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SUFFERING, SOUL CARE, AND COMMUNITY:
THE PLACE OF CORPORATE LAMENT
IN EVANGELICAL WORSHIP

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SUFFERING, SOUL CARE, AND COMMUNITY:
THE PLACE OF CORPORATE LAMENT
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To my Lord Jesus Christ,
“a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”

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PREFACE

The study of suffering in the life of the Christian is immense and all-encompassing. I am indebted to a number of individuals who have planted the seeds of interest and watered the soil in which they have grown. Dr. David Norris encouraged the planting of the initial seed in a research paper on suffering during my seminary study. He and his wife, Nancy, have truly demonstrated Paul's admonition in 2 Corinthians 1:4 to "comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." My deep gratitude is expressed to Dr. James Littles, Jr., my professor, mentor, friend, and colleague, whose voice has never ceased to cheer me on from the sidelines, and whose own suffering and hunger to follow Christ has resulted in the nurture and education of many students; my supervisor at Urshan College, Executive Vice-President Jennie Russell, who graciously provided time and space for the completion of this project; Dr. Joseph Crider, whose ever-gracious spirit and commitment to excellence is evident within these pages; Dr. Eric Johnson, whose Christ-likeness, depth of insight, and boundless compassion has helped many a soul feel his or her worth; Dr. Esther R. Crookshank, a scholar without equal, whose fervency and love for the work of our Lord is unmatched; and to my Lord Jesus Christ, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." May I never cease in my longing to know Him "and the power of his resurrection," and grow in my willingness to "share his sufferings."

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament epistles contain multiple references to the first-century church and to believers throughout history, to rejoice as they remember the saving work of Christ (Rom 5:2–3, 12:12; Phil 3:1, 4:4; 1 Thess 5:16; 1 Pet 1:8). Indeed, believers have always had reason to rejoice as they considered Christ’s triumphal resurrection. However, in his letter to the Philippian church, Paul shared a message which was counter cultural in his day, and remains so in the current culture. In chapter 3, which begins with the simple command to rejoice, Paul calls believers to not only share in the triumph of Christ, but also to “share his sufferings,” all in an effort to know him (Phil 3:10). To know Christ is to know a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” as foretold in Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 53:4).

A follower of Christ desires to share the message of Christ’s triumph, to share the hope of healing, provision, and redemption. Offering the hope of Christ’s salvific work in a world torn by war, violence, drug addiction, and economic decline that touches individuals and families every day is indeed the mission of the church (1 Cor 5:19). However, at times, the efforts of believers to share the hope of Christ seem to leave little if any room for negative emotional expressions in corporate worship, perhaps for fear that they will detract from the saving message of the gospel.

Confusing faith with “positive thinking,” Christians often struggle with the words of the Psalmists and their raw, honest questions directed to Yahweh. For the Psalmists, the clearest demonstration of faith was their appeal to “the years of the right hand of the Most High” (Ps 77:10), in an effort to “remind” Yahweh of his covenant promise to his people. The dialogical nature of Israel’s relationship with Yahweh resulted

in this kind of open, honest, and at times strikingly harsh speech. However, the Psalmists relied on the relationship with Yahweh established generations before them, and expressed their complaints, fully trusting that they would be received and that Yahweh would act based on historical precedent. Indeed, the loss of Yahweh's presence and his faithful provision left the Psalmists sick, dejected, depressed, and in distress. David and the other Psalmists seemed clearly convinced that these honest expressions of their struggles held the same value in worship to Yahweh as their prayers in the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving.

Thesis

If worship of the one God is to be transformative for the worshipper, as both Old and New Testaments affirm (Isa 6:1-9; Rom 12:9-21), then worship must begin from a place of honesty. It seems to follow from this that the corporate worship service must be sensitively crafted to provide soul care for those who weep as well as those who rejoice.

This study addresses the need for balanced soul care in evangelical worship with specific attention to the Psalms and other biblical models for lament, in the context of two overarching questions: (1) how do believers worship faithfully while holding in tension eschatological hope and clear and present suffering? and (2) how can the liturgy serve as a means of balanced soul care for all congregants, whatever the emotional state of each worshipper?

Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Liturgy. Definitions and usages of *liturgy* found in the current worship literature cover a broad spectrum that are detailed later in this chapter. The working definition for the purposes of this dissertation is the regularly recurring gospel-shaped encounter between God and his people within the corporate church gathering in which he speaks to his people and they respond out of a desire to bring him glory, thereby confirming their identity as

his people and edifying one another through the shared experience of singing, praying, and receiving the proclaimed Word together.

Soul care. Betsy Barber and Christopher Baker define *soul care* as “the nourishment, healing, and flourishing of the whole person, with an emphasis on that person as a participant in the Body of Christ.”¹

Spiritual formation. According to Diane Chandler, spiritual formation is the “process of being formed into the image of Jesus through relationship with him.”² The definition developed by James C. Wilhoit adds the critical aspect of Christian community: “Christian spiritual formation refers to the intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.”³

Discussions of Lament in Worship Literature, ca. 1980-2016

Worship resources published during approximately the past thirty years have come from multiple disciplines, including biblical and practical theology, and sources on worship and the arts. While the subject of worship has been addressed for decades in books on music ministry, beginning with Donald Hustad’s *Jubilate: Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition*,⁴ authors such as theologian Marva Dawn, in her book *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time*, began a

¹Betsy Barber and Christopher J. Baker, “Soul Care and Spiritual Formation: An Old Call in Need of New Voices,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (September 2014): 270.

²Diane Chandler et al., “Spiritual Formation in the Church,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (September 2014): 294.

³James C. Wilhoit et al., “Spiritual Formation in the Church,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (September 2014): 294.

⁴Donald Hustad, *Jubilate: Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1981).

practical examination of worship through a biblical lens.⁵ Dawn's text, among others, opened the door to a new wave of worship publications that examined not only the task of music, but the whole life of the believer as an act of worship. David Peterson's *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* examined worship employing biblical languages and exegetical study to more accurately and holistically define worship as an act of engaging God on his terms and in the way he prescribed in Scripture.⁶

Although this trend in worship studies continued with authors examining worship from biblical, theological, and artistic viewpoints, only within the last decade have authors begun to focus on corporate lament. The events of 9/11, as well as ongoing wars and issues of oppression and persecution throughout the world, have prompted Christian scholars to consider lament anew, given the worldwide cry of suffering. Following is a chronological examination of worship resources during the past approximately thirty years for references to lament practices within the corporate church service. This chronological format demonstrates the increase in worship resources, particularly within the last decade, that focus on corporate lament practices. Resources (both scholarly and practical or ministry-oriented) may be categorized as follows: (1) biblical and theological studies, (2) practical theology, (3) psychology and soul care, (4) liturgical resources for lament, and (5) corporate worship and the use of the arts.

Biblical and Theological Studies

Preeminent Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann published *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, a seminal contribution to the examination of how the Psalms serve as templates and guides for modern worship. In this text,

⁵Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

⁶David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992).

Brueggemann presents what he believes is a cycle of orientation-disorientation-reorientation, found within the Psalms.⁷ In the preface, Brueggemann states that the goal of his book is a “postcritical” analysis of the Psalms, i.e., one which works to show how they can function as “voices of faith in the actual life of the believing community,” and takes into account “the interface between the flow of the Psalms and the dynamics of our common life.”⁸ Brueggemann’s numerous foundational publications on the Psalms, particularly the lament Psalms, have prompted scholars across academic fields to consider them anew and how they might inform corporate worship practices.⁹

Drawing insight from Walter Brueggemann’s work on the biblical laments, in *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirthing of Hope*, Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore draw on the Old Testament figure Rachel and the New Testament figure Mary to illustrate the inseparable connection between sorrow and hope in Scripture.¹⁰ Billman and Migliore examine lament in the biblical tradition, tracing it forward to its place in Christian traditions as well as in pastoral theology. This important chronological examination of the trajectory of lament in corporate worship concludes with examples of lament prayers in corporate worship and pastoral care. Although the study focuses exclusively on prayer, its implications for lament in musical worship are important given that the two mutually inform and support one another.

⁷Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

⁸Ibid., 10.

⁹See also Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2002); Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); Brueggemann, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014); Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹⁰Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore, *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 1-4.

Brueggemann's colleague, Kathleen M. O'Connor, in her 2002 commentary *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, connects the highly communal nature of the book of Lamentations to issues of social justice and poverty.¹¹ According to O'Connor, the poetry in this short Old Testament book calls the reader to "bear witness to pain," and "live as compassionate witnesses to suffering," both personally and corporately, within the four walls of churches and across the globe.¹² O'Connor emphasizes the ability of Lamentations to inform corporate worship uniquely in that it reminds believers of the suffering of people groups crippled by war and other national atrocities, calling them to lament before God for persecuted brothers and sisters worldwide.¹³

Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation by Allen Ross is a comprehensive biblical theology of worship covering the entire witness of Scripture. Ross dedicates a full chapter to the use of Psalms in the worship life of Israel, and gives detailed implications for modern worship. In it, Ross devotes a small section to the expression of lament due to illness, being attacked by one's enemies, or for penitence.¹⁴ Later, Ross states that in order for worship to be effective, it must be life-changing. Part of this change is a call to good works, including attending to issues of social justice, both at home and abroad. Ross draws together the act of corporate worship with the being and doing of Christ's work in the world.¹⁵

The late twentieth century brought an increase in the number of biblical and theological publications which focus entirely, or at least to a great extent, on the use of

¹¹Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

¹²*Ibid.*, 6.

¹³*Ibid.* 13.

¹⁴Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 254-65.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 508-9.

lament in the corporate practice of Israel, with specific implications for modern worship. Scott Ellington's *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* explores lament practices, both corporate and individual, in Job, Psalms, Lamentations, Jeremiah, and in the life of Christ. Built on Brueggemann's work, Ellington's book examines lament specifically as "risk," in that the praying of such prayers rejects "standing answers" that assume the experience of suffering is deserved, or that God is incapable of bringing resolution.¹⁶ Critical to his study is the connection drawn between Old Testament lament prayers and practices, and the principle of believers sharing in the suffering of Christ. Ellington's examination of various theologies of lament, based in the New Testament, works both to delineate and show similarities in these views.

Three important works focusing on lament in the Psalms were published in 2012 and 2013: Glen Pemberton's *Hurting with God: Learning to Lament with the Psalms*, C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste's *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Lament*, and Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard's *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*.¹⁷ Pemberton's book builds on the work of Brueggemann, with the two-fold goal of (1) making the case for the restoration of lament language in private devotion and corporate service, and (2) teaching believers how to lament by examining the range of laments from penitence to imprecation.¹⁸ Pemberton's book is important in that it avoids overly academic language in an effort to be accessible to the lay reader. Pemberton includes an important chapter-length discussion of the

¹⁶Scott Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson, Charles M. Collier, and D. Christopher Spinks (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), xi-xiii.

¹⁷Ben Pemberton, *Hurting with God: Learning to Lament with the Psalms* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012); C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste, eds., *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship* (Nashville: B & H, 2012); Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard, Jr., eds., *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul* (Chicago: Moody, 2013).

¹⁸Pemberton, *Hurting with God*, 12.

perceived ethical differences between cries of imprecation in the Old Testament and cries of suffering found in the New Testament.¹⁹ Pemberton believes one important application of the imprecatory Psalms is to call Western believers from the comfort and isolation of the Christian community to join in solidarity with persecuted believers worldwide.²⁰

Wells and Van Neste's *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship* examines the Psalms both historically and practically. Similar to Ellington's work on the shape of lament in the New Testament, Van Neste thoroughly examines the use of Psalms, particularly in the communal life of Jesus and his apostles in his chapter, "Ancient Songs and Apostolic Preaching: How the New Testament Laid Claim to the Psalms."²¹ Calvin Seerveld also contributes an important chapter, "Why We Need to Learn to Cry in Church: Reclaiming the Psalms of Lament."²² Seerveld argues that the first response of the corporate church to tragedy and suffering should be to cry out together, to pray the Psalms, as opposed to gossiping about the perpetrator or complaining.²³ This initial response of prayer encourages the use of the Psalms in the daily prayer life of the believer so that their language and metaphors become intrinsic and can be called upon in times of unexpected tragedy.²⁴ Unique to this chapter is Seerveld's connection of lament Psalms (including the imprecatory Psalms) to visual art, including paintings, etchings,

¹⁹Pemberton, *Hurting with God*, 117-32.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 131.

²¹Ray Van Neste, "Ancient Songs and Apostolic Preaching: How the New Testament Laid Claim to the Psalms," in *Forgotten Songs*, 35-50.

²²Calvin Seerveld, "Why We Need to Learn to Cry in Church: Reclaiming the Psalms of Lament," in *Forgotten Songs*, 139-58.

²³*Ibid.*, 144.

²⁴N. T. Wright offers an important study on the essential nature of the Psalms in the daily prayer life of the Christian. Wright also emphasizes the need to pray the Psalms consistently, including the laments, until they become inherent in one's prayers, giving expression where words would otherwise fail. N. T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms: Why They Are Essential* (New York: Harper One, 2013), 1-12.

and sculptures in various artist depictions of lament. The chapter concludes with versifications of lament Psalms by the author.

In *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, Schmutzer and Howard draw upon the expertise of eighteen Old Testament scholars, including Tremper Longman III, Bruce K. Waltke, Walter Kaiser, Allen Ross, and C. Hassell Bullock. With this breadth of expertise, the book contributes uniquely to the field by examining various theological, literary, and canonical themes found in the Psalms. The largest section of the book focuses on the study of the lament Psalms, with essays on (1) the penitential Psalms, comparisons between the lament Psalms and expressions of suffering in the book of Lamentations (with focus on communal laments); (2) the notable shifts in mood often found within a single Psalm; and (3) Psalms that question God's action, inaction, or perceived hiddenness, which, according to contributor Allen Ross, is "an even greater difficulty than the problem itself."²⁵ The final section of the book contains select sermon transcripts, including an important exegetical sermon on Psalm 88 by David M. Howard, Jr.

Two essays in *Spiritual Complaint: The Theology and Practice of Lament*, edited by Miriam J. Bier and Tim Bulkeley, address the subject of corporate lament practices, drawing insight from the biblical book of Lamentations. Robin A. Parry, in her essay, "Wrestling with Lamentations in Christian Worship," questions if Paul's command to "weep with those who weep" has been almost exclusively replaced with "unrelenting rejoicing."²⁶ Parry posits that the reading aloud of books such as Lamentations enables the Christian community to be "sensitized to pain, to pay attention to the suffering of

²⁵Allen P. Ross, "The 'Thou' Sections of Laments: The Bold and Earnest Prayers of the Psalms," in *The Psalms*, 135.

²⁶Robin A. Parry, "Wrestling with Lamentations in Christian Worship," in *Spiritual Complaint: The Theology and Practice of Lament*, ed. Miriam J. Bier and Tim Bulkeley (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 148.

others, to eschew the option to walk by on the other side.”²⁷ Citing the work of Stanley Hauerwas, Parry brings attention to the necessity of “learning by doing,” as opposed to the simple impartation of information, if spiritual formation is to occur in corporate worship.²⁸ The need for the musical canon to give place to myriad expressions of emotion for the community should be a principal goal of Christian worship, a model clearly found in the Psalms. Parry notes the imbalance in articulation of emotions that tip toward rejoicing, leaving little space for the authentic, and often complex, expressions of suffering.²⁹

The connection made here is critical: the communal nature of key biblical laments, when shared in corporate worship, can give language to emotions that are otherwise difficult to articulate. Parry notes that such expressions are inherently missional in that they call believers to empathetically join in expressing and caring for the pain of fellow-believers worldwide. Considering this missional element, one can more holistically respond to Jesus’ call in Mark 16:15 to “go into all the world and proclaim the gospel.”

Another essay, “Liturgy and Lament” by Anglican liturgist Colin Buchanan, was the paper he had given in Auckland, New Zealand, in February 2011, shortly after the Christchurch earthquake that same year. Buchanan’s essay discusses what he calls the “purpose-made liturgy,” i.e., one that addresses acute suffering that affects many members of a congregation or community.³⁰ At the conclusion of his essay are three sample liturgies of lament, two of which were used in church services following public tragedies in Japan and England, respectively. In each of these liturgies Buchanan is careful to model after those of the Psalmists who viewed lament as a forward-looking action taken

²⁷Parry, “Wrestling with Lamentations,” 150.

²⁸Stanley Hauerwas, “How We Lay Bricks and Make Disciples,” in *Living Out Loud: Conversations about Virtue, Ethics, and Evangelicalism*, ed. Luke Bretherton and Russ Rook (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2010), 39.

²⁹Parry, “Wrestling with Lamentations,” 150.

³⁰Colin Buchanan, “Liturgy and Lament,” in *Spiritual Complaint*, 156.

in the context of faith, instead of a mere “wringing of the hands” with no clear ending in sight.³¹

Daniel I. Block’s *For the Glory of God Alone: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* addresses worship across the biblical canon.³² Many of the Psalms are written from the viewpoint of an individual, which leads many to believe they are intended for private devotion. Block asserts, however, that the Psalter was a collection of both individual and communal prayers and hymns meant to be used in corporate worship.³³ Most importantly, for the present discussion, he argues that worshippers should be educated to view lament as an act of worship as much as that of rejoicing, thanksgiving, or praise found in many other Psalms. Block further decries the widespread embrace of the “health-and-wealth gospel” and the desire for a “spiritual high” in much Western evangelical worship, which avoids “negative feelings and expressions of grief.”³⁴

Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Schmutzer’s newly published *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering* frames their entire treatment of lament in the context of the Christian community.³⁵ Echoing Daniel Block, Peterman and Schmutzer deplore the Western church preoccupation with “marketing and image,” and the resulting loss of corporate lament, and discuss the dangers of relegating the work of

³¹Buchanan, “Liturgy and Lament,” 157.

³²Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God Alone: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014).

³³*Ibid.*, 182.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 208. Included in Block’s book is a helpful chart that delineates responses of faith to suffering found throughout the New Testament. The chart is particularly helpful in that it shows different ways in which suffering is perceived, e.g., “justified, warranted, deserved, punishment” or “not justified, unwarranted, undeserved punishment.” Based on the particular perception, the “response of the sufferer,” and the “answer of the sufferer” is given. Biblical examples are included for each. *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁵Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Schmutzer, eds., *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering* (Chicago: Moody, 2016).

soul care to small groups within the church or to private counseling outside the corporate gathering.³⁶ The authors state, “Wounded people among us ‘smell’ a form of pretense that is as programmed and insincere as the canned laughter of sitcoms. They are correct. *Shunned grief is spiritual hypocrisy.*”³⁷ This groundbreaking work develops an extensive biblical typology of suffering from both the Old and New Testaments as a means of equipping leaders in all facets of church ministry to better understand, make sense of, and biblically respond to various kinds of suffering both of individuals and within the corporate body.³⁸ The chapter on practically implementing the language of suffering in corporate worship is particularly valuable for this study.

One recent publication focusing on the use of the lament Psalms in New Testament prayers emphasizes the use of the Psalms as models for corporate and individual prayer. *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus’ Laments in the New Testament* by Rebekah Eklund specifically addresses Jesus’ use of the lament Psalms in his prayer in the Garden, at the tomb of Lazarus, weeping over Jerusalem, and the cry of dereliction from the cross.³⁹ Eklund’s study offers important applications for corporate musical practices in the conclusion of the book, where she traces the use of the Old Testament patterns of worship and prayer throughout the New Testament.⁴⁰ Especially important for the present study is the fact that the New Testament writers viewed lament through the lens of the death and

³⁶Peterman and Schmutzer, *Between Pain and Grace*, 28.

³⁷Andrew J. Schmutzer, “Longing to Lament: Returning to the Language of Suffering,” in *Between Pain and Grace*, 105, emphasis original.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 24-26, 29-33.

³⁹Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus’ Laments in the New Testament* (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 170.

resurrection of Christ, which did not end lament, but “provides the grounds” for its continuation.⁴¹ This point is critical for corporate musical worship practices.

Many of the sources discussed above share a common theme—a call to believers to reconsider how expressions of lament can be a part of the worship life of the Christian and the gathered church. As has been demonstrated, expressions of lament in corporate worship have only become part of the scholarly discussion largely within the last decade. Biblical and theological scholars have opened the conversation about corporate lament and have called leadership and laity to consider anew their place in the community of believers. The careful examination of Old Testament lament throughout the Psalms and Lamentations has laid the groundwork for future resources on practical ministry application which will be sorely needed if such practices are to be implemented beyond acts of confession. While most of the authors mentioned have clearly demonstrated the biblical precedent for corporate lament, few beyond Buchanan and Peterman and Schmutzer have given usable examples of liturgies. A clear gap in worship scholarship as well as in currently available ministry resources is in the area of music and its role in soul care practices and corporate expression of lament.

Practical Theology

Bob Rognlien, in his book *Experiential Worship: Encountering God with Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength*, includes a chapter examining the expression of so-called negative emotions in worship.⁴² Warning against emotional manipulation, Rognlien calls for authentic expressions during corporate worship, going so far as to ask, “When was the last time you allowed people a constructive opportunity to express God-given anger in

⁴¹Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 170.

⁴²Bob Rognlien, *Experiential Worship: Encountering God with Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), 119-24.

worship?”⁴³ Rognlien concludes that the inability to control specific emotions in corporate worship has led believers to ultimately exclude them. Rognlien believes the result of such emotional repression has resulted in “counterfeit emotionalism” and “inauthentic expressions.”⁴⁴ Rognlien has addressed an important gap in corporate worship, namely the expression of a broader range of emotions. What is missing, however, are methods by which to do so. As addressed in the previous section, Glenn Pemberton’s work with the imprecatory Psalms could be a point of departure and give language to such difficult expressions as anger within the corporate worship setting.

In a brief passage in *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God*, David Ford and Daniel Hardy address the need for solidarity in suffering.⁴⁵ The authors note the principle difficulty is the need for fellow believers to empathetically bear the suffering, lamenting alongside the sufferer.⁴⁶ Although Ford and Hardy do not directly apply this point to corporate worship practices, parallels can be drawn between the solidarity they call for and Rognlien’s thoughts on space for emotional expression in worship. Clearly, this area requires further study and steps for practical implementation.

The theme of solidarity in suffering is continued in Mark Labberton’s *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God’s Call to Justice*. Labberton believes authentic individual and corporate worship is fraught with “dangers” due to its call for a “realignment of power” and the involvement of believers in areas of social justice, both locally and worldwide.⁴⁷ Although he does not refer specifically to the imprecatory Psalms, their

⁴³Rognlien, *Experiential Worship*, 121.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵David Ford and Daniel Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 123.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God’s Call to Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 109.

spirit is implied in Labberton's idea that corporate worship responds to injustice can bring the accompanying emotions of anger and frustration to God who alone has the power to judge and execute vengeance.⁴⁸ Of particular relevance to this study on corporate lament practices is Labberton's premise that all of the individual elements of the liturgy (including the call to worship, prayers of adoration and confession, baptism and the Lord's Supper, musical worship, offering, the reading and preaching of Scripture, and the benediction) "[lead] us to recognize and redefine false power, and commission us in the kind of gospel power that equips us for our mission of seeking justice."⁴⁹

The need for the corporate body of Christ to weep for the brokenness of the world is addressed in *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* by John Swinton.⁵⁰ Swinton includes an important chapter on the nature of Christian suffering and the dangers of faith that shuns expressions of sorrow, rage, and protest.⁵¹ Swinton believes that attempts to "defend God" have resulted in the exclusion of entire dimensions of the human experience from God, as well as the inability to weep over

⁴⁸Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship*, 109. On the subject of imprecation, Labberton comments, "There are many reasons that worship and justice are inextricable, but the central one is the reality Jesus is Lord (Rom 10:9, I Cor 12:3). When we look at it this way, Christian worship—corporate and individual—can and should be one of the most profound and relevant responses to power abuse in the world." Ibid., 110. This responsive act is also one of opposition in that it not only calls out the injustice, but opposes it, placing the power in its rightful place. On speech as opposition, Brueggemann states, "Our feelings brought to speech are not as dangerous or as important as we imagined, as we wished, or as we feared. When they are unspoken, they loom too large and we are condemned by them. When spoken, our intense thoughts and feelings are brought into a context in which they can be discerned differently." Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 1984), 69.

⁴⁹Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship*, 114. The musical portion of the liturgy, according to Labberton, is particularly relevant as music has the ability to touch myriad emotions. It allows the "objective (people suffer)" to become "subjective (we suffer)" through the use of repeated lyrics. This calls for worship leaders to carefully choose songs accessible to the entire congregation. Ibid.

⁵⁰John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁵¹Ibid., 90-129.

sorrow in the world at large.⁵² This inability to weep has resulted from the exclusion of lament, an exclusion Swinton believes stems from an aversion to genuine community.⁵³ Using the example of the bombing in Ireland on Saturday, August 15, 1998, by the “Real IRA,” Swinton opens the chapter recalling the complete lack of response in the church service he attended the following day, a service in which “happy songs” of praise and thanksgiving disabled the people from expressing sorrow and lamenting the deaths and serious injuries perpetrated in their own community. Swinton suggests that corporate lament practices should start in small groups in which pain and hurt can be “heard into speech” in a safe environment of fellow believers.⁵⁴ This suggestion has merit as long as the message of solidarity is not somehow broken within the corporate gathering. Given Paul’s command in Romans 12:9 to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep,” one must conclude that if believers rejoice as a unified body, then the practice of lament must also be done in the unity of all believers.

Mike Cospers also addresses the place of lament in the liturgy in his book *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel*. Cospers specifically addresses the need for times of corporate lament over suffering that are separate from confession of sin.⁵⁵ Just as worshippers collectively use the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving as models for prayer, the lament Psalms should be collectively used to express dismay, sorrow, and frustration over unanswered questions or unexplained suffering. Key to Cospers’ argument is the counter-cultural reminder to believers that

⁵²Swinton, *Raging with Compassion*, 115.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁵Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 131.

“suffering is purposeful and that we have a God who is present in our suffering.”⁵⁶ This message must be presented consistently, and space for lament allowed regularly in order for worshippers to have the tools and language with which to process suffering, both individually or corporately. In this sense, through use of Psalmic and other laments, the liturgy becomes a type of language school for equipping believers to “sing in the desert,” while they live out the saving message of the gospel.⁵⁷ Cospers takes his discussion on lament in the liturgy one step further than Labberton in that he adds practical suggestions for its implementation: praying through a psalm of lament each Sunday, acknowledging and lamenting with the childless on Mother’s Day, giving space for silence and reflection, and being diligent about including times of lament following significant tragedies.⁵⁸

Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Considerations

Due to increased globalization, issues of soul care must be sensitive to the increasingly multi-ethnic nature of many congregations.⁵⁹ Cathy Black’s *Worship across Cultures: A Handbook* surveys the major distinct cultures worshipping in American churches and serves as a guide for common ministerial obstacles faced by clergy.⁶⁰ Black’s handbook, which references over twenty cultures represented in the American Evangelical context, supports the need for attention to soul care practices that embrace a

⁵⁶Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 132.

⁵⁷Ibid., 134. On using the Psalms as a language school, see Wright, *The Case for the Psalms*, 13-36. Wright, who has read and prayed through the Psalms daily for many years, states, “Part of my reflection in this book is that when the Psalms do their work in us and through us, they should equip us the better to live by and promote that alternative [biblical] worldview.” Wright, *The Case for the Psalms*, 19.

⁵⁸Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 135.

⁵⁹Curtiss Paul DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

⁶⁰Kathy Black, *Worship across Cultures: A Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 3.

sharing of faith within a congregation that respects ethnic and cultural differences. In Todd E. Johnson's *The Conviction of Things Not Seen: Worship and Ministry in the 21st Century*, Kathy Black contributes a chapter which underscores the fact that embracing multiple cultures includes the need to welcome multiple expressions of worship, and the willingness to "sing the song that most deeply touches the other's heart and even to sing it in the language that speaks to the depths of his or her soul."⁶¹

Charles E. Farhadian investigates the dynamic between worship and culture in *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices*.⁶² The soul care needs of the multicultural and multi-ethnic congregation, although challenging, can bring greater awareness of social justice needs as they are shared in corporate worship. The primary difficulty for a congregation in caring for those of other cultures or ethnicities is where to start. Contributor C. Michael Hawn, in his chapter on global prayer, points to commonalities such as sharing in the Eucharist.⁶³ Hawn believes that "at the table, all are equal," and therefore, "this ritual may nourish those gathered even though bruised, disenchanted, oppressed, despairing, and even hopeless."⁶⁴ Hawn's work on embracing common languages found in certain rituals, and Black's call to embrace the "cacophony of practices" found in the multicultural and multi-ethnic church, present a necessary tension that requires further study.⁶⁵

⁶¹Kathy Black, "Promises and Problems of a Multiethnic Church," in *The Conviction of Things Not Seen: Worship and Ministry in the 21st Century*, ed. Todd E. Johnson (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002), 145.

⁶²Charles E. Farhadian, ed., *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁶³C. Michael Hawn, "Praying Globally: Pitfalls and Possibilities of Cross-cultural Liturgical Appropriation," in *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 212.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Black, "Promises and Problems of a Multiethnic Church," 145.

Multicultural and multi-ethnic worship practices are not merely the combining of musical or artistic styles with the goal of satisfying particular tastes. A central goal is solidarity and the valuing of all cultures and ethnicities as they seek to glorify God. In *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*, Sandra Maria Van Opstal examines this solidarity through the lens of reconciliation, tasking corporate worship with not only drawing people to God, but also to one another.⁶⁶ Such practices not only enable worshippers to appreciate diversity in worship practices, but also more easily enable corporate lament practices.

As demonstrated in the sources reviewed, attention to soul care in multicultural and multi-ethnic contexts is often limited to issues of social justice and persecution. Scriptures such as Isaiah 1:16-17 clearly call Christian believers to “cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” The increasingly diverse and globalized world requires Christian believers to go beyond issues of social justice, embracing one another as the body of Christ, caring for one another enough to learn to understand the heart language of fellow worshippers. Van Opstal addresses this topic the clearest, although specific attention to liturgy is missing from her book. Much more integration needs to take place between the approach to liturgy presented by Cosper and Labberton and Van Opstal’s work on the call to reconciliation within the local church as a whole.

Psychology and Soul Care

In *So Much More: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality*, Debra Rienstra states, “Church is about shaping the soul so that we might bear the presence of God.”⁶⁷ Scripture

⁶⁶Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 60. Van Opstal further delineates the work of reconciliation into three sub-categories: (1) hospitality (“We welcome you.”), (2) solidarity (“We stand with you”), and (3) mutuality (“We need you”). Ibid., 74. Focus on these three elements continues Christ’s work of reconciliation, referenced in 2 Cor 5:18-20.

⁶⁷Debra Rienstra, *So Much More: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality* (San

clearly supports the transformative nature of worship, such as in Romans 12:1-2 where Paul calls believers to “present your bodies a living sacrifice” through the “renewal of your mind,” and in Isaiah 6:1-8, which found the prophet Isaiah crying out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips.” Scholars from the fields of worship studies and pastoral care cite the ways in which liturgical practices shape and care for the soul and form worshipers spiritually. Psychologist David Benner, while writing primarily about one-on-one friendships, believes the current therapeutic culture has separated the psychological from the spiritual.⁶⁸ This separation is not only witnessed individually, but also in the corporate gathering where one’s spiritual needs, or the “saving of souls,” becomes the primary focus, with far less attention given to immediate needs in times of suffering.

The concept of “shaping of the soul” referenced by Rienstra finds common ground in the soil of soul care. Among others, John Witvliet believes that “*everything* we do in church shapes how participants imagine God and God’s ways with us.”⁶⁹ The implications here are broad, connecting not only aspects of spiritual formation, but also those of soul care. Evan B. Howard notes the two-fold need of the individual for spiritual formation (specific means for fostering of spiritual growth) and soul care (nourishing another’s connection to God in times of rejoicing or weeping).⁷⁰ The implications are

Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2005), 162.

⁶⁸David Benner, *Spiritual Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 19.

⁶⁹John Witvliet, “The Cumulative Power of Transformation in Public Worship: Cultivating Gratitude and Expectance for the Holy Spirit’s Work,” in *Worship That Changes Lives: Multidisciplinary and Congregational Perspectives on Spiritual Transformation*, ed. Alexis D. Abernethy (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 44, emphasis original.

⁷⁰Evan B. Howard, “Advancing the Discussion: Reflections on the Study of Christian Spiritual Life,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 1, no. 1 (2008): 13.

clear: if worship is to be transformative, and if the saving message of the gospel is to have its affect, then the focus of the corporate service must be holistic.

In *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*, Eric Johnson identifies explicit biblical teachings on soul care, including the “inter-human dimension.”⁷¹ The distinctly communal nature of Scripture itself gives support for the transformative work of corporate worship in addressing soul care needs. On the scriptural admonitions to the corporate church to provide soul care, Johnson states,

Implementing such admonitions and encouragements leads to the creation of communities with high and holy standards that simultaneously provide loving, patient and accepting environments. Communities such as these can best help their members mature into the kind of Christian personhood that is increasingly able to engage in self-examination, take responsibility for one’s actions and behave in ways that promote the welfare of others.⁷²

Key to his argument is the reciprocal nature of this process. As Johnson notes, supporting fellow believers in Christian maturity leads other believers to do the same, perpetuating the cycle.⁷³ As corporate worship transforms believers, they in turn engage in the work of the liturgy, aiding others in healing and transformation.

Corporate lament practices also encompass the needs of those with disabilities. In his book *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, Thomas E. Reynolds points to the “labels and categories” often assigned to disabled persons in the church, inhibiting them from full participation.⁷⁴ Key to Reynolds’ thesis and to this study is that, in singularly focusing on the need for healing in disabled persons, their place as image-bearers of God is easily lost. Reynolds argues that, instead of indicating a

⁷¹Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 47.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 24.

“diminishment of the image of God,” disability enables the Christian community to redefine “human wholeness, normalcy, impairment, redemption, and God’s love and power.”⁷⁵ As the liturgy is crafted with a corporate and all-inclusive focus on spiritual formation and soul care, the definition of human wholeness is reconsidered in light of Scripture and the contributions of the body of Christ as a whole.

Serene Jones examines the effects of abuse and violence on worshipers and the worshipping community in *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*. While she does not address the liturgy directly, Jones examines the ways trauma affects and shapes the way believers and non-believers define and receive grace.⁷⁶ The role of the liturgy in care of victims of abuse is unique, as abuse often affects the victim’s view of community.⁷⁷ While issues of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse must be processed in

⁷⁵Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 24. Ruth Duck addresses the need for sensitivity toward special needs worshippers in services of healing. At times, persons with special needs may refuse to attend a healing service, or if they choose to attend, might not receive the healing promised or for which they prayed. Duck admonishes believers not to accuse people of having “too little faith,” or “too much sin,” as this “adds insult to the challenges” already faced by the individual. Instead, she suggests believers follow Jesus’ pattern in Mark 10:46-52, in which he asked the individual about their specific need and what needed to be done. Duck adds that, at times, “friends may best offer heaping portions of respect, listening, and compassionate action in response to the person’s actual desires and needs. A congregation must become sensitized to the voices and concerns of people with disabilities before even contemplating a service of healing, in order to avoid hurtful situations.” Ruth Duck, *Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21st Century* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 236.

⁷⁶Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 11.

⁷⁷In addressing the violence of sexual abuse, Andrew Schmutzer notes that it is “inherently transgressive to the personal, communal, and religious boundaries.” Andrew J. Schmutzer, “Spiritual Formation and Sexual Abuse: Embodiment, Community, and Healing,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*, 2, no. 1 (2009): 71. This requires that healing “must address the spoiling and distortion that now runs throughout these realms.” Ibid., 67. While this study does not deal specifically with issues of sexual abuse, the connection to the communal nature of the liturgy is critical. Schmutzer concludes that healing and spiritual formation for the abused must not only address the theological and personal aspects, but also the social component. Further study is needed as to how the liturgy can help to provide a healthy and safe communal environment for the abused, aiding in spiritual formation while at the same time offering soul care. Providing this safe

the private counseling session, the sensitivity of the worshipping community and of leaders in their crafting of liturgy with compassion is critical. In *Bearing the Unbearable: Trauma, Gospel and Pastoral Care*, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger emphasizes the need for worship leaders to be intentional in creating space in the liturgy and cultivating practices that promote the flourishing of *koinonia*, or community, within the corporate body and between individuals.⁷⁸ One can align Hunsinger's focus on compassion with Phil C. Zylla's idea of "formative vision," which sees compassion as the "defining description of ecclesial communities whose desire is to care for the suffering."⁷⁹ Zylla not only advocates for compassion as part of believers' "formative vision," but also describes it as a "central and abiding depiction of the church's mandate to the world."⁸⁰ Hunsinger and Zylla align with Van Opstal in defining the work of the church as an act of reconciliation that flows out of compassionate vision.

Liturgical Resources for Lament

Using the Psalms as a template for liturgy, Don Saliers, in his book *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine*, discusses how lament works together with praise and thanksgiving, keeping the latter from becoming an empty ritual.⁸¹ According to Saliers, "Christian public prayer finds praise and thanksgiving far less demanding when lamenting

communal environment calls for clearly delineated tasks within the liturgy apart from that of private counselors and trauma care groups.

⁷⁸Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable: Trauma, Gospel, and Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 102-3.

⁷⁹Phil C. Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow: A Pastoral Theology of Suffering* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 176.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 121.

is suppressed.”⁸² Indeed, here Saliers builds on Brueggemann’s assertion that praise is the natural conclusion in the reorientation stage of the cycle of suffering.⁸³ Although the idea of lament in corporate worship is uncomfortable for some worshippers, focusing on elements of lament already present in the liturgy can help give more space for it in the future. Saliers identifies parts of the liturgy such as the Good Friday remembrance of Jesus’ cry to the Father from the cross, or in the breaking of bread and pouring of wine in the Eucharist.⁸⁴ Educating worshippers to understand these portions of the liturgy as lament can lead them to connect their present personal and corporate pain to Christ’s suffering, which in turn can deepen and enrich the times of reorientation in the liturgy and in their personal lives when praise and thanksgiving are offered.

Nancy Duff echoes Saliers in warning of self-deception and insisting on praise in the face of suffering. According to Duff, the believers’ hope is grounded deeply in Scripture and can be an “eschatological challenge to the status quo.”⁸⁵ In agreement with Brueggemann and Ellington, Duff warns that an insistence on hopeful proclamation can “become confused with a self-deceptive refusal to acknowledge things for how they really are.”⁸⁶ Scriptural support for this tension between simultaneous hope on one hand and suffering on the other is found in 1 Peter 1:6: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.” Peter is writing to a group of Christians who are suffering *and* hoping, living within the tension and avoiding the self-deception of denial of their pain.

⁸²Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 121.

⁸³Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 10.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 123-24.

⁸⁵Nancy Duff, “Recovering Lamentation as a Practice in the Church,” in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 4.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

John Witvliet addresses the practical implementation of the Psalms into the liturgy in his book *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources*. Citing the dialogical nature of the Psalms, Witvliet believes the reading of Psalms in corporate worship forms in believers healthy communication habits and brings a “sense of solidarity” with the original writers and users of the Psalms.⁸⁷ Witvliet refers to the balance of praise and lament as an “ebb” and “flow,” noting that the cry for mercy found in Psalm 130 naturally looks to the remembrance of past forgiveness referenced in Psalm 4.⁸⁸ If this pattern of praise and lament is incorporated into the liturgy, it can help believers understand the relational and dialogical nature of the Psalms and of prayer in the life of believers today.

Corporate Worship and the Use of the Arts

The formative nature of corporate worship must be carefully considered when designing the liturgy. The balance of worship expressions found in the Psalms and other biblical texts confirms the need to offer times for myriad emotional expressions, from praise and thanksgiving to lament. Brueggemann likens the work of the liturgy to the forming of a world, and believes the world should be shaped around a balanced understanding of expressions offered by the whole person as worship to God.⁸⁹ Space in the liturgy brings the suffering believer into solidarity with the worshipping community and offers a safe place for asking questions similar to those found in the Psalms.

Besides the reading of Psalms and prayers of lament, the musical portion of the liturgy can facilitate expressions of lament, given the ability of music to easily access the emotions. In essence, according to David Duke, “Sung faith is felt and seems more

⁸⁷John D. Witvliet, *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 27.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁹Brueggemann, *Israel's Praise*, 133.

accessible for the sufferer.”⁹⁰ William Dyrness devotes a chapter of his book, *A Primer on Christian Worship*, to the didactic nature of worship, including the acknowledgement of shared participation in Christ’s glory and in his suffering.⁹¹ In essence, as believers are shaped in Christ’s image within the corporate worship service, they are “shaped into people who know how to lament.”⁹²

Within the last decade, one of the most detailed examinations of Christian worship music is Robert Woods and Brian Walrath’s book, *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*. In the chapter by Wendy J. Porter entitled “Trading My Sorrows: Worshiping God in the Darkness—The Expression of Pain and Suffering in Contemporary Worship Music,” she examines worship songs written and recorded between 1989–2005 for themes of lament and suffering.⁹³ Porter analyzed these songs both musically and lyrically for expressions of mental, emotional, physical, or spiritual suffering.⁹⁴ Porter concludes that only ten of the seventy-seven songs examined

⁹⁰David Nelson Duke, “Giving Voice to Suffering in Worship: A Study in the Theodicies of Hymnody,” *Encounter* 52, no. 3 (1991): 263.

⁹¹William Dyrness, *A Primer on Christian Worship: Where We’ve Been, Where We Are, Where We Can Go* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 82-85.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 131. Dyrness finds agreement with preacher and theologian Timothy Keller, who, in a sermon entitled “Praying Your Tears,” states that becoming a person of faith may lead one to weep *more*, given the “new heart of flesh” promised in Ezek 11:36. As hearts become more vulnerable and touchable through praying lament Psalms and participating in corporate lament, believers grow in grace and can expect to cry as Jesus who was labeled a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). Tim Keller, “Praying Your Tears,” in *Psalms: The Songs of Jesus*, sermon series, recorded February 20-March 19, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/psalms-the-songs-of-jesus>.

⁹³Wendy J. Porter, “Trading My Sorrows: Worshiping God in the Darkness—The Expression of Pain and Suffering in Contemporary Worship Music,” in *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*, ed. Robert Woods and Brian Walrath (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 77.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 77-78.

contained any expressions of lament and suffering.⁹⁵ Porter's conclusion finds agreement with Cospers, Duke, and Dyrness in that "honest worship" that gives place for authentic expressions of lament serves a didactic purpose in that it not only gives space to expressions of sorrow during suffering, but also proactively equips believers for future suffering.⁹⁶

The language of Evangelical corporate worship has largely focused on the use of words, with very limited use of visual art, instrumental music, movement, or other means of artistic expression. Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra examine the verbal nature of worship in their book *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry*. Drawing support from the Psalms, Rienstra and Rienstra focus on the need for authenticity and a variety of emotional expression in the words used in corporate musical worship.⁹⁷ Reinstra and Reinstra give particular attention throughout their book to the need for authenticity in worship expressions, culminating in the seminal chapter entitled, "Something Blue: A Ministry of Lament." By using lament as a ministry, the church can teach and encourage believers to bring personal and global suffering before God instead of denying pain in favor of 'religious fervor.'⁹⁸ The authors believe this can be accomplished through individual and corporate confession, reading of Psalms of lament, and pastoral prayers which also perform a didactic function.

The increased attention in the last decade to the place of lament in evangelical worship demonstrates an increased understanding of the need for authenticity in emotional expression. Lament practices in corporate worship not only give place to individual expression, but also educate and equip believers to be aware of and respond to the cries

⁹⁵Porter, "Trading My Sorrows," 90.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra, *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 108.

⁹⁸Ibid., 223.

of brokenness and suffering in their communities and across the globe, and to continue Christ's work of reconciliation in the world. This dissertation seeks to fill a gap in the research which gives specific attention to the need for regular authentic expressions of lament modeled after the Psalms. Such expressions are needed, not just during times of national or global crisis, but in the weekly corporate worship service, addressing the needs of individuals and the congregation as a whole. The Psalms must serve as both template and teacher if believers are to understand honest and authentic emotional expressions, and value their demonstrations of faith-filled dialogue between God and worshipers. These songs and prayers served both as a reminder of Yahweh's faithfulness in the past and called him to action in the individual and corporate life of Israel; their message continues to be relevant today.

This survey of literature addressing the need for expressions of lament in corporate worship has come from across disciplines and is grounded on the foundation of Scripture. Biblical scholars such as Brueggemann, Ross, and Block have identified clear examples of lament throughout the canon. Scholars of practical theology and psychology have exposed the need for soul care, not only in the private counseling relationship, but amongst believers corporately. Liturgical scholars have demonstrated the need to reopen the Psalter, drawing from its resources and using it as a model for newly composed expressions of lament. Musicians are beginning to connect the powerful ability of their art to educate and facilitate corporate lament, fortifying the vocabulary of believers for use in current and future times of suffering. This call from across disciplines to restore expressions of lament that can help provide soul care for believers is critical in a post-9/11 world where individual and global suffering are a matter of everyday life.

Delimitations

The consistent and widespread focus on worship throughout the biblical text is considered, although this study predominantly focuses on worship models found in Psalms; connections of specific Psalms to the historical and prophetic books are addressed as

needed. In addition to the Psalms, worship in the life of Jesus, and the writings of Paul, Peter, and John in the Revelation are examined.

In the discussion of theologies of suffering, questions of theodicy with respect to divine healing are outside the scope of the study, as is the attempt to arrive at a conclusive definition of wholeness. Also outside the project's scope are what Reynolds labels "assumptions about normalcy that stem from [the] sociocultural environment and that reflect certain interpretations of the Scriptures."⁹⁹ Worship in this dissertation is discussed in the context of vulnerability across the body of Christ, and touches, acknowledges, and validates worshippers across the spectrum of needs. As Reynolds has stated of worship from this perspective, "These responses belie the redemptive nearness of God to human vulnerability and brokenness, a nearness of solidarity that does not undo or fix such brokenness, but . . . paradoxically embraces it."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 28.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 32.

CHAPTER 2

SUFFERING AND LAMENT IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The preceding literature review demonstrates the need for more focused attention on the place of lament in corporate evangelical worship. Biblical scholars and theologians have recognized and devoted time and space to the scriptural precedents for corporate lament practices as first demonstrated in Brueggemann's 1984 article, "The Costly Loss of Lament."¹ Scholars of worship and liturgy have only more recently begun to understand with some consistency its importance, exploring the nature and need to cultivate these practices within the last decade. In order to understand the need for and place of lament in corporate worship, one must first look to precedents and models found in Scripture.

This chapter presents a discussion of the language and theology of lament as found in the Old Testament. Although the primary focus will be on a theology of suffering based on expressions found in the Psalms, focus will also be on Christ's use of the lament Psalms in his prayers. The goal is not to develop a new theology of suffering, but rather to examine these theologies of suffering, using them as models for the contemporary context. In addition, the discussion introduces J. L. Austin's "speech act theory" as it has been applied to the Psalms, resulting in a broadened understanding of the dialogical nature of Israel's worship practices.

Theology and Language of Biblical Lament

The cries of lament across the biblical canon, and particularly in the Old

¹Walter Brueggemann, "The Costly Loss of Lament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36 (October 1986): 57.

Testament, demonstrate the centrality of such language in the prayer life of God's people. Though mostly found in Job, Psalms, Lamentations, and Jeremiah, the cry of the sufferer is heard consistently across the biblical canon, such as in Jacob's cry of fear at the thought of facing his brother, Esau (Gen 32:9-12); Hannah's agonizing plea to bear a child (1 Sam 1); Habakkuk's prayer of protest, with its richly complex issues of theodicy (Hab 2); Jesus' cry of dereliction from the cross (Mark 15:34); and Paul's plea for God to remove the "thorn" in his flesh (2 Cor 12:7-8). These prayers of lament demonstrate the consistency of such expressions across the biblical canon, serving as an example for believers who desire to engage in similar expressions.

The relationship between Israel and YHWH in the Old Testament was dialogical in nature, involving individuals or the community as a whole. Foundational to this relationship is the faithfulness and *hesed*, or "steadfast love," of YHWH, a central part of God's character to which the people of the Old Testament returned and upon which they consistently relied. At the heart of this relationship is the covenant sworn between YHWH and Israel, one in which each party is bound by a loyal commitment (Exod 19, 24). Indeed, as the people broke the covenant, God meted out judgment, punishing the people for their sin (e.g. 2 Kgs 17:7-8; Jer 32:26-33, Ps 78:59-62). Yet even with judgment looming, YHWH *spoke* to his people through the prophets, and continued to hear their repentant cries for deliverance. Israel's prayer, therefore, was contingent upon the state of the covenant. When the covenant was functioning well, dialogue was largely based in praise and thanksgiving; when broken, the offended partner would, in the words of Walter Brueggeman, "attempt to reach across the breach" in order to restore covenantal equilibrium.²

In both the prose and poetic prayers of lament in the Old Testament, the intimacy of the divine covenant relationship is readily found in the forms of address with

²Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 147.

which the people called on YHWH. Often overlooked by modern readers, the address typically found at the beginning and again at the conclusion of Old Testament prayers further reinforces the nation's reliance on YHWH's covenant faithfulness, while adding urgency to the petition or complaint.³ Addresses such as "O God" or "O LORD" (e.g., Gen 15:1-6; Exod 5:22-23; Num 14:13-19; Jer 32:16-25) are most commonly found. Cries of "Most high God," or "the Holy One of Israel" are also often found in the lament Psalms, serving as a reminder to either individuals or the community that YHWH's power and might surpass the dire situation and he is able to redeem.

Even more personal than the above addresses are the appeals of "my God" (Ps 22:1), "O LORD my God" (Ps 140:6), or "our God" (2 Chron 14:11). These highly personal forms of address indicate the central element of trust upon which the covenant with YHWH was built.⁴ To appeal to YHWH as "my God" or "our God" gives even greater weight to the closeness of the covenantal relationship.⁵ This claim indicates the depth and breadth of not only the psalmist's relationship with YHWH, but also the relationship with YHWH throughout time, beginning with the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15. The Psalmist likely viewed this address as a means to "motivate" YHWH and remind him of his reputation for trustworthiness among the nations besides Israel.⁶

³Patrick Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 58.

⁴Ibid., 59.

⁵Although not a prayer of lament, Ps 18 is a prime example of the use of the personal "my," as it uses this pronoun thirteen times throughout the course of this single Psalm. Attributed to David, this prayer of thanksgiving celebrates many facets of God's character in the Psalmist's mind: my shield, my rock, my salvation, etc. Miller notes that the person praying sees God as "*pro me*" as he builds on these assertions and divine character traits. Ibid., 60.

⁶Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 148. See for example Ps 79:10 in which the psalmist asks, "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of your servants be known among the nations before our eyes!"

The personal nature of the address is grounded in remembrance of God's soteriological acts, which are reflected in his dialogical relationship with Israel.⁷ God's saving acts found in the Old Testament are foundational to the story of Israel, and are often the result of the cry "out of the depths" from the people, a cry rooted in covenant. Indeed, one cannot engage a theology of the Old Testament without regarding as foundational the saving acts of YHWH in response to the cry of his people. This engagement requires that one see lament as a central element, not only in the history of Israel, but also in an understanding of God as a relational being. Claus Westermann notes that much of Western contemporary theology has been characterized by "objective thinking about God," which is in direct opposition to the Old Testament presentation of a subjective God who is "characterized by dialogical thinking," and not a God who failed to respond to the emotive expressions of his people.⁸

Given the centrality of lament to the relationship between Israel and YHWH in Old Testament theology, one can conclude that expressions of suffering are necessary and even expected by God. Westermann comments,

In both the Old and New Testaments the lament is a very natural part of human life; in the Psalter it is an important and inescapable component of worship and of the language of worship. In the Old Testament there is not a single line which would forbid the lamentation or which would express the idea that lamentation had no place in a healthy and good relationship with God.⁹

Because Israel understood this freedom of emotive expression to YHWH, suffering and its accompanying emotions were understood by men and women of the Old Testament as an offering of worship equal in value to that of praise and thanksgiving.¹⁰ Furthermore,

⁷Claus Westermann, "The Role of Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament," *Interpretation* 28, no. 1 (1974): 22.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 25.

¹⁰Author and pastor Tim Keller comments, "Sociologists and anthropologists have analyzed and compared the various ways that cultures train its members for grief, pain, and loss. And when this comparison is done, it is often noted that our own

the expression and processing of these emotions in the presence of YHWH served a two-fold purpose: (1) an act of trust grounded in the historical covenantal relationship, and (2) the expression of suffering and grief to One who had the power to intervene so that evil would not be accepted as the norm.¹¹

The psalmist's ability to dialogue freely with YHWH across the spectrum of emotions and life experiences was grounded in both his trust in YHWH's faithfulness and its outgrowth, the gift of life itself. Bruggemann and Bellinger note that YHWH's "fidelity" was the foundation upon which the psalmist's relationship with him was built.¹² From the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15 onward, the gift of life given to Israel was embraced as YHWH's promise to his people. If Israel would love and obey his laws, the promises of steadfast love, mercy, grace, righteousness, and justice would be the promised result. Brueggemann and Bellinger comment that this obedience on the part of God's people "is a full existence of trust in and loyalty to a covenant partner, trust and loyalty that are embodied in obedience to instructions but that bespeak an interpersonal, interactive communion, and not simply compliance with a set of rules."¹³

Theology of Suffering in the Psalms

Much of the theology of suffering in the Old Testament can be said to be

contemporary secular, Western culture is one of the weakest, and worst in history at doing so." Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Dutton, 2013), 14. Keller goes on to note that most societies work to provide a "discourse," or means to make sense of suffering. He cites the vastly varied responses to the Newtown, CT, school shootings in December 2012, and how the vastly varied responses to newspaper articles on the massacre demonstrated the lack of emotional tools for processing such tragedy, resulting in the need to turn to other cultures and religions (Hindu, Buddhist, Confucianist, classical Greek, and Christian) for answers. Ibid.

¹¹J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 118.

¹²Walter Brueggemann and William Bellinger, *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 520.

¹³Ibid.

embodied in Psalms of lament, for it is there that many of the most intense and personal expressions of suffering are found. Voiced primarily from the human perspective, unlike divine laments recorded elsewhere in Scripture, the Psalms of lament are pleas for deliverance, healing, and/or forgiveness with a holistic focus that brings the whole person, with all accompanying emotions, before God.¹⁴ What is important to all the various perspectives is the need to bring the suffering to speech. The articulation of grief to Yahweh is a safe place to verbally process the suffering, and avoid the probability of hopelessness that would be brought on by silence or isolation.¹⁵ The psalmists understood that neither “processing (for the hurting) nor understanding (for the empathizing)” could take place until grief had been expressed in speech.¹⁶ The types of laments vary, and include cries of complaint, pleas, confessions of guilt, or acts of protest. Regardless of the type, the unifying factors among these laments are the covenantal relationship and the realization that deliverance can come from YHWH alone.

This sense of safety in articulating suffering is grounded in the covenantal commitment between YHWH and his people, and serves as the foundation upon which

¹⁴Timothy M. Pierce, *Enthroned on Our Praise: An Old Testament Theology of Worship*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 244.

¹⁵Walter Brueggemann, *Hope within History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1988), 88. Brueggemann references Ps 39, in which the Psalmist realizes the cost of guarding and silencing his suffering, and ultimately chooses to speak out. Brueggemann states, “Speech breaks the despair. The speech out of despair moves toward and addresses God, the subject of hope. As silence leads to hopelessness, so speech invites the God of all hope to be present.” Ibid., 39. See also Walter Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 142.

¹⁶Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Schmutzer, “The Grammar of Suffering: Basics of Affliction in Scripture,” in *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering*, ed. Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Schmutzer (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 23. The authors note the need to “read and translate” what they have called the various “grammars” of suffering such as speech, visual art, dance, music, or even silence. For further discussion on the role of music in processing and expressing suffering, see William Dyrness, “Prophecy to these Dry Bones: The Artist’s Role in Healing the Earth,” in *Tikkun Olam: To Mend the World: A Confluence of Theology and the Arts*, ed. Jason Goroncy (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014).

the lament is built. While cries such as “How long, O, Lord?” might appear to carry connotations of mistrust, they are acts of great faith in that they appeal to YHWH’s record of covenant faithfulness, steadfast love, and mercy, and according to John Eaton, are “grounded upon the certainty of the divine-human relationship.”¹⁷ Scott Ellington explores the connection between lament and covenant relationship more closely,

Biblical lament, while it does include tears, pleas, complaints and protests, is something more. It is the experience of loss suffered within the context of *relatedness*. A relationship of trust, intimacy, and love is a necessary precondition for genuine lament. When the biblical writers lament, they do so from within the context of a foundational relationship that binds together the individual with members of the community of faith and that community with their God.¹⁸

Not only were the Psalmists appealing to YHWH based upon his faithfulness in their individual lives, but also in the entire history of Israel. This “appeal” to God’s record of faithfulness is demonstrated in passages such as Psalm 77:9-12:

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion? Then I said, “I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.” I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.

In the words of Samuel Balentine, the biblical laments drew the suffering “into the orbit of YHWH’s concern,” and thus constituted a clear act of trust, serving to strengthen and deepen the covenantal relationship.¹⁹

The covenantal nature of the expressions found in the Psalms brings unique insight into the ways and means of processing emotions in ancient Israel. For the psalmists and other Old Testament figures, it was natural to process and pray all emotions in the presence of YHWH. Tim Keller distinguishes between expressions of suffering in the

¹⁷John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 235.

¹⁸Scott Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 7, emphasis original.

¹⁹Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue*, *Overtures to Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter Brueggemann (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 263. See also Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 202.

Psalms and modern approaches for processing feelings. Keller notes that religion often teaches people to either “deny their feelings” or to be “under-awed” by feelings, while contemporary secular society often encourages individuals to “vent feelings” and even to be “over-awed” by them.²⁰ The Psalms offer what Keller terms a “Gospel third way” for processing emotions; rather than deny or vent emotions, believers are to *pray* the particular emotion to God.²¹ Keller states,

The Psalms say it is very dangerous to deny your feelings or vent your feelings, to either stuff your feelings or bow down to your feelings. The Psalms tell us we are supposed to pray our feelings, not just pray about our feelings. [We are] to actually take them before God and pour them out in a pre-reflective way, and process them in the presence of God, in the light of who he is and who we are, in the light of the realities that come to us and bear down on us as we are in his presence.²²

The outpouring across the emotional spectrum found in the Psalms constitutes what Keller has termed “God’s case book”—God’s resource given to believers as a means for further developing both the individual and corporate relationship with Him.²³

Orientation, Disorientation, and Reorientation in the Psalms

The richness of the Psalms is partly found in the diversity of expressions across the emotional spectrum explored. Throughout much of the twentieth century, biblical scholars such as Gunkel, Mowinckel, Mays, McCann, and Westermann have developed typologies or categorizations of the Psalms.²⁴ While neat categories might facilitate use

²⁰Tim Keller, “Praying Your Tears,” *Psalms: The Songs of Jesus* sermon series, recorded February 20-March 19, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed June 24, 2016. <http://www.gospelinlife.com/psalms-the-songs-of-jesus>.

²¹Ibid.

²²Tim Keller, “Praying Your Guilt,” *Psalms: The Songs of Jesus* sermon series, recorded February 20-March 19, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/psalms-the-songs-of-jesus>.

²³Keller, “Praying Your Tears.”

²⁴For example, see Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984); James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox,

and application of individual Psalms, much recent Psalm scholarship commends canonical reading of the Psalter as a means of mining fresh insights into thematic unity in the Psalms, both between the five scribally edited books of the Psalter, and into the overall trajectory of the book. N. T. Wright advocates enthusiastically for reading the book of Psalms as a whole, contending the reader should travel through the psalter, experiencing the ebb and flow from praise to lament, and the many emotions in between, in order to understand their interrelatedness in the worship life of Israel and their application to current worship practices.²⁵ Indeed, as one reads through the Psalter, the dynamic flow between the Psalms of praise and lament gives evidence of the rich dialogical nature of Israel's relationship with YHWH. At the heart of this dynamic relational flow is the assertion that "The LORD reigns," and the unmovable truth that all of life functions around this covenantal promise, according to Psalm scholar James Mays.²⁶ Mays notes further, "The prayers of the people of God are based on the confidence that the proclamation is true."²⁷ All of ancient Israel's life revolved around this central truth.

When one considers that the psalmists filtered life through the lens of YHWH's unquestionable reign and abiding presence, one's understanding of the Psalms of lament is reshaped, allowing greater understanding of the sometimes raw and anguished

1994); McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Psalms*; Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985).

²⁵On the ebb and flow of the Psalms, N. T. Wright comments, "The Psalms, I want to suggest here, are songs and poems that help us not just to *understand* this most ancient and relevant worldview [of God's view of time, space, and matter], but actually to *inhabit* and *celebrate* it—this worldview in which, contrary to most modern assumptions, God's time and ours overlap and intersect, God's space and ours overlap and interlock, and even (this is the really startling one, of course) the sheer material world of God's creation is infused, suffused, and flooded with God's own life and love and glory. The Psalms will indeed help us to understand all of this." N. T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms: Why They Are Essential* (New York: Harper One, 2013), 22.

²⁶James L. Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 31.

²⁷*Ibid.*

expressions found there. When this proclamation was in conflict with the psalmists' lived experience, they lamented in an effort to bring reality into alignment with their belief in YHWH's rule and reign. That life had become unbalanced or untethered from the security of YHWH's presence was unacceptable and even unbearable to the psalmists. In the cry of lament, Brueggeman notes, "God is summoned relentlessly into the now," in an effort to restore equilibrium and to reaffirm to the psalmist the fact of YHWH's reign.²⁸ Indeed, these multivalent, faith-filled expressions of suffering were brought before the one and only source of relief and restoration known in the history of Israel: YHWH himself.

This tension between belief and experience is key to understanding the Psalms of lament; Scott Ellington describes it as a collision of these two truths.²⁹ Belief, according to Ellington, is that which one reasons to be true about God, the way in which one defines the relationship with him in times of order and calm.³⁰ Conversely, experience is more difficult to define, "less tidy," and often does not fit perfectly with one's beliefs.³¹ Belief—that which is clear "on paper"—is often challenged when one attempts to incorporate it into actual experience. For instance, how does one respond when prayers for healing are offered, only to be met with the perceived silence of God? When met with the repeated or protracted challenges of painful experience, beliefs can be reexamined or even changed in order to ease the tension.³² Ellington explains the place of lament within this tension:

The prayer of lament arises from an experience that challenges belief: a tragic event is followed by God's subsequent lack of response to prayer, thus raising questions and doubts about the nature of God's relationship with his people. Lament places a

²⁸Brueggemann, *Israel's Praise*, 137.

²⁹Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 12.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 14.

strong affirmation of belief, that God is a God who hears and delivers, over against an experience of God's silence and hiddenness in times of need.³³

The biblical prayers of lament were the result of the working out of this tension, of the wrestling between the limited understanding of humanity and the all-encompassing wisdom and sovereignty of YHWH, evidenced in his record and promise of faithfulness to his people.

Central to Walter Brueggemann's theology of the Psalms, and particularly the lament Psalms, is the "cycle" or movement he traces from the Psalmist's established belief in God, or orientation, into an experience of disequilibrium, or disorientation, and ultimately to a state of new orientation.³⁴ Brueggemann is careful to note that the movement through these stages is not always linear or a "once-for-all experience," because the unpredictable nature of life prevents such certainty.³⁵ Furthermore, he explains that while some Psalms of lament complete the entire cycle, others may be partial, representative of a single stage of the cycle. Regardless of the configuration within a given Psalm or within the life of a Christian believer, Brueggemann maintains that the life of faith for God's people regularly moves between the stages of disorientation and new orientation.³⁶ The new orientation becomes common or even mundane before being interrupted by disorientation, beginning the cycle anew. For example, Brueggemann identifies some entire Psalms as "Psalms of orientation."³⁷

Orientation. The Psalms of orientation present a sense of equilibrium and settled peace. Called psalms or "hymns" of praise, these Psalms express thanksgiving,

³³Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 14.

³⁴Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 19.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 22.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*, 19-22.

confidence, remembrance of YHWH's faithfulness in the history of Israel, or celebrate his royal reign and reputation as a mighty warrior and conqueror of Israel's enemies.³⁸ In a state of orientation, there is no sense of threat, no need for fear, and instead an abiding sense of God's unquestionable faithfulness. Brueggemann describes orientation as "a state of God's faithfulness and goodness . . . experienced as generosity, continuity, and regularity."³⁹

It is important to note that the state of orientation is not a world devoid of the awareness of suffering; as noted, orientation was once experienced as "new orientation," or the state of being *after* a season of disorientation. Instead, Brueggemann explains this as a season lived underneath the "canopy of certitude."⁴⁰ He continues by noting that this certitude brings with it a "givenness [sic] to be relied upon," a remembrance of transitions *from* disorientation *into* new orientation, and the confidence that this will once again be the case.⁴¹ Although the immediate conclusion could be that these Psalms are only for use in times of perceived peace and safety, one must be careful not to overlook

³⁸Irene Nowell, *Pleading, Cursing, Praising: Conversing with God through the Psalms* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 87. Nowell's work includes a helpful chart that delineates various types of Psalms of praise as well as individual/corporate laments. Also see the seminal work by Claus Westermann on the use of the word "hymn" in describing certain of the Psalms of praise. Westermann builds on the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel in his attempt to situate the hymn of praise within the cultic worship of Israel. See Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 11-30.

³⁹Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 26.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 27.

⁴¹*Ibid.* Interestingly, Brueggemann comments that such a "canopy of certitude" can easily become a form of social control: "But there are times when such psalms must be used carefully or with a knowing qualification. . . . Then we must always ask whose interest is reflected and served by such psalms and by their use." The unhealthy result of insistent use of such Psalms to the exclusion of the laments is that one could fall into a "system of obedience and rewards," or even inculcate believers with a fear of honest emotive expressions in corporate worship. The need to maintain a status quo of positive thinking (which is often substituted for biblical faith) could be the unfortunate result of the exclusive use of Psalms of orientation. *Ibid.* For further discussion, see the final chapter of this dissertation.

their eschatological function. One must note the presence of the “already-and-not-yet” in these Psalms, which enables even the suffering to turn to them. The note of eschatological hope enables the orientation Psalms to inspire both immediate and present confidence in YHWH as well as a broader hope of transformation, which will lead to “*transformation* and new creation.”⁴²

Psalms of orientation are generally communal, as they often call others to join in the praise of YHWH. Given that Psalms of orientation were at some point expressions of new orientation, one can find upon careful examination a review or summary of a time of trouble from which the psalmist was delivered. The praise of YHWH is the natural outgrowth of this deliverance, and its level of exuberance must match, or even outstrip, the intensity of the previous suffering as Mays points out.⁴³ An example of this call to corporate praise of YHWH is found in Psalm 145, which intensifies as it describes God’s gracious oversight of mankind. Verses 8 and 9 describe YHWH as “gracious,” “merciful,” and “slow to anger,” and represent a recollection of an individual or corporate time of suffering and subsequent deliverance. Similarly, verses 14, 18, and 19 remind the congregation that YHWH “upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down,” “is near to all who call on him,” and “hears their cry and saves them.” This Psalm served as a kind of literary “altar” of remembrance, to borrow Brueggemann’s phrase, to which the people could return in coming seasons of disorientation.⁴⁴

⁴²Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 28, emphasis original. As noted, when used eschatologically, the inadvertent use of Psalms of orientation as “social control” is avoided and instead is transformed into “social anticipation” as believers collectively anticipate the coming of the new creation.

⁴³Mays, *Psalms*, 24.

⁴⁴Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 28.

Disorientation. Entire Psalms of disorientation, or Psalms that contain segments of disorientation, comprise the largest category in the Psalter in Brueggemann's typology.⁴⁵ In addition to those generally known as Psalms of lament or suffering, other categories or types include Psalmic prayers of complaint, distress, or protest. Sixty-seven of the 150 Psalms can thus be identified as some form of lament, with 49 being individual laments, and 18 representing laments of the community or entire nation of Israel.⁴⁶

The Psalms of lament, and other laments found regularly throughout the Old Testament, generally do not offer an explanation for suffering. As will be seen in the forthcoming discussion, according to Peterman and Schmutzer, the Old Testament "recontextualizes" suffering by "placing it inside a dynamic of covenantal relationship."⁴⁷ In contrast to substitutionary suffering found in the New Testament, the Old Testament focuses more prominently on innocent suffering and issues of theodicy and the prosperity of the wicked.⁴⁸ Given the dialogical nature of Israel's relationship with YHWH, there is an abiding expectation that God will vindicate Israel's suffering (e.g., Ps 94:1-3; Is 57:17-21; Hab 3:12-15).⁴⁹

Although at first glance the Psalms of disorientation may appear to be mostly individual in expression, they are imbued with a communal framework found in the recurring complaint regarding a sense of isolation brought on by the suffering, as noted in

⁴⁵Nowell, *Pleading, Cursing, Praising*, 87.

⁴⁶Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 9-12. This text contains a helpful chart delineating all Psalms into particular types. An alternate classification is noted by Peterman and Schmutzer who categorize the laments as follows: 42 individual, 16 corporate, 9 that use some lament. Andrew J. Schmutzer, "Longing to Lament: Returning to the Language of Suffering," in *Between Pain and Grace*, 107.

⁴⁷Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Schmutzer, "The Grammar of Suffering: Basics of Affliction in Scripture," in *Between Pain and Grace*, 21, emphasis original.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Psalm 42:4: “These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng, and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.” In essence, the movement from orientation to disorientation leaves the worshipper feeling marginalized and in isolation, no longer able to participate in key communal events of the corporate worship life of God’s people. Requests and thanksgiving for oneself or others were most often offered *along with* the worshipping community at festivals, or in villages or families.⁵⁰ Goldingay explores this communal element:

The story of Hannah suggests that even individual prayers may naturally take place at the sanctuary, though one may then pray them as an individual not in the context of the community’s worship. Praying on your own is possible but is often a sign of things being wrong in some way. To have to pray on one’s own is a sign of how needy one is, abandoned by or separated from other people. An aspect of the predicament out of which one then prays is the individual’s isolation from the community.⁵¹

That such prayers would take place in isolation from others may intensify the focus of the prayer on the most pressing issue in need of resolution: the lack of community.⁵²

⁵⁰Peterman and Schmutzer, “The Grammar of Suffering,” 27.

⁵¹John Goldingay, *Israel’s Life*, vol. 3, Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 196.

⁵²Moshe Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 51. The connection between the psalmist’s cry of dereliction and abandonment and modern soul care is apparent. In writing on the goals of Christian soul care, Eric Johnson cites one goal of discourse as interpersonal relationship. As beings created and shaped in the image of God, believers are inherently dialogical beings. That Johnson states, “Dialogue is fundamental to the life of persons” is not surprising. Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 14. Neither is it surprising, then, that the psalmists’ principle cry was against the isolation experienced as a result of suffering. Johnson continues, “Christian soul care, according to this model, promotes relational communication through dialogue. God is a dialogue partner in the Christian healing of the soul, and we are always situated in the midst of a history and matrix of human conversations, one of which is that between counselor and counselee. Understood rightly—by faith—Christian soul care is always a *trialogue*, involving counselor, counselee and the omnipresent God (Kellemen, 2005; Sphar & Smith, 2003).” Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care*, 15. The connections to corporate worship can be made given its communal nature.

Besides being marginalized from the immediate community, the psalmist also cries out against the alienation he feels from all generations of God's people before him. Ellington states, "That to which the psalmist appeals is far greater than the crisis of the moment or even the community that is physically present. The community of Israel shares in an enduring relationship of steadfast love with an eternal God."⁵³ The fact that this remembrance of and appeal to YHWH's time-transcending love and faithfulness is found throughout the Psalter brings further weight and significance to its use by the psalmist. Indeed, specific Psalms call the people to worship of YHWH simply by reciting portions of Israel's history.⁵⁴ These Psalms served as testimonies to YHWH's faithfulness, and helped to tether the psalmist to the larger sense of his or her place in the multi-generational community of Israel.⁵⁵

That the Psalmist *expected* YHWH to save him is evident in the consistent appeal to His providential acts throughout the history of Israel as well as to the defining attributes of his character. In Moses' meeting with God on Mt. Sinai during which he received a second copy of the Ten Commandments, YHWH described his defining attributes: "The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness'" (Exod 34:6). It was to these very attributes the psalmists so often appealed, whether separately or in their entirety. Psalm 25:6 states, "Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old." Psalm 136, with its recurring interlinear refrain, "For his steadfast love endures forever," encapsulates the entire history of the world, from creation to the present, and Israel's story, all grounded in

⁵³Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 68.

⁵⁴See for example Pss 78, 105, 106, and 136.

⁵⁵Lee Roy Martin, "The Book of Psalms and Pentecostal Worship," in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016), 83.

YHWH's steadfast love. Psalm 86, quoted here in its entirety, situates within the cry for deliverance an appeal to the entire list of YHWH's attributes:

¹Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. ²Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God. ³Be gracious to me, O LORD, for to you do I cry all the day. ⁴Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. ⁵For you, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. ⁶Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. ⁷In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me. ⁸There is none like you among the gods, O LORD, nor are there any works like yours. ⁹All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O LORD, and shall glorify your name. ¹⁰For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. ¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. ¹²I give thanks to you, O LORD my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. ¹³For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. ¹⁴O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them. ¹⁵But you, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. ¹⁶Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. ¹⁷Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

While verses 3, 5, 6, and 13 each reference at least one of YHWH's defining attributes, verse 15 crescendos into a mighty climax of the full list.

Although this Psalm begins as a complaint, it also contains a feature unique to the Psalms of lament: what Brueggemann and Bellinger call the “motivational clause.”⁵⁶ Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 contain the word “for,” which introduces the reason the Psalmist believes YHWH should act on his behalf: he is poor and needy, he is Godly, he cries to the LORD all day, he lifts up his soul to the LORD, *for* YHWH answers him. Verses 14 and 17 serve as further motivation for YHWH to act since the adversaries, in their abuse of the psalmist, also bring disrespect and insult to YHWH whom he serves.⁵⁷ Brueggemann and Bellinger explain what is at the heart of the Psalm:

Finally, in verse 17, this one who is steadfast, incomparable, and “God alone” is the God of all comfort, who will answer the prayer and act on behalf of the petitioner.

⁵⁶Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 372. See also Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 114-15.

⁵⁷Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 372.

Thus, all of the great claims made for YHWH now come down to the specificity of action for this lowly servant in need. Even this “child of a servant girl” does not doubt that the incomparable God can and will be attentive to this voice of need, hope, and faith. . . . The “I” of petition is taken with full seriousness, but the hope of the “I” is to have doxological lips that are fully occupied by the “thou” of power and fidelity. . . . It is no wonder, moreover, that the “I” knows and relies fully on this intimate and undoubted source of help and comfort.⁵⁸

This Psalm holds in perfect tension the legitimacy of complaint in the face of suffering alongside an unshakable reliance on and trust in YHWH’s covenantal commitment to him and the larger community of Israel. This is no impulsive, hasty, or “knee-jerk” expression of trust; rather, it is one grounded in the history of YHWH’s own well-known foundational promise of covenantal faithfulness and steadfast love.⁵⁹

New orientation. While the experience of disorientation is clearly expressed and processed in the book of Psalms, it is never, with the exception of Psalm 88, where the Psalmists remain. Brueggemann comments, “While the speaker may on occasion be left “in the Pit,” (as in Ps 88), that is not the characteristic case. Most frequently the Psalms stay with the experience to bring the speech to a *second decisive move*, from disorientation to new orientation.”⁶⁰ As with disorientation, new orientation can account for a portion of a Psalm of lament, or the entire Psalm, in what is often categorized as Psalms of thanksgiving or praise.⁶¹ Although the most frequent movement found in the Psalms is from lament to praise, other patterns can be identified, including a move from praise to

⁵⁸Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 373.

⁵⁹Brueggemann and Bellinger link this confession of trust to the first answer of the Heidelberg Catechism: “Question: What is your only source of comfort and strength in this age and in the age to come? Answer: That I belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.” The authors comment, “The petition of this psalm and the affirmation of the catechism come to the same point: that I belong to my faithful Savior. No wonder the ‘thou’ of God prevails over the need of ‘I.’” Ibid., 374.

⁶⁰Ibid., 123, emphasis added.

⁶¹Ibid.

lament (Pss 3, 6, 13), from lament to praise with a return to lament (Pss 12, 28), or a vacillation between lament and praise.⁶²

The turn from lament to praise (or new orientation) in individual Psalms of lament has been a consistent point of interest for Old Testament scholars. Some argue that the turn was caused by a word from a prophet or priest, assuring the psalmist that his prayers were heard and the deliverance sought has been granted.⁶³ Other scholars argue that the praise found at the conclusion of the Psalm was later combined with the initial lament, after the sought-for deliverance came (Pss 3, 28, 31).⁶⁴ In this case, whether a day or many years have passed since the suffering was experienced, the psalmist is recalling the disorientation and the subsequent deliverance that resulted in new orientation.⁶⁵ Brueggemann comments that these recollections, or “rush of positive responses” such as thanksgiving and amazement, find their way into the original prayer of lament.⁶⁶ Some explain the “turn” from lament to praise as a “psychological shift,” resulting in an expression of confidence that YHWH *will* grant the deliverance needed, or that forgiveness

⁶²Federico G. Villanueva, *The ‘Uncertainty of a Hearing’: A Study of the Sudden Change of Mood in the Psalms of Lament* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 121, cited in Daniel J. Estes, “The Transformation of Pain into Praise in the Individual Lament Psalms,” in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard, Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 151.

⁶³Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 50. See also Estes, “The Transformation of Pain into Praise,” 152.

⁶⁴Estes, “The Transformation of Pain into Praise,” 152.

⁶⁵Peterman and Schmutzer note that the laments can even switch tenses between the past and the present: “Laments do not capture the when of distress; rather, they highlight the *what* of personal suffering now felt throughout the psalmist’s relational ecosystem.” Considering this lack of reference to the specific time of the suffering, it is logical to conclude that the “turn” to new orientation/praise could have come at a variety of times after the suffering. See Andrew Schmutzer, “Longing to Lament: Returning to the Language of Suffering,” in *Between Pain and Grace*, 112.

⁶⁶Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 11.

for sin committed will be granted (Pss 9, 71, 77).⁶⁷ Estes states, “By uttering the divine name, he could be sure that help was on the way to meet his need. . . . Having made this vow and anticipating God’s resultant intervention in his life, the psalmist is liberated from his pain to praise God.”⁶⁸ Scholars such as Leann Snow Flesher believe the “turn” can be best understood through a combination of the prophetic word or expression of confidence, depending on the particular psalmist.⁶⁹

Understanding the “turn” in the lament Psalm as a new orientation requires the reader to reconsider whole Psalms of praise, thanksgiving, and celebration as a possible response to a period of corporate or individual lament.⁷⁰ Bruggemann has written that praise typically arose in the life of Israel after a time of suffering, and it would be inconsistent to draw a similar conclusion when considering the individual lament Psalms.⁷¹ In light of this ultimate transition to praise, one can more easily understand Westermann’s view of a “continuum” along which all Psalmic prayers, both corporate and individual, are situated.⁷² If all prayers found in the Psalms are found along this continuum, as Westermann believes, then all are thus connected to both praise and lament.⁷³ He states,

There is no petition [in the Psalms], no pleading from the depths, that did not move at least one step (in looking back to God’s earlier saving activity or in confession of confidence) on the road to praise. But there is also no praise that was fully separated

⁶⁷Estes, “The Transformation of Pain into Praise,” 153.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Leann Snow Flesher, “Rapid Change of Mood: Oracles of Salvation, Certainty of a Hearing, or Rhetorical Play?” in *“My Words Are Lovely”: Studies in the Rhetoric of the Psalms*, ed. Robert L. Foster and David M. Howard, Jr., The Library of Hebrew Bible, Old Testament Studies 467 (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 35-45.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise*, 140.

⁷²Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 74-75.

⁷³Ibid., 75.

from the experience of God's wonderful intervention in time of need, none that had become a mere stereotyped liturgy.⁷⁴

One can see that the remembrance of YHWH's salvific actions to earlier generations, or the promise of salvation to come, propelled the psalmists along the continuum, moving them ever closer to praise as suffering resolved into new orientation.⁷⁵

It is most important to understand that the transition from disorientation to new orientation was not a return to life as experienced *before* the suffering. Considering this transformation, it is important to label this final stage of the "cycle" *new orientation*, as opposed to *reorientation*, given the transformative nature of suffering. Not only is the source of the suffering relieved, changed, or removed, but the psalmist's view of YHWH, himself, his community, and the source of suffering itself is transformed. This transformation is noted in Psalm 73, as the psalmist chronicles his struggle to meet his physical needs in light of the prosperity of the wicked. As the psalmist works through feelings of jealousy and envy, he admits in verse 3, "For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Finding meaning in the seeming disparity was impossible, so in frustration he gave up, and in verse 16 called it a "wearisome task." After a period of suffering, a visit to the sanctuary of the Lord brought the needed transformation, as he recounts in verses 23-28:

Nevertheless, I am with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire beside you. My heart and my flesh

⁷⁴Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 154.

⁷⁵Scott Ellington rightly cautions readers of the Psalms against the "collapse of the dialectic" that reduces lament to a mere "introduction to praise," and fails to see its relationship to praise. Just as most of the laments eventually move to praise, so too do many of the Psalms of praise carry scars or memories of suffering experienced at the other end of the continuum. For example, Pss 105 and 106, at first glance, are glorious celebrations of God's wondrous deliverance of his people from Egypt and their induction into the Promised Land. However, within these Psalms are shades of suffering, remembrance of sin, rebellion, and judgment, the period of slavery in Egypt, feelings of hunger and thirst, and fear at the crossing of the Red Sea. While the overall tone is praise, it is clear that the suffering is what propelled the people towards celebration and thanksgiving. Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 62.

may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the LORD GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

The psalmist's realignment and renewed identification with the faithful Torah community brings about the transformation. Brueggemann and Bellinger note the powerful "nevertheless" found in verse 23 that leads the psalmist back to the "elemental faith claim": YHWH is good.⁷⁶ However, even the perception of YHWH's goodness is transformed from "material prosperity" in verse 1, to a celebration of "intimate communion" in verse 28.⁷⁷

Representing new orientation, Psalm 30 is one of a group of Psalms known as songs of thanksgiving.⁷⁸ Mays notes the importance of these Psalms for the spiritual health of the community, and labels them a "canonical witness" whose expression completes the cycle of suffering in the psalmist's life, thus affecting the life of the community.⁷⁹ Though the suffering was experienced in isolation, deliverance from it is celebrated in community. Thus, the communal praise completes the cycle of suffering, becoming a natural and necessary element if the period of disorientation is to completely resolve into new orientation. Mays writes, "Its praise completes and consummates what was begun in supplication."⁸⁰ The transformation culminates in verses 11 and 12, which see the Psalmist

⁷⁶Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 319.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Nowell, *Pleading Cursing, Praising*, 87. Included in the Songs of Thanksgiving are Pss 9, 10, 18, 30, 32, 34, 40:1-13, 41, 65, 66:13-20, 75, 107, 116, 118, 120, 124, 129, 138.

⁷⁹Mays, *Psalms*, 24.

⁸⁰Ibid. 140. Don E. Saliers notes that the call to rejoice in many Psalms of Thanksgiving was not "a call to conjure up objectless inner feelings of elation." The praise and thanksgiving was not a rush to rejoicing, but rather a *natural outgrowth* of the deliverance from suffering, and was freely offered, indeed *had to be offered*, if one was to fully enter into new orientation. Don E. Saliers, *The Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and the Religious Affections* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 41.

putting off his “sackcloth” only to be clothed with joy. Brueggemann and Bellinger draw attention to the “total reconfiguration” in the Hebrew verbs used here to mean “take off” and “put on,” which indicate no less than complete transformation.⁸¹ The use of such strong verbs can only indicate the depth of gratitude on the part of the psalmist for the miraculous salvation, transformation, and restoration to community which could come from YHWH alone.

Speech-Act Theory Applied to the Psalms of Lament

Speech-act theory, developed by John Searle, Donald Evans, and others, was first presented systematically and in detail in the William James Lectures at Harvard University by J. L. Austin in 1955, and later in his book *How to Do Things with Words* in 1962.⁸² Austin’s foundational theories were further developed in seminal works by John Searle (1969 and 1979), and Herbert Paul Grice (2001), respectively.⁸³ As defined subsequently by Eugene Botha (2007), speech act theory is a theory of language that “focuses its attention on the effects of the use of certain utterances in a specific speech situation.”⁸⁴ This theory was first applied early on to theological language by Donald Evans (1963) in *The Logic of Self-Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator*,

⁸¹Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 152. The authors note the correlation between these verbs and the baptismal formula of Eph 4:22-24, in which Paul admonishes the Ephesian church to “take off” the old man, and “put on” the new man, “created after the likeness of God.” This transformation is also one which evokes praise of the depth and intensity likely felt by the Psalmist.

⁸²Eugene J. Botha, “Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” *Neotestamentica* 41, no. 2 (2007): 275; J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, The William James Lectures, bk 1 (Cambridge, MA: Boston University Press, 1962).

⁸³Herbert Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); John Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁸⁴Botha, “Speech Act Theory,” 276.

specifically drawing on Austin's theory of the performative nature of speech acts.⁸⁵ The development of the theory can be concisely introduced as follows.

Speech-act theorists Austin, Searle and others, developed the concept of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. An illocutionary act is defined as an act of "speaking or writing which in itself effects or constitutes the intended action, e.g., ordering, warning, or promising."⁸⁶ Perlocutionary acts represent "the consequences or *effects* such acts have on the actions, thoughts, or beliefs, etc., of hearers."⁸⁷ In *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theories of Speech Acts* (1979), Searle further delineated six categories of speech acts:

1. Assertives—describe/represent an existing state of affairs; a claim ("Oh God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might" Ps 54:1)
2. Directives—imperative command in an attempt to produce an action ("Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled" Ps 6:2)
3. Commissives—commit to a specific course of action in the future; vow, promise, swear ("I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me" Ps 13:6)
4. Expressives—express a specific psychological state about a situation; thank, apologize, welcome, congratulate, etc. ("I will be glad and rejoice in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul" Ps 31:7)

⁸⁵Donald Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator*, Library of Philosophy and Theology, ed. Ronald Gregor Smith (Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 1963).

⁸⁶Oxford Living Dictionary, "Illocutionary act," accessed December 21, 2017. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/illocution>.

⁸⁷Searle, *Speech Acts*, 25, emphasis original. Johnson further delineates these two actions: an illocutionary act intends an action, though not completely clear on the exact outcome; a perlocutionary act is one which "produces an effect in its hearer/reader." Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care*, 197.

5. Declarations—realization of a proposition (“Vindicate me, O LORD, my God, according to your righteousness, and let them not rejoice over me!” Ps 35:24)
6. Assertive declarative—an assertive with the force of a declaration (“The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!” Ps 97:1)⁸⁸

These six categories draw attention to the fact that speech is more than the actual words spoken, but is equally connected to the action or intention which is an outcome of what is said.⁸⁹ Searle also notes that more than one type of speech act can occur in the same statement.⁹⁰

Donald Evans first applied speech-act theory to the biblical language of worship in *The Logic of Self-Involvement*.⁹¹ Building on Austin’s theories on speech acts, Evans argues that many statements found in Scripture can be labeled as “expressive” to some degree.⁹² According to Psalm Scholar Gordon Wenham, Evans’s assertion describes the prayers found in the Psalter, which were intended to be “recited or sung as prayers.”⁹³ But Evans categorizes the Psalms further. Due to their self-involving nature, the prayers of the Psalter according to Evans fall into two main speech-act categories: commissives (the speaker commits himself to a course of action: promise, pledge, engage, swear loyalty) and behabitives (an attitude is expressed: praise, thank, worship, protest).⁹⁴

⁸⁸Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 12-20.

⁸⁹Botha, “Speech Act Theory,” 276.

⁹⁰Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 50.

⁹¹Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement*.

⁹²Gordon Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 67.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 63, 67.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 67-68. Wenham notes that, here, Evans “does not use the more nuanced analysis of speech acts found in Searle’s work; rather he builds on Austin’s simpler understanding of performative acts. . . . He adopts the terminology of J. L. Austin . . . to define the character of worship language.” *Ibid.*

Implications of Speech-Act Theory for Corporate Worship

Gordon Wenham argues that the application of speech-act theory to the Psalms sets them apart as performative speech unlike any other in Scripture. Wenham notes that Old Testament narratives or passages from the Law were likely recited within a family or tribe, and those listening could do so passively.⁹⁵ The use of the Psalms, however, was a different act altogether, and required much more intentional action on the part of the worshiper. Instead of passive participation, the worshiper reciting the Psalms was likely to do so in a much more heartfelt and intentional manner. This is where consideration of the performative nature of the Psalms comes into play for Wenham, especially in corporate use. Commissive and behabitive speech acts involve more than physical participation by the speaker or the one praying; they call for commitment and a lasting change of behavior at the heart level.⁹⁶

An interesting connection to speech-act theory is the concept of remembrance in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms. Tim Keller notes that the concept of remembering, according to Scripture, is “controlling consciousness,” or “making something so central to your consciousness that it affects you completely and particularly as a test of your behavior; to have it so central to your consciousness that it controls how you act.”⁹⁷ Keller uses Psalm 103 as an example of the Psalmist “controlling [his own] consciousness” as he reminds himself of YHWH’s “benefits” in verses 3-5: “Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” In verses 1 and 2, the Psalmist speaks to himself in an

⁹⁵Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 64.

⁹⁶Practical application of this theory is further explored in chap. 6.

⁹⁷Tim Keller, “Praying the Gospel,” *Psalms: The Songs of Jesus* sermon series, recorded February 20-March 19, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed June 24, 2016. <http://www.gospelinlife.com/psalms-the-songs-of-jesus>.

“expressive” act, reminding himself in his inmost being not to simply *state* or *recite* these truths, but according to Keller, to engage them deeply through “vigorous disciplined meditation and contemplation.”⁹⁸ The command to “bless the LORD, O my soul” is therefore an expressive speech act because, by proclaiming YHWH worthy to be blessed, one is offering to God his awe and respect. The result of this awe and respect is a promise to meditate on YHWH’s goodness, to offer praise, and to remember His acts in a way that results in changed behavior.

The implications for speech-act theory in praying the lament Psalms in corporate worship are many. First, to pray the Psalms of lament corporately or individually in the sense discussed here can aid in the transformation of the suffering individual or group. Bruggemann notes the ability of these Psalms to “evoke reality, thereby denying the tendency to the self-deception of a well-ordered life,” or one which refuses to admit or process difficult emotions in God’s presence, choosing instead to cover them with a façade of order and success.⁹⁹ The evoking of such reality is, according to Brueggemann, the very act that transforms faith, and which allows the worshiper to see God as “present in, participating in, and attentive to the . . . displacement of life.”¹⁰⁰ It is in the bringing to speech of such sorrow that one can more readily identify with the Christ of Isaiah 53:3: “A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” In addition to giving place and permission for such raw expressions, praying through the cycle of suffering found in the Psalms allows worshipers to understand and expect the faithfulness of God to bring new orientation in the future.

Second, in addition to transformation, the bold language of the Psalms teaches worshipers that nothing is out of bounds, and one’s pain, or the pain of others, must not

⁹⁸Keller, “Praying the Gospel.”

⁹⁹Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 53.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 52.

be denied in one's discourse with God.¹⁰¹ This is especially noted in the imprecatory Psalms, those which have been described by Wenham as "savage prayers" against those who do harm to God's people.¹⁰² According to Wenham, these directive prayers have three important implications: (1) they help one identify with others who suffer, (2) the simple act of bringing to speech these concerns gives greater weight and focus to the need, and (3) they can bring to light one's own neglect in effecting change regarding violence in the world.¹⁰³

Finally, the expressive nature of the Psalms of lament remind worshipers of their mortality and finitude, and thereby renew their love for the message of the gospel. The wide range of emotions and conditions covered by the lament Psalms give language to myriad physical, mental, and spiritual states, including the sorrows which Christ bore on the cross. The Psalms bring a multiplicity of expressions, including the cry for healing (Ps 6), repentance (Ps 51), deliverance from fear (Ps 3), expressing guilt and the need for forgiveness (Ps 130), and the struggle with doubt (Ps 73). Thus, their use in corporate worship can remind believers that Christ not only died for their salvation, but also that they may experience abundant life paradoxically, even in the midst of their present suffering (John 10:10).

Conclusion

The dialogical nature of Israel's prayer life found in the Psalms gives evidence of a rich and fully alive relationship with God. Although a surface reading of the lament Psalms can give the impression of a lack of trust in God's sovereignty, faithfulness, and

¹⁰¹Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 52.

¹⁰²Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 167.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 177-78. Clinton McCann notes that the use of imprecation in prayer puts vengeance into the hands of God, where it rightfully belongs. Additionally, in praying these Psalms believers are reminded of previous deliverance, or the deliverance of others, from similar circumstances. McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 117-19.

steadfast love, a deeper look reveals a cry that appeals to the psalmist's knowledge of God's history of faithfulness to his people. The Psalms of disorientation and new orientation give further evidence of this covenant relationship as the plea and complaint are transformed. It is then that the psalmist offers praise to God who has not only restored the sufferer, but has repaired the breach in community so vital to the worship life of Israel. So, while many of the laments present themselves as individual, the heart of the psalmist's brokenness is ultimately communal, thus his call for rejoicing amongst the community at the time of his or her deliverance.

The cry of the sufferer, however, does not cease at the coming of Christ. Indeed, Christ consistently modeled in his own prayers the use of the lament Psalms in processing his own suffering. The following chapter explores the continuance of lament in Christ's prayers found in the Gospels. Chapter 4 continues with an exploration of the ways in which key New Testament Epistle writers such as Paul, Peter and John followed Christ's example and drew from the rich treasure of the Psalms in articulating their personal suffering and the suffering of the persecuted first-century church. These themes and key scriptural passages are explored in the next chapter to demonstrate the continued historical trajectory of the use of lament Psalms, both individually and corporately in the lives of believers.

CHAPTER 3

MODELS OF LAMENT IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

The Lament Psalms in the Prayers of Jesus

The most important model for the use of Old Testament prayers of lament in the New Testament is Jesus Christ. During his earthly life, as recorded by the Gospel writers, Christ voiced his suffering and modeled for believers the use of prayers of lament from the Old Testament in processing his experiences and emotions. The Gospels recount three important scenes in which Christ lamented: (1) his lament over Jerusalem due to unrepentant sin (Matt 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35); (2) the death of Lazarus (John 11:34-44); and (3) the cry of dereliction from the cross (Ps 22:1). Although not directly quoting the Psalms, Jesus' grief over his own impending death, expressed in prayer to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, references laments found in the Psalms.

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

Prior to his lament over the city of Jerusalem over unrepented sin (Matt 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35), Jesus upbraids the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocritical, pompous behavior (Matt 23:1-7) and ill treatment of their fellow Jews. Jesus was clearly displeased by their self-indulgence that resulted in increased pain and suffering for the people for whom they were supposed to care. Labeling them "blind guides" (Matt 23:16), "whitewashed tombs" (Matt 23:27), "serpents" and "brood of vipers" (Matt 23: 33), Jesus uses strong language in calling attention to their sinful behaviors that had persisted despite repeated calls for repentance from the prophets (Matt 23:34a) whom they had killed, crucified, flogged, and persecuted (Matt 23:34b). Prior to Jesus' diatribe in

Matthew 23, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had demonstrated a history of misrule in alliance with Roman political leaders, all for selfish gain and accumulation of power.¹

Jesus' rebuke of the religious leaders of Jerusalem was not only due to their mistreatment of the Jewish population, but also in the context of his exposing the corruption in this city which had been celebrated for centuries in the Psalms as God's "holy habitation" (Ps 46:4), and the "city of God" (Ps 48:1, 87:3). Tragically, instead of being celebrated and revered as such, the city and God's house had become a den of thieves, desecrated by the greed and corruption of the Jewish priesthood, and the city itself was under the occupation and rule of polytheistic Rome. Jesus knew God's pattern of divine judgment of Israel's sin in the past, and God's decision to send his people into exile as punishment for their sins. The people's repeated rejection of God continued, even though Jesus had come to bring the good news of God's love, salvation, and new covenant to the people. Thus, one finds in Matthew 23:37-39 and Luke 13:34-35 this record of Jesus' lament over the sins of the people, their rejection of him as the Messiah, and the tragedy that Jerusalem, which was God's holy city, had fallen so low.²

Following his angry rebuke, Jesus pours out his grief in a kind of city lament that strongly echoes Jeremiah's famous use of the genre in Lamentations. However, this lament of Jesus is not only over Jerusalem but by implication the sins of the nation of Israel and the whole world. Tremper Longman III identifies in this famous lament imagery drawn directly from the Psalm, when Jesus lovingly expresses his longing to "gather" the people together "as a hen gathers her brood under her wings" (Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34).³ With almost maternal-like instinct, Jesus uses the metaphor found in the Psalms of a

¹Warren Carter, "Matthew 23:37-39," *Interpretation* 54, no. 1 (2000): 66.

²*Ibid.*, 67.

³Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 233.

mother hen protecting her young from potential threats. The Psalmists, according to Longman, repeatedly used this metaphor (17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 61:4, 63:7, 91:4) to “suggest the image of a bird shielding its young with its wings, or perhaps driving potential threats away from its young with the rapid beating of its wings.”⁴ This expression of Christ’s love and compassion for the people is remarkable given the extent of their sins, their killing of the prophets, their repeated violation of their covenant with YHWH, and their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

Following the metaphor of the hen gathering her brood, Jesus revealed the result of the peoples’ rejection in Matthew 23:27 (Luke 13:35): “See, your house is left to you desolate.” This judgment was likely leveled at both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, both of which were the representational seat of God’s rule and reign.⁵ That God would leave the city and temple “desolate” was significant, given its central place in Israel’s history and in God’s purpose. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in Matthew 21:1-11, he was fulfilling the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9 of the coming King of Zion who would rule in righteousness, bringing salvation. This judgment on the current religious leaders of Jerusalem and its inhabitants was the result of their repeated sin and rejection of God as their sovereign king.⁶

⁴Longman, *Psalms*, 233. The image of the mother bird would likely have been familiar to the people of Israel. Moses used the illustration in Deut 32:11 in his final song before his death. In v. 11, Moses used the image of an eagle that “stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions.” God had guided the people out of Egypt and into the promised land with utmost care and constant provision. Jesus could have been evoking this imagery and memory of Moses’ song to remind the people, not only of God’s care, but also of his covenant which they had repeatedly violated. Ibid.

⁵Carter, “Matthew 23:27-39,” 67.

⁶Both Luke and Matthew record the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Matt 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40). However, only Luke follows this with the record of Jesus again weeping over Jerusalem following his entry on the donkey (Luke 19:41-44). Here again, Jesus foretells the coming destruction of the city in 70 AD. He wept, stating, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make

According to Warren Carter, the lament of Jesus over Jerusalem mirrors the “three-part . . . pattern in which Israel sins, God punishes (exiles) [her], and restores Israel.”⁷ This pattern is found in the Old Testament in the words of the prophets each time Israel breaks its covenant with YHWH. However, judgment for the sins of the people is not final, as God wondrously promises eventual restoration even as the people are being exiled.⁸ This pattern of sin, judgment, and restoration seems to be evoked in Jesus’ lament when he declares, “For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Matt 23:39). Mirroring YHWH’s promise of restoration, Jesus seems to draw from Psalm 118:26, in promising restoration of the people after they are once again judged for their sin.⁹ At some point in their future, the people would turn to Christ, recognizing him as their Messiah, and declare, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Jesus Laments the Death of Lazarus

Jesus’ lament over the death of Lazarus is the only recorded example of Jesus expressing his personal grief over the loss of a friend. Scripture records that Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and seems to imply a deeply personal and meaningful relationship with this family. According to John 11:33, a few days after Lazarus’ death,

for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. . . . And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation” (vv. 42, 44b)

⁷Carter, “Matthew 23:27-39,” 68.

⁸Pss 105 and 106 chronicle the history of Israel, including their sins and violation of YHWH’s covenant, along with the promised restoration. Brueggemann and Bellinger note the use of “three verbs” in Ps 106:6 to describe the extent of the people’s sin: “sinned,” “committed iniquity,” and “done wickedness.” The repetition gives weight to and emphasizes the egregious nature of their wrongdoing. Walter Brueggemann and William Bellinger, *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 459.

⁹Ibid., 506. According to Longman, this Psalm, an entrance liturgy, is the final Psalm in the Egyptian Hallel, which was sung during Passover in the peoples’ celebration of the exodus from Egypt. Whether this Psalm refers specifically to the exodus from Egypt or another deliverance from battle is unclear. Longman, *Psalms*, 399.

upon meeting Mary and the other Jews who had come to weep with her, he was “deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.” In his record of this event in Jesus’ life, John succinctly records perhaps the single most poignant verse in all of Scripture: “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). Seeing Lazarus’ tomb and hearing the weeping of family and friends moved Jesus to a tearful expression of grief and sadness.

The reference to Psalms in this lament by Jesus is indirect, but some connections can be drawn. In describing Jesus’ response to the death of his friend, John seems to draw from Psalms, stating that he was “deeply moved” (v. 33), and “deeply moved again” (v. 38). The phrases “deeply moved,” “troubled,” or “deeply/greatly troubled” are used throughout the Psalms to describe grief, or suffering brought on by sickness, suffering, or the enemy. It would seem that John drew most clearly from Psalm 6:3: “My soul is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long?” Again in Psalm 77:4b, the psalmist states, “I am so troubled that I cannot speak.” Echoing the Psalms, this language is used to describe a time of sorrow and suffering in the life of Jesus, and clearly connects to the prophecy that he was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3).¹⁰

Jesus’ Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

Three of the four Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) give a full account of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his arrest and crucifixion.¹¹ This

¹⁰Rebekah Eklund notes that the death and raising of Lazarus (John 11:40) functions similarly as the death and resurrection of Jesus (John 21:19) in that both would bring glory to God. Eklund writes, “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 Lazarus that precipitates Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion in John’s narrative (John 11:45-53, 12:9-11); but it is also Jesus’ confrontation with death at Lazarus’ tomb that prefigures God’s victory over death at Jesus’ resurrection.” Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus’ Laments in the New Testament*, The Library of New Testament Studies, ed. Mark Goodacre (London: T & T Clark, 2015), 38-39.

¹¹John places Jesus and the disciples in an unnamed garden just prior to his arrest and crucifixion. There is, however, no record of his prayer as recorded in Matt 26:36-46 or Mark 14:32-42.

prayer, in which Jesus prays to the Father to remove “the cup” from him is a possible, but somewhat controversial, expression of not only Jesus’ lament, but also an expression of anguish.¹² However, whether or not the emotion of fear is present, that Jesus would be “sorrowful” and “greatly troubled” indicates a level of distress. That Jesus was experiencing some intense distress is supported by the description of his posture: “He fell on his face” (Matt 26:39) and “he fell on the ground” (Mark 14:35). Only in Luke’s account (22:41) does one read that Jesus simply “knelt down” to pray.¹³

These descriptions of Jesus’ demeanor and posture during prayer would seem to find some connections in the lament Psalms, which use similar language. Since Jesus used the language of the lament Psalms elsewhere, he could have possibly had in mind Psalm 6:3, which specifically states, “My soul also is greatly troubled.” This Psalm, along with Psalm 42, is known as the Psalm of the “righteous sufferer,” due to the opening inscription εἰς τὸ τέλος in Greek manuscripts, translated “unto the end.”¹⁴ Eklund notes,

¹²Gerald Peterman also describes Jesus’ emotional reaction in Matt 26:37 (“sorrowful and troubled”) and Mark 14:33-34 (“greatly distress and troubled”) as one of fear, in addition to anguish. Peterman notes that this is the first time Jesus experienced the wrath of the Father, and the emotive response is evidence of one completely unfamiliar with this, given he had always pleased the Father (John 8:29). Peterman notes, “And yet the certainty of his obedient death does not take away the temptation to go the easy way; nor does his certainty make him a stoic as he faces wrath.” Gerald W. Peterman, “A Man of Sorrows: Emotions and the Suffering of Jesus,” in *Between Pain and Grace*, ed. Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Peterman (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 93. Scott Bader-Saye emphasizes the use of the Greek word ἐκθαμβέω (*ekthambeo*), translated as “frightened” or “greatly amazed,” in the previous references. He notes that this is the only time this term is used in conjunction with Jesus throughout the Gospels. Scott Bader-Saye, “Fear in the Garden: The State of Emergency and the Politics of Blessing,” *Ex Auditu* 24 (2008): 10.

¹³Eklund points to the influence of Stoic philosophy and Luke’s Greco-Roman social environment that demonstrated an aversion to public displays of sorrow. The influence of Stoicism and Greco-Roman social structure are, according to Eklund, a possible explanation for his choice of “knelt down,” which is a more composed response. Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 30.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 38. Eklund notes the eschatological function of these lament Psalms in Qumran literature which made it much more likely that the gospel writers interpreted them this way as well. *Ibid.*

“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.”¹⁵

In addition to his possible appropriation of language found in Psalm 6, Jesus seems to borrow another common metaphor from the Psalms: “the cup.” This metaphor is used in the Psalms to indicate either God’s favor or his wrath. Psalm 16:5 finds the writer declaring, “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.”¹⁶ Psalm 23:5b presents a theme of abundant provision from the Lord, his shepherd, stating, “My cup overflows.” Alternatively, the metaphor of “the cup” can also refer to God’s wrath poured out on those who sin or who break his covenant.¹⁷ Psalm 75:8 states, “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.” Psalm 11:6 cites the ingredients of the cup of wrath as “fire and sulfur and a scorching wind.” While Psalm 102:9 does not directly reference “the cup,” it indicates that the psalmist’s drink is mingled with his own tears, which would imply emotions connected to lament. That Jesus would pray for the removal of “the cup” (Matt 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36, 39; Luke 22:42) indicates therefore that he understood and was familiar with the Psalmic metaphors, and suggests strongly that he likely borrowed from them as he wrestled with the coming weight and severity of God’s wrath he would have to bear.

Not only does one find connection to Jesus’ use of these Psalmic metaphors, but also to the overall purpose in the laments of bringing to speech one’s suffering, demonstrated in Jesus’ appeal to the Father: “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me”

¹⁵Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 38.

¹⁶Ps 16:8-11 are used in reference to the resurrection of Christ in Acts 2:24-31 in Peter’s address at Pentecost.

¹⁷Mark Futato, “Psalms 16 and 23: Confidence in a Cup,” in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 236.

(Matt 26:39). This practice of bringing to speech one's suffering is consistently found in Brueggemann's cycle of "orientation, disorientation, and reorientation" in the Psalms, which itself could possibly even be applied in this broader sense to Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, his crucifixion, and resurrection. His knowledge of the coming "cup" of God's wrath, the severe beating he would endure, the brutality and inhumane nature of the crucifixion that Jesus had likely witnessed others endure, and his betrayal by Judas produced unmitigated dread and suffering, resulting in a depth of disorientation not previously known by any other human. Yet, in his resurrection, a degree of new orientation not previously known also occurred, and could be connected to the statement in Hebrews 12:2: "Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross [disorientation], despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God [new orientation]."

Jesus' Cry of Dereliction from the Cross

Although Jesus modeled the use of biblical lament throughout his life, nowhere is it clearer than in his cry of dereliction from the cross recorded in Matthew 27:46: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" In quoting Psalm 22 to express the abandonment he experienced in the crucifixion, Jesus is continuing the Old Testament liturgical tradition of using the lament Psalms to express sorrow to God, and also giving permission to all who live after him to use these Psalms in the same way.¹⁸ James Mays notes that in this Psalm one does not hear the voice of a particular sufferer at a certain point in history; instead, "its language was designed to give individuals a poetic and liturgical location, to provide a prayer that is paradigmatic for particular suffering and

¹⁸The early church recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of the Psalms. Ps 22, although not a Royal Psalm (such as Pss 2 and 72) that celebrates the anointing of a king, was nonetheless associated with Christ. This association was due in part because the Psalm expressed humiliation and eventual vindication of Christ. Similar Psalms include 31, 69, and 118. G. M. Galvin, "The Messianic Psalms: How the Early Church Viewed Christ," *Bible Today* 48, no. 6 (2010): 335-36.

needs. To use it was to set oneself in its paradigm.”¹⁹ Jesus shows all people who would come after him how to suffer righteously by joining together with those who trusted Yahweh before him and praying in their words.

As believers today read Jesus’ use of Psalm 22:1 in the gospel accounts, their experience of suffering can be transformed through the power of Christ’s innocent and redemptive suffering. Mays notes that often during a time of suffering, “faith and experience” come into conflict with one another, as they did most acutely in Christ’s crucifixion.²⁰ Mays comments,

In [Psalm 22] dying is portrayed as the experience of a threefold loss: of vitality, of social support, and of God. It was clear that where death set the final seal on that threefold experience for those who identified themselves with the Lord, a line was drawn against God’s sovereignty. . . . In the passion of Jesus, that threefold loss is undergone and he dies. But his resurrection is the signal to all who dread and undergo the threefold loss that death itself has been brought within the rule of the God of Jesus Messiah.²¹

In Christ’s resurrection, the conflict between “faith and experience” is ultimately resolved and is “a justification of God in whom they trust, and a vindication of their trust.”²²

Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection assure believers that God has not failed, nor have they been forgotten.

Throughout the New Testament, the believer’s participation in the suffering of Christ is a consistent theme. The appeal for help found in the Psalms has shifted to an acceptance of suffering “for the sake of Christ,” which submits one’s pain to God’s glory and his overarching plan.²³ With this shift comes the impact of the cross, which does not

¹⁹James Luther Mays, “Prayer and Christology: Psalm 22 as Perspective on the Passion,” *Theology Today* 42, no. 3 (October 1985): 323.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 330.

²¹*Ibid.*, 330-31.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 323.

negate suffering or take away one's right to lament. Instead, the cross ensures believers that their suffering is not in vain, and that it will ultimately be redemptive. This tension is noted in Paul's writings (Rom 8:28, 2 Cor 4:17), Peter's first epistle (1 Pet 1:6-7) and James' admonition to rejoice in the midst of fiery trials (Jas 1:2-4).

Ellington claims, "Suffering and the function of lament are changed in light of the death and resurrection of Christ."²⁴ The reason for the changed function of suffering is the added element of the "already-but-not-yet" in the life of believers as a result of Christ's death and resurrection. In his study of eschatological themes in modern worship song, Matthew Westerholm notes, "Following Christ's ascension, the church lives in the days when the Bridegroom has been taken away from them (Matt 9:15). This is a season to lament."²⁵ While on the one hand God's "power is made perfect in weakness," the believer still experiences times of suffering during which the cry of lament is necessary. Ellington writes, "Instead of seeking for a hidden God in the midst of suffering, the New Testament lament accompanies, and even impels, the coming of God's response to suffering, the ministry of Messiah."²⁶ The cries of New Testament believers demonstrate that Christ's prayer, "Thy kingdom come," has yet to be fulfilled. While the momentary in-breaking of his kingdom is felt in acts of healing, provision, and deliverance, those cries that await to be heard remind believers that his kingdom is yet to come.

Christological Implications for a New Testament Theology of Lament and Suffering in the Epistles

The life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ form much of the foundation

²⁴Scott Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 171.

²⁵Matthew Westerholm, "'The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here': The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 190.

²⁶Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 180

upon which the New Testament theology of suffering is built, as previously noted.²⁷ Themes of the redemptive nature of Christ's work pervade the New Testament, even infusing and weaving together Old Testament themes of hope in the coming of a victorious Messiah with the reality of the Suffering Servant and his subsequent identification with the suffering of his people. The honest, heartfelt dialogue in the Gospels between Jesus and those in need continued to echo the Old Testament communal cries of disorientation. Jesus' use of Old Testament laments in shaping his prayers connected believers to Israel even as they fulfilled the nation's longing for Messiah.²⁸ The question and subsequent answer to the purpose of suffering, which the Old Testament viewed largely as a consequence of sin, was redefined and became "a thesis, if not *the* thesis," of the New Testament, according to Dan G. McCartney.²⁹ He notes, "The answer to the problem of suffering and death lies in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ."³⁰

Christ's incarnational suffering and work of redemption on the cross shifted and redefined the purpose of suffering for believers. In fact, Christ's redemptive work is multifaceted, not only saving sinners from eternal judgment, guilt, and brokenness, but also continuing this salvific work as he identifies with believers in their present suffering. In writing on the diversity of atonement images found in the cross, Richard Mouw observes,

The fact is that the Bible presents the work of the Cross as a many-faceted event, setting forth a variety of images for the Atonement: self-giving love, the forgiveness

²⁷Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 168.

²⁸Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 171.

²⁹Dan G. McCartney, "Suffering and the Goodness of God in the Gospels," in *Suffering and the Goodness of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 79-80, emphasis original. McCartney notes that the Old Testament dealt with the suffering of the innocent through a theology of "vicarious suffering of the righteous remnant of Israel as a whole," as noted in Isa 53, and by enduring suffering, this remnant would "vicariously atone for the sins of Israel. This representative suffering would then qualify Israel as a whole for redemption." Ibid., 80.

³⁰Ibid.

of enemies, payment of a debt, the ransom of captives, victory over the demonic principalities and powers, and so on.³¹

This wide spectrum of images depicts Christ as victorious and powerful, while also revealing him as the broken Christ of Isaiah 53:3 who was a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” This paradox is echoed throughout the New Testament.

The two great extremes in this multiplicity of images of Jesus are those of *Christus Victor*, an “unbroken Christ, a powerful, conquering Christ,” and *Christus dolor*, “one who suffered and is sorrowful.”³² While the doctrine of atonement in Scripture is vast, the images of the victorious Christ and the suffering Christ are central, and focus on different and vital views of Christ’s life, as well as his redemptive work on the cross. While an in-depth examination of atonement is clearly not the focus of this dissertation, the implications of both the victorious and suffering Christ to a New Testament understanding of lament practices are vital to the present study. Within Christ’s suffering and death one finds the paradoxical appearance of these two images. Viewed in juxtaposition, the images of the suffering and victorious Christ continue to model the cycle of disorientation (suffering) and new orientation (victorious) found in the Psalms and continuing in the lives of believers.

Christus Victor: The Conquering Christ

The image of *Christus victor*, or the conquering Christ, is found in Colossians 2:13-15, as described by Paul:

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing

³¹Richard J. Mouw, “Why Christus Victor Is Not Enough: Each Atonement Theory Highlights a Truth about the Cross—but None More So than Christ’s Substitutionary Death,” *Christianity Today* 56, no. 5 (May 2012): 30.

³²Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney, *The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 3, 10.

it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.³³

The image of the victorious Christ is one of authority, of a Christ who conquers, defeating his enemies openly for all to see. This image of Christ was first embraced by church fathers including Origen, Irenaeus, and Gregory of Nyssa, and was often accepted as the “standard view” of early Christians with regard to atonement.³⁴

In more recent years, the vision of Christ victorious in his atoning work has been strongly developed by Gustav Aulén in his book *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Atonement*. Aulén’s book presents Christ as the beloved Son whom God sends into the battle against Satan in order to free all of mankind from certain defeat and eternal slavery.³⁵ While Jesus may have appeared to be defeated due to his suffering and horrific death at the hand of Satan, he ultimately defeated the enemy and rose again, promising a future restoration during which all humankind will rule with him in his kingdom.³⁶ Therefore, the cross is, in Mouw’s words, not only a display of “more loving humanness,” but also a picture of the battle between God and evil.³⁷ Instead of responding in violence and destruction, Christ defeated the political and military powers of Roman authorities who represented evil spiritual principalities by his

³³The King James Version of this text translates the final phrase of v. 15 as “triumphing over them by his cross.”

³⁴Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 793. Schmiechen offers an exploration of ten theories of atonement, including that of liberation, which was connected to the image of Christ as victor in the early centuries of the Christian church. Schmiechen gives particular attention to the views of Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius, Jürgen Moltmann, James Cone, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and feminist and womanist perspectives with regard to the development of the liberation theory of atonement and its implications for modern views of Christ as victor. Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 123-66.

³⁵Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1931), 16-17.

³⁶Brad Harper, “Christus Victor, Postmodernism, and the Shaping of Atonement Theology,” *Cultural Encounters* 2, no. 1 (2005): 37.

³⁷Mouw, “Why Christus Victor Is Not Enough,” 30.

non-violent response, culminating in the ultimate victory of his resurrection.³⁸

Since the publication of Aulén's book, other authors have embraced this view, including Gregory Boyd in *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* and Robert Webber in *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Post-Modern World*.³⁹ More recently, Martyn John Smith, in *Divine Violence and the Christus Victor Atonement Model: God's Reluctant Use of Violence for Soteriological Ends*, posits that the *Christus victor* model presents a holistic view of God and salvation history. Smith notes,

The CVM [*Christus victor* model] therefore does more than merely provide understanding and insight into the atonement; like one of its descriptors, the Dramatic Model, it presents the atonement of Christ as more than something which occurred only in the last week of his life on earth. Instead the CVM is an atonement model which focuses on God – what he set up, what he won back, and how his purposes are always fulfilled regardless of what Satan or humanity does to oppose him.⁴⁰

In his examination of multiple atonement views, theologian Paul Fiddes notes that the renaissance of the *Christus victor* atonement model since the publication of Aulén's book in 1931, is not surprising given the increased attention in recent decades to social justice issues such as oppression and violence which necessitate a "divine victory over the hostile powers."⁴¹

Christus Dolor: The Suffering Christ

The image of *Christus dolor*, or the suffering Christ, presents the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3) who, in his earthly life, suffered in solidarity

³⁸Mouw, "Why Christus Victor Is Not Enough," 30.

³⁹Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997); and Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Post-Modern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

⁴⁰Martyn John Smith, *Divine Violence and the Christus Victor Atonement Model: God's Reluctant Use of Violence for Soteriological Ends* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 194.

⁴¹Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 112.

with humankind.⁴² Drawing from this Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 53, the image of *Christus dolor* connects immediately with the image of a Christ who identifies with believers in their sufferings, as stated by the writer in Hebrews 4:15: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” According to Mouw and Sweeney, the “identifying-with aspect” of Christ’s incarnation must be equally considered alongside his triumphant resurrection, “the final redemptive transaction at Calvary.”⁴³ As the authors assert, the fact that God would so interest himself in understanding humanity’s brokenness “from the inside of our humanness” deserves to be taught and fully understood in all of its implications for Christian living.⁴⁴

The implications of *Christus dolor* for Christian living have been embraced by both Western and non-Western theologians. Theologians such as Kazoh Kitamori see Christ’s ongoing work of reconciliation and healing not only in his crucifixion, but in his identification with suffering throughout his earthly life.⁴⁵ Mouw and Sweeney point out the almost exclusive identification with Christ’s suffering among non-Western theologians in works such as Kazoh Kitamori’s *Theology of the Pain of God* and Kosuke Koyama’s *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: A Critique of Idols*.⁴⁶ Western theologians such as Stephen J. Nichols and Jonathan Ebel argue that connections between war and religion in American

⁴²Mouw and Sweeney, *The Suffering and Victorious Christ*, 45-46.

⁴³Ibid., 48.

⁴⁴Ibid. Mouw and Sweeney note the importance of “the great ontological gap” between Creator and creature which is highlighted in Reformed theology.

⁴⁵Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1965).

⁴⁶Ibid.; Kosuke Koyama, *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai: A Critique of Idols* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985).

society encourage support of the *Christus victor* model, and as Ebel notes, deflects the church away from identifying with the suffering Christ.⁴⁷

Conclusion

As has been discussed in this chapter, both atonement theories of the victorious and suffering Christ respectively, are profoundly and carefully rooted in Scripture. Instead of embracing one model and rejecting the other, it can be argued that both are not only applicable but essential to a full grasp of the redemptive work of Christ. While Christ's life provides the ultimate examples of human suffering, in his identification with humankind culminating in the horrific agonies of his crucifixion, his triumph over death provides the basis of hope that the same resurrection life will ultimately be shared by all believers. Precisely by embracing these two opposing Christological images of the spectrum of suffering, believers can more readily understand Paul's admonition in Romans 12:15 to "rejoice with those who rejoice, [and] weep with those who weep." The community of faith should expect to give and receive no less in its pursuit of Christocentric transformational living.

⁴⁷Stephen J. Nichols, *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to "The Passion of the Christ"* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 18; Jonathan Ebel, *Faith in the Fight: Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

CHAPTER 4

SUFFERING AND LAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The individual and corporate prayer life of Israel is most clearly articulated in the book of Psalms. The dialogical nature of the book reveals a number of themes, including the cry of the sufferer in the laments. As noted in the previous chapter, biblical expressions of lament, both individual and corporate, were rooted in the covenantal relationship between God and his people. When lived experience did not line up with God's covenant promises, the people cried out, and these cries of complaint and protest were recorded as part of the worship life of Israel.

Jesus' use of the Psalms of lament in his own prayers during times of suffering was reflected in the centrality of the Old Testament, and particularly the Psalms, and in the lives of the New Testament writers and in the worship of first century believers.¹ As noted in the previous chapter, not only did Jesus model *how* to lament through using the Psalms, but in serving as an example, he also gave believers *permission* to offer prayers of lament when experiencing suffering and distress. Jesus demonstrated the need for bringing the emotions of suffering to speech, and that believers should pray these emotions in pre-reflective outpouring to God.² Thus, one can conclude that the dialogical nature of Israel's relationship with God demonstrated in the Psalms and throughout the Old Testament did not end at the coming of Christ.

¹Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, introduction to *The Psalms in the New Testament*, The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 1.

²Tim Keller, "'Praying Your Tears,'" *Psalms: The Songs of Jesus* sermon series, recorded February 20-March 19, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed June 24, 2016. <http://www.gospelinlife.com/psalms-the-songs-of-jesus>.

Jesus' use of the Psalms is obviously unparalleled, and is in itself sufficient to make the case for their continued use in corporate worship. The fact that the Psalms, along with Isaiah, are the Old Testament books most referenced, quoted, and alluded to by the New Testament writers further emphasizes the need for their inclusion in individual and corporate worship today.³ Their rich, artistic, and pictorial language should serve, in the words of Tremper Longman, as a "libretto of the most vibrant worship imaginable."⁴

Jesus and the New Testament writers use a broad range of the Psalms didactically, as well as in personal and corporate worship. This chapter contains a survey of lament Psalms found in the New Testament, using Rebekah Eklund's typology of Psalmic "echoes," "extensions," and "allusions."⁵ Given the pervasiveness of the Psalms in the New Testament, a study is merited of the specific use of lament Psalms in the synoptic Gospels, letters and epistles, whether in direct quotation or allusion. These echoes and extensions informed the New Testament writers' theology of suffering, and served as the lens through which they understood and applied the implications of Jesus' suffering and resurrection to the ongoing suffering of believers.⁶ This chapter addresses the New Testament writers' emphasis on the communal nature of suffering, and the subsequent implications of insights and themes from the laments for current evangelical corporate worship practices.

³Moyise and Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 2.

⁴Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 9.

⁵Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament*, Library of New Testament Studies, ed. Mark Goodacre (New York: T & T Clark, 2015), 170.

⁶Ibid.

“Echoes and Extensions” of Old Testament Lament in the New Testament

The New Testament finds similarities to the Old Testament regarding practices of prayer.⁷ Patrick Miller notes certain key similarities, for example, between the prayers of the Old Testament and those of both Paul and Jesus.⁸ Miller observes that Jesus was “nurtured in the traditions of Israelite and Jewish prayer,” and therefore it is not surprising to find metaphors from the Psalms and other Old Testament passages woven into his prayers, as discussed in the preceding chapter.⁹ More importantly, Jesus demonstrated the breadth and depth of relationship with YHWH and the broad emotional spectrum found in the Psalms when he prayed from the cross the desperate, anguished prayer, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1), followed by the contrasting and trust-filled expression, “Into your hands I commit my spirit” (Ps 31:5). Paul mirrored the Psalmists in his prayers for mercy, peace, and well-being, both for himself and first century believers.¹⁰

Rebekah Eklund notes that, while the Psalms were used in quotes or allusions, the way in which the lament was shaped by the New Testament writers differed from that expressed in ancient Israel.¹¹ This difference in shape was due in part to the infusion of Stoic philosophy into the New Testament Epistles and the early church, and its emphasis

⁷Eklund, *Jesus Wept* 170. This section will implement Eklund’s typology of “echoes and extensions” lament Psalms found in the New Testament.

⁸Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 305.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. It is important to note the corporate nature of Paul’s prayers, which should serve as a model for believers today. Eph 3:16-19 records Paul’s prayer for emotional and spiritual strength for Ephesian believers; Phil 1:9-11 contains Paul’s prayer for loving relationship that connected to the spiritual help of believers; finally, Col 1:9-12 finds Paul praying holistically for believers for mental, spiritual, emotional, and even physical growth and maturity. These prayers mirror the Psalmists who regularly wove these themes into their dialogue with YHWH.

¹¹Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 12.

on piety, and the emerging theology of the cross, which calls for “imitation of Christ’s sacrificial self-giving” as noted in Philippians 2:1-11.¹² While the lament as protest is present, Eklund notes that the New Testament writers often emphasized lament as penitence, which partially turns away from lament as protest, as in Paul’s use of Psalm 51 in Romans 3.¹³

While themes of piety, joyful endurance, and penitence are indeed present in the writings of Paul and others, references to lament in the face of persecution can also be found. Eklund notes the presence of an eschatological thrust in New Testament lament that “trusts that 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.”¹⁴ While Jesus’ suffering changed the face and purpose of lament, it did not effectively remove suffering which leads to lament. Eklund notes,

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.¹⁵

¹²Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 12. Eklund cites Luke’s downplay of emotions in his portrayal of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane as an example of Stoic influence.

¹³Ibid., 12-14. Eklund notes that the fading use of lament as protest is partially due to the theological emphasis on atonement, which sees Jesus’ lament only as “mourning over humanity’s sin.” Ibid., 13. Patrick Miller argues to the contrary that Jesus’ laments, and particularly his cry of dereliction, indicate that he laments just as much over the suffering of humanity as he does over its sin. Patrick 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: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 20. On Paul’s use and application of the lament Psalms, Eklund notes, “Paul uses the language of lament [in Psalm 51] 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. By taking lines that originally referred to enemies or to the wicked and applying them to all humanity, Paul has appropriated this part of the lament pattern in order to indict sinful humanity and vindicate God’s righteousness.” Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 13-14.

¹⁴Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 17.

¹⁵Ibid., 17.

Although Jesus' life, death, and resurrection changed the face of lament, they did not remove it, but rather offered hope bound up in eschatological yearning for Christ's glorious return. Given this reality, lament must be considered normative practice in individual and corporate worship, for it is in this way that the church joins together in the longing for the completion of Christ's redemptive work.

The following discussion of Eklund's theory of quotes or allusions, and also of the ethos of lament, sheds further light on the practice of corporate lament in the New Testament and the resulting implications for believers today.

“Quotes or Allusions” to Lament Psalms

Within the category of lament itself, echoes of the Psalms in the New Testament have been divided by Eklund into two subcategories: (1) texts that quote or allude to the lament Psalms, and (2) texts that “evoke the ethos” of the Psalms.¹⁶ Direct quotes or allusions to the Psalms are in the writings of Paul, Peter, John, and Hebrews, and are especially found in the Gospels and in the words of Jesus, as discussed in chapter 2. The following exploration of echoes and extensions of the Psalms in the New Testament demonstrates the continued application of the well-known Old Testament language of lament by its authors. These echoes and extensions, bound up in the Christological lens through which writers such as Paul, Peter, and John viewed their present suffering, can inform the corporate lament practices of modern believers. Representative examples from each of these authors are explored next.

The lament Psalms in the writings of Paul. Christians in the first century lived under Roman rule, and Paul often alluded to or referenced this—for example in his instruction on paying taxes to earthly rulers in Romans 13. Sylvia Keesmaat finds that the “tension” between “imperial justice and the justice of God” is noted throughout the letter,

¹⁶Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 17-20.

and was a source of struggle and even persecution for the people.¹⁷ Paul's opening statements in his letter to the Romans indicate his desire and passion for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, of which he indicated in verses 16-17 that he was "not ashamed." The widely-held belief under claim by Roman rule that Caesar was the source of salvation through his military victories was boldly challenged in Paul's opening attribution of salvific power to Jesus Christ's gospel.¹⁸

According to Richard Hayes, Paul's allusion to Christ as the source of salvation of whom he is unashamed could have been rooted in Psalm 71, which might account for Paul's terminology regarding shame.¹⁹ Verses 1-2 sound the call for salvation from YHWH alone: "In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame! In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me." Hays notes the parallel here between "righteousness" in verse 1 and "justice," which was likely the tone Paul drew from this Psalm in what has been described as a challenge to the so-called sovereign rule of Caesar.²⁰ Similarly, Psalm 62:1, and its claim of salvation in YHWH alone, likely informed Paul's view of justice.

Given this call for God's justice in verses 16-17, Keesmaat argues that Paul here "evoked the world of the lament, where the question of God's faithfulness and

¹⁷Sylvia Keesmaat, "The Psalms in Romans and Galatians," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 141.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁹Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 38.

²⁰*Ibid.* Similarly, Craig Keener notes that throughout the letter, Paul connects Christ's salvific work on Calvary to the acquittal of these believers, further supporting his claim of Christ as ruler above Caesar: "Accusers raise accusations only at their own peril" in light of Christ's "vindication" and his subsequent exaltation to God's right hand. Craig Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 111.

justice is up for grabs.”²¹ According to Keesmaat, the disorientation occurs as Paul points to the “radical dissonance” of Caesar’s rule over against God’s sovereignty, as he allows “the *question* of God’s justice” to “whisper around the edges,” echoing the fear of being put to shame in the face of Roman rule.²² However, Paul’s bold claim that he is “not ashamed” asserts to the Roman Christians that the sovereign God has, indeed, risen up and acted on their behalf. Keesmaat notes,

And in asserting that he is *not* ashamed, Paul is thereby suggesting to his readers (hearers) that God *has* arisen, that God *has* acted according to his justice, that God *has* vindicated his people, and that *this* is the gospel, the good news that challenges the so-called ‘good news’ of Rome.²³

Finally, Paul strengthens his argument in support of salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ, a salvation of which he is “not ashamed” (Rom 1:16-17), with a possible allusion to Psalm 98:2-3.²⁴ Here the psalmist references the righteousness/justice of God revealed to the nations: “The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” Paul draws together the corporate body of Christ, beginning with the lament of Psalm 71 and culminating with his confidence in the hope of salvation offered in Psalm 98. Keesmaat sees Psalm 98 as one of reorientation that has moved through lament, the cry for salvation, and which ends in an acclamation of coming salvation for a world “created anew,” even in the face of persecution.²⁵

²¹Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” 141.

²²Ibid., emphasis original.

²³Ibid., emphasis original.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., 142.

Among other references to the persecution of the Roman believers is the beloved and oft-quoted Romans 8. Developing his theme in this epistle of the superiority of Christ, Paul inserts allusions to and echoes of eschatological hope, while continuing to emphasize the justice of God against their persecutors.²⁶ To accomplish this, Paul weaves together the motifs of the “groaning” of creation (v. 22), the groaning of believers (v. 23), and that of God himself (v. 26):²⁷

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly, for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

The Greek word Paul uses for this groaning cry is the word predominantly used by the psalmists in their cries against their oppressors.²⁸ Keesmaat highlights this usage, stating, “This language originated in Israel’s first experience of empire, and was repeatedly used when Israel found herself suffering under imperial control during her history.”²⁹ The connection Paul draw’s here between Israel’s groaning and that of the Roman believers brings to speech the suffering of these first-century believers, while connecting them to the hope that Christ identifies with them, stating in verse 26 that “the Spirit helps us in our persecutions.”

The conclusion of Romans 8 finds Paul quoting from Psalm 44:22: “For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” This cry

²⁶Keener, *Romans*, 104.

²⁷Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” 149.

²⁸Ibid. See Pss 18:7; 32:3; 69:4.

²⁹Ibid. See Exod 2:23-24 and Lam 1:18, 21-22. For further in-depth discussion of Israel’s groaning, see Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 124-33.

to YHWH for deliverance from oppression was likely known among many in Paul's audience, and its insertion here must have echoed their own desires for deliverance from persecution, along with their need for assurance of Christ's victory. It is here, according to Craig Keener, that Paul sounds the note of eschatological hope first introduced in verse 23, with its emphasis on adoption and redemption.³⁰ Reinforcing his assertion, Paul asks, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31), once again uses the image of the conqueror and connecting it to Christ: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Keesmaat writes, "Paul is rejecting the imperial categories here of victory . . . and is replacing them with the category of suffering love."³¹ Although their present circumstances indicated defeat, Paul announced that their suffering in solidarity would label them as members who could not be separated from the body of Christ.

The theme of the Christians who, though now suffering, will ultimately be "more than conquerors" is a common one throughout Paul's writings, and especially in 2 Corinthians. Paul often mentioned his suffering and weakness throughout his letters and epistles as his means of identifying with the suffering of Christ.³² In fact, Paul went as far as to state that suffering would be expected if one were to identify with a "rejected Messiah" and his "offensive Gospel."³³ Robert Plummer posits that this "fundamental

³⁰Keener, *Romans*, 107. Hays believes Paul is drawing from the eschatological hope he believes is prophesied in Ps 44: "Scripture prophesies suffering as the lot of those . . . who live in the eschatological interval between Christ's resurrection and the ultimate redemption of the world." According to Hays, this is the vocational suffering of those who will be united with Christ. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 58.

³¹Keesmaat, "The Psalms in Romans and Galatians," 152.

³²See for example 1 Cor 2:2; 2 Cor 4:10; Gal 2:20; Phil 3:7-11

³³Robert L. Plummer, "The Role of Suffering in the Mission of Paul and the Mission of the Church," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 17, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 8.

Christological grounding of Christian suffering” is the foundation of the Christian calling to which Paul refers again and again throughout his writings.³⁴

This central theme of Paul’s writing, however, was turned against him by his adversaries, the “false apostles” in Corinth, who claimed Paul’s apostleship was invalidated because it lacked “signs and wonders” in addition to his own healing and deliverance.³⁵ Given this extensive opposition, Paul spends much of 2 Corinthians making the case that “strength *in weakness*” is the greatest validation of the ministry of an apostle.³⁶ This point is perhaps most clearly expressed in 2 Corinthians 4:7-15, where Paul compares himself to an “earthen vessel” or ordinary clay pot in which a priceless treasure, the message of the gospel, is being stored. Why would such a priceless treasure be stored in such an ordinary, even “cracked” pot such as Paul? So that it would be evident to all that “the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (v. 7).

In this key passage of 2 Corinthians 4:7-15, Paul once again calls on the Psalms to support his teaching about the paradoxical nature of suffering and new life in Christ. The parallel is found between verse 13 of Paul’s text and Psalm 116:10, which Paul directly quotes.

Table 1. Parallels between Psalm 116 and 1 Corinthians

Psalm 116:10	2 Corinthians 4:13
I believed even when I spoke: “I am greatly afflicted”:	Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed and so I spoke,” we also believe and so we also speak,

³⁴Plummer, “The Role of Suffering,” 8. See for instance Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 1:5; 2:14-15; Gal 6:12; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24-25.

³⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 88, 94.

³⁶*Ibid.*, emphasis original.

Like the psalmists, Paul vows to speak what he knows to be truth: the steadfast love of God has enabled him as well as them (both in the midst of their suffering and at its conclusion) to enter a place of new orientation brought about by the suffering. For the Psalmists this is restoration to health and identification with the community, and for Paul, it is further identification with Christ.

Both Psalm 116 and 2 Corinthians 4:7-15 are addressed to the community, of the Psalmist or the church in Corinth, respectively. This communal element is key in that it calls on the community to share thanksgiving both in and for the suffering of each other.³⁷ Paul also makes an appeal toward the community of believers, reminding them that it is Christ who raises them out of their suffering so that they, in turn, might be examples of the newness of life given by grace through Christ.³⁸ In describing the mutual spiritual benefits between members of the body of Christ, Ernest Best notes that it is not only those who minister that share in the rejoicing and weeping, but also those members of the congregation who, in turn, build up those ministering.³⁹ In this way, the entire body, in enduring affliction, does not “lose heart” (v. 16), but instead focuses on the renewal of the “inner man” and the “eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (v. 17).

The lament Psalms in 1 Peter. The expectation articulated in the Epistles that believers would suffer is seen perhaps most clearly in 1 Peter.⁴⁰ The first letter of Peter

³⁷Brueggemann and Bellinger note that the Psalmist upbraids the community in Ps 116:11 for a seeming absence or lack of support during the time of disorientation: “I said in my alarm: all mankind are liars.” Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 501.

³⁸Ernest Best, *Second Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1987), 43.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Gordon Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 186.

was written to fellow Christians who were likely suffering due to persecution.⁴¹ It is clearly more hortatory than expository in its purpose and tone, with its appeal for courage and steadfastness in the face of sometimes severe suffering.⁴² Besides the suffering inflicted by slander and verbal abuse, the reference to “fiery trial” in 4:12 evoked the real possibility of physical harm and death, Hiebert notes.⁴³ Since the topic of suffering pervades the entire epistle, it was evidently intense, and thus Peter’s central theme and concern. In order to address their suffering, Peter drew extensively on Psalms 34 and 118, with several references to Isaiah 53 and the “suffering servant” language.⁴⁴ As in the writings of Paul, Peter addressed the community of believers as a whole, viewing their suffering as affecting not just individuals, but the entire body.

Peter’s address to these believers reflects a radical transition in his perspective and relationship to Christ, McCartney points out. The same apostle who had initially rejected the fact that Christ should suffer (Mark 8:31-32) now embraces suffering with the understanding of its necessity in identifying with and becoming like Christ.⁴⁵ He goes so far as to call fellow believers to “rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings” (1 Pet 4:14) because this is the measure of Christ’s glory resting upon them. Earlier in the letter he wrote,

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he

⁴¹Dan G. McCartney, “Suffering in the Teaching of the Apostles,” in *Suffering and the Goodness of God*, Theology in Community, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 108.

⁴²D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Peter: An Expositional Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 20.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Sue Woan, “The Psalms in 1 Peter,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 222.

⁴⁵McCartney, “Suffering in the Teaching of the Apostles,” 109.

suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (1 Pet 2:21-23)

Here, Peter is recalling the Suffering Servant from Isaiah 53, and particularly the language of verse 9, “and there was no deceit in his mouth,” which Peter uses in verse 22.⁴⁶

Besides making extensive use of the Suffering Servant language of Isaiah 53, Peter also draws heavily on the Psalms of lament and thanksgiving, especially Psalm 34, in shaping his epistle.⁴⁷ He uses Psalm 34 extensively throughout the epistle both as encouragement for believers, and to support his admonition to embrace sufferings in the name of Christ. Shown in table 2, Psalm 34 is found in allusion or direct quotation in at least seven passages in 1 Peter.

Psalm 34 is significant and applicable to Peter’s message in several ways. First, it is a Psalm of deliverance or reorientation in which the psalmist boldly praises YHWH for liberating him from “fears” and vows to “bless the LORD at all times.” Although the Psalm begins with the voice of the individual, it quickly takes on the communal tone in verse 3 when the psalmist declares, “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.” Brueggemann and Bellinger note that the call for communal participation is an invitation for others to take part in the individual’s experience of deliverance, and in turn, to learn of the faithfulness of YHWH.⁴⁸ Another important communal element of this Psalm, according to Brueggemann and Bellinger is that, in the Psalms, “seeking the Lord suggests cultic activity,” and could indicate that the psalmist prayed in the temple during the crisis and prior to deliverance.⁴⁹ Now the psalmist crafts his thanksgiving into a lesson for the community regarding the faithfulness of YHWH.

⁴⁶Wayne Grudem, *I Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 129.

⁴⁷Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 186.

⁴⁸Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 169.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Table 2. Parallels and allusions between Psalm 34 and 1 Peter⁵⁰

Psalm 34	Parallel Text	1 Peter	Parallel Text
34:4	“delivered me from all my fears”	3:6	“do not fear anything that is frightening”
34:9	“fear the LORD”	1:15, 17	“conduct yourselves with fear”
34:13-17	“keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit” “turn away from evil . . . seek peace” “eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry” “the face of the LORD is against those who do evil”	3:10-12	“let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit” “turn away from evil . . . seek peace” “eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer” “the face of the Lord is against those who do evil”
34:11	“turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it”	1:14	“do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance”
34:13	“keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit”	2:1	“put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander”
34:14	“turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it”	2:12	“keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable”
34:14	“turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it”	2:22-23; 3:9	“neither was deceit found in his mouth” “do not repay evil for evil, or reviling for reviling”

Given the didactic nature of Psalm 34, it is therefore not surprising that Peter would use much of it as the basis for his instruction to the suffering believers. His tone of encouragement to persecuted believers based on God’s faithfulness to deliver parallels that of the Psalm and in turn, calls the community to trust that he will sustain them. On this correlation between Psalm 34 and Peter’s epistle, Brueggemann and Bellinger note,

The portrayal of the life of the righteous in these last verses [of Psalm 34] makes it clear that such a life is often found in the midst of suffering. The promise of YHWH is not a promise of undisturbed happy circumstances but a promise of divine presence and hope in all of life. Verse 20 expresses this presence in a powerful way with the image of divine protection of “all their bones.” The conclusion of the psalm is in a

⁵⁰Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 188-89; Woan, “The Psalms in 1 Peter,” 223-24.

proverbial style affirming that those who take refuge in YHWH will find redemption rather than condemnation.⁵¹

Given that the suffering of those to whom Peter wrote was extensive and ongoing, the use of Psalm 34 is apropos in that it does not deny that suffering will happen. Instead, it calls believers as a community to expect and share in suffering, all the while clinging to the unmovable hope in verse 19: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”

Although not directly quoted by Peter, echoes of Psalm 22 as well as of the Suffering Servant language of Isaiah 53 are heard in this epistle’s opening verses. Peter’s generic reference to “prophets” in verses 10-12, according to Hiebert, refers to a non-specific voice which looks forward to the future, instead of referencing a particular Old Testament prophet.⁵² Here, Peter exhorts his readers to recall the many voices who predicted the sufferings of Christ, such as Isaiah in his description of the Suffering Servant in chapter 53, and possibly the prophecies concerning Christ in Psalm 22. These voices predicted the manifold sufferings of Christ, some of which were relatable to Peter’s audience. In calling the people to “look back” to these prophecies, Tim Keller maintains that Peter was reminding them that Christ was not indifferent to their suffering, but instead fully participated in it, even to a degree beyond which they would ever know.⁵³

The lament Psalms in Revelation. Steve Moyise notes the connection between Psalm 137 and the narrative of Babylon’s fall in Revelation 18.⁵⁴ Psalm 137:9

⁵¹Bruggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 170.

⁵²Hiebert, *First Peter*, 63.

⁵³Tim Keller, “Suffering: If God Is Good, Why Is There So Much Evil in the World?” sermon series, recorded October 1, 2006, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.gospelinlife.com/suffering-if-god-is-good-why-is-there-so-much-evil-in-the-world-5495>.

⁵⁴Steve Moyise, “The Psalms in the Book of Revelation,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 241.

finds the psalmist declaring to his Babylonian captors, “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock.” John alludes to this passage in Revelation 18:6 where he records a voice from heaven declaring in reference to Babylon, “Pay her back as she herself has paid back others.” Here, Moyise notes the use of similar verbs in the Psalm and in Revelation in reference to the rendering of punishment to Babylon⁵⁵: “John finds in Psalm 137 a graphic description of the fate of God’s enemies, namely, that the punishment will fit the crime.”⁵⁶ The central element of these two references is the prayer of imprecation by their author for vengeance, not by the people, but by God, who alone has authority to mete out judgment on the enemy.

Other echoes of the Psalms in Revelation include the expression of trust that concludes the communal lament found in Psalm 106. Beginning as a hymn of praise, this Psalm quickly changes direction, unfolding as a confession of sin as the writer recounts the narrative history of Israel.⁵⁷ As the psalmist pleads for help, he asks YHWH to remember him (v. 4), and to show mercy to the people in spite of their sinfulness (v. 5). Following this plea, the psalmist recounts the communal history of Israel’s sinful deeds in breaking her covenant with YHWH (vv. 6-46). Notable is the use of three specific verbs in reference to the sin of the people: “sinned,” “committed iniquity,” and “done wickedly,” which show the pervasive and explicit nature of their sin.⁵⁸

Given this central theme of remembrance, Brueggemann and Bellinger assert, it is likely that the psalmist is calling Israel to remember YHWH’s deliverance of the people from the oppression of Pharaoh.⁵⁹ Besides remembering his deliverance, the

⁵⁵Moyise, “The Psalms in the Book of Revelation,” 241. While the psalmist uses future and aorist tenses, John uses the imperative and aorist tenses.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Brueggemann and Bellenger, *Psalms*, 458.

⁵⁸Ibid., 459.

⁵⁹Ibid.

greater point of Psalm 106 is the proclamation of YHWH's mighty power among Israel and the surrounding nations (vv. 8, 47). This theme of remembrance is echoed and culminates in Revelation 19:1-4, which records,

After this I heard what seemed to the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen, Hallelujah!"

Moyise concludes that this praise of God for deliverance that culminates with "Amen, Hallelujah" echoes the concluding verses of Psalm 106, which contains the singular occurrence of this identical phrase.⁶⁰ While noting that "Amen, Hallelujah" could have been a standard "liturgical repetition," Moyise notes that it is likely John was echoing this theme of thanksgiving following deliverance as found in this Psalm.⁶¹

The multiple quotes or allusions to lament Psalms found throughout the New Testament call believers to suffer so that they may be like Christ. Given the regular inclusion of such references, Dan McCartney goes so far as to claim that the "thesis" of the New Testament is that the suffering and death of Christ was the answer to the suffering and death of believers.⁶²

Fulfillment of the Old Testament Reversal Theme

However, in addition to this central thesis, another theme arises from the suffering and death of Christ: the hope by believers in eschatological reversal, or the reversal of fortunes of the righteous and wicked, foretold in the Old Testament.⁶³ The

⁶⁰Moyise, "The Psalms in the Book of Revelation," 240.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Dan G. McCartney, "Suffering and the Goodness of God in the Gospels," in *Suffering and the Goodness of God*, 79.

⁶³McCartney, "Suffering and the Goodness of God," 83. See for example Isa

teaching of Jesus throughout his lifetime were pervaded with this theme, although his actual methods were surprising, often counter-cultural, and even anti-climactic to his disciples and others who heard his teachings. Dan McCartney notes that this reversal was the heart of John the Baptist's question to Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"⁶⁴ John's question was effectively asking about the reversal foretold in the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus replied that the reversal was already taking place, because "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (11:5).⁶⁵ That this reversal would be further accomplished through the suffering and death of Christ would come as a surprise even to John himself, as well as the other disciples.

Jesus would do more than suffer and die, however. He would "encompass" and redefine suffering in his death *and* in his resurrection, both for himself, his disciples, and finally for the whole world.⁶⁶ Jesus' all-encompassing resurrection would not only vindicate himself and his ministry over those who put him through humiliation and death, but would culminate in the vindication of all believers in the eschaton. Until that time, however, suffering was to be expected, as noted in Acts 14:22: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."⁶⁷ Rebekah Eklund views the role of lament in the life of Jesus ultimately in light of his coming kingdom:

New Testament lament trusts that 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

9:6; Mic 5:5; Ezek 34:25-31; Zech 9:9-13.

⁶⁴McCartney, "Suffering and the Goodness of God," 83.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., 85.

prays lament, provides God’s answer to Israel’s long-prayed cries of lament and guarantees the ultimate cessation of lament in the eschaton.⁶⁸

Jesus’ death and resurrection did not remove the need to lament, but should rather be seen as the catalyst for lament in the New Testament and beyond.⁶⁹ Until eschatological hope is ultimately realized, believers cry out in their suffering, held in the tension of the “already-and-not-yet,” as their laments echo with the cry, “Thy kingdom come.”

The “Ethos” of the Lament Psalms

Many New Testament narrative texts are not directly modeled on Psalmic lament, but “evoke the ethos” of lament, i.e., embody the spirit of laments found in the Psalms, according to Eklund.⁷⁰ While pleas for help in the Psalms were directed to YHWH, in the Gospels such petitions were directed toward Jesus Christ.⁷¹ Table 3 illustrates examples found throughout Matthew, Mark, and Luke that mirror the plea for mercy commonly found throughout the Psalms of lament:

Table 3. Pleas for help in the Gospels

Narrative	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Jesus awakens and calms the storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	--
Peter’s cry while walking on water	14:22-33	--	--
Two blind men cry out for restored sight	9:27-31	--	--
Cry of the Canaanite woman	15:21-28	7:24-30	--
Demon-possessed boy	17:14-28	--	--
Two blind men on road to Jericho	20:29-34	--	--
Blind Bartemaeus	--	10:46-52	--
Ten lepers	--	--	17:11-19
Blind man on the road	--	--	18:35-43

⁶⁸Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 17.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

Consistent in the previous passages is the cry, “Have mercy on me,” or some variation of this plea based on the particular context. This cry resonates throughout the Psalms of disorientation, and could have found its source there given the use of the Psalms for individual and corporate worship by the Jewish community.

The account of Jesus and the disciples in the storm at sea, although presented as a narrative, is a New Testament text which can be read as moving through Brueggemann’s “cycle” of orientation, disorientation, and new orientation in a pattern similar to that of the lament Psalms. Mark 4:35-42 gives the account:

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Prior to this account in Mark 4, Jesus shared several parables with the crowds and then privately with his disciples, sharing deeper spiritual truths for those who could hear and understand. Following his long day of teaching, Jesus had requested that the disciples go with him to the other side of the lake (v. 35), presumably to do more teaching, healing, or other types of ministry. At the onset of the storm, the disciples move into a state of disorientation during which they voiced fear and distress as they cried out for Jesus to save them (v. 38). The cry of the disciples, which questions Jesus’ care and concern (v. 38), echoes the expressions of abandonment found at times in the Psalms of lament.⁷² Psalm 77:8-9 finds the psalmist asking, “Has his steadfast love forever ceased?” and “Has God

⁷²Scott Ellington notes that, although questions of “why?” and “how long?” are often missing from New Testament laments, invocations, pleas, and complaints comprise the primary types of petitions found there. Ellington finds in the disciples’ cry, Lord, save us! We are perishing!” recorded in Matt 8:25, a combination of the invocation, plea, and complaint in one succinct and urgent request. Scott Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 166.

forgotten to be gracious?” These and similar questions echo throughout the Psalms of lament, demonstrating a universal cry for deliverance in times of disorientation. Matthew’s account of this story finds the disciples rousing Jesus from sleep with the petition in 23:25: “Save us Lord; we are perishing.” Although Matthew’s account, with its cry of distress, differs in tone from the complaint found in Mark’s Gospel, the sentiment is the same: “Save us Lord, or we will die.” This is the cry of disorientation so familiar to the psalmists.

Rebekah Eklund notes that in this passage, the disciples directly echo the cry in Psalm 107:25, 29, which states, “For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. . . . He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.”⁷³ Psalm 107:30 goes on to note the response recorded by the psalmist: “Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.” The cry of the disciples in both gospel accounts awakens Jesus who immediately speaks to the storm, commanding it to become peaceful and still (Mark 4:39; Matt 8:26). Immediately, at Jesus’ rebuke of the storm, the state of new orientation is established as the disciples experienced yet another dimension of Jesus’ identity they had not previously known.⁷⁴ The cry once directed to YHWH is now directed to Jesus Christ as the disciples come to more clearly understand his divine nature.

The account of the Canaanite or Syro-Phoenecian woman found in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 is an example of a narrative lament. Matthew’s Gospel gives the following account in 15:21-28:

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Yes, Lord,

⁷³Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 19.

⁷⁴Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 166.

yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered her, O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Within this story, four common elements of the lament Psalms can be found, including (1) the address ("Lord, Son of David"), (2) the complaint ("my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon"), (3) the plea ("Have mercy on me"), and (4) the motivational statement ("even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table"). Ellington also notes the "divine contribution" found both in this New Testament lament and many Psalms, which he describes as "the silence of God."⁷⁵ Jesus' initial lack of response and the woman's continued complaint recorded in Matthew's Gospel form the heart of this story and propel it to its final resolution, the healing of the daughter. Jesus words to the woman function as a "salvation oracle," turning her cry from "plea to praise," and from "despair to hope."⁷⁶

The narratives of the disciples' cry to Jesus during the storm and of the Canaanite woman's plea for deliverance represent a continuation of Old Testament lament prayer in the New Testament. These representative stories show not only that lament continued, but that honest, heartfelt dialogue was welcomed and responded to by God, himself. These narrative laments and the personal laments of Jesus fulfilled, in part, the prophecy of Isaiah 53:3 that Jesus was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," his own and that of others. Luke 4:18-19 records Jesus, reading from the scroll of Isaiah and referring to himself as the one who was anointed to "proclaim good news to the poor . . . proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, . . . set at liberty those who are oppressed." This mission, prophesied in Isaiah, would ultimately lead Jesus to the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of his own suffering in Isaiah 53, and demonstrate

⁷⁵Ellington, *Risking Truth*, 178. The absence or silence of God is noted throughout the Psalms of lament. See for example Pss 22:1; 10:1; 13:1; 55:1-2; 69:16-17; 88:1-2, 14; 102:1-2. Ps 51:9, 11 records David pleading for God not to hide his face, nor to be cast from the presence of God.

⁷⁶Gail O'Day, "Surprised by Faith: Jesus and the Canaanite Woman," *Listening* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 294.

the fulfillment in his earthly ministry, but his own suffering, death, and resurrection would forever change the meaning of believers' suffering for all time.

Conclusion

The clear echoes and extensions of Psalmic lament in the New Testament, as well as of other passages that reflect more broadly the ethos of lament, demonstrate the ongoing need for the church to know and understand the rich language of suffering found in the Psalms. Given that much of the New Testament was written to the persecuted church, it is easy to hear these echoes throughout the letters and epistles. The epistle writers sought not only to give language for expressing lament, but also to gather up the suffering of believers in the work of the crucified Christ and the eschatological hope that resulted from his identification with their suffering. The writer to the Hebrews captured this hope in 4:15–16, stating, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Christ's use of the lament Psalms identified him as this very high priest, the *Christus dolor*, who modeled the truth that the road to praise and new orientation could only be reached by passing through the sorrow and lament of disorientation. His death and resurrection became the template for the lives of all believers, and proved that though suffering is unavoidable, it is bound up in the eschatological hope given by the *Christus victor*. He also modeled that the very genuineness of praise and the glory of new orientation and resurrection could not be fully felt without the ugliness of the cry of lament.

The models of lament found in the Psalms, Christ's prayers, and the New Testament writers' theology of suffering are foundational for modern corporate worship practices. Chapter 5 of this dissertation will discuss implications of lament in the Psalms and New Testament for modern corporate worship, followed by recommendations for further research and worship resources in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE EVANGELICAL WORSHIP

This dissertation has examined the centrality of the Psalms, including the lament Psalms, in the worship of ancient Israel, their presence in the prayers of Christ, and their impact in shaping a theology of suffering and lament in the Gospels and epistles in the New Testament. Chapter 2 demonstrated the integral use of the lament Psalms in both individual and corporate worship in Israel, focusing on the dialogical nature of Israel's relationship with YHWH, and the faithful expressions of suffering which predominate the Psalter. Chapter 3 examined Jesus' use of the lament Psalms in his prayers. Finally, chapter 4 explored the use of the lament Psalms across the New Testament—their presence in the Gospels, and in the writings of Paul, Peter, and John.

The preceding chapters aimed to show that the Psalms function throughout the biblical canon as models for worship, and as such serve as important templates for current planners and leaders of corporate worship. Examination of the various genres of the Psalms yields clear and definite implications for soul care in the evangelical church. One such implication which has been consistently central to corporate worship is that God is to be praised, and that the gathered church should celebrate and offer thanksgiving for Christ's redemptive victory in his death on the cross and resurrection. While this premise for offering praise is vital for corporate worship, of equal importance is the need for corporate worship to be a safe place in which believers can cry out as did the Psalmists when life experience and belief come into conflict. An undeniable precedent for lament as worship is consistently present throughout Scripture, as demonstrated in preceding chapters.

What, then, should be the response to those suffering within the corporate body? How may those in church leadership better plan for and minister to worshippers who would cry out as the Psalmist, “How long, O LORD?” The body of Christ has been wondrously gifted and equipped with professionals and scholars from across disciplines, all of whom can and should contribute through their various ministries to the care of souls. In 1 Corinthians 12:6, Paul reminds believers that though there is a variety of gifts, they come from the same Spirit who “empowers them all.” He continues in verse 7: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit *for the common good*.” Paul goes on to explain that God has specifically placed all parts of the body in relation to one another in order that there be “no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (v. 25). Paul’s body metaphor for the church demonstrates, therefore, the vitality and necessity of all members fully and faithfully functioning together.

The overarching purpose of this dissertation has been to bring attention to the needs of believers for soul care across the body of Christ, specifically the bringing of those needs into corporate worship, and to encourage utilization of the multitude of ministries in Christ’s body to better meet the needs. Attitudes within some sectors of evangelicalism toward biblical counseling as a profession and an essential ministry of the church have often been resistant or skeptical in past decades. The crying needs inside and outside the church in the present day demand that all ministries of the church partner together to serve the “common good” of the suffering. Such joint ministry is not an option, but a necessity in current culture.

This chapter first presents a summary of conclusions and undergirding premises drawn from the examination of Scripture in the preceding chapters that speak to the need for soul care across the spectrum of needs. The chapter concludes with foundational considerations for implementing these premises into corporate worship practices.

Conclusions and Undergirding Premises

From the voice of Abel's blood crying out to God, to the protests of the Psalmists, to Christ's anguished prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the cry of martyrs in Revelation, tears and prayers of suffering are found across the canon. While Scripture makes it clear that Christ's sacrificial death triumphed over evil and suffering (Col 2:13-15) giving believers cause to rejoice, it also makes clear that suffering and "various trials" (1 Pet 1:6) will continue to be normative until Christ's return. One may conclude, then, that if believers follow the biblical example, they will weep.

Thus, the wonder of Scripture, as explored in chapters 2 through 4 of this dissertation, comes in part from the fact that it "addresses the world as we know it," according to Timothy Land and Paul Tripp, and paints a clear picture of God as intimately interested and involved in the details of life, in sorrow as well as in rejoicing.¹ Central to this picture are the Psalms of lament which involve real people wrestling with God and asking aggressive questions in the midst of their suffering. This clear picture is often vastly different from that of modern evangelical corporate worship which tends to emphasize rejoicing and positive thinking. Alternatively, the Psalms paint a vastly different picture of the mixture of sorrow and rejoicing, of protest and praise. Instead of an unrealistic emphasis on perfection, the Psalms, according to John Witvliet, demonstrate a balance of "tenacious faith" and "candid grappling," a consistent movement through the cycle of orientation and disorientation.²

From the Scriptures, therefore, can be distilled at least six undergirding principles on which to build a theology of suffering and corporate soul care:

¹Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2006), 96.

²John Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 40.

1. The Psalms are God's "case book" of soul care. The prayers in the Psalms represent all conditions of the human heart, and as such, serve as exemplars for the processing of all human emotions.³
2. Worship is not pain denial. The Psalmic laments legitimize protest and complaint as valid forms of prayer, and acts of faith and trust.⁴
3. Worship is *dialogical* and *relational*. The relational nature of worship presupposes the use of expressions from across the spectrum of human emotions.
4. Worship is ultimately communal. Although the Psalms of lament are predominantly written by individuals, they ultimately view suffering as communal, given the centrality of the community to the well-being of the individual.
5. Lament fuels authentic praise.
6. Lament has an eschatological dimension. Christ's crucifixion transforms lament into an eschatological practice as it accelerates the consummation of Christ's ministry.⁵

These undergirding principles and their implications for modern corporate worship are briefly examined next.

The Psalms As God's "Case Book"

The beautiful poetry of the Psalms was written by real people who lived and worshipped in ancient Israel. Although the circumstances of their lives were much different from those of modern believers, their humanity, its joys, sorrows, victories, and losses, was the same. According to Tim Keller, therefore, the Psalms function as God's "case book" of prayers prayed from across the emotional spectrum. As such, they teach believers to pour out their emotions "pre-reflectively," that is, to pray their emotions first, before

³Tim Keller, "Praying the Gospel," *Psalms: The Songs of Jesus* sermon series, recorded February 20-March 19, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed June 24, 2016. <http://www.gospelinlife.com/psalms-the-songs-of-jesus>.

⁴Jared Runck, Professor of Old Testament Studies at Urshan College, St. Louis, MO, conversation with author, April 12, 2014.

⁵Scott Ellington, *Risking Truth: Reshaping the World through Prayers of Lament*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. K. C. Hanson, Charles M. Collier, and D. Christopher Spinks (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 181.

filtering them, to lay the emotions bare in the presence of God, the only true source of healing wholeness.⁶

There are at least two main implications of these myriad expressions for modern corporate worship. First, planners and leaders of worship must be sensitive to the needs and life circumstances of those whom they shepherd, and plan the corporate service appropriately. Thus, for example, a service of exuberant rejoicing following the sudden death of a child in the church community would not only be insensitive, but would greatly hinder both the bereaved family and the larger corporate body from bringing their pain into worship and processing it in the presence of God. Sensitive planning and leading, therefore, teaches believers that the corporate gathering is a safe place to bring their sorrows, and that they may enter into God's presence and pray pre-reflective prayers, whether using the words of the Psalmists or their own. Making space for such reflection requires careful teaching, planning, and modeling of lament prayers by those in leadership so that those who are suffering can feel greater freedom to express their own lament before God. Nancy Duff suggests that opportunities for corporate lament should be introduced in a similar manner as regular times of confession and repentance in order to make lament a corporate practice with which believers would be comfortable.⁷

In addition to the work needed by planners and leaders of corporate worship, the expertise of professional counselors and social workers in the congregation should be utilized. The drawing together of the various ministries within the corporate body can better equip the pastoral and worship leadership within the church to lead those who are suffering in prayers of lament. By utilizing and drawing upon the expertise and input of

⁶Tim Keller, "Praying Your Tears," *Psalms: The Songs of Jesus* sermon series, recorded February 20-March 19, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, accessed February 24, 2016. <http://www.gospelinlife.com/psalms-the-songs-of-jesus>.

⁷Nancy Duff, "Recovering Lamentation as a Practice in the Church," in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 8-9.

believers professionally trained in soul care, those who lead in song selection and service planning in corporate worship can more effectively and sensitively compose prayers of lament, and can choose songs and scripture readings that teach believers to honestly and courageously name their feelings in God's presence.⁸

Worship Is Not Pain Denial

Praise is a central element of corporate worship mandated by Scripture. Yet, worship that does not also include space for expressions of lament can not only become unbalanced, according to Duff, but even "self-deceptive" and devoid of hope.⁹ While praise of God is mandated in Scripture (e.g., Pss 95, 98, 150), believers must realize that praise does not guarantee hope, nor does lament negate it. The common misconception is that only praise can be connected to faith and hope. This misconception stereotypes lament as negative thinking and as a practice to be avoided. Clinton McCann cites this misconception as the reason for the limited number of lament Psalms and hymns found in most corporate worship services today.¹⁰ Their absence results in a hymnody that is at best one-sided, and at worst misrepresentative of a life equally marked by orientation and disorientation. With respect to such "one-sided" hymnody, Brueggemann writes, "It is very clear that a church that goes on singing 'happy songs' in the face of raw reality is doing something very different from what the Bible itself does."¹¹ Instead, corporate worship practices should strive to reflect the balance in the Psalms, a balance that does not deny suffering, but offers it as an honest and authentic act of worship.

⁸Duff, "Recovering Lamentation," 9.

⁹Ibid., 4.

¹⁰Clinton J. McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 85.

¹¹Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 52.

Corporate worship that includes only positive expressions to the exclusion of lament inaccurately associates lament with negative thinking. Such worship also faces the danger of directing the worshipper's confidence to self instead of its rightful place in God alone. A worship experience that connects faith and praise to positive thinking, in which believers challenge one another to think enough positive thoughts until the suffering ceases, would be foreign to the Psalmists. Such encouragement to simply think positive thoughts, according to Glenn Pemberton, results in confidence that has "replaced recognition of need."¹² Pemberton cites Jesus's own transparent modeling of lament within a group setting at the death of Lazarus:

When Jesus encountered grieving sisters, contemplated his own impending death, or hung on a cross, he did not try to comfort everyone by telling them to have more faith, that God has a plan, or not to worry because "all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord." He did not lead them in a song of praise—*he lamented*—not for lack of faith or doubt in the Father, but because of his faith and because of his relationship with a Father who understands life at sea.¹³

The decision to bring his pain to God is an authentic act of worship that represents a turning away from human hubris and pride to an acknowledgement that God alone can save.

Worship Is Dialogical and Relational

Chapter 2 of this dissertation explored the dialogical nature of Israel's relationship with God. Relationships devoid of dialogue, or those that embody only positive expressions are relationships that are one-sided, and ultimately unhealthy. As previously noted, the Psalms are pre-reflective prayers spoken directly *to* God, as opposed to prayers or songs *about* God. Such direct discourse—both as praise and lament—establishes or confirms the relationship between the Psalmist and God.

¹²Glenn Pemberton, *Hurting with God: Learning to Lament with the Psalms* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012), 40.

¹³*Ibid.*, 52, emphasis original.

This dialogical model found in the Psalms has important implications for modern corporate worship practices. The Psalmists understood that their relationship with God was all-encompassing, and as such, included all of life experience. Brueggemann has explained that the Psalmists teach believers that “there is nothing out of bounds, nothing precluded or inappropriate [to express to God],” and to “withhold parts of life . . . is in fact to withhold part of life from the sovereignty of God.”¹⁴ Thus, a balanced and rich variety of expressions in corporate worship serves to deepen and strengthen the relationship between God and individual worshipers, and between individuals and the worshipping community as a whole.

Lament as an Act of Community

The Psalms, even when written from the viewpoint of the individual, often ended in either an affirmation of God’s faithfulness to the community (Ps 22:25), or with the Psalmist mourning his marginalized state (Ps 42:4). Feelings of marginalization caused by suffering are a reality for many believers, and are augmented by the individualistic nature of the current culture. One vital function of corporate worship, therefore, is to restore the element of community as God’s people so familiar to the Psalmists. Paul’s use of the “body” (1 Cor 12) and “building” (Eph 2) metaphors resonates with this sense of community, and appeals to believers in a counter-cultural call to focus on their corporate identity as a unified body. Such practices encourage believers to be bearers of hope for those who cannot find hope within themselves.¹⁵

While individual laments predominate in the Psalter, the corporate laments are equally as important as templates for corporate worship. These laments (e.g., 44, 74, 79, 137), when read in community, remind believers that they are “citizens,” and caution against the indifference endemic to the individualistic culture. Additionally, these

¹⁴Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 52.

¹⁵Duff, “Recovering Lamentation,” 4.

corporate laments, such as Psalm 74, can be prayed by the congregation as a means to grieve for those who are persecuted worldwide. In this way, the Psalms serve as both template for and teacher of prayer, bringing the community into greater solidarity with brothers and sisters across the world.¹⁶

Outside the Psalms, the lament as an act of community is also found in the writings of Paul. In what is perhaps his clearest admonition on the subject, Paul admonished believers in Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” There was no delineation between rejoicing and weeping, nor indication that one was communal and the other relegated to the small group or private therapy session. Paul’s command was clear: both rejoicing and weeping should be done in community.

Lament Fuels Authentic Praise

Chapter 2 of this dissertation discussed the cycle often found in the Psalms of lament to praise, or disorientation to new orientation, and the repetition of that cycle. Psalm 138, for example, demonstrates that praise is robust and meaningful when fueled by the remembrance of deliverance: “On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased” (v. 3); “For though the LORD is on high, he regards the lowly” (v. 6a); and “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life” (v. 7a). These recollections of times of suffering and of God’s deliverance lead the Psalmist to offer thanks with his “whole heart” (v. 1), to “bow down towards your holy temple” (v. 2), and to proclaim his praise so profoundly that “all the kings of the earth shall give you thanks” (v. 4). The Psalmist offered profound, exuberant praise, the kind that could only come

¹⁶Pemberton asks important questions regarding the need for solidarity across the worldwide body of Christ: “Why do our hymnals portray Christianity as a celebration of one victory after another while neglecting voices crying out from the margins of loss and defeat? Is this portrayal true to our world? Is it true to biblical theology?” Pemberton, *Hurting with God*, 40.

from the recollection of deep sorrow out of which God delivered him.

Gerald Peterman, commenting on the unique nature of praise born of lament, goes so far as to claim, “Without pain, praise is ‘thin’ and halfhearted.”¹⁷ Practically, planners and leaders of corporate worship can aid in believers’ understanding of this cycle by organizing services around themes of the church calendar during times such as Holy Week. While the rejoicing and praise associated with Easter Sunday is merited, it can only be fully felt after the congregation has first journeyed through the lament of the events of Christ’s passion associated with the days prior, with weeping, crucifixion, and death. Only as believers are led through the sorrow of Christ’s suffering and death can the magnificence, beauty, and power of his resurrection begin to be comprehended and be fully celebrated.

Lament as Eschatological Practice

The death and resurrection of Christ propelled his followers into a consistent tension between rejoicing born of redemption and the cry, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20). The eschatological function of lament directly contradicts the triumphalist philosophy that seeks to achieve freedom from sorrow in the present, claiming that Christ’s promise of abundant life (John 10:10) meant that the dissonance of suffering would be removed, or that it would have little impact on the Christian. Instead, lament acknowledges the present reality of the brokenness of fallen humanity in a fallen world, holding these in tension with the hope of God’s coming kingdom. This tension, perhaps it can be said, is the beauty of lament, as it resists the present suffering while reaching forward in hope.

While it has been posited that suffering must be given voice in the gathered church, and that believers must share in the communal cry of lament, it must also be

¹⁷Gerald W. Peterman, “Longing to Lament: Returning to the Language of Suffering,” in *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering*, ed. Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Schmutzer (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 108.

emphasized that lament is not the final word. Ultimately, lament for the Christian will end in praise, as it did in nearly all the Psalms. The offering of praise to God, according to John Swinton, enables believers to “take seriously the pain and sadness of the world, but refuse to be crushed by it.”¹⁸ However, even heartfelt praise, offered by believers in thankfulness unto God, somehow does not satisfy the longing of those still living with unanswered questions in a broken world.

Thus, it is important for worship leaders to hold in tension the triumph of Christ’s sacrificial love with His ultimate coming defeat of death and the hope that brings.¹⁹ In short, expressions of suffering and lament in corporate worship cannot be divorced from the cry in Revelation 22:20, “Come, Lord Jesus.” While the theme of suffering due to persecution pervades the New Testament, so does the cry for Christ’s kingdom to come. Though not all believers suffer from persecution, life in a fallen and sinful world will bring suffering and sorrow, and will always lead believers to cry out for Christ’s return. “Following Christ’s ascension,” worship scholar Matthew Westerholm writes, “the church lives in the days when the bridegroom has been taken away from them (Matt 9:15). This is a season to lament.”²⁰

In addressing the Roman believers, Paul reminds them that “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings” (Rom 5:2-5). Douglas Hall comments, “Paul knows that ‘the story, as yet, has no ending,’ or to be more accurate, he knows that the ending (*eschatos*) . . . is a matter of hope, not of sight, and as such, an

¹⁸John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 113.

¹⁹J. Christiaan Beker, *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 97.

²⁰Matthew Westerholm, “‘The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here’: The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 190.

ending *out of* and *towards which* we are commanded to live.”²¹ The unfinished “story” in which believers now live necessarily holds the tension of both sorrow and hope. If the corporate worship service is comprised of only praise and thanksgiving it will ultimately leave suffering worshippers feeling as outsiders, and it will not be faithful to the model found in the Psalms. Giving believers space and the means of expressing sorrow and lament, using the broad range of emotions found in the Psalms, comforts the sorrowful, and hastens the coming of Christ’s kingdom in the sense that Christ commanded his disciples to “occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13).

Foundational Considerations for Facilitating Lament in Corporate Evangelical Worship

The promise of redemption and the hope of the coming of Christ’s kingdom is today more urgent than ever in the post-9/11 world where suffering and persecution are the daily reality for many Christians. While North American believers are largely exempt from persecution, Christians in areas such as North Korea, the Middle East, and North Africa suffer for their faith on a daily basis.²² While suffering and persecution may ebb and flow, the laments of the Psalmists and those of first-century believers continue, even though the triumphalism of North American culture often silences their expression.²³

²¹Douglas Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 143.

²²Open Doors USA, “World Watch List,” accessed June 19, 2017, <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>.

²³C. Clifton Black reminds believers that the long line of those who lament continues and connects to the Psalmists as well as to first-century believers addressed by Paul and others: “As long as we live with God in a world destined for glory yet still unredeemed, at times unspeakably blasphemed, we shall lament even as we rejoice.” Black carefully cautions Christian leadership to note the difference between grief and lament: “Well-intentioned but mistaken psychotherapists have confused grief with lament, implying that lamentation expresses a definable stage in a predictable grieving process. A person or family proceeds through ‘stages of grief,’ which, if executed successfully . . . eventuate in a mentally reconstituted individual or group. . . . This I know, by faith, and from experience: grief may wane or become numbed, but lament is not a ‘stage’ from which children destined for the glory of God evolve, then leave behind (Col. 1:24–29).”

Thus, it is important for worship leaders to attend prayerfully and intentionally to the needs of the suffering within their congregations, as well as those in the world-wide community of believers. As modeled by Paul and other writers of the New Testament, celebration of Christ's triumph must be held in tension with the acknowledgement of present suffering. Without this tension, according to Beker, either suffering is devoid of hope and results in despair and despondency, or hope apart from suffering becomes fallacious and baseless.²⁴ The careful and prayerful interweaving of these varied elements into the liturgy must acknowledge the suffering of local believers and the larger persecuted church, while undergirding these realities with proclamation of the hope and redemption given through the gospel and the promise of Christ's coming reign.

The following elements provide a solid foundation for a worship service that can sustain this tension biblically: (1) a clear theology of the cross, (2) relearning and reclaiming the language of lament, and (3) regular recital and sharing of the common story or shared history of the church body.

A Clear Theology of the Cross

In his article "The Friday Voice of Faith," Walter Brueggemann states, "The loss of the lament psalm in the worship life of the church is essentially the loss of a theology of the cross."²⁵ The cross paradoxically teaches believers that strength is found in weakness, and that resurrection cannot take place without death, and the accompanying tears and suffering. Christ's suffering showed believers that he was able to "sympathize with our weakness" (Heb 4:15). Taking appropriate time to linger in the lament in

Thus, since life is consistently intertwined with suffering, space for it in the liturgy must be consistent. C. Clifton Black, "The Persistence of the Wounds," in *Lament*, 53.

²⁴Beker, *Suffering and Hope*, 31-38.

²⁵Walter Brueggemann, "The Friday Voice of Faith," *Reformed Worship* 30 (December 1993), accessed June 19, 2017, <https://www.reformedworship.org/article/december-1993/friday-voice-faith-serious-theology-cross-requires-serious-practice-lament-psa>.

corporate worship without pressure of an immediate “rush to rejoicing” reminds believers that Christ understood human frailty, and that worshippers can safely bring suffering to the cross within the community of believers.

While the paradox of the cross seems to be largely rejected in triumphalist North American culture, the Christian church dare not reject it. Echoing Beker’s connection of suffering to hope, Brueggemann envisions the relationship between lament and praise as the “Friday and Sunday of Christian faith,” respectively, and sees in it the pattern of crucifixion and resurrection modeled in the sufferings and ultimate triumph of Christ.²⁶ By implication, to remove the acknowledgment of suffering and to focus only on the triumph of Christ’s resurrection is to lose an entire dimension of the meaning of Christ’s salvific work. While Christ did indeed triumph over sin and death, he did not do so apart from the suffering of the cross. Thus, while a triumph intoxicated church will much more easily embrace Christ’s resurrection and finds comfort in celebrating, an important dimension of this triumph is lost when worshippers do not invest time weeping over the pain of his death.

While Christ’s triumph over death is the turning point of all time and the source of the Christian’s hope, Christ’s suffering and death is something of which worshippers must regularly be reminded. The Psalms of lament can facilitate this reminder, or in the very least, serve as templates for new songs of corporate lament. These types of expressions not only help worshippers process their personal suffering, but can enable them to both receive and share Christ’s compassion and mercy with believers locally and worldwide. If lament is to be restored, worship leaders and planners must assist believers in a renewed understanding of and love for the cross.

²⁶Brueggemann, “The Friday Voice of Faith.”

Relearning and Reclaiming the Language of Lament

Incorporation of lament into corporate worship can be accomplished through prayers, the reading of Psalms, corporate music, art, and preaching. The focus of this dissertation has been on the biblical foundations for the musical portion of corporate worship, finding much of its basis in the Psalms of lament.

Structuring the language of worship to encourage specific kinds of laments is work which must be carefully and prayerfully completed. Historically, lament in the liturgy has focused almost exclusively on penitence and confession.²⁷ The Seven Penitential Psalms, chosen by Augustine, eventually came to be linked to a specific “cardinal sin”: (1) Psalm 6: anger; (2) Psalm 32: pride; (3) Psalm 38: gluttony; (4) Psalm 51: lechery; (5) Psalm 102: greed; (6) Psalm 130: envy; and (7) Psalm 143: sloth.²⁸ According to Peterman, these Psalms eventually became the focus of corporate lament, to the near-exclusion of other expressions in public worship, with the exception of special services.²⁹ However, given that some suffering is undeserved, and not the result of sin, the broad range of emotions expressed across the Psalms of lament, not only the penitential Psalms, must become part of the language of the church.

Finally, when modeled on the prayers of the Psalmists, corporate lament eventually culminates in an expression of confidence in God’s faithfulness and steadfast love.³⁰ Space and time for such expressions during the corporate service must be included. Singer-songwriter and author, Michael Card, in his 2005 book *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament* established a turning point in evangelical

²⁷Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 14.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹Peterman, “Longing to Lament,” 118.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 120.

awareness of the need for lament in corporate worship. Writing to the church after 9/11, Michael Card proclaims as a central theme in the book that song “born in the wilderness of suffering” is ultimately the truest expression of worship offered by the body of Christ.³¹ Thus, after giving ample space to express one’s own suffering, and for believers to share the suffering of others, worshippers must be led in a remembrance of God’s past acts of deliverance, either through the words of Scripture (the Psalms, epistles, etc.) or new words by of the congregation itself.³² Modeling the Psalmists, worshippers are reminded of God’s faithful acts of deliverance, and in the act of remembering are able to offer faith-filled, authentic praise, even in the presence of suffering.³³ The volatile nature of the world demands that church be a place of respite and a safe space for the honest, heartfelt expressions of suffering.

Regular Recital of the Shared History of Believers

A recurring central theme in the Psalms of lament is the element of community. This theme is especially important in Psalms when the Psalmist mourns the severing of community due to suffering. Psalm 22, for example, concludes with the sufferer rejoicing upon his return to community (vv. 22-23) and finally calling for others to join him in praise of YHWH (v. 23). The element of community cannot be excluded if suffering individuals are to be holistically restored; the body of believers is integral during the time of suffering.

³¹Michael Card, *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), 63. Theologian Don Saliers supports Card’s claim that the most authentic worship results from suffering: “Christian public prayer finds praise and thanksgiving far less demanding when lamenting is suppressed . . . [and] praise and thanksgiving grow empty when the truth about human rage over suffering and injustice is never uttered. The revelatory character of prayer, liturgical or devotional, is diminished when no laments are ever raised.” Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 121.

³²John Witvliet, *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 32.

³³Ibid.

The building of community through shared story and recitation of common history can maintain the healthy bonds needed when suffering strikes the individual. The recitation of God's deliverance of Israel was common, as found in Psalms 78, 105, 106, and 136. Within each of these Psalms are references to the sins of the people, the suffering of the nation, God's acts of deliverance, and the record of God's blessings to remind the people of God's mercy, faithfulness, and steadfast love.

The reiteration of this shared story of God's work on behalf of His people, according to Lee Roy Martin, "build[s] community and transmits the ethos of the community to new members and to the next generation."³⁴ In addition to connecting current and future generations, the shared story of God's delivering acts reminds believers of their solidarity with generations past, and even the Psalmists themselves. The shared story must hold suffering and rejoicing in tension, along with the common thread of God's faithful presence and the promise of Christ's coming kingdom. Thus, Martin states, instead of "a weekly convention of strangers," corporate worship is to be filled with people from all walks of life, broken and whole, sharing in the bearing of burdens, fulfilling Paul's command to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15).³⁵ The prayerful, sensitive selection of hymns, songs, and scriptural readings, with regular repetition, can begin to build the foundation upon which this shared story is built.

Conclusion

The rich gift of the Psalms given to Christian believers has been an integral part of corporate worship beginning with their use in ancient Israel. The Psalmists were ordinary people, dedicated to the service of God, who penned deeply expressive songs of

³⁴Lee Roy Martin, "The Book of Psalms and Pentecostal Worship," in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016), 83.

³⁵*Ibid.*

individual and corporate worship. While separated from the Psalmists by centuries of time, believers today are intimately connected to them by the covenant with YHWH, by the element of shared humanity, and the broad range of emotions which result from daily living. Central to the Psalmists was their connection in the heritage of those who lived under YHWH's reign. Christian believers today must remember that they, too, are a part of that heritage, and can thus borrow the words of the Psalmists as they connect themselves to this long line of worshippers.

Undergirding the cry of the Psalmists for the church is the indescribable gift of Christ's redemptive suffering and resurrection, a gift over which the body of Christ can and should rejoice. And yet, even with this life-altering reality, believers continue to suffer in the post-9/11 world filled with wars, tragic loss, sickness, sin, and death. It is in the midst of this suffering that believers can reach back and join in the Psalmist's cries, even while reaching forward to the promise of Christ's coming kingdom, where John's prophecy of Revelation 21:3-5 will be realized:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

In the face of suffering, within the tension held between pain and hope, the task of the worship leader is immense. Corporate song provides an environment where expressions of sorrow and wrestling with unanswered questions can be done safely, in community, as worshippers share not only in the sorrow of one another in the local church, but hear and uplift the cry of suffering and persecuted believers worldwide. The biblical precedent for such practices, as demonstrated in this dissertation, is undeniable. As the world becomes increasingly broken and sinful, believers can draw upon the rich scriptural expressions found in the Psalms and throughout the canon, holding suffering and hope in tension until the unfolding of Christ's kingdom when tears will be no more.

CHAPTER 6

WORSHIP CASE STUDIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In recent years, use of the Psalms in Christian worship has been on the rise and has included the use of the laments. Among the catalysts for this renewal have been new books and recordings whose creators birthed them after seasons of struggle, often times of personal loss or in the lives of loved ones. Recent notable examples of such creative work have been produced by artists and scholars who having endured either a painful event or a prolonged period of suffering, have found in the Psalms of lament a rich resource that is both cathartic and healing. Such expressions, therefore, are often only birthed after a period of personal or communal tragedy.

Worship Case Studies

Four case studies of recent musical or scholarly projects will be discussed that demonstrate ways in which lament Psalms have become a means of expression to pray through and process experiences of suffering or tragedy: (1) the recent recording by Sandra McCracken of select Psalms, with particular focus on her use of Psalm 42 and the healing it brought during a period of personal suffering;¹ (2) the scholarly study of the Psalms by Ray Van Neste and C. Richard Wells birthed out of the aftermath of a tornado that struck Union University in 2008;² (3) the multiple layers of suffering in the life and ministry of Michael Card which resulted in pastoral and devotional literature and songs

¹Sandra McCracken, *Psalms*, Towhee Records B00U583Z9U, 2015, CD.

²C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste, *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship* (Nashville: B & H, 2012).

on the subject of lament;³ and (4) the work of American Slater Armstrong whose compassion for suffering Christians in Sudan, Africa, resulted in a recording of original songs using indigenous instrumentation and the voices of the Sudanese people to express both hope and joy in the presence of unprecedented and protracted suffering.⁴ The chapter concludes with an examination of parallel studies that intersect and resonate with corporate lament expressions, and suggested areas for further study.

Sandra McCracken: Personal Use of the Lament Psalms

Sandra McCracken is a song and hymn writer whose 2015 recording *Psalms* was in great part an expression of her personal sorrow during a period of deep suffering.⁵ In a 2015 interview with The Gospel Coalition in which she referenced her suffering, McCracken described the Psalms as “invitational,” in the sense that they invite believers into intimacy with God. McCracken commented,

The Psalms are by nature invitational. I recently asked a pastor-friend about how he would describe healthy relational intimacy, asking what it looks like within marriage or within close community. He said that the first word he thinks of that displays intimacy between two people is *invitation*. When God included the poetry of the Psalms in his letter to us, he made a move toward us that invites us more deeply toward him, with our affections and with our emotion.⁶

McCracken continued in the interview, emphasizing how believers who are caught up in the daily task of living rarely have time to reflect on deeper feelings and emotions and

³Michael Card, *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005).

⁴Slater Armstrong, *Even in Sorrow: A Recorded Project for the Persecuted Church in Sudan*, Joining Our Voices B001CQOQQA, 2002, CD.

⁵McCracken, *Psalms*.

⁶Ivan Mesa and Sandra McCracken, “Sandra McCracken on Life, Loss, and Longing in the Psalms,” May 21, 2015, accessed July 29, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sandra-mccracken-psalms>.

how these are evidenced in interactions and behaviors.⁷ According to McCracken, “Often it takes a painful life-disruption before we stop and reflect on what’s beneath the surface of the life we have built.”⁸ Although the Psalms were part of her daily devotional practice, McCracken admits that the inspiration to versify and set these texts to music came out of her own time of suffering.⁹

On her album McCracken includes three versifications of lament Psalms: 42 (“My Help, My God”), 43 (“Send Out Your light”), and 62 (“My Soul Finds Rest”).¹⁰ A fourth song includes the cry, “O LORD, have mercy,” found in many of the laments, including Psalms 25, 51, and 123. According to McCracken, the song “My Help, My God,” a versification of Psalm 42, became a repeated and beloved anthem during the most difficult period of her suffering.¹¹ This Psalm concludes with the Psalmist encouraging himself: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” This verse is also found in Psalm 43, and is included in the song “Send Out Your Light.”¹²

As a result of her journey through sorrow and lament, McCracken concludes that the Psalms are a source of expression when a believer’s own ability to verbally express their pain is silenced as they enable one to “go deeper into honest sorrow,”

⁷Mesa and McCracken, “Sandra McCracken on Life, Loss, and Longing.”

⁸Ibid.

⁹Sandra McCracken, “Songs of Praise, Lament, and Hope” (lecture at Calvin Institute of Worship, May 2, 2016), accessed July 29, 2017, <http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/songs-of-praise-lament-and-hope/>.

¹⁰McCracken, *Psalms*.

¹¹Sandra McCracken, “My Help, My God,” 7041360, Drink Your Tea Music, 2015.

¹²Sandra McCracken, “Send Out Your Light,” 7041263, Drink Your Tea Music, 2015.

because “we are not the first to feel what we feel.”¹³ While some of McCracken’s Psalm versifications are individual prayers, she states that she has been recently burdened to write versions more appropriate for congregational use.¹⁴ While acknowledging that the present culture avoids personal expressions of grief in favor of success and triumphalism, McCracken believes the church must “fight against the dishonesty of living on the surface of things, or encouraging people to put a smile on their faces so they will have a positive attitude about difficult things.”¹⁵

McCracken’s journey into and through a period of suffering resulted in a change in mood of her performances from extroverted and lighthearted to more contemplative and introspective expressions. While she acknowledges in the interview that in the future her journey may turn back to a period where every performance is a “party,” at present the sorrow has led her to use the Psalmic laments as a new and different lens through which to view and process life.¹⁶ Her long season of growth has birthed a new set of devotional resources for the layperson and a desire in McCracken herself to write and produce laments for congregational use.

In her embrace and reworking of the Psalms, in this project McCracken is an example of a believer accessing these ancient songs in order to express and pray specific emotions, and particularly those of sorrow. In doing so, she taught believers to align themselves with the emotions of the Psalmists. This type of personal/devotional use of the Psalms can aid in restoring believers to the community of faith, while at the same time

¹³Mesa, “Sandra McCracken on Life, Loss, and Longing.”

¹⁴McCracken, “Songs of Praise, Lament, and Hope.”

¹⁵Mesa, “Sandra McCracken on Life, Loss, and Longing.”

¹⁶Calvin Worship Institute, “Conversation with Singer-Songwriter Sandra McCracken,” May 2, 2017, accessed August 8, 2017, <http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/conversation-with-singer-songwriter-sandra-mccracken/>.

enriching the dialogical relationship with God so deeply valued by the Psalmists themselves.

**C. Richard Wells and Ray Van Neste:
The Lament Psalms in Community**

The beauty of the Psalms is in part due to their versatility, in that they can function in virtually every setting of the church's ministry, from personal use and scholarly study, to pastoral care. Ray Van Neste and C. Richard Wells, both members of the faculty at Union University, compiled the book *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*, from papers given during a conference on the Psalms at their institution in 2008.¹⁷ Earlier that year, just prior to the originally scheduled conference date of February 2008, the university was struck by a massive tornado that destroyed a large part of the campus. Covering a span of topics, the chapters explore how the Psalms serve as a guide for Christian life and worship, both in times of joy and pain. In the preface to the book, Van Neste shares how he and his colleague, professor of music Dr. Betty Bedsole, settled on the Psalms precisely because of the devastating circumstances through which their university community had come. Although the suffering and massive loss experienced was communal rather than personal, the authors' foundational reason for turning to the Psalms was much the same as McCracken's: they found in the Psalter a means for processing and expressing emotion, prayer, and healing from immense tragedy.

Van Neste elaborates on the purpose and foundation for the study in the preface of the book, noting that at previous points in the history of the church, the Psalms were a consistent source of inspiration and reformation for this process.¹⁸ Using this historic foundation, Van Neste and Wells divided the book into two sections: (1) biblical and historical foundations for use of the Psalms, which explores how the Psalms are formative

¹⁷Wells and Van Neste, *Forgotten Songs*, xiii.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 2.

for corporate practices of prayer, not only in the early church, but also in ancient Israel and in the worship practices of Christ and his disciples, and (2) incorporating the Psalms into modern worship practices, which offers practical examples of how to sing the Psalms in corporate worship, including the lament Psalms. The book concludes with an annotated bibliography of resources for those desiring to implement the Psalms into corporate worship.

Birthing out of tragedy, this collection of essays covers a spectrum of ways—from scholarly work to practical ministry application—for incorporating Psalms into the life of the church. It is a resource that brings with it a depth of insight from the community’s journey through suffering as the voices of various authors, including faculty, staff, and students within the Union University community. The book demonstrates the ways in which suffering and lament are able to create out of pain an offering that can serve and minister to the community of believers, and help to refine and mature, even transform their worldview by evoking deep gratitude and a greater pursuit of relationship with God and one another.

The study of the Psalms by Wells and Van Neste demonstrates the need for songs and expressions of lament by the community of believers in times of tragedy. The study is unique in that it not only explored ancient practices of Psalmic lament, but also applied these practices to the present losses experienced at the university. Additionally, this study demonstrates how the community of believers can be called together by the Psalms to express myriad emotions, and to process them in the presence of God, both individually and corporately.

Michael Card: Pastoral and Devotional Use of the Lament Psalms

Singer-songwriter, and author Michael Card has for several years directed the focus of his artistic efforts to restoring lament in the devotional life and pastoral literature of the church. Card’s song “Come Lift Up Your Sorrows,” which is representative of his

desire to restore lament practices in both the personal devotional lives and corporate worship of Christians, invites believers to “come find the worth of God that only the suffering seek.”¹⁹ In *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament*, Card shares the story of a postcard he received from theologian and scholar Calvin Seerveld shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that read, “See, you have no songs to sing.”²⁰ Seerveld’s terse note inspired Card to compose laments, and to equip others to do the same. It was also the final catalyst for Card’s watershed book that brought suffering to the forefront of evangelical Christian consciousness—at least for those that had ears to hear, and inspired the production of his subsequent recording, *The Hidden Face of God*, hymns and original songs of lament.²¹

Prior to the events of 9/11, Card shares in the book he had faced tragedy and profound loss in his personal life and the lives of close family members. In the space of thirteen months, his sister had lost two unborn children, and his son was arrested on three different occasions.²² Card relates how the long season of sorrow over his son’s self-destructive lifestyle brought to him a greater understanding of God’s *hesed*, the Hebrew word which permeates the Psalms often translated as God’s “lovingkindness,” a concept which Card explains as the essence of the gospel.²³ The pain of his son’s arrests and other tragic events in Card’s personal journey reached a personal climax for him following the

¹⁹Michael Card, “Come Lift Up Your Sorrows,” *The Hidden Face of God*, Discovery House Music B000GS5DTY, 2006, CD.

²⁰Card, *A Sacred Sorrow*, 7; Michael Card, “General Session 6, part 1” (presentation, Think Worship Conference at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, June 17-19, 2014).

²¹Card, *The Hidden Face of God*.

²²Card, “General Session 6, part 1.”

²³Card, *A Sacred Sorrow*, 15.

attacks on the nation on 9/11, driving the direction of his entire ministry to the study, writing, and teaching of biblical lament from that time on.

As a result of his own journey, Card concluded that the rhythm of suffering followed by lament is part of the biblical model of the journey that every believer will experience.²⁴ This journey is not only modeled in the life of key biblical figures (i.e., Job), but also throughout the entirety of Scripture, which models the movement from knowing God as a “concept,” to knowing him as a “person,” and in “relationship.”²⁵ Card’s personal journey of suffering led him to conclude, therefore, that “all worship begins in the wilderness,” and it is in the wilderness that one finds that the most precious gift one can offer to God is “the thing that hurts you most.”²⁶ In the process of Card’s working through these concepts and his own suffering over the years, he produced a series of books and songs, albums, and conference lectures that invite believers to share their sorrows with God, both individually and corporately, and enable them individually and corporately to move through the wilderness of lament into the rich relationship with God brought about as a result of the journey. Card’s music serves as an example of the diversity of themes that can come from the Psalms and how they can be crafted for both individual and corporate use. His work demonstrates the multivalent nature of the Psalms of lament for use in personal devotion as well as for pastoral care.

Sudan, Africa: Global Lament Traditions

Outside the North American context the need for lament resources is great due to widespread persecution of Christians in areas such as Sudan. In her article on the use of the arts in trauma healing, Harriet Hill, program director for the Trauma Healing

²⁴Card, “General Session 6, part 1.”

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Institute of The American Bible Society contends, “For traumatized people to find healing, they need to express their pain.”²⁷ Hill notes that most African cultures adhere to a lament tradition that can incorporate melody, poetry, dance, or a specific posture.²⁸ Sadly, those unfamiliar African cultures have at times labeled such traditions as “heathen” or “off-limits,” according to Hill.²⁹ While these expressions may seem foreign to those outside the African context, when compared with the Psalmic laments, such demonstrations are more in line with the biblical responses to suffering in ancient Israel than non-expressive Western modes of response to pain.³⁰

A striking example of worship born out of suffering is captured on the recording by Slater Armstrong of Sudanese Christians who have suffered persecution and even death as a result of a civil war that lasted many decades in their country.³¹ Armstrong, serving at the time as a worship leader in Louisiana, first heard the story of atrocities suffered by the Dinka community in the late 1990s, when many of their people were forced into slavery during the war.³² Armstrong travelled to Sudan in 1999, and recorded the singing of Dinka congregations and choirs of adults and children on the album entitled *Even in Sorrow: A Recorded Project for the Persecuted Church in Sudan*.³³ The album, which was released in 2002, also included some native instruments. Most of the songs feature

²⁷Harriet Hill, “The Arts and Trauma Healing in Situations of Violence and Conflict,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 177.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 178.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹George Luke, “Eritrea and Sudan: Worship in the Midst of Suffering,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church*, 200. Armstrong, *Even in Sorrow*.

³²Luke, “Eritrea and Sudan,” 200.

³³Armstrong, *Even in Sorrow*.

amazingly up-tempo tune styles despite lyrics that express deep sorrow over the loss suffered by the people. The song “Children of God” details the terror of an enemy raid at night during which the Dinka believers were brutally beaten, sexually abused, and many captured and sent into slavery.³⁴ This song holds in tension the brutality of the suffering and the fact that the people are “children of God,” calling on other Christians to realize their plight and offer help:

We’re children who should be protected,
Just like the ones you adore.
We’re orphans with angelic faces
With names like Barbara and George.
Like Jonathan, David, and Mary,
People you love of your own
We’re naked and hungry, we need liberating
From prison and dying alone.³⁵

The most closely Psalm-based song on the album, “Praise Jehovah,” expresses trust in God that is born of oppression and loss.³⁶

O Lord, You’re my comfort and solace
When I am alone.
When I look for direction and purpose,
You lead me home.

Oh Lord, You’re my light and salvation,
When trials appear.
When I’m sinking in deep tribulation,
You hold me near.

Reflecting a confidence and praise born of sorrow, the song echoes Psalm passages such as 18:1-6, which reflect the confident speech of one who has experienced sorrow and whose cry was heard by God.

Armstrong’s *Even in Sorrow* captures only a few grippingly honest songs of both trust and sorrow being created amid suffering, persecution, and loss by Christians across the world. It is also a glimpse into the way in which cultures outside North

³⁴Lyrics cited from Armstrong, “Children of God,” track 3, *Even in Sorrow*.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Lyrics cited from Armstrong, “Praise Jehovah,” track 5, *Even in Sorrow*.

America use their art forms to process suffering and bring it to speech. Armstrong's recording captures a body of congregational songs that may seem to many Westerners incongruously joyful and upbeat even though many of their lyrics clearly express the deep losses of the church in Sudan. The use of indigenous native instruments, including various African drums, allowed the people to bring their own unique identity even while expressing the universal cry of those who have been persecuted.

Parallel Studies

The subject of corporate lament intersects with a range of related topics that have received recent scholarly attention from worship scholars, biblical scholars, theologians, musicians, and artists. These models have undertaken specific questions regarding worship practices, questions which influence and are influenced by corporate lament. Several representative example studies will be presented in this section in order to demonstrate this intersection and to encourage further exploration of other connecting studies.

David Duke: Typologies of Lament Hymns

In his article "Giving Voice to Suffering in Worship: A Study in the Theodicies of Hymnody," David Duke argues that hymns represent liturgy of non-liturgical traditions, and as such, shape and reflect the beliefs of the people.³⁷ Duke believes congregational song should allow believers to express lament as an integral part of the relationship with God, bringing the suffering into his presence.³⁸ In this comparative study of five hymns by both Isaac Watts and Anne Steele, Duke explores ways in which their respective hymns encourage or discourage worshippers to respond to their suffering, either individually or

³⁷David Duke, "Giving Voice to Suffering in Worship: A Study in the Theodicies of Hymnody," *Encounter* 53, no. 2 (1991): 263.

³⁸*Ibid.*

corporately. From this comparison, Duke develops a typology of lament hymns which includes:³⁹

1. Hymns of *explanation*: give reasons for pain and function as theodicies; are impersonal and focus on the cognitive.⁴⁰
2. Hymns of *assurance*: pastoral in tone, express Christian belief; remind believers of historical suffering of the saints and their endurance by God's grace.⁴¹
3. Hymns of *Lament*: may include confession of trust; work to identify and name pain; appeal for God's help; often express frustration; question the care of the community and even God; recall and long for comfort of past life; can contain all or a portion of elements from the lament Psalms (address, plea, complaint, petition, confession of trust).⁴²

Duke's article presents a foundation upon which to build future studies of congregational song, and also a lens through which scholars may examine current worship song for its ability to adequately give expression to suffering believers.

Sibley Towner: Comparative Study— the Psalms and Modern Hymnals

Basing his study on the premise that the hymnal represents a “second canon of accepted teaching,” and which although lacking the authority of Scripture, is nonetheless supportive of the theological teachings of the church, Sibley Towner has undertaken an examination of five hymnals published since 1985, focusing on hymns that present an entire biblical Psalm or at least a large portion of a given Psalm.⁴³ Towner begins by

³⁹Duke, “Giving Voice to Suffering in Worship,” 266-71.

⁴⁰Ibid., 266.

⁴¹Ibid., 268.

⁴²Ibid., 270.

⁴³Sibley Towner, “‘Without Our Aid He Did Us Make’: Singing the Meaning of the Psalms,” in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Brent A Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 18. Hymnals examined are *Psalter Hymnal* (Grand Rapids: CRC, 1987); *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989); *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990); *Rejoice in*

categorizing each hymn according to Hermann Gunkel's classification of the Psalms, including both individual and communal laments.⁴⁴ Towner's study reveals that the laments, both individual and communal, rank lowest in number of Psalm types represented across all five hymnals, with only "prophetic oracles of judgment" ranking lower.⁴⁵ This imbalance of hymn types reveals a distinct deficiency in hymns that cover the range of emotions found in the Psalms. The hymnals surveyed leaned heavily toward praise and thanksgiving themes which, though important, must be balanced with expressions of sorrow, he argues. Towner notes that congregations prefer to celebrate God as "creator" and "liberator," rather than "lament to the God who listens."⁴⁶ Given this imbalance, Towner concludes, "In the competitive denominational marketplace of the twenty-first century, somber doesn't sell. We prefer to sin and repent, lament and die in silent privacy."⁴⁷

Towner's study of these five major recent North American hymnals is foundational for the study of corporate worship music as a whole. His study reveals that the rich presence of lament found in the Psalms is largely lacking in current Protestant North American congregational song, and that the repercussions of this absence are the breakdown in community which results in believers who suffer alone.

Matthew Westerholm: Inaugurated Eschatology in Congregational Song

In his study of contemporary American hymnody, Matthew Westerholm

the Lord (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); and *The New Century Hymnal* (Cleveland, TN: Pilgrim Press, 1995).

⁴⁴Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

⁴⁵Towner, "'Without Our Aid He Did Us Make,'" 21.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

examines the most-used congregational worship music between 2000 and the end of 2015, with attention to how themes of inaugurated eschatology in corporate song influence spiritual formation and self-identity in US evangelical churches.⁴⁸ The goal of the study is to use lyrics of worship songs to ascertain how a congregation understands and accepts particular church doctrines, and the subsequent changes this might bring to how evangelicals understand and define themselves.⁴⁹ Westerholm's study reveals a sharp decline in the presence of themes of inaugurated eschatology ("already-and-not-yet"), especially that of the "not-yet," in contemporary worship music, and offers suggestions on how these themes can be restored.

Westerholm's study is vital for a clear understanding and reimplementation of corporate lament practices in that it reminds believers of the dangers inherent in focusing on the "already," which leave little space for the cry of Revelation 22:20, "Come, Lord Jesus!" The absence of eschatological themes can lead believers to seek solace in the present, and to lose a vital dimension of Christ's work on the cross which inaugurated the coming of his kingdom when suffering would cease. This loss, Westerholm argues, silences the church's voice of lament in favor of triumphalist and perfectionist expectations that lead believers to seek happiness and contentment in the "now," rather than groaning for the coming of Christ's kingdom (Rom 8:23).⁵⁰ Such a philosophy marginalizes believers who experience suffering, according to Westerholm:

If worshipers had an exciting week, the "already" service affirms their experience. But if their week had more trial than triumph, they leave the service disappointed. When the leaders are not as perfect as they appear, worshipers (especially the young) leave the church devastated. . . . When evangelical worship services imply

⁴⁸Matthew Westerholm, "'The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here:' The Doctrine of Inaugurated Eschatology in Contemporary Evangelical Worship Music" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 3.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., 178.

that believers should experience complete victory now, the church is creating expectations that it cannot meet; it is preparing its people for disappointment.⁵¹

The present study of lament confirms Westerholm's premise that congregational song must equip believers with balanced language which allows them to both praise God and to lament before him.

Westerholm's attention to themes of inaugurated eschatology in contemporary worship music is vital if the church is to provide space for its members to cry out to God in their personal suffering, for the suffering of the congregation or community as a whole, and for the persecuted church at large. If given permission and time to lament in a space that is safe and where believers may come together to cry out as the Psalmists did, a healthy church can be nurtured that longs and cries out for the return of Christ's kingdom when sorrow and tears will be no more.

Pam McAllister: Instilling the Psalms for Periods of Crisis

Author and music director Pam McAllister advocates for the cultivation of a canon of songs, hymns, and scriptural passages for use in the church and the family in times of crisis.⁵² McAllister relates the story of the final hours of her sister's life, during which the two recited cherished poems, and the family sang cherished hymns of comfort.⁵³ Regarding the need for an established "canon" of texts and songs, McAllister asks, "What are the cherished passages, the words of life and beauty, that will rescue us, hold us together, help us through our hard times?"⁵⁴

⁵¹Westerholm, "'The Hour Is Coming and Is Now Here,'" 178.

⁵²Pam McAllister, "Wonderful Words of Life," *The Hymn* 68, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 35.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

McAllister's emphasis on the use of the arts in both daily life and corporate worship—particularly songs, hymns, and poems—as an anchor and a healing balm of comfort mirrors the reception of the Psalter as it was used by ancient Israel and by believers throughout history. Labeling such texts as a “familiar path” into the unfamiliar, McAllister cites the work of bestselling author Stephen Levine, whose studies on grief and loss consistently remind readers to choose a work of art, such as a song or poem, to lean on and from which to find comfort in difficult times.⁵⁵ While she does not specifically recommend the Psalms or even Scripture for such use, her article points to the power of beloved texts to come to mind unbidden during seasons of suffering and moments of crisis. These heartfelt prayers and songs found in the Psalms were at one time on the lips of men and women of ancient Israel as they, too, grappled with the triumphs and tragedies of life. Though the circumstances of the Psalmists' suffering were different from those of believers today, the cries of their hearts to a good and loving God mirror the cries of modern believers and can equally serve to aid and assure in times of crisis.

Interdisciplinary Use of the Psalms

The multivalent nature of the Psalms makes them valuable in many areas of ministry and academic disciplines, including theology, worship and congregational song, and counseling and psychology. In a recent survey of articles on songs and hymns from the Bible, Chris Angel discusses recent studies by authors who have applied expertise from various fields to the study and use of the Psalms, as well as other hymnic passages found in Scripture.⁵⁶ Particularly relevant to the topic of corporate lament practices is the article by Daniel J. Estes, which examines the intertextual usage of Psalm 78:1-8 throughout the

⁵⁵Stephen Levine, *A Year to Live: How to Live This Year as if It Were Your Last* (New York: Bell Tower, 1997), cited in McAllister, “Wonderful Words of Life,” 36.

⁵⁶Chris Angel, “Sing a New Song: Songs and Hymns from the Bible,” *The Hymn* 68, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 33-34.

canon, particularly in Deuteronomy and Proverbs.⁵⁷ Estes also examines the Psalm as poetry and song, noting the effect of these artistic forms on the student, and the ways in which they enable the reader or singer to undergo and encounter feelings similar to that of the author.⁵⁸ Angel notes that Estes goes one step further and encourages the interdisciplinary study of the Psalms from the viewpoint of cognitive psychology and neurology.⁵⁹

This dissertation sought to bring attention to the ways in which the Psalms can function as tools of soul care within the gathered church and in the individual lives of believers. Estes' work relates to that of psychiatrist Curt Thompson, who has conducted a similar study on the integration of neuroscience and spirituality, and who cites specific Psalm passages that support this integration.⁶⁰ Due to the depth and breadth of emotional expressions they contain, the Psalms, and particularly the laments, serve not only as tools for believers to pray and express the emotions of suffering, but also point to the need for new scholarship at the intersection of biblical and theological study, applied ministry, and neuroscience and psychology.

The Necessity of Lament in Preaching and Song

Luke Powery and Thomas G. Long have both produced recent work on the need for emotionally honest preaching based on biblical lament drawn from the Revelation and

⁵⁷Daniel J. Estes, "Psalm 78:1-8 as a Musical Intertext of Torah and Wisdom," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173 (July-September 2016): 297-314, cited in Angel, "Sing a New Song," 34.

⁵⁸Angel, "Sing a New Song," 34.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2010), 163-71.

from the Psalms, respectively.⁶¹ Powery examines the worship hymns found in Revelation 5:1-14, with special attention to the “countercultural portrayal” of the crucified Lamb who has suffered for mankind over against the triumphalism of the Roman Empire.⁶² His article focuses on the tension found in the Revelation hymn that expresses both rejoicing and suffering, and makes a plea for this same balance in both congregational song and preaching: “Singing and preaching hymns does not exclude the agony and tragedy of humanity but praises and preaches through, in, and against the cancerous pain of human life.”⁶³ In a similar argument, Thomas Long calls for more preaching texts based on the Psalms in order to “[keep] their poetic power laced more firmly into the larger theological fabric of faith.”⁶⁴

These appeals in cutting edge articles on preaching to consistently keep scriptural hymns, and particularly the Psalms, in the spiritual diet of worshippers echoes the spirit of this dissertation. The regular use of the Psalms in Christian preaching, teaching, and song equips believers with poetic expressions that can be integrated into the regular vocabulary of prayer, and in turn cultivates a rich atmosphere for soul care within the gathered church.

Studies Needed

This study of corporate lament sought to lay the biblical foundations for a theology of suffering and its application to ministry, specifically worship ministry, in the

⁶¹Luke Powery, “Painful Praise: Exploring the Public Proclamation of the Hymns of Revelation,” *Theology Today* 70, no. 1 (2013): 69-78; Thomas G. Long, “Four Ways to Preach a Psalm,” *Journal for Preachers* 37, no. 2 (2014): 21-32, cited in Angel, “Sing a New Song,” 34.

⁶²Angel, “Sing a New Song,” 34.

⁶³Powery, “Painful Praise,” 77. See also, Luke Powery, *Ways of the Word: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

⁶⁴Long, “Four Ways to Preach a Psalm,” 23.

local church. This section will suggest representative studies that need to be undertaken in the area of corporate lament.

The Psalms and the Liturgical Calendar

The historic reading and singing of the entire Psalter throughout the church year and methods for its implementation in evangelical practices is an area in which ministry tools are needed. Methods and worship ministry guides for the implementation of the lament Psalms in penitential seasons of Holy Week and Advent must be crafted to familiarize leaders with their rich and descriptive language so appropriate for these seasons. Such practices would require musicians capable of versifying the Psalms to create new paraphrases suitable for congregational use at specific liturgical seasons. These projects could start with the metrical Psalms and melodies in the Genevan Psalter, as has been done by a group of musicians in The Psalms Project, led by Shane Heilman, a singer-songwriter, guitarist, and worship leader from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and a group of professional musicians, worship leaders, and song writers.⁶⁵ A project of massive proportions is *Psalms Reborn*, by nationally-known sacred jazz musician Chuck Marohnic, who created new, original settings for the entire book of Psalms to music in a wide variety of genres and related musical idioms of jazz for solo, ensemble, and choir settings.⁶⁶

Hymns of Lament for Specialized Services

The Psalms can serve a key role for pastoral leaders and those trained in specialized soul care professions such as counseling, chaplaincy, and social work. The use of the lament Psalms can play a central role in the bereavement process for professionals

⁶⁵The Psalms Project, “Psalms 1-10,” vol. 1, December 20, 2011; “Psalms 11-20,” vol. 2, December 10, 2013; “Psalms 21-30,” vol. 3, n.d., accessed August 3, 2017, <http://thepsalmsprojectband.com/>.

⁶⁶Chuck Marohnic, “Psalms Reborn,” Music Serving the Word Ministries, accessed August 8, 2017, http://musicservingtheword.org/the_psalms_reborn_project.

who lead individuals or groups through times of suffering and loss. Leading grief specialist, music therapist, and long-time hospice director, Joy Berger, wrote an important recent study that examines the central role of music to the grief process. Berger's work draws from theories and methods of music therapy, chaplaincy training, and her own past journey through devastating personal loss. An important study would examine how the Psalms of the lament could further enrich and enhance these theories and methods, and enable the suffering to draw from these ancient words both for prayer and expression of pain.

There is a need for ministry tools detailing the use of the Psalms, and particularly the laments, when ministering in a prison context. In this setting, expressions of grief over personal suffering may be mingled with themes of remorse over sin. There is a need for Psalms of pleading as well as those of assurance of God's faithful presence. Scholarly studies on the use of Psalms in prison ministry could include interviews with current and former inmates or with chaplains or others who have served in this vital area of ministry.

Finally, Psalm-based resources for prayer retreats, divorce recovery support groups, and groups for the recently bereaved are needed. The Psalms of lament could provide words to express suffering for those to whom words have been lost due to the depth of grief. Ministry tools on the use of Psalms of lament with those actively dying and with their family members engaged in anticipatory grieving could be fruitful for equipping young or inexperienced pastors, as they comfort the grieving and facilitate expression of their sorrow.

Studies in Historical Periods of Congregational Song

Historical studies that trace the use of the lament Psalms in Christian (specifically Protestant) worship traditions are needed as well. Every era of church history can be fruitfully examined from the perspective of how they have dealt with suffering and lament through an examination of the hymnody of the era. In evangelical worship

particularly, such studies are needed to document the decline of lament, beginning with the urban revival of the era of the late nineteenth century through the present era of contemporary Christian worship music.

Methodologies for the study of hymns of these historical periods can include the comparison of lament themes drawn from the output of particular hymns writers, such as in the study by Duke previously referenced.⁶⁷ Towner's comparative study between hymnals of various denominations could be expanded to not only examine Psalm versifications, but also lament hymns.⁶⁸ Finally, a study of the influence of theological and doctrinal emphases such as John Wesley's perfectionism, or "entire sanctification," on the hymnody of the period could begin to uncover reasons for the eventual loss of lament in congregational song across the larger spectrum of evangelical life since ca. 1980.

The Psalms and Global Awareness

Attention has been given to the persecuted Christians across the world by people such as David Platt in his video presentation "Secret Church," which draws attention to the persecuted church who must meet in secret in order to practice corporate worship.⁶⁹ In order to bring the American church into greater solidarity with suffering brothers and sisters, Secret Church gatherings seek to mimic the private gatherings of believers across the world who must meet in secret in order to practice their faith. Platt has produced teaching videos for use in these gatherings, with the purpose to draw the attention of the American church to the needs of persecuted believers worldwide. While the Secret Church initiative does not address song, it bears a powerful connection to the lament Psalms, as the ancient words of the Psalmists can give modern believers words to pray that express

⁶⁷Duke, "Giving Voice to Suffering in Worship," 263-72.

⁶⁸Towner, "'Without Our Aid He Did Us Make,'" 21.

⁶⁹David Platt, "Secret Church," accessed August 3, 2017, <http://www.radical.net/about-secret-church>.

the sorrows of persecution and the subsequent cry for deliverance. Research into Psalm-based global worship songs could serve to augment the work of Platt and of others involved in similar ministry projects.

Conclusion

The case studies presented at the opening of this chapter represent the versatility of the Psalms of lament for use by individuals and groups, for personal devotional use, and in pastoral care. The parallel studies surveyed demonstrate the interconnectedness of lament with other biblical and theological studies. The complexity of the society and culture in which believers live requires that the cry of suffering not be answered with triumphalist platitudes of prosperity and success, but with the heartfelt expressions found in the ancient words of the Psalmists that gave witness to the rich dialogical nature of Israel's relationship with God throughout history.

The outpouring of recent artistic work in case studies and parallel studies surrounding the Psalmic laments is calling believers to consider their use anew in corporate worship. A word of caution is in order. Care must be taken to not allow lament practices to be viewed as a trendy practice that will soon pass out of use, eclipsed by yet a newer trend. Superficial co-opting of lament in corporate worship practice must be avoided. Scholars from across multiple fields must explore this topic through multiple lenses in thoughtful research built on biblical foundations. While certain trends in corporate worship practices may come and go, individual and corporate lament must never go the way of a passing trend. The role of lament was central to the worship life of ancient Israel, for so much of the nation's history proves that it was not a trend, but rather a deeply-rooted biblical practice that must continue to be cultivated faithfully and reverently in the corporate worship of the gathered church of Jesus Christ until He returns.

The need for ongoing study of the use of lament Psalms and their application to various contexts resonates in the cries of believers across the world and will not cease until the coming of Christ's kingdom. Events such as the August 2017 race riots in South

Carolina by white supremacists and Neo-Nazis directed against African-Americans call the church to lament, to “weep with those who weep” (Rom 12:15). Singer-songwriter and worship author, Greg Sheer, contends that in response to events such as these the church must “develop worship that takes sin seriously and grace even more seriously, that acknowledges the cancers that fester in our country without becoming fearful, that gives us songs when we have no words.”⁷⁰ The tension between suffering and hope modeled within the Psalms of lament expresses deeply-rooted trust in God who is attentive to the cries of suffering believers. Modern worship song “Sovereign Over Us,” by Aaron Keyes, Brian Browning, and Jack Mooring, beautifully captures this tension in its opening stanza and refrain:

There is strength within the sorrow
There is beauty in our tears
And you meet us our mourning
With a love that casts out fear
You are working in our waiting
You’re sanctifying us
When beyond our understanding
You’re teaching us to trust

Your plans are still to prosper
You have not forgotten us
You’re with us in the fire and the flood
You’re faithful forever, Perfect in love
You are sovereign over us.⁷¹

Wherever the common element of fallen humanity is present, believers will need to give voice to suffering. As God’s own Word, the Psalms of lament will never be exhausted, but will continue to serve as the voice of prayer and ultimately of trust and hope for the church of Christ until He returns.

⁷⁰Greg Scheer, “Reflections on Charlottesville,” *Greg Scheer Music*, August 14, 2017, accessed August 8, 2017, <http://musicblog.gregscheer.com/>.

⁷¹Aaron Keyes, Brian Browning, and Jack Mooring, “Sovereign Over Us,” 6011370, Capital CMG, Jack Mooring Music, Meaux Jeux Music, Thank You Music, www.worshiptogether.com, 2011.

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ABSTRACT

SUFFERING, SOUL CARE, AND COMMUNITY: THE PLACE OF CORPORATE LAMENT IN EVANGELICAL WORSHIP

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This dissertation examines the biblical foundations of corporate lament practices beginning with the worship of ancient Israel as found in the Psalms, and their continued use by Jesus in his prayers, the gospel writers, and in the epistles of Paul, Peter, and John in the Revelation. It concludes with case studies and recommendations for the inclusion of lament practices in modern corporate worship.

Chapter 1 is a chronological literature review beginning ca. 1980, which demonstrates the increase in worship resources, particularly in the last decade, that focus on corporate lament practices. Resources are categorized as follows: (1) biblical and theological studies; (2) practical theology; (3) psychology and soul care; (4) liturgical resources for lament; and (5) corporate worship and the use of the arts. Scholarly and non-scholarly sources are included.

Chapter 2 examines the language and theology of lament in the Old Testament, with specific focus on the Psalms. J. L. Austin's "Speech Act Theory" is also discussed and applied the lament Psalms in order to broaden the understanding of the rich dialogical nature of Israel's corporate worship practices.

Chapter 3 examines the prayers of Jesus and how his use of the lament Psalms serves as a model for modern believers. Chapter 4 applies Rebekah Eklund's typology of "echoes and extensions" of the lament Psalms in the writings of Paul, Peter, and John in

the Revelation. The goal is to demonstrate that use of the lament Psalms continued after the coming of Christ.

Chapter 5 contains a summary of conclusions and undergirding premises for the use of lament Psalms in modern corporate worship. The chapter concludes with foundational considerations for implementing these premises into corporate worship practices.

Chapter 6 includes four contemporary case studies in which the Psalms of lament are used to pray through and process times of tragedy and suffering. These case studies include personal, corporate, devotional, and pastoral care examples. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of parallel studies and suggested areas for further study.

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