to the right hand of God) (see, e.g., Phil 2:5-11; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3).³⁹ Most importantly, Jesus' resurrection from the dead brings forward the resurrection expected at the end of time. In the next section, I consider the effect of this unique proleptic Christian eschatology on the function of lament in the New Testament.

³⁷ Jon D. Levenson challenges the conventional view that the Torah has little or no evidence for belief in the resurrection; he argues instead that ample resources exist in the Hebrew Bible for the later doctrine of resurrection, centered especially around the constitution and restoration of the people Israel (Jon Douglas Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006], x). Belief in resurrection was clearly not a Christian innovation, but neither was it consistent or widespread in Judaism at the time of Christ. On the doctrine of resurrection in Judaism, see also Nickelsburg; Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984); Günter Stemberger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung: Studien zur Anthropologie und Eschatologie des palästinischen Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972); Hans Clemens Caesarius Cavallin, *Life after Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in I Cor. 15* (Lund: Gleerup, 1974); Ulrich Fischer, *Eschatologie und Jenseitserwartung im hellenistischen Diasporajudentum*, BZNW 44 (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1978); Émile Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle?: Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1993); N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003). Grant Macaskill studies the links between revealed wisdom and apocalyptic or inaugurated eschatology in Second Temple literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Matthew, in Grant Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom and Inaugurated Eschatology in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007).

³⁸ The precise connection between messianic hope and the resurrection of the dead is not entirely clear; see Robert J. Kepple, "Hope of Israel, the Resurrection of the Dead, and Jesus: A Study of their Relationship in Acts," *JETS* 20, no. 3 (1977): 235 n.13.

³⁹ Nickelsburg, 227-9.

6.3 Christian Eschatology and Lament

The Christian eschatology of the two overlapping ages (the now and the not yet) shapes the laments of the New Testament.⁴⁰ The difference between Christian and Jewish eschatology is not resurrection per se, but the resurrection of one man, Jesus Christ, in this age, and the in-breaking of the next age into this one through his resurrection. For Christian lament, the signs of the unredemption of the present age—all the ways in which God’s will is *not* yet done on earth, including the persistence of sin and death—constitute the “problem” or “enemy” about which Christians raise their voices in protest, penitence, and hope. The hope of lament rests on Jesus’ resurrection, and on the way his resurrection guarantees the general resurrection from the dead. The resurrection and the inauguration of the new age means that vindication – God’s redemption – has broken into the present, even while full redemption remains to be realized.⁴¹

To ground these claims in the New Testament, I pair Rachel’s weeping and Jesus’ blessing of the mourners to describe Jesus’ ministry as the in-breaking of God’s kingdom and the promised consolation of Israel – and thus the promise of the end of lament. Next, I argue that New Testament lament rests in and displays the tension between realized and future eschatology. I suggest that over-emphasizing either the realized pole or the future

⁴⁰ Ottmar Fuchs and Martin Ebner offer important studies of the relationship between Christian eschatology and lament in, respectively, Ottmar Fuchs, “Unerhörte Klage über den Tod hinaus! Überlegungen zur Eschatologie der Klage,” in *Klage*, 347-79; and Martin Ebner, “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im Neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, 73-87. Fuchs asks if lament persists beyond the grave, into death and even into the eschaton, arguing that lament never ceases until God’s “universal reconciliation [universalen Versöhnung]” is complete – even reconciliation between victims and perpetrators (Fuchs, 365, 379). Ebner argues, as I do, that lament and resurrection hope are intertwined in the New Testament. See also Oswald Bayer, “Erhörte Klage,” *NZStH* 25, no. 3 (1983): 259-72; and Oswald Bayer, “Zur Theologie der Klage,” in *Klage*, 289-300.

⁴¹ By equating the vindication of lament with God’s redemption, I draw attention to the way lament calls on God to be true to God’s character and to keep God’s promises, whether to humanity or to Israel. Redemption is thus in line with both God’s promises to Israel and God’s ultimate purposes for humanity.

pole has a tendency to undermine Christian lament. To illustrate the point, I study 1 Thessalonians 4:13 as a text that demonstrates a balance between the realized and the future in its description of mourning with hope. Because of the New Testament's emphasis on hope and perseverance in the face of death and suffering, I argue that lament and patient endurance properly belong together in the New Testament imagination. Finally, I explore the Lord's Prayer as a set of petitions, embedded within an inaugurated eschatological framework, that express the longing of lament for God's kingdom fully to come.

6.3.1 Blessed Are Those Who Mourn: Jesus' Ministry as the Consolation of Israel

Rachel's weeping in the Gospel of Matthew represents the anguished cries of Israel for redemption in the midst of great suffering and the pain of God's apparent silence or judgment. Jesus' ministry of healing and exorcism, his proclamation of the good news of the kingdom, and his death and resurrection signify God's answer to Rachel's weeping (i.e., to Israel's lament) and the proleptic end of lament, the comforting of all who mourn.

According to my working definition of lament (see Chapter 1, section 1.5), Rachel's weeping falls into my third category: texts that evoke the function and ethos of lament. It is neither a fully-formed prayer of lament nor a quotation of an Old Testament lament text. Keith Campbell notes that Rachel's weeping fails to qualify as a lament on form-critical grounds.⁴² On the other hand, Rachel's mourning *functions* precisely as a lament within its context in Jeremiah and more subtly within its context in Matthew. She

⁴² D. Keith Campbell, "NT Scholars' Use of OT Lament Terminology and Its Theological and Interdisciplinary Implications," *BBR* 21, no. 2 (2011): 219-23.

wails in distress, from a situation of suffering; and God responds to her cries with salvation.

I argue that Matthew appropriates the wider context of Rachel's weeping in Jeremiah's prophecy, and thus appropriates its function as lament and plea for the end of exile.⁴³ Within the framework of Matthew 1-5, Jesus' "genesis" (1:1), his announcement of good news (4:23), and his promise of blessing on those who mourn (5:4) are God's response to Rachel's plea and represent the promised consolation of Israel. Although Rachel's weeping appears only in Matthew, it provides a paradigmatic example of lament's function within Jesus' ministry as that which prompts and precedes the inauguration of the kingdom of God – the promised end of Israel's suffering in exile.⁴⁴

6.3.1.1 Rachel in Genesis and Jeremiah

In Genesis, Rachel is the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, the ancestors of the northern tribes of Israel. Rachel's death portrays her as a woman of sorrow: she dies in childbirth during Benjamin's birth, and she names her son "בְּרִי-אֲוֶן" (son of my sorrow) (Gen 35:16-20). Rachel's next significant appearance is in the book of Jeremiah,⁴⁵ where her "children" are not just her own sons, but all the tribes of Israel who have been carried off into captivity and exile. Her weeping in Jeremiah is not a formal lament or a prayer

⁴³ For the ability of a quoted text to evoke its wider context—a trope sometimes called transumption or metalepsis—see Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 19-20; and John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). As Hollander writes, "The interpretation of a metalepsis entails the recovery of the transumed material" (ibid., 115).

⁴⁴ Ellington proposes that the laments of Rachel and of the Canaanite woman serve key parallel functions in Matthew; Rachel's lament initiates Jesus' messianic ministry to Israel, and the Canaanite woman's lament "[drives] its transformation into a mission to all nations" (Scott A. Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* [Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008], 181).

⁴⁵ Christine Ritter studies the other occurrences of Rachel in the Old Testament in Christine Ritter, *Rachels Klage im antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum: eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Studie* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 12-56.

but wordless wails, expressed in both the Hebrew and Greek texts with a powerful series of mourning words.⁴⁶

Significantly, Rachel's voice is heard in *Ramah*, a town in the tribe of Benjamin, but more importantly a gathering place of the exiled Judeans on the way to Babylon (Jer 40:1; cf. Isa 10:29; Hosea 5:8).⁴⁷ Rachel, mother of the northern tribes, is the embodiment of all Israel crying out to God from the pain of exile.⁴⁸ Her refusal to be comforted is the strident protest of a lamenter who demands that God hear and respond.

Yet Jeremiah sets Rachel's weeping in the context of two chapters characterized not by lament but by hope: God promises to restore Israel, to return Israel to her own land (31:16-17), and to make a new covenant with her (31:31-34). Jeremiah 30 begins, "This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you. The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity

⁴⁶ In the Hebrew text, a voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and bitter weeping (תִּמְרוֹתַיִם בְּכִי נָדָה), refusing to be comforted. In the Greek text (Jer 38:15 LXX) a voice was heard in Ramah of lamentation and weeping and wailing (θρήνου και κλαυθμοῦ και ὀδυρμοῦ); Rachel would not stop weeping (Ραχηλ ἀποκλαιομένη οὐκ ἤθελεν παύσασθαι). In Matthew, the phrase "οὐκ ἤθελεν" recalls the Septuagint text, and "παρακληθῆναι" recalls the Hebrew text (פָּתַח־לִּי). See John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI; Bletchley, England: Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 124, for MT and LXX influences on Matthew's quotation.

⁴⁷ Ritter, 39. Davies and Allison refer to Ramah as "a city of sadness *par excellence*" (W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988], 269).

⁴⁸ In *Targum Jonathan*, an Aramaic translation of Jeremiah, Jer 31:15 reads, "A cry is heard 'in the heights of the world, the house of Israel is lamenting and moaning... ' Jerusalem is weeping for her children. She refuseth to be comforted, for they are not'" (Samuel H. Dresner, *Rachel* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994], 180). Rachel continues to be an important figure in later rabbinic traditions. The midrash to Lamentations, Lamentations Rabba 24, describes God's grief over Jerusalem's destruction and the people's exile. At God's bidding, Jeremiah summons Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses from their graves to lament Jerusalem's destruction. One by one, they plead for God to have mercy and restore the people. Finally, Rachel approaches God, and explains that she helped Leah deceive Jacob on their wedding night out of love for her sister. Only then does God relent and promise to restore Israel (Midrash Rabba, Lamentations, Proem XXXIV); see Belden C. Lane, "Hutzpa K'lapei Shamaya: A Christian Response to the Jewish Tradition of Arguing with God," *JES* 23, no. 4 (1986): 574; Dresner, 183-4. For the tradition that the Messiah will arrive and be crowned at Ramah, see *ibid.*, 204-5.

and restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess,' says the LORD'" (Jer 30:1-3). In Jeremiah 31, Rachel is not left weeping; God responds to Rachel's cries in the immediately following verses: "This is what the LORD says: 'Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,' declares the LORD. 'They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your descendants,' declares the LORD. 'Your children will return to their own land'" (Jer 31:16-17). Rachel's petition has been heard; God has responded to her wailing with a promise of hope and restoration.

6.3.1.2 Rachel's Weeping and God's Comfort in Matthew

In Matthew 2, Joseph heeds an angel's warning and flees with his wife and son into Egypt, in fulfillment of a prophecy in Hosea: "Out of Egypt I have called my son" (Hos 11:1). Meanwhile King Herod, furious at the deception of the magi, has ordered the killing of all male children under the age of two in and around Bethlehem. According to Matthew 2:18, this fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah 31: φωνὴ ἐν Ῥαμὰ ἠκούσθη, κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὄδυρμὸς πολὺς· Ῥαχὴλ κλαίουσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς, καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν παρακληθῆναι, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν ("A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and great lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted, because they are no more").

Whereas Jeremiah pictures Rachel weeping for the children of Israel gone into exile, Matthew applies her tears to Herod's slaughter of the children of Bethlehem. This is in some ways a curious application of Jeremiah's text, as if Matthew simply casts around for a scriptural image of great maternal mourning over the death of children and

finds Rachel.⁴⁹ Yet the context suggests otherwise. Matthew does not draw on the figure of Rachel from Jeremiah 31 simply to appropriate a woman of sorrow from Israel's tradition; rather, he uses Jeremiah 31 alongside Hosea 11 (in Matt 2:15) to interpret Jesus as the one who ushers in and enacts the end of Israel's exile and her promised redemption.⁵⁰ This interpretation depends on Matthew's evoking the wider context of Jeremiah 30-31 rather than assuming that he quotes one verse from Jeremiah, shorn of its context, for his own purposes.

Taking into account the evangelist's wider purposes in his first three chapters reveals that the themes of Jeremiah 30-31 cohere elegantly with his intentions.⁵¹ From the very beginning, Matthew presents Jesus as the one who announces and ushers in the eschatological end of Israel's exile. Matthew's genealogy itself portrays the life of Jesus as the story of Israel, and presents Jesus as the Messiah who will bring Israel's exile to an end.⁵² In Matthew's first four chapters, with the exception of the temptation in the

⁴⁹ Interpreters sometimes puzzle over why Matthew claims Jeremiah 31 was "fulfilled" in Herod's slaughter of the innocents; see R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 86-8.

⁵⁰ Multiple elements connect Hosea to Jeremiah 30-31: the fierce mother-compassion of God, Israel as a child/children, Ephraim, bitter weeping (Hos 12:15). Of course, as Steve Moyise points out, Hosea 11:1-2 does not provide a perfect parallel between Jesus and Moses, raising the question of whether Matthew genuinely means to evoke a new exodus (Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New* [New York; London: Continuum, 2001], 42). On the other hand, Matthew is hardly concerned with an exact parallel, but rather with the larger theme of return from exile and restoration. For the New Exodus typology in Mark, see Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); for Matthew see Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); France, 81.

⁵¹ Ritter, 122-3, proposes that Matthew is aware of and makes use of the wider context of Jeremiah 31. Likewise, Richard Hays argues, "Matthew's reference to Rachel works as a metaleptic trope, recalling the wider context of Jeremiah's prophecy"; Richard B. Hays, "The Gospel of Matthew: Reconfigured Torah," *HTS* 61, no. 1-2 (2005): 177. Matthew does not cite Jeremiah's "new covenant" theme in his account of the last supper (Matt 26:28), but Luke's parallel passage makes it explicit (Luke 22:20).

⁵² Mervyn Eloff, "Exile, Restoration and Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus Ο Χριστος," *Neotest* 38, no. 1 (2004): 75-87. For the Moses typology throughout the book of Matthew, see Allison, esp. 137-290. For a discussion of Jesus' typological identification with Moses in Matt 2:13-15, through the quotation of Hosea 11, see Hays, "The Gospel of Matthew," 173-4. Finally, it seems significant that both Rachel and Jesus are types for Israel.

wilderness, all of the Old Testament quotations evoke contexts of either the end of exile or the restoration of the Davidic dynasty.⁵³ Isaiah 40:3 is especially important for its prominent role at the beginning of all four gospels (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23), announcing the character of Jesus' ministry as the comfort of God's people and the promised salvation of Israel.⁵⁴ The wider context of Hosea 11:1 also prophesies the Lord's intention to bring the people back from exile (Hos 11:10-11), which strengthens the possibility that Matthew aims to invoke the theme of return from exile. This wider context helps to configure Herod's murders as "a metaphor for all the history of Israel's grief and exile" and indeed for the loss of Israel's children – then through exile into the strange lands of Babylon, now at the violent hands of a ruler who bows to another foreign empire.⁵⁵

Unlike Jeremiah, Matthew seems to leave Rachel disconsolate in his text, concluding his quotation of Jeremiah with the stark claim, "She refused to be consoled." On the other hand, in Matthew's narrative, Rachel's weeping immediately precedes the announcement, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near," and the quotation from Isaiah 40 that calls for Israel to prepare the way of the Lord. As in Jeremiah,

⁵³ Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23; Mic 5:2 and 2 Sam 5:2 in Matt 2:6; Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15; Jer 31:15 in Matt 2:18; Isa 40:3 in Matt 3:3; Isa 9:1 in Matt 4:15-16. I owe this observation to Nathan Eubank, who notes it in Nathan Eubank, "Wages of Righteousness: The Economy of Heaven in the Gospel According to Matthew," unpublished dissertation, Duke University, 2012.

⁵⁴ The Targum of Isaiah 40:1-11 reinterprets the text so that the prophet's good tidings refer not to Cyrus' decree that the Israelites could return home to Israel, but to a prophecy of the imminent final judgment when the LORD returns to Zion. Eubank argues, "Matthew reads passages dealing with the end of exile through a similar apocalyptic framework as dealing with the coming moment of God's decisive intervention in history" (Eubank). While Matthew is the only Gospel that uses the figure of Rachel, the theme of Jesus' ministry as the eschatological end of exile and the inauguration of the kingdom of God appears in the other Gospels as well (see Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New* [London; New York: T & T Clark, 2008], 6-20). The Gospel of Mark narrates what Rikki Watts describes as an Isaianic New Exodus, in which Jesus announces and enacts the in-breaking of God's kingdom and arrives in Jerusalem to deliver YHWH's people from bondage (see Watts).

⁵⁵ Hays, "The Gospel of Matthew," 177.

Rachel's tears in Matthew precede and prompt the saving, restoring actions of the Lord.⁵⁶

In Matthew 5, even more strikingly, the theme of comfort appears as eschatological promise: “blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται, Matt 5:4).⁵⁷ Matthew's beatitudes echo the promises in Isaiah 61:⁵⁸

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, *to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion*—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. (Isa 61:1-3, emphasis added)

Isaiah's proclamation places the phrase “all those who mourn [πάντας τοὺς πενθοῦντας]” in parallel with “those who mourn in Zion [τοῖς πενθεοῦσιν Σιων].” This reveals the identity of the mourners in Matthew as those who weep over the destruction of the holy city and the exile.⁵⁹ The mourners in Matthew likewise weep over the continued oppression of Israel – as exemplified in the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem.

⁵⁶ James L. Kugel, in *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2003), argues that in the Old Testament it is “the oppressed human's cry” that impels the Lord to act. “I am powerless *not* to react, God seems to say, once the abused party cries out to Me” (Kugel, 110). Cf. Ellington, “For Matthew the prayer of lament accompanies and energizes the unfolding of the Kingdom of God” (Ellington, 190).

⁵⁷ Matthew uses κλαίω for Rachel's mourning (probably influenced by Jer 38:15 LXX, which uses κλαίω and ἀποκλαίω); and in the beatitude he uses πενθέω, which he likely draws from Isa 61:2-3 (LXX). Cf. Luke 6:21b μακάριοι οἱ κλαίοντες νῦν, ὅτι γελάσετε (Blessed are the ones who are weeping now, because you will laugh); paired with the woe: οὐαί, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν, ὅτι πενθήσετε καὶ κλαύσετε (Woe to the ones who are laughing now, because you will mourn and weep).

⁵⁸ Isaiah 61:2 LXX uses the verb παρακαλέω: “παρακαλέσαι πάντας τοὺς πενθοῦντας.”

⁵⁹ Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC 33A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 92; cf. Mark Allan Powell, “Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” *CBQ* 58, no. 3 (1996): 465. Likewise, Davies and Allison write that the people of God, in both Isaiah and Matthew, mourn “because the righteous suffer, because the wicked prosper, and because God has not yet acted to reverse the situation” (Davies and Allison, 1:448).

The beatitude offers a promise of comfort for those who are mourning. In fact, it suggests that mourning is an appropriate response – a *blessed* response – to the current conditions. Matthew has announced Jesus’ message as “good news” (4:23); in the beatitudes, we discover for whom his announcement is good news.⁶⁰ Church tradition has overwhelmingly taken the reference to mourning as sorrow over sin,⁶¹ but this is not Matthew’s primary meaning, who uses mourning as the sorrows of “this eon” which will be replaced with comfort in the age to come – especially the sorrows of Israel over judgment and exile.⁶²

The meaning of παρακαλέω as comfort occurs only in these two verses in Matthew, in reference to Rachel refusing comfort, and again in reference to the promise of comfort for those who mourn.⁶³ In light of Matthew’s allusions to Isaiah 61:1-3, the comforting of the mourners refers to God’s vindication and salvation.⁶⁴ Isaiah 40 displays the same meaning of comfort as God’s restoration of Israel, where the cry, “Comfort, comfort [παρακαλεῖτε] my people!” occurs just before the announcement that presages the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in all four Gospels: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.”

⁶⁰ Powell, 470.

⁶¹ See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 1:193, esp. n.80.

⁶² Ibid., 194. In the LXX, πένθος and πενθέω play a special role in prophecies of disaster regarding Israel, descriptions of divine judgment on Israel, and prophecies of salvation; see Rudolf Bultmann, “πένθος, πενθέω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:42.

⁶³ Elsewhere Matthew uses it to mean urge, beg, exhort.

⁶⁴ Cf. 1QH 18.14-15 (alluding to Isa 61:1-2) and 11QMelch 2.20.

Furthermore, in Matthew, the promise to comfort the mourners occurs in an eschatological framework. In Isaiah and in Revelation, the cessation of weeping and the wiping away of tears are signs of the eschatological age (Isa 25:6-8; Rev 7:17; 21:4). The Gospel of Luke also uses παρακαλέω as eschatological comfort. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham tells the rich man that he has already received his good things, but that Lazarus (who received bad things in life) is now being comforted in the next life (Luke 16:25).

All the promises of the beatitudes are variations on the final claim, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”⁶⁵ This claim suggests not just comfort in the next life but an inaugurated eschatology; they reveal the in-breaking of God’s kingdom into the present time through Jesus’ ministry.⁶⁶ Ulrich Luz argues that the background for Jesus’ blessing on those who mourn is “the apocalyptic hope for a total reversal of conditions,” a reversal that is already occurring in Jesus’ ministry: “the promised glorious future is already dawning.”⁶⁷

Especially in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus’ response to petitions for help in the Gospels indicates the way that the kingdom of God – and thus the vindication of lament –

⁶⁵ Davies and Allison, 1:446.

⁶⁶ See Powell, 460-79; Pino di Luccio, “Son of Man, Sons of the Woman, and Teachers of the Law: Eschatological Features of the Gospel Beatitudes, with a Selected Bibliography on the ‘Son of Man,’” *Estudios eclesiásticos* 84, no. 329 (2009): 340-1, 350-1.

⁶⁷ Luz, 189. More tentatively, Davies and Allison write that “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” is a futuristic or proleptic present, but may hint that the kingdom is already present in some sense (Davies and Allison, 446). Samuel Wells describes the “comma” in each beatitude—the pause between the pronounced blessing and the promised reversal/reward—as the place where Christians dwell, between the cross and the resurrection. See Samuel Wells, “Dwelling in the Comma,” a sermon preached at Duke Chapel Jan 30, 2011 (<http://www.chapel.duke.edu/sermons.html>). Joel Marcus observes of the Gospel of Mark: “Instructed by his Gospel, members of Mark’s community will believe that they can already see God’s [apocalyptic] triumph in the present, that they can discern its contours in a form bespeaking suffering love and vindication...that they can hear the strains of the hallelujah song in a voice that cuts through the groaning caused by war, social ostracism, and persecution...” (Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 198).

begins breaking into the present. Cries like “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David” (Matt 15:21), “Lord, help me” (Matt 21:25), and “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47) echo the petitionary cries of lament psalms like Psalm 86:16 (“Turn to me and be gracious to me”) and Psalm 109:26 (“Help me, O Lord my God”). These petitions fulfill much the same function as Rachel’s weeping: they prompt Jesus to act and to offer God’s salvation through forgiveness, healing, restoration to community, and freedom from demons.

The Lord’s Prayer reveals a similar eschatological tension and longing; the ones who mourn are much like those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and in turn like those who pray, “your kingdom come.” (I discuss the Lord’s Prayer as an eschatological lament-like prayer in section 6.3.4 below.)

6.3.2 Inaugurated Eschatology and Lament: Vindication Now and Not Yet

As a specifically Christian practice, lament depends on maintaining the New Testament’s eschatological tension between the realized and the future. In a fully realized eschatology, nothing remains over which to complain or petition, because God’s salvation has been completely accomplished. In a fully future eschatology, lamenters can only hope for vindication in heaven, in the next age, rather than God’s redeeming work in the present. In a proleptic eschatology, the promised vindication of lament is brought partially into the present, not just for Jesus (through his resurrection), but for all his followers through participation in Jesus’ death and resurrection (Rom 6:1-11; Col 3:1-3).⁶⁸ Christians in the early churches awaited Christ’s *parousia* and God’s future

⁶⁸ The New Testament’s description of eschatology is itself diverse, with varying emphases placed on the realized and future poles. I do not mean to smooth over these differences, but I argue that the New Testament as a whole displays the tension between the kingdom now and the kingdom still to come. In this sense, New Testament (and thus Christian) eschatology can be described in general as proleptic or

vindication but experienced God’s kingdom in the present through the presence of the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-21; John 16:13).⁶⁹ These manifestations of comfort—in Jesus’ ministry and in the church—signify the promised end of lament: when there will be nothing left for which to weep, nothing left over which to protest.

As a practice within an inaugurated eschatology, Christian lament takes up the challenge of Martin Buber, who wrote that Jews are unable to believe in Jesus as the Messiah because the world is not yet redeemed, creation has not been perfected. Buber writes, “An anticipation of any single part of the *completed* redemption of the world... is something we cannot grasp.”⁷⁰ God, Buber says, does not linger on his way. As the church seeks to narrate the signs of God’s kingdom in the present, it will always face the observable persistence of sin, evil, and brokenness. Lament in the Christian eschatological imagination rests in this space: it acknowledges and joins in with Buber’s challenge by refashioning it as urgent prayer to God. Why *does* the world remain yet so unredeemed, when Christ is risen? Yet it also trusts that God does *not* linger on his way.

Christian lament clings confidently to the promise that God has already acted to answer all the prayers of lament and bring them to an end, and it searches out and rejoices

inaugurated eschatology. Joachim Jeremias reportedly preferred the term *sich realisierende Eschatologie* – eschatology becoming actualized (see Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* [London: SCM Press, 1967], 33).

⁶⁹ Although John never uses the verb παρακαλέω, he refers several times to the Holy Spirit as παράκλητος, which the King James Version renders “Comforter,” but which modern translations tend to render “Advocate” (so NIV, NRSV) (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; cf. 1 John 2:1, which refers to Jesus Christ as the “παράκλητον ... πρὸς τὸν πατέρα”). This forges an interesting canonical link between the eschatological comfort described in Matthew and Luke, and the Holy Spirit as “comforter” of God’s people between the eschatological ages in John.

⁷⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, “Israel’s No: Jews and Jesus in an Unredeemed World,” *Christian Century* 107 (Nov. 7, 1990): 1021. See also Paul Meyer and John T. Carroll, *The Word in this World: Essays in New Testament Exegesis and Theology*, NTLi (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 7-8.

in signs of proleptic comfort – for example, in acts of justice, healing, restoration to community, forgiveness, and generosity. Simply put, Christian eschatology presses us to see that the prayer of lament has been, in one sense, definitively answered by Jesus’ incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection, but in a proleptic way, in a way that leaves lament longing even more for the promised consolation.

In order to investigate this claim, I compare two theologians who operate with an inaugurated eschatology, one in relation to suffering and the other in relation to lament. First, I discuss David Kelsey’s narration of redemption in the midst of suffering in the here and now, as a way of describing lament’s inaugurated vindication. Then, I turn to Karl Barth as a representative example of a theology that rules out lament *because of* the nature of Christian eschatology; but I suggest that Barth’s own construal of the “not yet” character of the Christian life theoretically allows room for lament as a practice of longing for God’s redemption of the whole world to be fully actualized. Finally, I discuss 1 Thessalonians 4:13 as a text that displays the way that Christian lament balances between grieving and hope because of the resurrection. Ambrose’s interpretation of this text shows how hope in the resurrection can increase the longing of lament and place it within the context of patient endurance.

6.3.2.1 Help for Lamenters in the Here and Now

David Kelsey resists an overly future eschatology, which displaces all hope of vindication into heaven. Instead, Kelsey explores what “earthly redemptive difference” Jesus makes to concrete situations of “horrific suffering.”⁷¹ His work is especially

⁷¹ David H. Kelsey, *Imagining Redemption* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 15. For Kelsey, people need redemption from two different kinds of situations: redemption from sin (i.e., the problem of guilt), and redemption from horrible situations (caused by evil, through no fault of their own). The two, he observes, are often intertwined, but he focuses most of his attention on the second strand. In

applicable to a discussion of lament for the way that he addresses settings of deep suffering – the settings from which lament naturally arises. His argument that Christians can expect redemption in the present hinges on an inaugurated eschatology: Kelsey notes that most Christian talk of redemption focuses on the hereafter, but argues that “the inauguration of God’s long-promised end time on earth now” necessitates reflection on God’s present redemption.⁷²

Kelsey begins with three common cultural meanings of the word “redeem”—making up for a bad performance, redeeming or freeing from alien control, and making good on a promise—which he then extends metaphorically into the Christian context. Placing Jesus in the foreground rather than the background of our lives frames our stories within a larger narrative context that gives them new meaning. To extend Kelsey’s metaphors, Jesus first makes up for “a bad performance” – in other words, makes up for loss and tragedy by incorporating them into a new creation. Jesus also redeems by freeing from alien control – that is, by freeing from all that distorts our identities, and bringing us into the unconditional love of God as revealed in Christ. Here Kelsey proposes replacing the image of Christ as “fellow sufferer who understands” with that of Christ as “fellow sufferer who sets free.”⁷³ Finally, Jesus redeems by making good on a promise – by creating a new and promising context that hinges on God’s promise to create a new

fact, “horrible situations” and evil are closely connected, perhaps even equated in Kelsey’s work. Suffering itself is not evil, but is caused by evil, whether by sin or by awful circumstances. Kelsey resists the idea that suffering is redemptive in and of itself, but concedes that the changes brought about by suffering can sometimes be redemptive.

⁷² Ibid., 15.

⁷³ Ibid., 59.

community and new creation. All three of these redemptive actions depend on an inaugurated eschatology.

But are the changes Kelsey describes objectively observable? Despite Kelsey's repeated uses of the words *concrete* and *real*, the changes he describes are largely interior, concerning a person's soul or subjectivity. Kelsey anticipates this objection and argues that these are in fact real changes that break vicious cycles, bring healing, and transform relationships. Jesus' story illuminates all other human stories, particularly those threatened by evil, as stories "of redemption begun though not yet fully actualized."⁷⁴

Although Kelsey emphasizes a person's imaginative efforts – the "*imagining*" of redemption – human agency is not in competition with divine agency, but rather cooperates with it. As I have proposed, the Holy Spirit participates in prayers of lament, and is an agent of redemption in the present. John's Gospel makes clear the connection between inaugurated vindication and the work of the Holy Spirit by naming the Holy Spirit the *παράκλητος*, which can mean *comforter* (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Also, since I have claimed lament as a practice of a community, seeking out the signs of God's redemptive activity in the present – the vindication of lament in the here and now – is an activity that properly belongs within the community of faith.

As a community of the in-between time, the church seeks to live in reconciliation with God and one another in proleptic witness to God's future kingdom. Stanley Grenz argues that being conformed to the image of God, in conformity to Christ, is both an eschatological goal and a present reality. The church, in Grenz's words, is the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 103. See also Rowan Williams, *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982), 45-67, 91-112, for an exploration of how belief in the "risen-ness of Jesus" created communities of forgiveness and transformed relationships. Williams' insistence that the risen Jesus has embodied form in the life of the community helps to embed Kelsey's descriptions more explicitly in the life of the church.

“foregleam” of a new humanity, re-created to reflect the *imago Dei* through imitating Christ.⁷⁵ Of course, the church is not itself the kingdom of God. But despite its weaknesses, the church can bear witness to the proleptic comforting of the mourners. In the midst of a world groaning with suffering, it displays, points to, and searches for the marks of the new creation breaking into the present. In solidarity with all those who mourn, it provides whatever marks of God’s comfort now that it can, and holds out the hope and the promise that all those who mourn will someday receive perfect comfort.⁷⁶

6.3.2.2 Realized Eschatology and the Cessation of Lament

For Karl Barth, God’s definitive act of salvation in Jesus Christ provides the answer to the prayer of lament in such a way that lament is no longer needed in the new age. As such, he is an important representative of the Christian tendency to avoid lament because of the resurrection and God’s inauguration of the new age. Some scholars argue that Barth construes lament as disobedience because of an overly realized eschatology.⁷⁷ However, I suggest that Barth rules out lament not because his eschatology lacks a future element, but because the sole task of humanity in the present age is to grasp and live into the reality of the new age – a task accomplished by repentance, praise, and gratitude, not by lament.

⁷⁵ Stanley Grenz, Lund Lecture at North Park Theological Seminary, October 2001.

⁷⁶ David Ford writes that the church’s work is to build up communities whose practices of worship, forgiveness, faith, hope, and love are signs that “God, not evil, is the basic truth of life” (David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 88).

⁷⁷ See, for example, Wüthrich, 60-76; and Martin Wendte, “Lamentation Between Contradiction and Obedience: Hegel and Barth as Diametrically Opposed Brothers in the Spirit of Modernity,” in *Evoking Lament*, 77-98. Adam Neder defends Barth against this charge in Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 45-7.

In the section of the *Church Dogmatics* titled “Jesus as Victor,” Barth declares that the old eon has objectively passed away, and the new eon is “the only reality.”⁷⁸ This decisive transition of the ages is complete: “the Word of grace does not say that man will be this new man, but that he already is.” A bit later in the same section, Barth acknowledges the inaugurated side of eschatology when he continues, “here and now you *begin* to be the new man, and are already that which you will be eternally.” Barth recognizes that there is a “not yet” with which to reckon: “The victory of Jesus the Victor is not yet consummated.”⁷⁹ Indeed, Barth acknowledges that the gap between the Now and the Then is sometimes painfully wide: in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, he describes “the tension between the Now and the End, between the appearance and reality, between time and eternity, between our knowledge and the truth...”⁸⁰

However, Barth also insists that to know Christ as the Risen One is to have “basic, direct, and unconditional certainty of the final victory which is still awaited but which comes relentlessly and irresistibly.”⁸¹ It is this unshakeable certainty that presses Barth to view lament as a feature of the old age. For Barth, the act of God in Jesus Christ means that the “salvation of humanity is objective, real, and perfect.” What remains for Barth is the “corresponding subjective counterpart to this objective fact,” which is “the

⁷⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), IV/3.1, 246, cf. 246-9. See Wendte, 95.

⁷⁹ Barth, *CD*, IV/3.1, 249, 250, 262.

⁸⁰ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans., H. J. Stenning (New York: Arno Press, 1977), 82. See also the sermon he preached at the funeral for his son: Karl Barth, “Matthias Barth,” in *This Incomplete One: Words Occasioned by the Death of a Young Person*, ed. Michael D. Bush (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 9-20, which I quote at the end of Chapter 7.

⁸¹ Barth, *CD*, IV/3.1, 263.

realization of this fact within the lives of those whom he represents.”⁸² The proper response to God’s act in Christ is praise – is unconditional obedience. This is precisely where Barth seems unable to incorporate lament *as a feature* of the space between the Now and the Then. Barth appears to equate the “not yet” primarily with humanity’s sinful refusal to accept God’s “now”: “This resistance is necessary because [something in human beings] cannot bear what is here said about the passing of the old man and the coming of the new. Especially it cannot tolerate without opposition the urgent ‘now’ of this message.”⁸³

Barth’s conviction about the utterly decisive, singular character of the resurrection and the new eon leads him to see lament as a thing of the past – a tool of the Old Testament, used when the people of God necessarily had to cling to God “in a hope against hope,” but a tool no longer required – in fact, no longer needed – for the followers of the risen Christ.⁸⁴ Barth writes, “This aeon has been overcome in Christ with all its principalities and powers. Christ took it in His body to the cross and bore it to the grave. Therefore now the form of the struggle in the Old Testament which it still presupposes, can and must fall to the rear.”⁸⁵ It is not that suffering has gone away; followers of Christ inevitably suffer because of their membership in Christ. But in Jesus Christ “we have

⁸² Neder, 46.

⁸³ Barth, *CD*, IV/3.1, 251. Barth essentially equates resistance and opposition to God’s “completed work of reconciliation” with the devil, although he speaks of “the ancient foe” with deliberate reluctance (260-1). His unwillingness to address the existence of evil as anything other than “the resisting element in man” is, perhaps, additional reason for the lack of lament in Barth’s theology. Augustine’s notion of evil as human sin tends accordingly to restrict the role of lament to penitence (Wüthrich, 62-5), but Augustine is also concerned chiefly with lament’s ability to create “affective attachment to Christ” rather than to the things of this world; see Brian Brock, “Augustine’s Incitement to Lament, from the *Errationes in Psalmos*,” in *Evoking Lament*, 201.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, *CD*, I/2, 108.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, *CD*, I/2, 106-7.

here the answer to the insoluble question of Job and the Psalmists” – i.e., the answer to the question, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Indeed, Barth downplays Jesus’ lament: “this question as such does not figure greatly in the life and teaching of Jesus, and in the suffering of His followers generally it has ceased to play any part.”⁸⁶

The bitter questions of Job and the Psalmist *have been answered*; “their problem has ceased to be a problem,” because “God Himself goes right into this darkness in which man has to stand and move before Him, [and] ... experiences and bears it Himself.” Barth concludes, “If Christ really fought the fight with the old world and if man already lives with Him in faith in the new, his only business, his only fight is to acknowledge and confirm that the fight in question has already been fought.”⁸⁷

In terms of the relationship between lament and eschatology, Barth excels in the “now” and in the answering of the petition. God *has* decisively answered Israel’s (and humanity’s) petitions for help. God in Christ *has* gone into the darkness in which we live. Yet the darkness persists. The gap between Now and Then is painfully wide. The world appears unredeemed. For Barth, the finality of the completion of God’s redemption, based on God’s unbreakable promise, renders lament unnecessary, perhaps even a form of doubt in the certainty of God’s faithfulness. For the martyrs under the throne, however, and for the apostle Paul, the redeemed still cry out in longing for the final redemption, asking Jesus to *Come!* again.

⁸⁶ Ibid., *CD*, I/2, 107. Of course, this is a point on which I differ significantly from Barth. I hope I have demonstrated how integral Jesus’ laments are to his identity and his mission.

⁸⁷ Ibid., *CD*, I/2, 108, 112. Wendte argues that both Barth and Hegel “deny lamentation its power of resistance because they present it as something that in truth is already overcome” (Wendte, 78); cf. Wüthrich, 74.

Lamenting is not a form of disobedience, a No to God's grace – rather it is a way of joining *with* Christ in his laments, of participating in them. Barth's emphasis on participation in Christ theoretically leaves the door open for such an interpretation, even if he does not, in the end, make this move himself.⁸⁸ Later in Barth's writing, in his meditations on the Lord's Prayer, Barth describes passion as "a person's suffering from an unfulfilled desire which seeks fulfillment," and says that "Christians by definition are people who suffer from such an unfulfilled desire." The Christian who prays for the hallowing of God's name (Matt 6:9; Luke 11:2) has a passion, an unfulfilled desire, for God's name to be sanctified in the world, in the church, and in himself.⁸⁹ While Barth uses the term passion rather than lament, he imbues the petitions of the Lord's Prayer with a longing for their fulfillment that coheres with the longing of lament. This in turn could construe the passion of lament as a form of steadfast endurance – as an expression of hope in the coming of God's kingdom, while acknowledging the painful gap that still remains between the Then and the Now.

6.3.2.3 Grieving with Hope: 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Paul's teaching about grieving, death, and the resurrection in 1 Thessalonians 4 offers a balance between the now and the not yet, by proposing that grief (and by implication lament) is transformed but not eliminated by the resurrection. In Ambrose's interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:13, hope in the resurrection increases the longing of lament, rather than mutes it, and places it within the context of patient endurance.

⁸⁸ See Neder, esp. 58-80.

⁸⁹ Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV, 4: Lecture Fragments*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 111, 113.

In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul claims that the resurrection should transform the way Christians grieve in the face of death. Paul writes to a congregation concerned about those who have died before Christ has returned. “I do not wish you to be ignorant,” he writes, “so that you might not grieve as those who have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13). Paul implies that there is a non-Christian way to grieve in the face of death, i.e., without hope, and a Christian way to grieve that is altered by hope in the resurrection.⁹⁰ Jesus’ death and resurrection change the meaning of death so that one faces it differently – not without grief, but with a different kind of grief, tempered by hope that death is not the final end.

Of course, what it means in concrete terms to grieve with hope is difficult to describe, and is partially dependent on social and cultural context. For example, early Christians in the Roman Empire struggled to apply this teaching within a cultural milieu dominated by a Platonic philosophy that devalued the material, and a Stoic philosophy that condemned public grieving over death as a womanish weakness. Comparisons of funeral orations and consolation literature in the first three centuries after Christ reveal this struggle to define appropriate grief within their own cultural milieu as well as in light of the overriding truth of the resurrection. Like Paul, who instructed his congregation to grieve differently from those who had no hope, these early Christians also sought to grieve differently from their pagan neighbors.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Of course, the grammar of the verse yields another possible interpretation: Only those who have no hope, grieve; Christians, who have hope, do not grieve. I find this interpretation to be highly implausible within the context of 1 Thessalonians and Paul’s writings more generally. See, e.g., Martin Ebner’s treatment of the text in Ebner, 74-5, 87, where he argues that grief and resurrection hope are not mutually exclusive; rather, Paul is addressing the problem that the Thessalonians have ceased to expect God’s intervention in history, which causes them to grieve improperly – i.e., without hope.

⁹¹ See Warren Smith’s upcoming study of grief and hope in early Christianity (Warren Smith, *Grieving with Hope*, forthcoming).

I offer here one brief application of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 within a particular cultural context: Ambrose's funeral orations for his brother Satyrus.⁹² Ambrose notes that Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 placed a "curb on my grief" (or, in another translation, "a bit upon my sorrow"), but he also argues against the Stoicism of his day when he protests that not all sorrow signifies personal weakness or lack of faith in God.

But we have not committed a serious fault by our weeping. Not every display of sorrow is a sign either of a lack of trust in God or of weakness in ourselves. Natural grief is one thing, sorrow which comes from lack of hope is another, and there is a great difference between longing for what you had and grieving because you have lost it. . . . Whenever a patriarch was buried, his people wept profusely. Tears are, therefore, indicators of devotedness, not inciters of grief. Hence, I frankly allow that I, too, have wept, but the Lord also wept.⁹³

For Ambrose, the tears of the Old Testament patriarchs, and Jesus' own public display of grief at the grave of Lazarus, confirm for Ambrose that the apostle Paul commends a modified form of grief rather than the restraint of weeping altogether. Ambrose seeks to reconfigure weeping from a form of *grief* (frowned upon by Stoicism) into a type of *longing* (legitimated by love for his brother and by hope in the resurrection).

Throughout the orations, Ambrose alternates between expressing the depth of his loss and clinging to his belief that the resurrection must temper his sorrow ("What sorrow does not the gift of resurrection assuage!").⁹⁴ He continually interacts with common tenets of Stoicism regarding grief, rejecting some and moderating others. For example, Ambrose acknowledges that it is customary to console oneself by drawing the mind away

⁹² Ambrose, "On His Brother Satyrus," in Gregory Nazianzen and Ambrose, *Funeral Orations*, ed. Martin R. P. McGuire, The Fathers of the Church 22 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1953), 161-259.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, First Oration, par. 9, page 165.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Second Oration, par. 3, page 198.

from grief by discussion, but he claims that he would rather temper his grief than alter his affection for his brother. Likewise, Ambrose concedes (along with the Stoics) that pain is more easily borne by those who have thought about it beforehand, but confesses that he simply could not bring himself to do so.⁹⁵ On the other hand, Ambrose decries excessive or inordinate grief as the dread of death.⁹⁶ Ultimately, this is the difference between believers and unbelievers in their grief, between those who grieve with and without hope: the belief that death is not the final end of life, but opens the gate into eternal life in God's presence.

When Ambrose applies 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to his own grief over his beloved brother's death, he adapts and resists the prevailing philosophy of his day regarding grief and death. His orations display his struggle to legitimate Christian expressions of mourning while still placing boundaries around that grief – boundaries provided by the doctrine of the resurrection. He recognizes that his personal sorrow becomes shared by the community and thus is a form of communal grieving over a shared loss. Finally, his emphasis on longing rather than on grief coheres with the longing of lament. In Ambrose's words, hope in the resurrection enables us to grieve with more patience, and to long with more intensity.⁹⁷

Ambrose's cultural context is not our own; but his adaptation and resistance of the prevailing Stoic and Platonic philosophies of his day may provide a general template for adapting and resisting the prevailing attitudes of our own day toward expressions of grief

⁹⁵ Ibid., First Oration, par. 14, page 167.

⁹⁶ Ibid., Second Oration, par. 11, pages 201-2.

⁹⁷ "What I am doing is not contrary to Scripture, namely, that I should grieve more patiently, but long more ardently" (ibid., Second Oration, par. 42, page 214).

in the face of death and loss.⁹⁸ Most importantly, I take Ambrose's interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 as a worthy outworking of the text's inherent balance between mourning and hope, between urgent longing and patience, between the now and the not yet. According to Ambrose, belief in the resurrection ought to enable Christians to mourn with more patient endurance (ὕπομονή), but also to long more ardently for God's good future.

6.3.2.4 Lament and Patient Endurance

Patient endurance, of course, is one of the main virtues commended by the New Testament, especially by Paul, in the face of grief and suffering. This emphasis results at least in part from an inaugurated eschatology. Since God has already inaugurated the new age and decisively overcome the powers of death and evil, what is required is patience and perseverance in the face of the inevitable "birthpangs" of suffering, trouble, and persecution that accompany the tumultuous arrival of the new world. Following Jesus means "taking up the cross" (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). At the very least, discipleship involves "an openness to suffering and persecution" (e.g., Acts 9:15-16).⁹⁹ The endurance of suffering is a feature of living in the "not yet."

This emphasis does not seem immediately hospitable to a practice of lament. It is hard to complain to God about suffering if suffering teaches, perfects, and joins the

⁹⁸ For example, what are the prevailing philosophies of our day and culture(s) regarding appropriate expressions of mourning, grief, and complaint in the face of death, pain, and injustice? This applies most obviously to funeral and grieving practices, since 1 Thessalonians 4:13 focuses on grief in the face of death, but has wider applications to expressions of pain and anger in public and private spaces, including the church. One of the surprising omissions of Thomas Long's otherwise excellent book about Christian funerals is that it mentions lament only in passing and never (as far as I can discern) by that name; see Thomas G. Long, *Accompany them with Singing: The Christian Funeral* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 137-8. I agree with Long that a funeral is much more than therapeutic care or "grief management" (ibid., 134), but I do not take lament to be therapy.

⁹⁹ Stephen Lakkis, "'Have You any Right to be Angry?': Lament as a Metric of Socio-Political and Theological Context," in *Evoking Lament*, 178.

believer to Christ (e.g., Heb 12:1-11; Jas 1:2-4; Col 1:24).¹⁰⁰ Belden Lane attributes the loss of boldness in Christian prayer in part to Paul's emphasis on the patient bearing of suffering in the eschatological age: "the trauma of temporary suffering is *fully absorbed* into the eschatological tension of a new age's having broken into the present. . . . Complaint, therefore, becomes inconsequential in a situation where God has already given the full extent of self-giving in the death of God's son."¹⁰¹ This interpretation, somewhat like the critique of Barth's eschatology offered above, places the accent mark on the *now* of God's redemption rather than the *not yet*, and correspondingly dismisses lament as a practice relevant only for the former age.

However, Revelation 6:9-11 demonstrates that complaint is certainly not inconsequential for those awaiting God's justice. The belief that "God has already given the full extent of self-giving" in Jesus' crucifixion does not mean that the new age has fully arrived. Rather, the New Testament as a whole witnesses to the paradoxical tension between the realized kingdom and all that is yet to come in God's future victory. It is precisely in this setting of longing and certain hope that the practice of lament and the need for endurance both occur.

The eschatological nature of Christian lament reveals the close connection between lament and the "patient endurance" (ὕπομονή) that the New Testament commends, often in the context of the eschatological reward that awaits those who remain steadfast during the trials of the present time and endure to the end (Luke 21:19;

¹⁰⁰ Augustine's view of suffering as pedagogical and his corresponding description of lament in a fully Christological framework illustrate the point. For Augustine, Christian lament means joining Christ's suffering and lamenting what Christ lamented. This is a valuable example of Christologically oriented lament, but it can strip lament of its function as human complaint toward God. See Brock, 183-203.

¹⁰¹ Lane, 583, emphasis added.

Col 1:11; Heb 10:36; 12:1-2; Rev 2:2-3, 19; 3:10; 14:12; cf. 1 Clem 5:5). Just as the typical pattern of lament ends in trust, praise, and hope in God's salvation, the reason for patient endurance is hope and trust; this hope is grounded in the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead and trusts that God will likewise raise the faithful from death into new life. The one who endures hopes in what she cannot see (Rom 8:25) but believes in it nonetheless. Ὑπομονή is the steadfast, even stubborn refusal to yield to despair in the face of pain or persecution or the troubles of the unredeemed world, because of the hope that God has acted and will act again. Romans 3:3-5 makes explicit the relationships between troubles (θλίψις), patient endurance (ὕπομονή), and hope (ἐλπίς): troubles produce patient endurance, patient endurance produces character, character produces hope (cf. Jas 1:2-4). Ὑπομονή thus arises from suffering and generates hope – much in the same way that lament arises from suffering and presses toward hope.

Lament can be seen as a form of perseverance in the lament psalms themselves.¹⁰² Almost all lament psalms contain a reversal from complaint to praise (many psalms contain more than one reversal). Although some scholars suggest that an oracle promising God's help precipitates the reversals, others describe the reversal as an act of hope. In other words, the reversal offers praise for *anticipated* rescue, based on God's faithfulness in the past. Claudia Welz locates the reversal in "the praying process itself. ... By praying and saying the psalm, traversing the stages of invocation, lament, petition, avowal of trust and promise of praise, the reversal is realized anticipatorily. ... [T]he full actuality of the anticipated closeness to God will only find its proof in the future."¹⁰³ In

¹⁰² The word ὕπομονή in the Psalms (LXX) is comparatively rare (Ps 9:19; 38:8; 61:6; 70:5).

¹⁰³ Claudia Welz, "Trust and Lament: Faith in the Face of Godforsakenness," in *Evoking Lament*, 135.

this way, the dramatic turn from complaint to praise is a proleptic proclamation of hopeful trust in God's final redemption: the redemption is experienced in part in the present, is based on evidence from God's help in the past, and is proclaimed in praise even before it happens. Thus the prayer of lament itself provides a model for the endurance of suffering – for perseverance and hope in the midst of trouble. (One thinks again of the persistence of Rachel, the widow before the unjust judge, and the Canaanite woman.)

The apostle Paul also occasionally draws on language from the lament psalms for the purpose of encouragement in the midst of affliction. For example, in his letter to the Romans, Paul evokes the “the world of the lament” in a broad way in his presentation of God's righteousness, faithfulness, and justice.¹⁰⁴ In chapter 15, in a section of the letter dedicated to exhortation and encouragement, Paul uses two psalms as “a christologically grounded model of steadfastness to sustain hope in the midst of adversity” – Psalm 69 and Psalm 18.¹⁰⁵ Richard Hays describes the quotation of Psalm 18 as “post-resurrection discourse, celebrating (proleptically?) the eschatological triumph of God.”¹⁰⁶ The parenthetical “proleptically?” seems crucial. God has already vindicated Christ in resurrection, and inaugurated the eschatological new age, signs of which are evident

¹⁰⁴ Keesmaat, 141; cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 38. Keesmaat writes, “In echoing the language of these psalms, Paul is evoking a context where God's justice and steadfast love are appealed to for salvation”; by asserting that he is not ashamed, Paul is claiming that God *has* arisen and acted to save, judge, and vindicate his people (cf. Ps 44:10, 16, 24, 29) (Keesmaat, 140, 141).

¹⁰⁵ Richard B. Hays, “Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul's Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention,” in *Future of Christology*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 133, 135. Christ speaks the words of Psalm 69:9 in Romans 15:3 (“The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me”) and Psalm 18:49 (17:50 LXX) in 15:9 (“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name”).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 135. Psalm 18 is a hymn of praise for deliverance from distress and from enemies, not a lament. It presents not the complaint of a lamenter in the midst of distress, but the gratitude of one who has been rescued.

precisely in the Gentiles' worship of Israel's God, as promised in Scripture. But full triumph has not yet come, not least because the promises of Romans 9-11 (all Israel will be saved) have not yet been fulfilled. The full eschatological community, when both Jew and Gentile will raise their voices together in harmonious praise, remains to be realized.

Paul also links the language of lament to perseverance in 2 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, in a series of phrases Paul uses to describe his own resilience in the face of trials, Paul uses a set of words that have resonances with multiple lament psalms – especially θλίβω, ἀπόλλυμι, and ἐγκαταλείπω. Immediately after this litany of weakness, Paul writes that “we have the same spirit of faith” according to what is written: “I believed, therefore I spoke” (ἐπίστευσα διὸ ἐλάλησα), which is a line taken verbatim from Psalm 116:10 (LXX 115:1), a psalm of praise for deliverance from death. In the LXX, the psalmist continues, “but I was greatly afflicted.” (The MT text continues, “I kept my faith, even when I said, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’”) Paul's situation mirrors that of the psalmist; he has been rescued from death and remains trusting in the midst of affliction.¹⁰⁷

Placing patient endurance alongside lament sets it into its proper frame, since both lament and patient endurance arise from the same roots of suffering and hope. However, commending patience endurance is obviously more problematic in some social contexts than others. I have already noted in multiple places how sociopolitical and cultural contexts shape both biblical and contemporary laments (e.g., Chapter 1, section 1.2.1; Chapter 3, sections 3.3.2 and 3.4.1). Counseling patient endurance without lament to those in anguish could sound like paternalism or the preaching of passivity. Counseling

¹⁰⁷ H. H. Drake Williams, III, “The Psalms in 1 and 2 Corinthians,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 175.

patience to the comfortable, on the other hand, could be quite easy. As Chuck Campbell notes, “Those who enjoy many of the material and personal benefits of the [Domination] System, and who would to some extent grieve its passing, might just as soon delay the reign of God.”¹⁰⁸ Campbell goes on to insist that patience, truthfulness, and anger must be held together in order to counterbalance and inform one another.¹⁰⁹ Without patient endurance, lament risks losing its final stanza of praise and hope, and thus risks lapsing into despair. Without lament, patient endurance risks becoming passive or fails to speak truthfully about the nature of suffering in the present age.

“Hope,” writes William Stringfellow, “does not belong to those who are comfortable.”¹¹⁰ The proleptic nature of Christian lament only sharpens its intensity and its urgency, the way one surges forward when one glimpses the finish line at the end of a long race. This urgency is surely possible in a variety of social settings, but lack of longing has a certain correlation to more comfortable or privileged social locations. The challenge for contemporary churches, then, is how to practice the patience, the perseverance, and the sharp longing of lament within their own contexts (see Chapter 7, section 7.3).

6.3.3 Lament in the Lord’s Prayer

Here, I consider the Lord’s Prayer as an eschatological lament – a paradigmatic Christian petitionary prayer for the in-between time. It invokes God’s name, calls upon the Father for help, and presents specific petitions, which suggest the implicit problem:

¹⁰⁸ Charles L. Campbell, *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 179.

¹⁰⁹ Campbell commends practicing the Sabbath and listening to the stories of oppressed and marginalized peoples as practices of the virtue of patience alongside truthfulness and anger; see *ibid.*, 183.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

the kingdom of God remains to be fully actualized. The petitions occur within the same eschatological matrix that frames the passion narrative and the Gospels as a whole.

The Lord's Prayer, while not a formal lament, offers a pattern for lamenting between the times. I demonstrate this claim by: 1) establishing the Old Testament context for the petition to God to sanctify God's name, showing that it contains subtle hints of prophetic intercession (reminding God of God's reputation, to prompt God to act in Israel's favor) and that it connects to the restoration of Israel; and 2) focusing on the central petition(s) "your kingdom come" and "your will be done" as prayers for the consummation of God's rule that has already begun.¹¹¹

6.3.3.1 "Sanctify Your Name" as Prayer for Restoration

In both Gospels, the prayer opens with a third person passive imperative, properly understood as a divine passive: "Let your name be sanctified," or, "[Father,] sanctify your name!"¹¹² Ezekiel 36:20-24 supplies the likely background to this petition. The name of God has been profaned among the nations because of Israel's defeat and removal from their own land (Ezek 36:20). God decides to act, not for Israel's sake but "for the sake of my holy name." God will vindicate the holiness of God's great name (LXX καὶ ἁγιάσω τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ μέγα) by gathering Israel from all the nations where they have been

¹¹¹ For the background of the Lord's Prayer in Jewish and first-century liturgy, see Simon Kistemaker, "Lord's Prayer in the First Century," *JETS* 21, no. 4 (1978): 323-8. For the invocation "Our God/Father in heaven" in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Moshe Weinfeld, "The Litany 'Our God in Heaven' and its Precedents in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Liturgical Perspectives*, 263-9, 59-72. For more on the Jewish background to the Lord's Prayer, see Baruch Graubard, "Kaddish Prayer," in *Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, ed. Jakob J. Petuchowski and Michael Brocke (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 81-9; and Joseph Heinemann, "The Background of Jesus' Prayer in the Jewish Liturgical Tradition," in *Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 6-15. For a comparison of Luke's and Matthew's accounts, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Lord's Prayer* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969): 386-95.

¹¹² For the use of third person imperatives in prayers and petitions. see Joel Marcus, "'Let God arise and end the reign of sin': A Contribution to the Study of Pauline Parenthesis," *Bib* 69, no. 3 (1988): 386-95.

dispersed and bringing them back to their own land (36:22-24).¹¹³ This declaration precedes a series of promises to cleanse Israel, to put a new heart and spirit within her, and to rebuild and replant the land. In other words, sanctifying God's name comprises eschatological restoration, the establishing of the people under God's rule. Through these actions, God's name will again be sanctified in Israel and among the nations (Ezek 20:41, 44; cf. also Lev 22:32; Isa 42:8; 48:11). As Gerhard Lohfink writes, "It is precisely in God's re-creation of Israel...that the kingdom of God arrives."¹¹⁴

The honor and sanctity of God's name among the nations frequently prompts God's redemptive actions in the Old Testament, whether it is a reason provided by a petitioner (where it often occurs within an intercessory lament), or a reason supplied by the Lord for God's own actions.¹¹⁵ In his role as an intercessor, Moses invokes YHWH's own good reputation with the nations to convince God to avert God's anger and not destroy Israel (Exod 32:11-12; Deut 9:26-29). Clearly, the sanctity of God's name involves "displaying divine power which works liberation and redemption for his people."¹¹⁶

The petition for God to sanctify God's name is thus a petition for God to establish God's rule. Especially in later prophetic texts, YHWH's kingship can signify God's rule

¹¹³ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia; New York: Fortress Press; Paulist Press, 1984), 15-16. Lohfink identifies this with the church, which is surely right, but before that it is Jesus who ushers in the end of exile for Israel and embodies Israel's faithfulness before God.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹⁵ See Ps 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; Jer 14:7, 21; Ezek 36:22; Dan 9:9; 1 Sam 12:22; Ezek 20:9, 14, 22; 36:22; cf. 3 Jn 1:7; 1 Chron 16:35; Ps 79:9; Isa 42:8; 59:19; 63:14; cf. Ps 86:9; 106:47; 115:1; Rev 15:4.

¹¹⁶ See also Ezek 20:41; 28:25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:7, 27. Alfons Deissler, "The Spirit of the Lord's Prayer in the Faith and Worship of the Old Testament," in *Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 7.

in the eschaton (Isa 52:7-10).¹¹⁷ Immediately following this opening cry, and deriving from it, the Lord's Prayer offers its central petition, from which all the other petitions flow: *your kingdom come* (ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου), which Matthew pairs with the parallel phrase *your will be done – as in heaven, also on earth* (γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς). The cry, “Let your kingdom come!” longs for what Rachel's tears demanded: the establishing of God's rule of perfect justice and peace, which includes the restoration of Israel, the vindication of God's long-suffering people.

6.3.3.2 God's Kingdom Now and at the Eschaton

Matthew's parallelism invites the reader to see the coming of the kingdom and the accomplishing of God's will as two sides of the same coin. The kingdom of God is the place where God's will is perfectly done. God's will already prevails in heaven; the Lord's Prayer seeks the same on earth. Jesus speaks variations of the prayer “your will be done” later in the Gospel narrative, in the Garden of Gethsemane, also in the context of a petition to the Father and also in a setting of eschatological urgency.¹¹⁸ In Jesus' case, the petition for God's will to be done follows his first petition that God take “the cup” away from him, if it is possible.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁸ Of course, Matthew's version reproduces the petition of the Lord's Prayer exactly. See my Chapter 2 for a longer discussion of Jesus' laments in the Garden of Gethsemane, including its eschatological setting. For the vocative “Father,” Deissler draws attention to Hos 11, Jer 31:20, and Is 63:15ff. (ibid., 6).

¹¹⁹ Partly for this reason, Patrick Miller proposes that the New Testament largely replaces lament with a theology of the cross, in which Jesus has fulfilled ultimate suffering, and what matters is submission to God's will and participation in Christ's suffering (Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994], 323). Yet “Your will be done” is not the “suppression” or “complete surrender” of the petitioner (Heinemann, 86). Within an Old Testament framework, “the petition ‘Your will be done’ describes a single large ark [sic] from the OT which encompasses cosmos, history and the final configuration of both...” (Deissler, 12).

The Lord's Prayer and Jesus' prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane both contain warnings about entering the time of πειρασμός – trial or temptation. In the context of the passion narrative, πειρασμός refers to the tribulations of the inbreaking eschatological age. To the petition “μη εισενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,” Matthew adds another parallel: “ἀλλὰ ρῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ” (*but rescue us from evil*) (cf. John 17:15), further framing this petition in the context of an eschatological battle with the demonic forces that oppose God's will.

Alfons Deissler defines the Lord's Prayer as a biblical *tephillah* – that is, a petitionary prayer under the wider umbrella of the genre *qinah* (the dirge). “The petitions aim at personal salvation but also at the realization of God's own cause.”¹²⁰ In the case of the Lord's Prayer, God's cause has already begun to be realized through Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. In Jesus' preaching, healing, and exorcizing, God's kingdom has broken into the world. In Jesus' resurrection, the new eschatological age is decisively inaugurated and the resurrection event of the end time is brought forward into the present, but remains to be fully realized.

Gerhard Lohfink argues along with Joachim Jeremias that the Lord's Prayer operates within this eschatological tension: “The event in which God sanctifies his name stands in the same temporal tension between *already* and *not yet*, between the fulfilling *present* and the *future* that is still ahead, as does the coming of the kingdom.”¹²¹ Jeremias compares the eschatology of the Qaddish to that of the Lord's Prayer: “In the *Qaddish* the prayer is by a congregation which stands in the darkness of the present age and asks for

¹²⁰ Deissler, 4.

¹²¹ Lohfink, 15.

the consummation. In the Lord's Prayer, though similar words are used, a congregation is praying which knows that the turning point has already come, because God has already begun his saving work. This congregation now makes supplication for the full revelation of what has already been granted."¹²²

These petitions of the Lord's Prayer reveal the primary "problem" of New Testament and subsequent Christian lament: the kingdom *not yet* come, God's will *not yet* done on earth. Thus the martyrs pray the consummate prayer of longing in Revelation: "How long, O Lord?"¹²³ The New Testament has three central petitions for lament in an inaugurated eschatology: "Your kingdom come"; "Your will be done"; and "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20). These are interrelated petitions. They all ask essentially the same thing: for God to complete the redemption that God began when the Father raised the Son Jesus from the dead. As discussed above, the petition within an inaugurated eschatology asks for and expects both redemption *now* and redemption *then*. The phrase "on earth as it is in heaven" suggests this dual meaning. The lamenter petitions God for the work of redemption, through the Holy Spirit, on this earth and in

¹²² Jeremias, 22-3. Jeremias argues that every petition in the Lord's Prayer has a dual earthly and eschatological meaning. For example, he proposes that the word *epiousion* means "for tomorrow" rather than "today," based on the Aramaic version of the prayer in the Gospel of the Nazarenes, and thus argues that the petition for bread, like the other petitions, has a concrete sense and an eschatological sense – it entreats God for earthly bread and for the bread of life (heavenly manna) (ibid., 23-25). Likewise Jeremias sees the presence of the eschatological age in the petition to forgive: "O Lord, we indeed belong to the age of the Messiah, to the age of forgiveness, and we are ready to pass on to others the forgiveness which we receive" (ibid., 28). Jeremias sums up the "inexhaustible mystery" of the Lord's Prayer in the phrase "sich realisierende Eschatologie" (ibid., 32). This phrase is sometimes translated "inaugurated eschatology" or "proleptic eschatology," but reportedly Jeremias preferred the translation "eschatology becoming actualized" (ibid., 33).

¹²³ Ellington suggests that "lament fragments" in Revelation bracket God's unfolding judgment on the wicked and provide a structural *inclusio* for the entire book (the complaint in Rev 6:10; the response in Rev 16:5-7; further praise in Rev 19:1-2). Ellington thinks (and I am not so sure) that this movement from lament to response to praise "lend[s] to the book of Revelation as a whole the tone of a lament prayer as the unfolding vision moves from a cry in the midst of suffering to a shout of triumph as God answers the prayer of lament" (Ellington, 172).

this lifetime, as the kingdom has been brought forward through Jesus' ministry and resurrection. But the lamenter also petitions God for the kingdom at the eschaton, for the day when there will be no more injustice, no more tears, no more death, no more cause for lament at all.

6.4 Conclusion

Eva Harasta describes Christian lament as “cruciform lament,” and this fittingly captures the way that New Testament depends on Jesus' laments as its ultimate model. However, it does not explicitly incorporate the essential connection between lament and the resurrection. According to the New Testament witness, Christians pray lament not only in light of the cross, but also in light of the resurrection. As Martin Ebner argues, faith in the resurrection does not end lament, it provides the grounds for lament: “Belief in the resurrection of Jesus and the corresponding hope for resurrection is the theological basis for lament before God.”¹²⁴ Christian lament joins in with Jesus' speaking of lament, in longing for the completion of what Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection began – the return of Christ and the full arrival of God's kingdom.

In the New Testament, lament is a practice for the *now*. It is a practice that makes sense not only because there is a God who hears and who redeems but also because there is a *not yet*. Likewise, Jesus laments as a human fully immersed in a painful *now*, but in his own person he embodies the *not yet*; he himself is the promise that the one to whom we pray knows our longing for that *not yet* and will indeed, will surely, bring that *not yet* into being. In the meantime, blessed are those who mourn.

¹²⁴ “Der Glaube an die Auferweckung Jesu und die damit verbundene Auferweckungshoffnung ist die theologische Basis für die Klage vor Gott.” Ebner, “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im Neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, 75.

7. Conclusion: Lament as a Christian Practice

7.1 Reprise

In my first chapter I described the goal of this project as the articulation of the role and function of lament in the New Testament. I proposed that the need for this project arose from two related issues: first, what seems to be the relative absence of lament in the New Testament when compared to the Old Testament, and second, a resurgence of theological interest in lament. I addressed the first in order to contribute to the second, by providing a methodical description of lament's role throughout the New Testament.

I offered a working definition of lament in the New Testament, which I derived from the Old Testament pattern: lament is a persistent cry for salvation to the God who promises to save, in a situation of suffering or sin, in the confident hope that this God hears and responds to cries, and acts *now* and *in the future* to make whole. In other words, lament calls upon God to be true to God's own character and to keep God's own promises to humanity, to Israel, and to the church. I argued that a careful investigation of the New Testament reveals that it thoroughly incorporates the pattern of Old Testament lament into its proclamation of the gospel, especially in the person of Jesus Christ as he prayed and embodied lament. Jesus represents God's answer to Israel's long-prayed cries of lament, but he also takes up the prayer of lament as a human being (the subject of Chapter 3), as the Messiah-King, high priest, and prophet of Israel (the subject of Chapter 4), and as the divine Son of God (the subject of Chapter 5). Because of this, lament has a dual function in the New Testament: it points to Jesus as the beginning of the fulfillment

of lament's cries, and it points forward to the consummation of God's kingdom as guaranteed in Jesus' resurrection.

7.2 Lament as a Christian Practice

As I explored in Chapter 3, lament is an expression of prayer or protest shared across human cultures. As such, it is a general human impulse – the impulse to give voice to pain. Yet as a Christian practice it is also a *particular* practice, one shaped by the laments of Israel in the Old Testament and the laments of Jesus in the New. In this respect, Christian lament is both an act we do instinctively and also an act that must be learned.¹ I offer brief reflections on the implications of this claim, using three main categories: attention to God, attention to pain, and attention to the Christian hope.

1. *Attentiveness to God.* I have emphasized repeatedly in this project that laments are *prayers* – that even though others “overhear” the lament, such as the community and those who might have caused the suffering, it is God who is the primary hearer of lament. Learning to pray lament thus means learning to seek and speak to God in the midst of pain. Scholars like Warren Reich, Dorothee Sölle, and Allen Verhey have reminded us of the silence of suffering, and of how difficult it can be to give words to wounds. The practice of lament means giving suffering a particular voice, in words that are directed

¹ On learning lament, see Brian Brock, “Augustine’s Incitement to Lament, from the *Errationes in Psalmos*,” in *Evoking Lament*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock (New York; London: T&T Clark International, 2009): 183-203; and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970). In Gary Anderson’s study of rituals of grief and joy in Israelite religion, he follows the models of Émile Durkheim, George Lindbeck, and Clifford Geertz in proposing that ritual action gives rise to and shapes emotion rather than the other way around (Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* [University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991], 4-14). But Anderson adds the caveat that this model is not “a complete explanation” – obviously there are times when behavior is prompted by strong emotion (96-7). Specifically regarding reconciliation, Emanuel Katongole and Chris Rice suggest that three practices can help us learn the discipline of lament: pilgrimage, relocation, and public confession; see Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing*, ed. Chris Rice, Resources for Reconciliation (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 90.

toward God, whether it is in Konfliktgespräch (conflict speech), or penitence, or anger, or sorrow, or cries for help. Nicholas Lash describes the Christian (and Jewish) life as “a lifelong discipline of attentiveness... [a] lifelong discipline of learning to see in the dark. That disposition of the mind and heart which we call faith is thus a matter of learning to keep one’s eyes open...”²

2. *Attentiveness to pain.* Contemporary American culture, as a general rule, goes to great lengths to avoid pain, aging, and death. Lament has no such qualms. Rather, in lament the one who suffers tells the truth about the extent of her pain, before God and in the community. This resists any theology that denies the reality of suffering, views suffering exclusively as a form of moral education,³ or insists that people simply “get over” their pain and “move on” with life. Learning to lament and to hear lament means sitting in the darkness with Job’s friends without reaching too quickly for the light switch; it means sitting alongside the suffering on the “mourner’s bench.”⁴ It means learning to ache for all the ways the world remains unredeemed, for ourselves and others, and (in the words of Ambrose) to long more ardently for the cessation of pain and tears.

3. *Attentiveness to hope.* Defining lament as a practice places certain boundaries around the expression of powerful emotions such as grief and anger within a Christian context. These are not boundaries intended to restrict or mute such expression, but rather

² Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of ‘Religion’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 205.

³ Nicholas Wolterstorff names the tension between suffering as a wrong and the value of suffering when he writes, “How can we thank God for suffering’s yield while asking for its removal? ... The valley of suffering is the vale of soul-making. ... How do I receive my suffering as blessing while repulsing the obscene thought that God jiggled the mountain to make *me* better?” Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 96, 97.

⁴ Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owen, *Living Without Enemies: Being Present in the Midst of Violence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011); Wolterstorff, 63.

to give it shape and voice, to “encompass the hurt within a faithful identity.”⁵ As Gary Anderson notes, the ritual cycle of joy and mourning in Israel set “boundaries on the unbounded.”⁶ Such edges have the capacity to create a form within which the rawest pains and fears can gain their voice and turn to prayer – even if that prayer is in the form of accusation or complaint over God’s absence (Ps 22:1).⁷ Within this “formful” space, to borrow words from Walter Brueggemann, attention to hope is fostered, even from within the darkest places of pain.

Christian lament presses toward a specific hope: not material comfort, not personal happiness per se, not even a more just world, but the resurrection of the dead and the restoration of all creation. Through the biblical laments, Christians may learn to lament for those things we might not otherwise long for ourselves.⁸ As Dietrich Bonhoeffer notes, praying the Psalms and the Lord’s Prayer schools us in a way of praying that is not simply for our own needs at the moment: “What matters is not what we feel like praying about, but what God wants us to ask him for. Left to ourselves, no doubt we should often pray no more than the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer. But God desires otherwise. Not the poverty of our own heart but the riches of the Word of God must decide how we are to pray.”⁹

⁵ Allen Verhey, “Prayer as Practice,” in *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life Care*, ed. John Swinton and Richard Payne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 100 n.7.

⁶ Anderson, 96.

⁷ In a workshop on lament in a local church, participants reported that using the basic “form” of lament (invocation, complaint, petition, praise) helped them to write their own laments, especially if they had never done so before.

⁸ See, for example, Timothy Gorringer, *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002). The question of what we may rightly pray for is an important one, given that the heart of a lament is the petition. See Verhey, 92, 102, esp. n.9.

⁹ Bonhoeffer, 3.

As a Christian practice, lament is situated within the communion of saints – by which I mean both Scripture and the catholic church, now and throughout time – and in the presence of the other – by which I mean that practicing lament trains the church to hear the laments of the world. Specifically, this means that Christian lament, as drawn from the Old and New Testaments, is a practice in the company of Israel, in the company of Jesus, in the company of the church, and in the company of the world.

7.2.1 Lamenting in the Company of Israel

An investigation of lament in the New Testament reveals a close continuity with the Old Testament laments, especially the psalms of lament. When Jesus laments, he uses the prayerbook of Israel – the Psalter. The New Testament authors write no new prayers of lament because they do not need to: they already have such prayers at their disposal. Furthermore, as outlined in Chapter 2, when the Gospels describe the final days and hours of Jesus’ life, they draw from the pattern of multiple lament psalms to describe his betrayal, suffering, death, and vindication. By implication, this means that Christian lament is a continuation of the practice of lament as articulated in the Old Testament, and a joining with the longing of Israel for redemption and restoration.¹⁰

This means most simply continuing to lament using Israel’s prayers – allowing the laments of Israel in the Psalter, the prophets, and the Pentateuch to shape the church’s laments. Continuing to lament in the company of Israel surely means at least praying alongside Job (and those who pray Job-like prayers of anguish over personal illness, loss,

¹⁰ As much as the prayers of Israel are Christian prayers, they were originally the prayers of Israel, and they remain the prayers of the living tradition of Judaism. In a certain sense, then, by using the laments of Israel as the paradigm for Christian lament, the church is borrowing another people’s prayers – a people who prays “next year in Jerusalem” as well as “your kingdom come.” Walter Brueggemann discusses praying the Psalms for Jews, with Jews, and as Jews in Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1982), 51-65.

and distress), alongside Lamentations (and those who grieve the destruction and violence in the cities they love), and alongside the psalmist of Psalm 88 (and thus with those who seek God in the darkness).

Perhaps it also means remembering that Jewish lament cries out for a Messiah yet to come, which means mourning with anguish alongside the apostle Paul for the unbelief of his people – and longing with him for the day when Jew and Gentile will raise their voices together in worship in the eschatological communion of saints (Romans 9-11; 15).

7.2.2 Lamenting in the Company of Jesus

Because Jesus is the crucified and risen Lord who continues to make himself present to the community of faith, the church also laments in his company and with his help. This is primarily a claim fleshed out in Chapter 4, section 4.4, where I describe the role of lament in Jesus' priestly identity. As the Risen One who continues to bear his wounds (John 20:20, 24-27), Jesus brings the human prayer of lament with him into the throne room of God.

When the church laments alongside Jesus, in his company, it does so primarily as a form of participation in Christ rather than in imitation of Christ per se. As I have argued, some aspects of Jesus' suffering and lament are unique to his identity and are therefore non-repeatable. On the other hand, Jesus' laments in some ways provide a model for his followers. The passion narratives suggest that the experiences of Jesus' followers will mirror that of Jesus, and thus that they ought to follow his example: "The various ways the Gospels portray Jesus in his passion exhibit the stance the Christian must take: *immersed in prayer in Gethsemane*, alert for the onslaught of evil at the

moment of arrest, clinging to his trust in God as the fierce power of death threatens to overwhelm him on the cross.”¹¹

Yet Jesus is not merely a model for us to imitate: “Jesus does not just illustrate the human condition; he transforms the human condition.”¹² Because Jesus is both fully divine and fully human, Christian lament is both anthropological and Christological (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.1). Jesus joins in the lament of humanity and participates fully in it. Without the resurrection, however, Christ’s lament would reveal the depth of humanity’s entanglement in sin and death but would have no “transformative and creative effect on the lament of his believers.”¹³ Jesus’ lament (like his suffering and death) is unique because it is redemptive.¹⁴ In this way, all Christian lament becomes participation in Christ’s laments; our laments become possible because of Christ’s laments.¹⁵

7.2.3 Lamenting in the Company of the Church

As I described in Chapter 1, section 1.4.1, the lament psalms were part of Israel’s public worship. The individual lament psalms may have been deeply personal in their

¹¹ Don Senior, “The Death of Jesus and the Meaning of Discipleship,” in *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity*, ed. John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 241, emphasis added.

¹² Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 232. Susan Eastman explores the concepts of imitation of and participation in Christ in Susan Eastman, “Imitating Christ Imitating Us: Paul’s Educational Project in Philippians,” in *The Word Leaps the Gap*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 427-51; and Susan Eastman, “Philippians 1:6-11: Incarnation as Mimetic Participation,” *JSPL* (forthcoming). See also Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

¹³ Eva Harasta, “Crucified Praise and Resurrected Lament,” in *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2009), 208.

¹⁴ “Jesus Christ has brought before God all the needs, all the joys, all the thanks and hopes of mankind. On his lips the words of a man become words of God, and when we join in his prayer, the words of God become once more words of man” (Bonhoeffer, 3).

¹⁵ See Brock, 183-203.

origins, but they were not private; rather, they were shared by the worshiping community and preserved as the liturgy of Israel. The praise in the lament psalms gave “*public* witness to the divine act of deliverance the lamenter experienced.”¹⁶ The people shared publicly in both the complaint of the petitioner and his thanksgiving at God’s saving action.¹⁷

This suggests that the community can bear suffering in a way that an individual might not be able to do on her own. Sometimes, as in Psalm 88, prayer ends with the sufferer still in darkness, with the movement toward hope and praise left uncompleted. In that case, when the mourner cannot reach praise herself, or has lost faith in the certainty of God’s hearing, the community—and the canon—can complete the movement toward praise.¹⁸

To say that lament is prayed in the company of the church, within the community of faith, is not to say that lament ought never be a personal act. But it is to insist that lament is properly a prayer of the whole community, whether it be listening to and “mourning with” an individual mourner in her personal grief, and thus enfolding that private grief into the public worship of the body of Christ; or the community giving voice to a communal lament over shared tragedy, loss, or repentance. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

¹⁶ Anderson, 91, emphasis original. See Ps 5:12-13; 9:2-3; 32:11; 34:2-4; 35:27-28; 64:11; 109:28-30.

¹⁷ For the function of lament within a community, see Walter Brueggemann, “Lament as Wake-Up Call (Class Analysis and Historical Possibility),” in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, ed. Nancy C. Lee and Carleen Mandolfo (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 221-36. Brueggemann writes, “An interpretive community that regularly voices lament is a community that *acknowledges present pain* and that *anticipates transformation*” (233).

¹⁸ For this point, I am indebted to Allen Verhey, in a response to a presentation by Thomas Long on Christian funerals in Durham, NC. Kathryn Greene-McCreight makes a similar point regarding those who suffer from mental illness. “This is why we need the scriptures and the community of faith. They contribute faith and hope to us as from a well that cannot be reached from the depths of mental illness” (Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness* [Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006], 124).

remarked on praying the psalms in community, “Even if a verse or a psalm is not my own prayer, it is nevertheless the prayer of another member of the community.”¹⁹

Lamenting in the company of the catholic church throughout time also means drawing on the resources of the wider body of Christ for the practice of lament. This is important because of the way that different strands of the Christian tradition have emphasized different aspects of lament. I suggested in my first chapter that lament tends to take shape in two primary ways (which are not mutually exclusive to one another): as protest or complaint against suffering and injustice; and as penitence regarding sin. I have argued that New Testament lament, in relative continuity with Old Testament lament, displays lament’s function as both penitence and protest (see Chapter 1, section 1.2.2; and Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). Although Christian practice throughout history has tended, in general, to emphasize the penitential strand of lament, there are resources within the Christian tradition that emphasize protest.

For example, a cursory study of lament within the black church in America suggests that this tradition tends to use lament as a form of resistance and hope.²⁰ A similarly brief glance at the Catholic tradition (from the patristic era through contemporary times) suggests that this tradition has tended to treat lament primarily

¹⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, ed. Wayne W. Floyd, vol. 5A of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 55; quoted in Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller, *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 8. Allen Verhey argues that retrieving lament as a practice leads to greater compassion, since it preserves a place for the suffering in community; see Verhey, “Prayer as Practice,” 99. Hearing the laments of others within the community has the potential to change the community itself.

²⁰ In African American communities, lament arises from historical memory (the experience of slavery) and present experience (oppressive structures of racism in the United States). Lamenting these situations is often oriented toward change, as part of an active struggle for justice. In black churches, lament as protest tends to be directed against unjust social systems, rather than complaint directed to God.

(although not exclusively) as a form of penitence for sin.²¹ The Catholic Church (and other churches that use a lectionary and follow the liturgical calendar) and the black church (as well as other minority-community churches) make their own unique contributions to a contemporary practice of lament in the Western church, and their respective emphases reflect the breadth of lament in the New Testament.

Black churches in America have traditionally had rich resources for a practice of lament. For example, African-American preaching has often linked lament and celebration from the pulpit.²² Similarly, Cheryl Sanders describes the joining of suffering and lament with hope and celebration in the African-American experience. Despite the spirit of suffering and lament that arises from the “exilic” experience of African Americans, “belief in the presence of the Spirit and the actual experience of the Spirit in the midst of suffering [is] a tremendous sustaining and sacramental source of hope, a reason for celebration.”²³

Sanders identifies belief in an inaugurated or partially realized eschatology as that which sustains hope. Belief in the presence and power of the Spirit in the *now* aptly reflects the way that Christian eschatology brings the vindication of lament forward into the present (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.2.1). Many traditional African-American spirituals display the eschatological tension between God’s redemption now and in the future; they

²¹ This appears to be true not only for the Catholic Church, but for Protestant traditions as well. See Stefan Ark Nitsche, “Vor der Antwort käme die Frage: Die Psalmenrezeption im Evangelischen Gesangbuch,” in *Schweigen wäre gotteslästerlich: Die heilende Kraft der Klage*, ed. Georg Steins (Würzburg: Echter, 2000), 133-53; Oswald Bayer, *Leibliches Wort: Reformation und Neuzeit im Konflikt* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 347; Claus Westermann, “Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament,” *Interpretation* 28, no. 1 (1974): 33.

²² Luke A. Powery, *Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), especially xvii, chapters 2, 6, 7.

²³ Cheryl Jeanne Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7.

claim both a present freedom (“heaven on earth before physical death”) and heaven as the ultimate home and place of freedom after death.²⁴ Traditional African-American spirituality and contemporary worship practices in black churches have much to offer the American church as a whole in terms of lament and hope in a context of suffering and in the light of an inaugurated eschatology.

Traditions that follow the liturgical calendar or rely on lectionary readings have tended to incorporate lament regularly into their worship life as a form of penitence. Lectionaries have the potential to bring prayers of lament regularly before a congregation, but they tend to do so mainly by selecting the penitential prayers rather than imprecatory speech. For example, the Revised Common Lectionary omits Psalm 88, which ends in darkness, and the Psalm 139 reading skips the imprecatory section (verses 19-22).²⁵ The season of Lent provides an obvious platform for penitential lament, and liturgical events such as the stripping of the altar and the darkness of Tenebrae evoke Jesus’ laments and can allow worshipers to enter into the mourning of lament in various forms. The season of Advent has the potential to incorporate the longing of lament into its prayers, although it is less certain if congregations typically make use of this potential. Nevertheless, the rhythm of the traditional liturgical year naturally takes a church on an annual journey through the cycle of expectation and hope, darkness and light, penitence and gratitude.

²⁴ Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, “African-American Spirituals: Confronting and Exorcising Evil through Song,” in *Troubling in My Soul*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 159.

²⁵ The first version of the Common Lectionary included almost no lament psalms at all; more recent versions have incorporated more psalms, including 32 lament psalms. See James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 48; and Sheila Carney, “God Damn God: A Reflection on Expressing Anger in Prayer,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 13, no. (1983): 116-20. Carney argues that the liturgy uniformly avoids expressions of anger.

7.2.4 Lamenting in the Company of the World

Patrick Miller suggests that hearing the laments of Christ teaches us to listen to the suffering of the world, because of the way that Christ interceded for others—even for his enemies—in the midst of his laments. Because Christians learn to look not only at our own suffering but at Christ’s suffering on the cross, we learn to see the suffering of the other, and our ears become attuned to “the anger and despair, the loneliness and terror of others, more loudly than our own.” For Miller, this means that lament in the church, as a prayer of the community, has fundamentally become intercession for the other, in solidarity with our neighbors.²⁶ I explore this suggestion more fully in the section below on “lamenting-with relationships,” where I explore ways that lament can deepen solidarity with others both within and outside the church.

7.3 *Lamenting-with Relationships*

In this final section, I consider lament as a practice of the church through the lens of one final lament text: Paul’s exhortation to “weep with those who are weeping” (Romans 12:15; see also Chapter 4, section 4.5.2.3). In Chapter 3, through exploring the effects of lament on the hearers of lament, I gestured toward the power that lament has to create solidarity with sufferers – not merely among those who suffer, but also between those who lament and those who hear lament. If practicing lament means both learning to *pray* lament and learning to *hear* lament, then forming “lamenting-with” relationships is

²⁶ Patrick D. Miller, “Heaven’s Prisoners: The Lament as Christian Prayer,” in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 23-4. For Miller, this also means that our own prayers of loneliness and despair “cannot be controlled and scheduled and do not belong to the gathering of the community in praise and thanksgiving” (23). As I have already said, I respectfully disagree. It is the form and pattern of lament that shapes (but does not “control”) our own distress and brings it into the community as a matter for communal prayer and worship. We intercede not only for neighbors outside the community but for neighbors within the community as well, through hearing one another’s laments.

an important component of learning the practice of Christian lament. This can take place on an individual level (between two people, or a small group of people, or within a single congregation), or on a community level, between congregations or within a wider community.

Sitting on the mourner's bench

Once again Warren Reich's stages of suffering and compassion are instructive. Reich's first stage of compassion corresponds to the first stage of suffering, which is mute suffering: through silent compassion, one simply offers companionship and presence in the midst of pain. One recalls the first reaction of Job's friends when they saw how great was the suffering of their friend: they weep, tear their clothes, and sprinkle dust on their heads – physical symbols of the way they are entering into Job's grief. Then, “they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him” (Job 2:13). No words – for seven days. Nicholas Wolterstorff, borrowing a phrase from Peter De Vries, calls this “sitting on the mourner's bench” alongside those who mourn.²⁷

Eventually, Job's friends speak. We might wish they had chosen somewhat different words of consolation, but their fumbling efforts prompt Job to speak, too, and in doing so he gropes his way into lament and toward God. For Reich, this is the second stage of suffering – expressive suffering, or lament – and the second stage of compassion – expressive compassion, or helping the sufferer to discover a new voice or renarrate her

²⁷ Wolterstorff, 34; Peter De Vries, *The Blood of the Lamb* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 237. Martin Ebner describes the raising of the widow of Nain's son as illustrating the same lesson: “stay with the mourners” (bei den Klagenden bleiben); see Martin Ebner, “Klage und Auferweckungshoffnung im Neuen Testament,” in *Klage*, ed. Martin Ebner et al., JBTh 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 85-6.

story.²⁸ Perhaps a faithful practice of silent compassion is a prerequisite for expressive compassion. Once a person who suffers is ready to speak, to shape his suffering into words, the community can help the mourner give voice to lament and to hear that lament in all its fullness, no matter how difficult for both lamenter and hearer.

*Lamenting-with across boundaries*²⁹

Lament is obviously not exclusive to churches in marginalized settings or those with fewer resources, especially at an individual level. Tragedies such as cancer, car accidents, earthquakes, and the deaths of children strike the rich and poor alike. Particularly in an era of high unemployment and economic uncertainty, which prevail as I write, very few congregations are exempt from a social setting of loss from which lament might easily arise. Nonetheless, the particular social location and makeup of American churches contain both points of resistance against and promising resources for a practice of lament.

A social setting characterized by privilege, social power, and material wealth poses a certain challenge to the practice of lament.³⁰ In other words, the longing for God's new creation might not be as sharply felt for those who are comfortable in *this*

²⁸ Warren T. Reich, "Speaking of Suffering: A Moral Account of Compassion," *Soundings* 72, no. 1 (1989): 93-9.

²⁹ The language of lamenting-with with is borrowed from Samuel Wells' concept of "being with"; see, e.g., Wells and Owen, 23-47.

³⁰ Jon Sobrino writes from a Latin American perspective (San Salvador) about "the reality of a crucified world" and crucified peoples (the oppressed, the victims, the poor) to which the Western world and Western Christianity too often turn a blind eye; see Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994).

world. As Chuck Campbell notes, “Indeed, in many privileged congregations the *lack* of urgency about the deadly ways of the powers is the more fundamental issue.”³¹

Developing relationships among congregations of different social and economic settings can draw in multiple strands of a practice of lament. For example, a church that urgently experiences and laments the brokenness of the world might bring a form of lament as protest or intense longing for God’s kingdom to a more comfortable church. As a form of penitence, lament might enable another congregation to name and express its sorrow over involvement in causing or ignoring suffering.³²

Hearing the laments of others across boundaries—whether it be on the other side of the world or on the other side of town—necessitates a form of vulnerable hospitality in which one is willing to hear the stories of others and be changed by them. For example, Emanuel Katongole and Chris Rice argue that lament is the first step on the journey of reconciliation.³³ They name lament as “the prayer of those who are deeply disturbed by

³¹ Charles L. Campbell, *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 179. bell hooks proposes that the lack of public spaces in African-American communities where pain is articulated and shared can lead to “a life-threatening despair.” See bell hooks, “Love as the Practice of Freedom,” in *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 243-50. In Kathleen M. O’Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 128, O’Connor describes the ability of lament to address injustice; see also Emilie M. Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 23-5.

³² Lakkis writes, “If the churches ignore their own entanglement in structural sin, sanctify their expression in a bourgeois existence and, in denial, repress the memory that the Way of Jesus Christ is deeply linked with suffering – that there can be no resurrection without death – then they will find it difficult to offer up authentic, constructive lament; and they will always be subject to the divine challenge: do you think you have any right to be angry?” (Stephen Lakkis, “‘Have You any Right to be Angry?’: Lament as a Metric of Socio-Political and Theological Context,” in *Evoking Lament: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Eva Harasta and Brian Brock [New York; London: T&T Clark International, 2009], 182).

³³ Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 77-94. The role of lament in reconciliation could apply to individuals as well as communities on a more national or global scale.

the way things are,”³⁴ which identifies the inherent longing of lament for God’s wholeness in a broken world. Inherent within lament is also hope: in this case, hope that God has already effected reconciliation, breaking down the barriers between God and humanity and between human beings.

Another example might be embodied forms of lament that bear public witness to pain and hope, such as vigils (see, e.g., Chapter 3, section 3.3.4; and my description of the third category of lament in Chapter 1, section 1.5.1). Inasmuch as these actions embody the longing of God’s people for the kingdom to come, witness to the dawning of the new age and its gifts of forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing, and call on God to bring the kingdom into the midst of brokenness, they could be considered a form of lamenting action much like the wailing of Rachel or the “groaning” of all creation. For example, whenever a murder occurs in the city of Durham (a town of 225,000 people, where approximately thirty people are shot to death every year), residents of Durham gather with family and friends of the victim, usually at the site of the murder, to light candles and pray and remember the person who died. This is a powerful act of embodied lament in solidarity with a suffering family and a suffering neighborhood, but it is also an act of hope that testifies to the goodness of the community.³⁵ This is one example of how entering into the lament of another can transform both the one who laments and the one who might not otherwise have heard that particular cry of pain.

³⁴ Ibid., 78.

³⁵ Wells and Owen, 105-10.

7.4 *The Liminal Practice of Lament*

In the New Testament, the prayer of lament rejoices in God's saving actions in the now and hopes urgently for God's saving actions in the future, the "not yet" of the eschatological timeline. As a Christian eschatological practice, lament is a liminal practice. It is "shaped by the incongruities between what is and what should or might be"; it is an instigator and sustainer of liminality.³⁶ Those who lament stand on the boundary between the old age and the new and hope for things unseen. In this respect, the longing of lament is a training in non-passive patience, in a form of waiting that strains eagerly toward the future.³⁷ Karl Barth expresses this liminality in a funeral sermon for his son Matthias:

It is by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Now and the Then are together in such a way that no power in heaven or on earth can separate them again. For it is he alone who in his bitter death on the cross and in his glorious resurrection has bound the Now and the Then together... This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we follow him and may stand with him at the border where the Now and the Then touch each other, that we at this border may believe, love, and hope. It is at this border where light falls into darkness, where life always rejoices in the face of death, where we are great sinners yet righteous, where we are taken captive yet free, where we see no way out yet we have hope, where we have doubts yet are certain, where we weep yet are glad.³⁸

³⁶ Charles L. Campbell and Johan H. Cilliers, *Preaching Fools: The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 130. See also Jacqueline Aileen Bussie, *The Laughter of the Oppressed: Ethical and Theological Resistance in Wiesel, Morrison, and Endo* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2007).

³⁷ Wolterstorff describes lamenters as "aching visionaries," who ache for God's kingdom to come and weep for all the ways it is not yet here (Wolterstorff, 86; cf. Allen Verhey, *Reading the Bible in the Strange World of Medicine* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003], 138-9).

³⁸ Karl Barth, "Matthias Barth," in *This Incomplete One: Words Occasioned by the Death of a Young Person*, ed. Michael D. Bush (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 13.

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