

THE COSTLY LOSS OF LAMENT

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Recent study of the lament Psalms has indicated their enormous theological significance for the faith and liturgy of Israel and for the subsequent use of the church. There is no doubt that the lament Psalms had an important function in the community of faith. In this paper I will explore the loss of life and faith incurred when the lament Psalms are no longer used for their specific social function.

I

We may begin with a summary of the current scholarly consensus. Claus Westermann has done the most to help our understanding of the Psalms and his work is surely normative for all other discussions.¹ Indeed, his work now has importance that ranks with that of Gunkel and Mowinckel for our understanding of this literature.²

1. The primary gains of Westermann's work are the following: First, he has shown that these Psalms move from plea to praise.³ In that move the situation and/or attitude of the speaker is transformed, and God is mobilized for the sake of the speaker. The intervention of God in some way permits the move from plea to praise.⁴

Second, Westermann has shown that the lament is resolved by and corresponds to the song of thanksgiving.⁵ Indeed, the song of thanksgiving is in fact the lament restated after the crisis has been dealt with. Westermann inclines to read this correspondence of lament and thanks as a subdued, regimented, and calculated form of response, whereas praise, in contrast with thanksgiving, is unfettered.⁶

Third, whatever one thinks of the contrast of thanksgiving and praise, Westermann has shown how the lament characteristically

ends in praise which is full and unfettered. Indeed, the proper setting of praise is as lament resolved. In a sense, doxology and praise are best understood only in response to God's salvific intervention which in turn is evoked by the lament.⁷

Fourth, Westermann himself has largely *begged the question* of life-setting for the laments. He is most reluctant to use the category of cult and when that category is denied, it is difficult to discuss *Sitz im Leben* in any formal sense.⁸

Lastly, Westermann has not explicitly articulated the relational dynamics that go along with the structural elements. But I think it is safe to deduce from his form-critical analysis the following relational dynamic. In these Psalms, Israel moves from *articulation* of hurt and anger to *submission* of them to God and finally *relinquishment*.⁹ Functionally and experientially, the verbal articulation and the faithful submission to God are prerequisites for relinquishment. Only when there is such relinquishment can there be praise and acts of generosity. Thus the relational dynamic *vis-à-vis* God corresponds to the move of the formal elements.

2. The question of *Sitz im Leben* is not as unambiguous as is our understanding of the genre, perhaps because Westermann has not directly turned his attention to the issue. We may suggest four elements of the scholarly discussion of this matter.

First, Mowinckel's temple hypothesis has largely dominated the discussion, and Aubrey Johnson has put the hypothesis to good use.¹⁰ However, such a mode of interpretation has caused a sense of unreality about the laments, as though they are used as play-acting in some great national drama, rather than the serious experience of members of the community.

Second, the juridical hypothesis of Schmidt, Delekat, and Beyerlin¹¹ is important and has much to commend it. No doubt the language of the lament Psalms reflects a juridical concern. However, it is difficult to know how 'realistically' to take the language. The hypothesis has suffered from the inclination to treat juridical language as only imitative. A psalm like Ps. 109 suggests that the language is real-life.¹² The appeal for a judge is a real one. The prayer petition is a request that the actual juridical procedure should be handled in a certain way.

Third, the influential hypothesis of Mowinckel that the 'evildoers' are people who work by sympathetic magic seems to me to be quite wrong-headed.¹³ A more realistic sense of social process would

indicate that those who are powerful enough to speak such words are the ones who administer, control, and benefit from social operations. This hypothesis again is an attempt to distance the laments from actual social processes. They reflect an 'idealistic' reading of the text.

Fourth, the work of Albertz¹⁴ and Gerstenberger¹⁵ seems to me to be most helpful in seeing that the laments are genuine pastoral activities. Albertz has seen that the personal laments function in a 'Kleinkult' apart from the temple, where the personal life-cycle processes of birth and death are in crisis. Gerstenberger has supported such a general sense of setting by placing these psalms in something like a house church or a base community in which members of the community enact a ritual of rehabilitation as an act of hope. This hypothesis has great plausibility and relates the poetry to what seem to be real-life situations.

3. It is still the case that, even in the light of Westermann's great contribution, scholars have only walked around the edges of the theological significance of the lament Psalm. We have yet to ask what it means to have this form available in this social construction of reality.¹⁶ What difference does it make to have faith that permits and requires this form of prayer? My answer is that it shifts the calculus and *redresses the redistribution of power* between the two parties, so that the petitionary party is taken seriously and the God who is addressed is newly engaged in the crisis in a way that puts God at risk. As the lesser petitionary party (the psalm speaker) is legitimated, so the unmitigated supremacy of the greater party (God) is questioned, and God is made available to the petitioner. The basis for the conclusion that the petitioner is taken seriously and legitimately granted power in the relation is that the speech of the petitioner is heard, valued, and transmitted as serious speech. Cultically, we may assume that such speech is taken seriously by God. Such a speech pattern and social usage keep all power relations under review and capable of redefinition.

The lament form thus concerns a redistribution of power. In the following discussion, I want to explore the negative implications of the redress of power. That is, what happens when appreciation of the lament as a form of speech and faith is lost, as I think it is largely lost in contemporary usage? What happens when the speech forms that redress power distribution have been silenced and eliminated? The answer, I believe, is that a theological monopoly is re-enforced, docility and submissiveness are engendered, and the outcome in

terms of social practice is to re-enforce and consolidate the political-economic monopoly of the status quo. That is, the removal of lament from life and liturgy is not disinterested and, I suggest, only partly unintentional. In the following I will explore two dimensions of loss and therefore two possible gains for the recovery of lament.

II

One loss that results from the absence of lament is the loss of *genuine covenant interaction* because the second party to the covenant (the petitioner) has become voiceless or has a voice that is permitted to speak only praise and doxology. Where lament is absent, covenant comes into being only as a celebration of joy and well-being. Or in political categories, the greater party is surrounded by subjects who are always 'yes men and women' from whom 'never is heard a discouraging word'. Since such a celebrative, consenting silence does not square with reality, covenant minus lament is finally a practice of denial, cover-up, and pretense, which sanctions social control.

There is important heuristic gain in relating this matter to the theory of personality development called 'object-relations theory'.¹⁷ The nomenclature is curious and misleading. The theory is a protest against psychological theories that claim that crucial matters of personality formation are internal to the person. Object-relations theory maintains instead that they are relational and external. 'Object relations' means that the person must relate to real, objective others who are not a projection, but are unyielding centers of power and will. For the very young child, such an objective other is, of course, the mother. For our subject, then, a parallel can be expressed between child relating to mother and worshipper relating to God.

The argument made in this theory is that the child, if she is to develop ego-strength, must have initiative with the mother, must have experience of omnipotence, and this happens only if the mother is responsive to the child's gestures and does not take excessive initiative toward the child. Winnicott writes:

A true self begins to have life through the strength given to the infant's weak ego by the mother's implementation of the infant's omnipotent expressions.¹⁸

The negative alternative is that the mother does not respond but takes initiative, and then the mother is experienced by the child as omnipotent:

The mother who is not good enough is not able to implement the infant's omnipotence and so she repeatedly fails to meet the infant gesture. Instead she substitutes her own gesture which is to be given compliance by the infant. This compliance on the part of the infant is the earliest stage of the False Self, and belongs to the mother's inability to sense her infant's needs.¹⁹

We can draw a suggestive analogy from this understanding of the infant/mother relationship for our study of the lament. Where there is lament, the believer is able to take initiative with God and so develop over against God the ego strength that is necessary for responsible faith. But where the capacity to initiate lament is absent, one is left only with praise and doxology. God then is omnipotent, always to be praised. The believer is nothing, and can uncritically praise or accept guilt where life with God does not function properly. The outcome is a 'False Self', bad faith which is based in fear and guilt and lived out as resentful or self-deceptive works of righteousness. The absence of lament makes a religion of coercive obedience the only possibility.

I do not suggest that biblical faith be reduced to psychological categories, but I find this parallel suggestive. It suggests that the God who evokes and responds to lament is not omnipotent in any conventional sense or surrounded by docile reactors. Rather, this God is like a mother who dreams with this infant, that the infant may some day grow into a responsible, mature covenant partner who can enter into serious communion and conversation. In such a serious conversation and communion, there comes genuine obedience, which is not a contrived need to please, but a genuine, yielding commitment.

Where there is no lament through which the believer takes initiative, God is experienced like an omnipotent mother. What is left for the believer then is a false narcissism which keeps hoping for a centered self, but which lacks the ego strength for a real self to emerge. What is at issue here, as Calvin understood so well, is a true understanding of the human self, but at the same time, a radical discernment of this God who is capable of and willing to be respondent and not only initiator.²⁰

III

The second loss caused by the absence of lament is the *stifling of the question of theodicy*. I do not refer to some esoteric question of God's

coping with ontological evil. Rather, I mean the capacity to raise and legitimate questions of justice in terms of social goods, social access, and social power.²¹ My sense is that, in the Old Testament, Israel is more concerned with *dikē* than with *theos*, more committed to questions of justice than to questions of God.²² Thus the line of scholarly interpretation from Schmidt to Delekat and Beyerlin is correct in seeing that the lament partakes in something of a claim filed in court in order to ensure that the question of justice is formally articulated. Westermann has seen that the poem of Job largely consists in these charges filed with the rather odd and inappropriate refutations on the part of the friends.²³

The lament Psalms, then, are a complaint which makes the shrill insistence:

1. Things are not right in the present arrangement.
2. They need not stay this way but can be changed.
3. The speaker will not accept them in this way, for it is intolerable.
4. It is God's obligation to change things.²⁴

But the main point is the first. Life isn't right. It is now noticed and voiced that life is not as it was promised to be. The utterance of this awareness is an exceedingly dangerous moment at the throne. It is as dangerous as Lech Walesa or Rosa Parks asserting with their bodies that the system has broken down and will not be honored any longer. For the managers of the system—political, economic, religious, moral—there is always a hope that the troubled folks will not notice the dysfunction or that a tolerance of a certain degree of dysfunction can be accepted as normal and necessary, even if unpleasant. **Lament occurs when the dysfunction reaches an unacceptable level, when the injustice is intolerable and change is insisted upon.**

The lament/complaint can then go in two different directions. In each direction I shall cite an extreme case. On the one hand, the complaint can be *addressed to God against neighbor*. Ps. 109 is an extreme case. The Psalm is an appeal to the *hesed* of Yahweh (vv. 21, 26) against the failed *hesed* of the human agent (v. 16). God is a court of appeal, through which a 'better' juridical process is sought (cf. v. 6). Whereas human justice has failed, it is sure that God's justice is reliable. But notice that the plea concerns actual, concrete issues of justice, presumably having to do with property. On the other hand, the complaint can be *addressed to God against God*. Ps. 88 is an

extreme case. Here it is the justice of God which has failed. In such a case Israel has no other court of appeal and so with great risk, Israel must return again and again to the same court with the same charge.²⁵ The Psalm is relentless, and that must be reckoned a very dangerous act, to keep petitioning the court of Yahweh against its own injustice. In both complaints concerning failed human *hesed* and unresponsive Yahweh, the issue is justice. In each instance, the petitioner accepts no guilt or responsibility for the dysfunction, but holds the other party responsible.

To be sure, these laments/complaints articulate a religious problem. But these speeches are not mere religious exercises as though their value were principally cathartic. Rather, the religious speech always carries with it a surplus of political, economic, social freight. The God addressed either is the legitimator and the guarantor of the social process (as in 88) or is the court of appeal against the system (as in 109). The claims and rights of the speaker are asserted to God in the face of a system which does not deliver. That system is visible on earth and addressed in heaven with the passionate conviction that it can, must, and will be changed.

In regularly using the lament form, Israel kept the justice question visible and legitimate. It is this justice question in the form of lament that energizes the Exodus narrative. Indeed, it is the cry of Israel (Exod. 2.23-25) which mobilizes Yahweh to action that begins the history of Israel. The cry initiates history.²⁶ Paul Hanson²⁷ has shown that the same right of appeal in the form of lament appears in Israel's legal material (Exod. 22.22-24), in which the poor can cry out. While the cry is addressed to Yahweh, it is clear that the cry is not merely a religious gesture but has important and direct links to social processes. When such a cry functions as a legal accusation, the witness of the tradition is that Yahweh hears and acts (cf. Ps. 107.4-32). In the Book of Covenant, we are given two such legal provisions. In the first case (Exod. 22.22-24), Yahweh responds to the cry and 'kills with a sword'. In the second case (22.27), Yahweh hears and is compassionate. In both cases, the cry mobilizes God in the arena of public life. In neither case is the response simple religious succor, but it is juridical action that rescues and judges. That is the nature of the function of lament in Israel.

Where the lament is absent, *the normal mode of the theodicy question is forfeited*.²⁸ When the lament form is censured, justice questions cannot be asked and eventually become invisible and

illegitimate. Instead we learn to settle for questions of 'meaning',²⁹ and we reduce the issues to resolutions of love. But the categories of meaning and love do not touch the public systemic questions about which biblical faith is relentlessly concerned. A community of faith which negates laments soon concludes that the hard issues of justice are improper questions to pose at the throne, because the throne seems to be only a place of praise. I believe it thus follows that if justice questions are improper questions at the throne (which is a conclusion drawn through liturgic use), they soon appear to be improper questions in public places, in schools, in hospitals, with the government, and eventually even in the courts. Justice questions disappear into civility and docility.³⁰ The order of the day comes to seem absolute, beyond question, and we are left with only grim obedience and eventually despair. The point of access for serious change has been forfeited when the propriety of this speech form is denied.

IV

I have pursued the loss of lament in two directions. On the one hand, I have argued in a psychological direction about object-relations and ego development. On the other hand, I have argued in a sociological direction concerning public, social questions of justice. I do not intend that the question of lament should be slotted as or reduced to either the psychological or the sociological dimension. Rather, the lament makes an assertion about God: that this dangerous, available God matters in every dimension of life. Where God's dangerous availability is lost because we fail to carry on our part of the difficult conversation, where God's vulnerability and passion are removed from our speech, we are consigned to anxiety and despair and the world as we now have it becomes absolutized. Our understanding of faith is altered dramatically, depending on whether God is a dead cipher who cannot be addressed and is only the silent *guarantor* of the status quo, or whether God can be addressed in risky ways as the *transformer* of what has not yet appeared. With reference to psychological issues, ego development is not dependent solely on a 'good-enough' mother,³¹ but on a God whose omnipotence is reshaped by pathos.³² With reference to social questions, the emergence of justice depends not simply on social structures, but on a sovereign agent outside the system to whom effective appeal can be made against the

system. Ego strength and social justice finally drive us to theological issues. A God who must always be praised and never assaulted correlates with a development of 'False Self', and an uncritical status quo. But a God who is available in assault correlates with the emergence of genuine self and the development of serious justice.

V

Finally, I conclude with some brief comments on Ps. 39, to see how these claims are worked out in a specific text. Ps. 39 is a lament which makes petition to Yahweh. The speaker announces his long-standing intention to keep silent (vv. 1-3a). But the practise of restraint only contributed to the trouble. In v. 3b, finally there is speech, because the submissive silence was inadequate. In v. 4, the speaker names Yahweh for the first time. In that moment of speech of bold address, things already begin to change. The cause of trouble has now become an open question in the relationship. The speaker resolves no longer to be dumb in the face of wickedness. That resolve creates new possibilities. Verses 4-6 are a meditation on the limits and transitoriness of human life. There is an appeal to know the end, i.e. the outcome, but it is not a very vigorous statement. It is still reflective, without great self-assertion.

The mood changes abruptly in v. 7, in which God is addressed for the second time. The text has *'adonai*, but some evidence suggests a second reading of *Yahweh*. But the crucial rhetorical move is *we'attâ*, 'and now'.³³ A major turn is marked as the speech moves from meditation to active, insistent hope.

And now, what do I hope for (*qaway*)? My hope (*yhl*) is in you.

The focus on Yahweh is an insistence that things need not and will not stay as they are. This is followed in v. 8 by a powerful imperative, *nsl*, 'snatch' or 'deliver'. In v. 9, the petition grows bolder because now the speaker is able to say 'You have done it'. The silence has turned to accusation, but the accusation is a form of active hope. Verse 11 returns to a more reflective tone. Then in v. 12, the third reference to Yahweh is again a vigorous imperative:

Hear my prayer, Yahweh
to my cry give ear,
at my tears do not be silent
for I am a sojourner with you.

The speech which has ended the silence is a strong urging to Yahweh. As the speaker has refused silence, now he petitions Yahweh also to break the silence (v. 12). The speech of the petitioner seeks to evoke the speech and intervention of Yahweh.

The Psalm ends with the terse *'ēnenī*, 'I will not be'. The urging is that God should act before the speaker ceases to be, as a result of a process of social nullification. Whether the speaker ceases to be depends on Yahweh's direct intervention, in the face of powerful forces which practice nullification.

I submit that this Psalm makes contact with both points I have argued. On the one hand, the speaker moves from silence to speech,³⁴ to a series of bold imperatives, and in v. 9 to a clarification which may be read as an indictment of God: 'You have done it'. The Psalm evidences courage and ego strength before Yahweh which permits an act of hope, expectant imperatives, and an insistence that things be changed before it is too late.³⁵ The insistence addressed to Yahweh is matched by a sense of urgency about the threat of not-being. I take this threat to be social and worked through the social system.

On the other hand, the justice questions are raised. They are raised as early as v. 1 with reference to the wicked (*raša*).³⁶ We are not given any specifics, but the reference to 'sojourner' in v. 12 suggests that the question concerns social power and social location which has left the speaker exposed, vulnerable and without security (except for Yahweh).³⁷ Yahweh is reminded that he is responsible for such a sojourner and is called to accountability on their behalf, because *'I am a sojourner with you'*.

On both grounds of *ego-assertion* and *public justice*, Ps. 39 causes a change in heaven with a derivative resolution of social systems on earth. This Psalm characteristically brings to speech the cry of a troubled earth (v. 12). Where the cry is not voiced, heaven is not moved and history is not initiated. And then the end is hopelessness. Where the cry is seriously voiced, heaven may answer and earth may have a new chance. The new resolve in heaven and the new possibility on earth depend on the initiation of protest.

VI

It makes one wonder about the price of our civility, that this chance in our faith has largely been lost because the lament Psalms have

dropped out of the functioning canon. In that loss we may unwittingly endorse false self that can take no initiative toward an omnipotent God. We may also unwittingly endorse unjust systems about which no questions can properly be raised. In the absence of lament, we may be engaged in uncritical history-stifling praise. Both *psychological inauthenticity* and *social immobility* may be derived from the loss of these texts. If we care about authenticity and justice, the recovery of these texts is urgent.

NOTES

1. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), and also *The Psalms, Structure, Content and Message* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980).

2. On the contributions of Hermann Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel, see A.R. Johnson, 'The Psalms', *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. by H.H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 162-209; John H. Hayes, *An Introduction to Old Testament Study* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), pp. 285-317; and Ronald E. Clements, *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 76-98.

3. *Praise and Lament*, pp. 33, 75, and *passim*.

4. How that intervention of God happened is unclear. The most formidable hypothesis is that of Hans Joachim Begrich, 'Das Priesterliche Tora', *ZAW* 66 (1936), pp. 81-92, reprinted in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (ThB 21; München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), pp. 217-310. Begrich proposed that a priestly oracle of salvation was spoken in the midst of the lament which moved the speech from plea to praise. On Begrich's contribution, see Thomas M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

5. Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, pp. 27-30.

6. Harvey H. Guthrie, *Theology as Thanksgiving* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), pp. 1-30, in my judgment, has a better understanding of thanksgiving as a vital form of response to God.

7. Guthrie, *ibid.*, pp. 18-19, shrewdly correlates form-critical insights with sociological realities. Guthrie, in contrast to Westermann, regards thanksgiving as a more primal mode of faith than is praise. I am inclined to agree.

8. More recently form-critical scholarship has moved away from a rigid and one-dimensional notion of *Sitz im Leben* to a much more comprehensive and dynamic notion which would be, I suspect, more congenial to Westermann. On this development, see Rolf Knierim, 'Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered', *Interpretation* 27 (1973), pp. 435-68; and Martin J. Buss, 'The Idea of *Sitz im Leben*—History and Critique', *ZAW* (1978), pp. 157-70.

9. The relinquishment here accomplished is liturgical, rhetorical, and emotional, but I think it is important to correlate that form of relinquishment to the economic relinquishment urged by Marie Augusta Neale, *A Socio-Theology of Letting Go* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975). I believe the two forms of relinquishment are intimately related to each other. It follows then that the loss of lament as a mode of letting go makes the possibility of economic relinquishment more problematic and sure to be met with resistance.

10. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien II, Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*; Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967). Various critiques are summarized in the presentations of Hayes and Clements.

11. H. Schmidt, *Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament* (BZAW 49; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1928); L. Delekat, *Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); W. Beyerlin, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht* (FRLANT², 99; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1970).

12. On the reality of social practice related to this Psalm, see my paper, 'Psalm 109: Three Times "Steadfast Love"', *Word and World* 5²(1985), pp. 28-46.

13. Mowinckel's view was articulated in *Psalmstudien*. It is summarized in *The Psalms in Israel's Worship, II* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 4-8.

14. Rainer Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion* (Calwer Theologische Monographien, 9; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1978).

15. Erhard Gerstenberger, *Der bittende Mensch* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980).

16. For this understanding of the social power of speech forms, see P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966). For this understanding applied specifically to the lament Psalms, see W. Brueggemann, 'The Formfulness of Grief', *Interpretation* 31 (1977), pp. 273-75.

17. A convenient summary of the theory is offered by Charles V. Gerkin, *The Living Human Document* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), pp. 82-96. I am grateful to Gerkin for suggesting some lines of my present research. Literature on the theory includes: Otto Kernberg, *Object Relations Theory and Clinical Psychoanalysis* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1976); *Internal World and External Reality* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1981); *Object Relation Theory and its Applications* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1981); Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971); D.W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Hogarth, 1965); and Harry Guntrip, *Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy and the Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

18. Winnicott, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

19. *Ibid.*

20. J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Library of Christian Classics, XX; ed. by John T. McNeill, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), pp. 35-39, understands so shrewdly how the knowledge of God and the human creatures are interrelated. On Calvin's attempt to assert the utter sovereignty of God and God's propensity for relatedness, see Ford Lewis Battles, 'God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity', *Interpretation* (1977), pp. 19-38.

21. On the social dimensions of the problem of evil and theodicy, see Peter Berger, Robert Merton, and especially Jon Gunnemann, *The Moral Meaning of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

22. On the relation of God and justice, *theos* and *dikē*, in the Old Testament understanding of theodicy, see Brueggemann, 'Theodicy in a Social Dimension', *JSTOT* 33 (1985), pp. 3-25, and *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), pp. 168-76.

23. Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

24. On such boldness in biblical prayer, see Moshe Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 11-14 and *passim*.

25. On the daring attempt to make an appeal other than to God, see Job 19.25. Samuel Terrien, *Job: Poet of Existence* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), p. 151, expounds such a reading of the text. This adventuresome thought is beyond the characteristic notion in the Old Testament that appeal can only be made once again to the same God. It is remarkable that Israel's rage against God did not drive Israel away from God to atheism or idolatry, but more passionately into prayer addressed to God.

26. On the cruciality of this cry for the shape of Israel's faith, see James Plastara, *The God of Exodus* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 49-59.

27. Paul D. Hanson, 'The Theological Significance of Contradiction within the Book of Covenant', *Canon and Authority*, ed. by George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 110-31. On the dialectic of compassion in response to human need, see now Hanson, 'War and Peace in the Hebrew Bible', *Interpretation* 38 (1984), pp. 341-79.

28. This emphasis on social evil is a departure from the otherwise splendid statement of James L. Crenshaw, *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), pp. 1-16. Crenshaw characterizes the issue only with reference to 'moral, natural and religious' evil. I believe such a characterization is inadequate because of the great stress in the Old Testament on social justice and injustice.

29. Fascination with 'meaning' was especially advanced by Paul Tillich, *Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 41-42 and *passim*. In retrospect, Tillich's triad of death, guilt, and meaningfulness, as it applies to the modern period, is uncritically idealist. A more materialist

sense of social reality could not settle so readily for the category of 'meaning' as the modern agenda.

30. On the function of civility as a mode of social control, see John M. Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility* (New York: Basic Books, 1974) and Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility* (New York: Panthom Books, 1982).

31. Winnicott, *op. cit.*, characteristically speaks of the 'good-enough' mother. He does not present a model of a perfect mother, but one who intuitively responds to the initiatives of the child. Winnicott observes that mothers characteristically operate in this way.

32. A variety of writers have now identified pathos as the mark of God which reshapes God's omnipotence. See Abraham Heschel, Dorothy Sölle, Kamo Kitamori, Jürgen Moltmann. In two recent articles I have suggested that the tension between God's omnipotence and God's pathos may be the shaping problem for doing Old Testament theology. See Brueggemann, 'A Shape for Old Testament Theology, I: Structure Legitimation', *CBQ* 47 (1985), pp. 28-46, and 'A Shape for Old Testament Theology, II: Embrace of Pain', *CBQ* 47 (1985), pp. 395-415.

33. On the rhetorical power of the conjunction, see James Muilenburg, 'The Form of Structure of the Covenantal Formulations', *VT* 9 (1959), pp. 74-79.

34. My analysis was completed before I saw the elegant exposition by Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), pp. 67-73. Alter also has seen that the movement of silence and speech is crucial in this Psalm:

On the contrary, the ancient Hebrew literary imagination reverts again and again to a bedrock assumption about the efficacy of speech, cosmogonically demonstrated by the Lord (in Genesis 1) who is emulated by man. In our poem, the speaker's final plea that God hear his cry presupposes the efficacy of speech, the truth-telling power with which language has been used to expose the supplicant's plight . . . The first two lines present a clear development of intensification of the theme of silence—from a resolution not to offend by speech, to muzzling the mouth, to preserving (in a chain of three consecutive synonyms) absolute muteness. The realized focal point of silence produces inward fire, a state of acute distress that compels a reversal of the initial resolution and issues in speech.

35. Erhard Gerstenberger, 'Der klagende Mensch', *Probleme biblischer Theologie*, ed. by Hans Walter Wolff (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), pp. 64-72, has shown how the complaint (in contrast to a lament of resignation) is in fact an act of hope.

36. Jose Miranda, *Communism in the Bible* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981), p. 44, has concluded, 'It can surely be said that the Psalter presents a struggle of the just against the unjust'. His argument is an insistence that *raša'* must not be rendered as a religious category, because it concerns issues of social power and social justice.

37. On the social situation of the sojourner, see Frank Anthony Spina, 'Israelites as *gerim*, "Sojourners", in Social and Historical Context', *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth*, ed. by Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Ill.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 321-35. Not unrelated to that social status, see Spina's more extended study on social rage, 'The Concept of Social Rage in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East' (Unpublished Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1977). This Psalm may be related to social rage around the question of theodicy.

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