

LAMENTATIONS AND THE POETIC POLITICS OF PRAYER

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Summary

The first half of this paper seeks to make explicit the political dimensions of the text of Lamentations. The poetry vividly depicts the political use of violence in the destruction of a society. Judah is ruined politically, economically, socially, and religiously by the Babylonians for political ends. In the second half of the paper I argue that Lamentations contributes to our theo-political reflections not so much in its provision of new conceptual categories, nor even in its sharpening of categories already in place but rather in its power for shaping the emotional, ethical-political response of its audiences (human and divine). The readers are invited to bring political calamity into God's presence and to seek salvation; they are encouraged to look with merciful eyes at victims of political violence even if those victims are not 'innocent'; they are encouraged to see political evil for what it is and to speak its name; they are guided towards becoming honest-to-God lamenters and God-dependent pray-ers who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

1. Introduction

After the execution of Charles I on 30 January 1649, Alice Thornton, a royalist from Yorkshire, wrote:

Oh! How we may take up justly those bitter lamentations of Jeremiah, the anointed of the Lord, the joy of our hearts, the light of our eyes is taken in their pits, the crown is fallen from our heads; woe to us that we have sinned, let every soul gird itself with sackcloth, and lament the

displeasure of God which has smitten our head, and wounded the defence of this our English church, our Solomon.¹

Here she picks up on Lamentations 4:20 and 5:16—texts that refer to the loss of the monarchy in Judah during the exilic period—and draws a parallel with the situation in her own day. What is interesting is that Alice Thornton saw Lamentations as having *political* relevance to her day. Without wishing to endorse the particular use that she made of the text I do think that her instinct to find a political application was correct. Lamentations speaks of the destruction of Judah as a *political* entity.

But most modern western Bible readers do not perceive the political relevance of Lamentations. Our default mode is to individualise the book's contemporary relevance such that it speaks only to our private sorrows. Here we would do well to pay attention to the Jewish tradition of reception.² Jewish approaches consider Lamentations in the light of the very concrete afflictions of the Jewish *community* through history and they warn us against the tendency to privatise the significance of the book. This opens us up to reflect on how Lamentations might contribute to the broader project of political theology.

2. Politics and Lamentations

I appreciate that we cannot collapse the world of the text into the world 'behind' the text. Nevertheless, to better grasp the political dimensions of the poetry we need to see it as arising out of and in response to the world 'behind' the text. The vast majority of scholars see the poems as a reaction to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in the Sixth Century BC and so we shall be reading the book against that background.³

¹ Quoted in T. Hunt, *The English Civil War: At First Hand* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002): 202.

² On which see the chapters in Robin Parry and Heath Thomas, eds., *Great Is Thy Faithfulness? Reading Lamentations as Holy Scripture* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, forthcoming).

³ Iain Provan has argued that the evidence does not demand such a dating of the book ('Reading Texts Against an Historical Background: The Case of Lamentations', *SJOT* 1 (1990): 130-43). Whilst he is correct, the cumulative weight of evidence makes such a date the only serious candidate.

2.1 The Babylonian Politics of Violence

Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, had two overarching goals that guided his individual political decisions. First, in terms of foreign policy, he intended Babylon's empire to inherit the Neo-Assyrian Empire that had preceded it. To achieve this goal he had to eliminate the influence of his main rival—Egypt—in Palestine, Phoenicia, and Syria. Second, in terms of domestic policy, he intended to make Babylon itself (a) militarily secure, (b) the supreme cultic centre for the land, and (c) the administrative centre of the empire. To this end he engaged in numerous major building projects. But such domestic goals required extraordinary financial and human resources to enable them. It was the foreign policy of the empire that provided such resources. The conquered lands were used to provide funding through the imposition of immense tribute, and to provide labour through repeated deportations from their populations.

The little kingdom of Judah was located in a zone where the battle for influence between Babylon and Egypt was played out. Jehoiakim submitted to Nebuchadnezzar but soon gambled that, with Egypt's help, he could revoke his vassal treaty with Babylon (2 Kgs 24:1). Fearing Egyptian power extending into Palestine Nebuchadnezzar led a punitive expedition to Jerusalem in 598/597 BC in order to make an example of it lest others be tempted to rebel. Jehoiakim was killed and his son, Jehoiachin, surrendered in order to save the city. He, along with many significant members of the population, was taken into exile—the first deportation—and Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah in charge as his Judaeen vassal king. But Zedekiah, probably encouraged by Egypt, also rebelled against his Babylonian patron (2 Kgs 24:20b). This was the final straw and Nebuchadnezzar launched a second campaign against Judah and Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25). The capital city was besieged from 588 BC, until the wall was breached in July 587 BC (2 Kgs 25:1-4). The fleeing Zedekiah was captured and he was taken into exile (2 Kgs 25:4-7). A second deportation of significant people from the population took place. A month after the city was captured Nebuchadnezzar had it destroyed (2 Kgs 25:8). Plausibly, we may postulate that this was motivated, in part, by a desire to crush the theological vision that funded the anti-Babylonian sentiments in

Judah—the belief that YHWH would protect Jerusalem and its temple.⁴ The Babylonians then moved to consolidate the situation and set Gedaliah, a Judaeon with pro-Babylonian sympathies, in place as governor.⁵ He ruled for perhaps five years before being assassinated by a Jewish nationalist and it seems that his assassination in 582 BC provoked a third punitive deportation (Jer. 52:30).⁶ It is not certain what the Babylonians did next but it is most likely that they set a Babylonian governor in place and it is reasonable to think that they became more brutal in their rule.

With Judah's immune system down this period also witnessed a threat from some of the peoples surrounding it (Edomites, Phoenicians, Philistines, Ammonites) that took advantage of its weakened condition by conducting raids. Without walled cities Judah was defenceless.⁷

Those that remained in Judah inherited a politically and economically ruined country. Lamentations is a response to these events from the perspective of those who had been on the receiving end and who had been left behind in the ruins. Lamentations bears witness to the trauma created by imperial strategies designed to break the will of a stubborn vassal state. The policy was to cripple and humiliate the rebel state as a lesson to its citizens and to others who might be tempted to rebel. This was the imperial politics of violence and we would do well to follow Daniel Smith-Christopher's proposal and view Lamentations as a reaction to 'state-sponsored terrorism'.⁸

2.2 *The Sword*

One of the innovations of the institution of the monarchy and the founding of the Israelite state was the introduction of a standing army.⁹

⁴ On the history of the exile see Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003): ch. 2.

⁵ Judaeans who had opposed the anti-Babylonian revolt seem to have been treated favourably (Jer. 39:13-14). It would be a mistake, however, to describe such Judaeans as pro-Babylonian. For instance, on Jeremiah's ambiguous stance towards Babylon see David J. Reimer, 'Political Prophets? Political Exegesis and Prophetic Theology' in *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel*, ed. J. C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 1998): 126-42.

⁶ See Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 94-95, 74-81.

⁷ Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 96; John Lindsay, 'Edomite Westward Expansion: The Biblical Evidence', *ANES* 36 (1999): 48-89.

⁸ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002): 76.

⁹ On which see B. S. J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001): ch. 9.

Lamentations speaks of the decimation of this army (1:15a-b, cf. 1:3a).¹⁰ In Lamentations the enemy's sword was also used against the wider population (2:21a-b, cf. 1:20c; 2:4a-b).

2.3 *Siege Warfare*

Chapters 2 and 4 poetically look backwards and evoke the Babylonian siege and destruction of the city of Jerusalem. One of the prominent aspects of siege warfare was famine. The poems vividly portray the horror for the citizens under siege as the food runs out. The image of starving children dominates the outburst of grief in 2:11c-12, the urgent plea in 2:19, as well as 4:1-4. Zion protests in 2:20 that the famine conditions have created the outrageous situation in which women are eating their own offspring!¹¹ That picture of extreme conditions driving even compassionate mothers to harsh and degrading behaviour reappears in 4:3-4 and 4:10. The famine is merciless—no one is exempt from it, not even those one would imagine would have priority access to food: the rich (4:5), the young (2:11c-12, 19; 4:1-4, 10), the devout (4:7-8),¹² priests, and elders (1:19). The dominance of this theme is an indication of the lasting trauma left by the experience of enforced starvation as a military strategy. The summary in 4:9 captures the horrible verdict:

Better off were those pierced by the sword
 than those pierced by hunger –
 those who bled from being stabbed
 by the lack of produce from the field.

The siege lasted for nineteen months until the wall was breached.

2.4 *The Destruction of Jerusalem—The Centre of Government*

A major focus of the poetry is the physical destruction of the capital city itself.¹³ The poets of Lamentations are aware of the wider

¹⁰ All translations are my own.

¹¹ We need not imagine that they kill their children in order to eat them. Perhaps they eat their children who were already dead from famine (so Adele Berlin, *Lamentations* [OTL; Louisville: WJKP, 2002]). There is debate about how literally to interpret some of the language in Lamentations. How much is making use of stereotypical motifs and how much reflects accurate historical description? See, for instance, D. R. Hillers, 'History and Poetry in Lamentations', *CurTM* 10 (1983): 155-61.

¹² There is some discussion as to whether the reference in 4:7-8 is to Nazirites, as I am supposing here, or to nobles. Either is possible.

¹³ On aspects of ancient Israelite town planning see Isserlin, *The Israelites*, ch. 5.

destruction of cities and rural communities in Judah (2:2a) but the loss of the capital is the major concern not because of myopic vision but because Zion—as the centre of the government and the cult—represents all Israel.

Our archaeological evidence, although interpreted in differing ways, seems to support the view that the Babylonian attack was a major devastation. ‘In the seventh century, at the end of the monarchy, there are at least 116 sites in Judah (cities, towns, and villages). In the sixth century (in the Babylonian period) the number drops to 41 sites ... 92 of the 116 sites of the monarchic period were abandoned in the Babylonian period.’¹⁴ That is eighty percent of Judah’s cities, towns, and villages destroyed or abandoned.

Lamentations takes time to depict poetically the physical destruction of Jerusalem.

2.4.1 The Wall and Fortifications

The wall symbolised security and the breach of the wall by an enemy was almost a guarantee that defeat was imminent (cf. 4:18).¹⁵ 2:1-10 in particular focus on the physical destruction of Jerusalem and the surrounding towns. There we read of YHWH, like an enemy, ‘smashing’ (2:2b) and ‘destroying’ the fortifications’ (2:5), handing over the walls to an enemy (2:7b), planning their destruction and consuming them (2:8a-b)

And he caused rampart and wall to mourn;
together they were exhausted.
Her gates sank down into the ground,
He destroyed and smashed her bars (2:8c-9a)

Such was the ferocity of the attack that YHWH set the city aflame and ‘devoured her foundations’ (2:11c). The Zion theology that maintained the inviolability of Jerusalem found itself speechless in the face of such an ‘impossible’ event.¹⁶ Even pagans are imagined as responding in disbelief (4:11-12).

¹⁴ William Schniedewind, ‘In Search of the Exile’, unpublished SBL paper delivered in Boston, 1999, quoted in Smith-Christopher, *Biblical Theology*, 47. On the debate about the impact of the Babylonian attacks see Smith-Christopher, *Biblical Theology*, ch. 2; Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, ch. 2.

¹⁵ On city fortifications and walls in ancient Israel see, Isserlin, *The Israelites*, 132-37.

¹⁶ John H. Hayes, ‘The Tradition of Zion’s Inviolability’, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82.4 (1963): 419-26.

2.4.2 The Palace

A number of cities, including Jerusalem, had citadels that could serve as a final place of refuge and defence. It was the royal acropolis in Jerusalem that served as the citadel fortification for the city. However, the king's residence and other state buildings were destroyed (2:5b, 7b).¹⁷ With the loss of the citadel the last line of defence was broken through and Judah's administrative centre was decimated.

2.4.3 The Temple

The temple was the religious centre of the nation (as well as being critical to the tax system).¹⁸ The Babylonians entered the temple, desecrated it, plundered it, and then destroyed it. Destroying temples was not normal Babylonian policy and it is an indication of just how politically threatening the Babylonians considered the Jerusalem temple—as the symbol that inspired Judahite insurrection—that they took this extraordinary measure.¹⁹ The desecration of the temple is represented by the narrator using the horrific poetic image of a gang rape:

An adversary has stretched out his hand
 over all her precious things.
 Indeed, she saw nations
 enter her sanctuary
 concerning whom you had commanded,
 'They shall not enter your assembly'. (1:10)

In the verse just quoted the narrator even 'quotes' God's own prohibition from Deuteronomy 23:2-6 back at him in an implicit criticism that God should allow such a shocking thing to happen. The only temple 'singing' now came from the anti-festival of pagan soldiers entering the sacred house of YHWH (2:7). The subsequent destruction of the temple caused the worshipping rhythms of Israel's life to falter—festival and Sabbath were forgotten (2:6). This spirit-crushing state of affairs causes even the inanimate roads and gates to groan (1:4a). The trauma created by these events is plain to see. The aftermath is seen in chapter five.

¹⁷ On royal palaces see Isserlin, *The Israelites*, 128-32.

¹⁸ On which see Victor Matthews and Don Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993): ch. 14.

¹⁹ See Johan Renkema, *Lamentations* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters): 114-15.

Because of this our heart became faint;
 Because of these our eyes became darkened.
 Because of Mount Zion which is desolate;
 Jackals roam on it (5:17-18)

2.5 The Destruction of Political Leadership

Judah was governed by its king, various royal officials, priests, and prophets.²⁰ Alongside these leaders older forms of local government with roots in the village communities continued to function, albeit in modified ways. In particular elders had an ongoing role, even in the cities.²¹

Having besieged the city and broken through the wall the Babylonians set about deconstructing the leadership. Jamieson-Drake argues that the social collapse of Judah was mainly the result of the collapse of the centralised administrative control and distribution system in Jerusalem.²² Whilst he may well go too far here he is certainly right to highlight the significance of the loss of leadership.

2.5.1 King

The capture of the king—probably Zedekiah—serves as the climax of the horrors in chapter 4:1-20.²³

[The] breath of our nostrils, YHWH's anointed,
 was captured in their pits—
 [He of] whom we said, 'In his shade,
 we will live amongst the nations'. (4:20)

The king served as a shade—a protector of, and a provider for his people. This verse pictures a very intimate connection between king and people—he is the very life-breath of the community. His capture by the enemy is thus catastrophic. It is not clear whether the poet is simply lamenting the loss of the monarchy as an institution—with the king presented as an ideal—or whether he was loyal to the specific king in question—Zedekiah. If the latter he had a different assessment

²⁰ On the social and political structure of ancient Israel see Isserlin, *The Israelites*, ch. 4.

²¹ On elders see Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel*, ch. 9.

²² D. W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach* (JSOTSup, 109; Sheffield: Almond, 1991): 75.

²³ On the king see Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, ch. 12.

of Zedekiah than his near contemporary, Ezekiel.²⁴ But it is perfectly possible that it is not Zedekiah, as such, that is lamented but simply the loss of a Davidic king.²⁵ The king is said in chapter two to be ‘spurned’ by God and exiled (2:6c, 9b), thus the community cries, ‘[The] crown on our head has fallen; Woe now to us for we have sinned’ (5:16). In the poetry of Lamentations the loss of the king was unequivocally tragic.²⁶

2.5.2 Royal Officials

The royal officials were part of a central bureaucracy—a staff of ministers and civil servants connected to the royal court.²⁷ Like the king, the royal officials were direct targets of ‘the enemy’ whose clear policy was to decapitate the leadership of Judah (1:6b-c). Like the king, once caught, their fate was exile (2:9b). Those officials that remain are treated disdainfully—possibly some are even executed (5:12a). In sum, YHWH ‘brought down to the ground [and] defiled the kingdom [of Judah] and its princes’ (2:2c).

2.5.3 Priests

Priests were religious functionaries but they also served clear political and economic roles.²⁸ Being Jerusalem-based the priests would have

²⁴ Ezekiel—writing from the Babylonian *golah*—had a high view of the institution of the monarchy and a very low view of those who had occupied that role in recent years. Zedekiah comes in for some especially blistering criticism. But this is because the occupants of the throne have not lived up to their responsibilities; Ezekiel still sees the coming restoration as including a restoration of the Davidic monarchy. On this see Daniel Block, ‘Transformation of Royal Ideology in Ezekiel’ in *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition, and Theology in Ezekiel*, ed. William Tooman and Michael Lyons (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010): 208-46. On Jeremiah’s attitude to Zedekiah see David J. Reimer, ‘Redeeming Politics in Jeremiah’ in *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. H. M. Barstad and R. G. Kratz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009): 121-36 (130-31).

²⁵ Amongst the exiles in Babylon messianic hopes were focused on Jehoiachin who had been deported in 598/597 BC. Later it was one of his grandsons—Zerubbabel—that returned to the Land as a Persian governor and rebuilt the temple. However, Zerubbabel was later removed by the Persians ending the dream of any near-future restoration of the Davidic monarchy.

²⁶ Ezekiel saw it as tragic but also the means by which Yahweh delivered his people from bad rulers (see Block, ‘Transformation’). But for Ezekiel as for Jeremiah (on which see Reimer, ‘Redeeming Politics’) the restoration of Judah went hand in hand with a restored Davidic monarchy (even if the pathway to that restoration was unclear). It is unlikely that the poets of Lamentations would have been satisfied with any restoration that lacked a Davidic ruler.

²⁷ On royal officials see Isserlin, *The Israelites*, 106-107.

²⁸ On priests see Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, ch. 14.

been focused in the city that attracted the attention of the adversary. Some of them died from hunger, perhaps during the siege or perhaps afterwards when food remained scarce (1:19b-c). Others were killed by the enemy, presumably when the temple was looted or destroyed (2:20). And, following a harsh critique of the priests and prophets, some are depicted as going into exile having been ritually and morally defiled by their sin (4:15-16). But not all were. Lamentations also depicts priests that remain in the ruined city after its destruction. They are presented as ‘groaning’ in despair because nobody comes any longer to the pilgrim festivals in Zion (1:4a-b). Without the temple the priests are crippled in their ability to fulfil their divine mandate.

2.5.4 Prophets

Prophets played an important role in the politics of ancient Israel. They were akin to political watchdogs that represented the divine assembly before the monarch and the people. In the days before the fall of Jerusalem, some of these prophets—those that the tradition later came to recognise as ‘false prophets’—had stirred up Judah to resist Babylon in the name of YHWH (e.g. Jer. 28:2-4).²⁹ It is perfectly reasonable to suppose that the Babylonians were aware of the troublemaking role of such prophets and they may well be amongst those said in Lamentations to have been killed in the temple (2:20c) or exiled (4:13-16).³⁰ This fate is presented in chapter 4 as a deserved punishment for their sin but in chapter 2 the stress falls on the shocking inappropriateness of those with sacred roles being killed in the temple itself.

2.5.5 Elders

The elders were the fathers of households who served in the village assembly to administer law and order. With the rise of the state, government by assembly remained as an aspect of the overall political scene, convening at the city gate, even if it was now situated within a new context that overshadowed it and diminished its power.³¹

²⁹ On prophets see Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, ch. 16.

³⁰ On both occasions they are linked with priests and we know that some priests were amongst those who also stirred up resistance to Babylon (Jer. 20:1-6). But prophets, such as Jeremiah, who supported surrender to Babylon were offered protection by the Babylonians (Jer. 40:1-6).

³¹ See Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, ch. 9.

In Lamentations the elders are not depicted as direct targets of ‘the adversary’.³² Some, as we have seen already, perish from starvation (1:19). Others are depicted as in a state of shock and mourning (2:10a-b). The powers that hold sway in the land after Jerusalem’s defeat do not treat the elders with honour or respect (5:12b; 4:16b). And, politically speaking, they have ceased to exercise their judicial role at the city gates: ‘Elders have ceased from the gate’ (5:14).

Finally, whilst they are not leaders we must not overlook the political significance of the ‘maidens’ in Jerusalem. They are mentioned several times as dying by the sword (2:21b), as going into captivity (1:18c), as being raped (5:11), and grieving (1:4c; 2:10c). They are possibly ‘the daughters of my city’ whose fate causes the narrator to weep so much in prayer (3:51). In the social world of ancient Israel the sexual integrity of ‘maidens’ represented the honour of households.³³ The inability of Judah to protect its women was an indication of weakness and a matter of shame. The abuse of women by ‘the enemy’ was an act of political power intended to shame and diminish the whole community.

Exile as Political Policy

The neo-Babylonian empire took its strategy of exiling key segments of populations from its predecessor, Assyria. There is debate about the number of people exiled but however this debate plays out we can maintain that many significant figures were deported and that this had a traumatic psychological impact on Judah.³⁴ We have already noted

³² Although we know from other sources that some were deported (cf. Ezek. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1; Jer. 29:1).

³³ On maidens see Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, ch. 13. On rape as a political act see Alice Keefe, ‘Rapes of Women/Wars of Men’, *Semeia* 61 (1993): 79-94.

³⁴ Defenders of a limited exile include Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (2nd edn; London: Black, 1960; tr. S. Godman) and Hans Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the “Exilic” Period* (Oslo: Scandanavian University Press, 1996). Those who see it as having a massive impact include Daniel Smith-Christopher, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington: Meyer Stone, 1989); Smith-Christopher, *Biblical Theology*, and Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*. Vol. 2: *The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732-332 BCE)* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2001); Stern, ‘The Babylonian Gap: The Archaeological Reality’, *JSOT* 28 (2004): 273-77. Maintaining something of a via media, but closer to the maximalists, is Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 81-90. He suggests that 25% of the populations were deported and perhaps another 25% killed in the conflict leading to a population loss of something like 50% (perhaps 40,000 people). Part of the problem is that the biblical

references to the exile of king, princes, priests, and prophets. Lamentations also presents the exile in wide focus. Zion is like a distraught mother whose children have been taken from her.³⁵

Her children went as captives
before the adversary (1:5c)
Listen then, all the peoples,
and see my sorrow.
My maidens and my young men,
have gone into captivity (1:18b-c)

The major psychological trauma caused by the exile to those left behind is captured in this image of a mother bereft of her children.³⁶

2.6 *Aftermath*

We know that the impact of the destruction lasted for generations. Palestine in the days of Haggai and Zechariah remained poor (Hag. 1:6, 9-12; Zech. 8:10) and the book of Nehemiah bears witness to the physical damage that remained in Jerusalem. Nearly one hundred and fifty years after the attack the city was still a ruin (Neh. 1:3; 2:3, 17)³⁷ and its population low (Neh. 11). Nehemiah also testifies to the long-term political humiliation of the community which is said to be ‘disgraced’ (Neh. 1:3; cf. Neh. 9:36-37; Ezra 9:6-9).³⁸ Within the book of Lamentations poems 1 and 5 in particular seem to focus on the state of Jerusalem *after* its destruction.

The fifth and final poem, depicting the situation in Judah some time after the destruction (5:20), pictures those who remain in the land but who have lost political control over that land. It appears that corvée and socage had been imposed (5:5, 8, 13). Their family inheritances and their homes have been taken over by ‘strangers’ and ‘foreigners’—their new overlords (5:2). They no longer have control over their own natural resources such as wood and water. Instead they must buy

sources present the deportations in differing ways (compare the escalating assessments in Jer. 39–43; 2 Kgs 24:5-16; 2 Chr. 36:26).

³⁵ And Zion’s children can include all those exiled from Judah (1:3a-b).

³⁶ The psychological trauma for those exiled is seen in Ps. 137. For a survey of recent attempts to apply insights from Psychology to Lamentations see Heath Thomas, ‘Relating Prayer and Pain: Psychological Analysis and Lamentations Research’, *Tyndale Bulletin* 61.2 (2010) 183-208.

³⁷ Though it seems that an earlier abortive attempt to rebuild them had been undertaken (Ezra 4:7-23).

³⁸ The temple rebuilding started in 520 BC and the finished work was rededicated in 515 BC. The walls were not completed for another forty-seven years (458 BC).

access to such things from others (5:3). Food appears to have remained scarce and it seems that attempts were made to source food from neighbouring countries (5:6). The acquisition of food is portrayed as full of dangers of its own (5:9) and hunger ravages the population (5:10).

This beaten down people are ruled over by ‘slaves’ (5:8) and they suffer numerous indignities—women are raped in the cities, princes are executed, elders are treated dishonourably, young men are put to backbreaking work (5:11-13).³⁹ The broken and traumatised community is in a permanent state of mourning (5:15, 17).

The first poem in Lamentations contrasts the status of the city before and after her beating. She was full—now she is alone; she was great among the nations—now she is like a widow, without legal status or protection; she was a princess on the international scene—now she is a slave. Her glory has departed (1:6a). She sits desolate and remembers the glories of her past (1:7a-c).

One prominent aspect of Lady Zion’s suffering in Lamentations is the very public humiliation that she has experienced. She has been politically *shamed* in front of a watching world. This comes out in various ways in the poems. Jerusalem is pictured like a woman who has been stripped naked in public as a punishment. ‘All those who honoured her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness. Indeed, she herself groans, and turns away’ (1:8b-c). She cannot face them. In 1:11 she interrupts the narrator’s words with a cry, and her very first words in the book are, ‘See, YHWH, and observe, for *I have become despised!*’ She has been reduced to ‘filth and refuse in the midst of the peoples’ (3:45, cf. 1:17c).

Shame also comes to the surface in the motif of onlookers mocking her fate. The enemy rejoices at what has happened and that no one has come to offer any comfort to the broken city (1:21a-b; 2:15-17c). Being the object of ‘reproach’ (5:1) is an integral part of the horror of the situation and the hoped for restoration includes the restoration of political *honour*.

In sum: Lamentations bears anguished poetic testimony to the political, economic, and social meltdown of the kingdom of Judah and its capital Jerusalem. In his book *The Desire of the Nations* Oliver O’Donovan has argued that Israel’s political expression of God’s

³⁹ Or possibly humiliating work (see Berlin, *Lamentations*).

kingship was manifest in three affirmations: first, YHWH gives Israel military *victory*; second, YHWH exercises just *judgement* through Israel's political leadership; third, YHWH grants political order and stability to Israel through *possession* of the promised land.⁴⁰ It takes but the reflection of a moment to see that Lamentations testifies to the loss of all three political aspects of God's rule in Israel.

3. The Politics of Lamentations

3.1 *How Can Lamentations Contribute to Political Life?*

Lamentations will not be a key text for those reflecting on important theo-political issues such as economic justice, the nature and function of law, models of government, the place of accountability, limits, and safeguards, or the relationship between church and state. There are plenty of biblical texts that bear more directly on such issues.

This is not to say that Lamentations does not have anything to say about such conceptual matters. Or, perhaps more precisely, the speakers of Lamentations *presuppose* certain views about such conceptual matters. For instance, the poems in Lamentations clearly imply a belief in the divine institution of the monarchy, the priesthood, and the prophetic office. It also presupposes a belief that God's covenant with Israel regulates its life, that office bearers and people are responsible before YHWH to walk according to that covenant, that the temple is indeed God's house where God's appointed festivals take place, that Jerusalem is rightly the political heart of Israel and that its collapse is a *bad* thing. The book is *not* a critique of the central place of Zion, nor of the political and religious institutions of Judah *per se*. As in prophetic texts, we find a critique of office *bearers* (prophets and priests) but *not* of the offices themselves.⁴¹ We find a critique of the people's *behaviour* but *not* of the covenant itself. We find a critique of the *inviolability* of Zion but not of its centrality. We shall highlight some of these implicit political concepts in what follows.

⁴⁰ Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): ch. 2.

⁴¹ Lamentations presents the disaster as a punishment for the sins of the people as a whole (e.g. 1:5, 8, 14, 18; 3:40-42; 5:16). But a failure of Judah's political leadership is also flagged up and the critique of leadership reveals something of the theological presuppositions of the poetry (2:14, cf. 2:9c; 4:13).

The main contribution of Lamentations to theo-political reflections, however, is of a different kind. Lamentations does not really add new strings to our biblical-theological harp but rather offers a unique *performance* using that harp; it does not provide new theological categories with which to make sense of theoretical questions. Rather, it serves as a witness that demands the attention of all theo-political thinkers and practitioners. The poetry testifies to the horror of political meltdown and, indirectly, to the goodness of political stability. It manifests the real, concrete human suffering that follows social collapse. And critically it both *models* and *solicits* a particular mode of response to such a plight. Commenting on the relation of the narrator to Lady Zion in chapters 1–2 Kathleen O'Connor comments:

In Lamentations the afflicted need a comforting witness, neither the evangelist who announces messages from outside suffering nor the legal witness in a court of law who 'objectively' states the facts, but something at once simpler and more difficult. The witness sees suffering for what it is, without denying it, twisting it into a story of endurance, or giving it a happy ending. The witness has a profound and rare human capacity to give reverent attention to sufferers and reflect their truth back to them. And in the encounter with those who suffer, the witness undergoes conversion from numbed ... observer to passionate advocate.⁴²

Lamentations invites its audience to become Zion's comforters and in so doing to become *emotionally engaged* witnesses. It is a call beyond mere biblical *theology* towards biblical *cardiology*. The narrator's reaction in 2:13 both *models* and *solicits* an appropriate ethical response:

What can I testify to you? What can I liken to you
 Daughter Jerusalem?
 What can I compare to you so that I can comfort you
 Maiden Daughter Zion?
 For as vast as the sea is your destruction.
 Who can heal you?

But the comforting voice Zion needs to hear the most is that of YHWH. No amount of human comfort can substitute for the lack of divine comfort, for the very identity of Judah—political and otherwise—depends upon that relationship. But in Lamentations YHWH remains silent. There is no instant-salvation here.

⁴² Kathleen O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003): 100.

Yet whilst we must respect the canonical *form* of Lamentations—a form that preserves this divine silence—we must at the same time pay attention to the canonical *context* of Lamentations. When we do that, we see that YHWH himself *did* respond to Jerusalem’s pleading. Several scholars have argued—to my mind, convincingly—that the prophecies of Second Isaiah are, in part, a *direct* response to the cries of the book of Lamentations.⁴³ In Isaiah 40–55 YHWH steps in to act as Zion’s comforter and in so doing restores her. All this highlights the important point that the *way* in which Lamentations engages politically is in *prayer*.

3.2 *Worship and Politics*

To better appreciate the political function of Lamentations we need to see the place of worship in Israel’s political life.⁴⁴ In worship the *just* and *righteous* king—YHWH—is the focus of attention. This keeps ever before Israel the covenant standards by which its rulers are held to account. It also serves to relativise all political power and to provide the basis for a transcendental critique of governments.⁴⁵ More than this, as O’Donovan notes, praise is the appropriate human response to divine government—it is the way in which the community of God acknowledges YHWH’s rule and is united as a political community in the act of worship. God’s rule is directed towards this response of community-unifying praise.⁴⁶

Here I think that Lamentations has something to contribute. The poems in the book were most likely written for use in public worship and this observation should warn us against limiting the political significance of worship to praise.⁴⁷ The politics of lament is both like

⁴³ See, for instance, Patricia T. Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (SBL diss 161; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997); Robin Parry, *Lamentations. The Two Horizons*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, ‘Lamentations in Isaiah 40–55’ in Parry and Heath, *Great Is Thy Faithfulness?*.

⁴⁴ E.g. Hanson, *Political Engagement*, ch. 2.

⁴⁵ ‘The throne of God grounds both civil obedience to the rulers as the norm, and at times disobedience when those rulers’ commands conflict with the reign of Christ. Both obedience and disobedience can be acts of worship’. J. Butler, ‘The Politics of Worship: Revelation 4 as Theopolitical Encounter’, *Cultural Encounters* 5.2 (2009): 7–23 (20).

⁴⁶ O’Donovan, *Desire*, 46–49.

⁴⁷ See Heath Thomas, ‘The Liturgical Function of the Book of Lamentations’ in *Thinking Towards New Horizons. Collected Communications to the XIXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Ljubljana 2007*, ed.

and unlike the politics of praise. Like praise these laments acknowledge YHWH's sovereign rule and refuse to elevate powerful political empires to divine status. Like praise Lamentations offers an appropriate set of human responses to God's providential reign—albeit providence acting in judgement rather than in salvation. Like praise these poems are an act of covenantal interaction with God. And like praise, they form another mode in which prayer engages a righteous God and holds the human powers accountable to act righteously. But there are distinctive aspects of lament.

First, it loudly proclaims that all is *not* right and it both manifests and reinforces a refusal to accept the way things are. Lament is prayer of a kind that 'refuses denial, practices truth-telling, and reverses amnesia ... Expression of pain is essential to prayer. It is that simple and that difficult. By telling the truth of its world to God, Lamentations becomes a school of prayer.'⁴⁸ In Lamentations Judah brings its affliction, suffering, humiliation, and grief into the presence of the deity.

But, second, lament is not merely some therapeutic venting of pain and frustration; it is a call on God to transform a situation and, as such, is an exercise of *hope*. In the case of Lamentations this is a hope for a salvation understood to have a clear political dimension. Even at its darkest moments Lamentations is never without hope—if one had given up hope one would cease to engage God. The hope of Lamentations is grounded in Israel's covenant with YHWH and the divine action consonant with God's covenant-faithfulness (3:21-24, 31-33). YHWH still rules and the covenant is still in place, so hope remains.⁴⁹

Central to the political hope in Lamentations lies God's divine rule over Israel and the nations. God's kingship is only directly spoken of once: 'You, YHWH, sit [enthroned] forever; Your throne [endures] from generation to generation' (5:19). However, it plays a pivotal role in the climactic prayer of the book. The community has spoken of all

M. Augustin and H. M. Niemann (Beiträge zur Erforschung des alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums 55; Frankfurt am Main: Lang Verlag, 2008): 137–47.

⁴⁸ O'Connor, *Tears*, 94, 126.

⁴⁹ Even the anguished question at the end of the book—'Why do you continually forget us, [and] forsake us for so many days?' (5:20)—only makes sense if the covenant is in place. If the community thought that YHWH had forsaken his covenant, the fact that their sufferings were so prolonged would not be such a perplexing issue for them.

its travails in its complaint to God (5:1-18). Then they turn and declare eternal God's kingly rule (5:19), which leads them to plead for restoration (5:20-21). The location of God's throne in heaven 'does not establish God's authority in abstraction *away from* this world, but rather as the sovereign authority *over* this world'.⁵⁰ This throne speaks of his rule over the nations (Ps. 47:7-8).⁵¹ Whilst God's kingship is most certainly *not* immunised from complaint in Lamentations,⁵² not even in 5:19—see how the complaint of 5:20 follows immediately on its heels and only gets its purchase *precisely because* YHWH still reigns—it is the foundation upon which any hope for the restoration of Israelite political life is built. He rules and his dominion has not been threatened in any way by the victory of Judah's adversary.

One of the dangers in some recent appreciations of lament is that they are too anthropocentric. They focus on the power of lament to help sufferers articulate sorrow and to transform pray-ers into people who are better justice-seekers. This is a very important insight but it is in danger of missing the central issue—that the primary audience the poets seek to influence is not the human audience but the divine. Lamentations offers an approach to politics which presupposes that *God is an active player* behind the scenes.

Third, in this context we should also note that the speakers of Lamentations practise what David Firth refers to as 'surrendering retribution'.⁵³ There is no suggestion that Judah should take revenge on Babylon. But crimes such as those committed against Judah should not go unpunished and in prayer Judah hands over retribution to YHWH. Firth argues that this surrendering of retribution is a consistent pattern in Israel's individual complaint psalms. And, as with those Psalms, we

⁵⁰ Butler, 'The Politics of Worship', 9.

⁵¹ Once we see the theology of kingship at work here we can perceive that it is, in fact, operative throughout the whole of Lamentations. When Judah fell to the enemy this was not because YHWH was the defeated victim of pagan gods. Israel's covenant Lord is exercising his rights as suzerain in using foreign nations to punish Judah. But that same covenant provides the foundations for hoped-for restoration (3:21-24, 31-33).

⁵² Robert Williamson Jr. has some helpful insights here but, in my opinion, he takes this subversive reading of Lamentations 5 too far (see his 'Lament and the Arts of Resistance: Public and Hidden Transcripts in Lamentations 5' in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, ed. Nancy C. Lee and Carleen Mandolfo (Atlanta: SBL, 2008): 67-80).

⁵³ David Firth, *Surrendering Retribution in the Psalms: Responses to Violence in the Individual Complaints* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005).

also find in Lamentations a *limitation* on the retribution sought. YHWH is asked to pay back the enemy *according to their deeds*—according to the *lex talionis* (1:21-22; 3:58-66; 4:21-22). This prayerful response is a political act. It is a renunciation of the ‘right’ to take violent retribution but it is predicated on the belief that *God* would act to call the enemy to account.

So this poetry is not primarily about teaching theological concepts (although one finds them in the book), nor even about shaping humans into more politically sensitive people (although it certainly has the potential to do that). First and foremost Lamentations is prayer—its audience is God. It exemplifies and legitimates—if any legitimisation is needed—the practice of public, political truth telling. It implies that political ‘death’ is a real evil and is to be brought by the community of faith into the presence of YHWH.

We can now consider some of the implicit political judgements embedded within the poetry of Lamentations. We will not consider the book’s critique of Judah’s political leadership but shall focus instead on its critique of the nations.⁵⁴

3.3 *Lamentations and International Politics*

3.3.1 **The Accountability of the Nations**

The poets of Lamentations view the enemy’s actions as a vehicle for divine punishment—the emphasis is very much on *YHWH-as-opponent-of-Israel*. However, it simultaneously views those enemy actions as culpable and as subject to divine retribution. This is presupposed by the critique of the nations in the book and is also implicit in Zion’s prayer for salvation and retribution:

... May they become like me.
 Let all their evil doing come before you,
 and deal harshly with it,
 as you dealt harshly with me,
 on account of all my transgressions
 (1:21-22, cf. 3:61-66; 4:21-22)

⁵⁴ See Robin Parry, ‘The Ethics of Lament: Lamentations 1 as a Case Study’ in *Reading the Law: Studies in Honour of Gordon J. Wenham*, ed. Gordon McConville and Karl Möller (London: T&T Clark, 2007): 138-55.

The fact that the actions of the enemy were viewed as instruments of divine action did not lead to the conclusion that they were morally justified.⁵⁵

3.3.2 The Empire Strikes Back

Lamentations plays its role as a part of the wider biblical critique of empire. The biblical literature, both Old Testament and New Testament, is very positive about nations but it is mostly very negative about empires.⁵⁶ Lamentations says nothing directly *about* empire but it *portrays the impact of empire* upon the nation of Israel. The imperial use of massive lethal force to overwhelm stubborn nations is presented *from the perspective of the victims*. Victors do not tell these stories but conveniently brush them under the carpet. The poetry demands of its readers that they look at the broken body of Jerusalem and do not turn away; that they serve as her comforters standing in solidarity with her. It is always a temptation for the politically powerful to avoid looking at those adversely affected by their decisions. Lamentations calls to its users to look very hard indeed.

As part of a critique of empire Lamentations functions as a witness against the use of excessive and indiscriminate military force to achieve goals. Those who suffer here are not simply the soldiers and leaders of Judah but the old people, the women, and the children. The empire used its power to win, *whatever the cost*. This book invites its audience to consider the cost and to weep.

⁵⁵ That God was thought to sometimes (justly) punish people through the (unjust) actions of human agents does not mean that the vivid portrayals of suffering-Jerusalem serve only as a critique of the human agents of punishment. Clearly there is an implicit complaint against God himself—indeed, the speakers of Lamentations are primarily concerned to present God as the *ultimate* cause of the suffering and the one who needs to “see” its problematic depths. My point is not to suggest that the distinction I make between divine and human causation immunises God from complaint, but it is to suggest that, in the end, however things currently *appear* to us, and however appropriate complaint against God is, the reality in which we trust is that God is *in fact* righteous. At times, we might not see how God’s actions can be right and we are permitted to protest against them. We are even authorised to question divine justice, but our faith is that, in the end, we shall see that God was indeed in the right. But the human instruments of divine action do not simply *appear* unrighteous—they *truly are* unrighteous.

⁵⁶ On empires see O’Donovan, *Desire*, 70-72, 86-88. On nations see Luke Bretherton, ‘Valuing the Nation: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Theological Perspective’ in *Public Theology in Cultural Engagement*, ed. Stephen R. Holmes (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008): 170-96.

The place of Lamentations in the moral and spiritual formation of its users is critical here. Take the first two chapters: the poems have been crafted in such a way as to demand sympathetic attention from both its divine and human audience. Both of the speakers—the narrator and Lady Zion—keep the audience’s gaze focused on her suffering. The audience are given no respite—they cannot turn away but are forced to look and to keep looking; they are invited to see her plight with kinder eyes than those of the enemy or the voyeuristic nations; they are encouraged by the use of poetic pleading to play the role of Zion’s comforters. They are led to look with horror on the actions of ‘the adversary’. In this way the poetry aims to sensitise its audience—divine and human—to the political sufferings of a people. This is literature that has the potential to be politically formative by shaping emotional reactions.

3.3.3 Unfaithful Allies

Judah had made various political alliances with surrounding nations. Part of such alliances was that they would come to each other’s assistance in time of need. Lamentations paints a picture in which Judah’s allies failed to honour such obligations. During the siege:

Our eyes continue to be spent
 [looking] for our helper – pointless!
 In our watchtower we watched
 for a nation that will not save us (4:17)

And after the fire the narrator reflects:

Bitterly she weeps in the night,
 and her tears are upon her cheeks.
 [For] her there is no comforter,
 from amongst all those who love her.
 All her companions have betrayed her,
 they have become to her as enemies (1:2b-c)

Zion says:

I called to my lovers.
 Even they deceived me (1:19a)

Now there is an implicit critique of Zion entering into such alliances in the use of the word ‘lovers’ (i.e. illicit rivals to YHWH) suggesting that the author of Lamentations 1 would have accepted the objections of the classical prophets to alliances with foreign states. Nevertheless, the

‘allies’ are still presented negatively for their failure to offer assistance.

3.3.4 Watching Nations That Fail to Offer Assistance

Zion calls to nations that are metaphorically passing by on the road (1:12-16, 18b-c). She appeals to them to notice her, to understand her plight, and to pity her, and offer comfort. She reaches out her hands to implore them but ‘there is none to comfort her’ (1:17). They pass by on the other side. Again this treatment of the political victim is presented negatively.

3.3.5 Edom: Political Opportunism at the Expense of the Victim

Edom is the only non-Israelite nation named in the book and it appears out of the blue in 4:21-22

Rejoice and be glad, Daughter Edom;
 You who dwell in the land of Uz!
 Also to you [the] cup will pass,
 You shall become drunk and strip yourself naked.

He will finish your transgression-punishment Daughter Zion
 He will no longer keep you exiled.
 He will attend to your transgression-punishment Daughter Edom,
 He will uncover your sins.

Exactly what Edom’s sin was is not mentioned. From other exilic and post-exilic texts, as well as from archaeological evidence, it appears that Edom took the opportunity presented by the weakening of Judah to expand westwards into Judahite territory.⁵⁷ This political opportunism at the expense of Judah is widely condemned in the Old Testament (Obad. 11; Ps. 137:8; Ezek. 35; Joel 3:19-21) and it appears that Lamentations forms part of that wider critique.

In these ways Lamentations portrays a range of bad political responses on the part of different nations to the suffering of Judah and it aims to shape the attitudes of its readers—both human and divine—towards such responses.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Lindsay, ‘Edomite Westward Expansion’.

⁵⁸ For Christians, reading the book in the light of the wider canonical story, the connections between Christ’s suffering and the exilic sufferings of Israel are suggestive. If Christ himself embraces Israel’s exile then we are invited to consider Lamentations in the light of the cross and vice versa. For Christians used to seeing the cross simply in spiritual terms this rudely reminds us that it was a highly political event. Jesus was *crucified*—the death assigned for *political* enemies of Rome, the imperial power of the time. The Nicene Creed makes this clear when it affirms that ‘he

4. Conclusion

Like Alice Thornton in the Seventeenth Century we wish to allow the text to help us view contemporary political sufferings with fresh eyes. Here multiple possibilities present themselves. One very sobering interpretative strategy for Christian readers is to read the text from the outside-in rather than from the inside-out. By this I mean that instead of identifying ourselves with the suffering people of Jerusalem we consider the possibility of seeing ourselves in the role of the nations—the oppressive imperial enemy, or the faithless allies, or the nations that ignore the sufferings of the victim, or those that exploit the political weakness of others. In other words we allow the text to serve as a prophetic critique of our own use of power. This is especially poignant if we consider the way that Christians have treated Jewish people over the centuries. The Church has used its social and political power to persecute Jews and Lamentations has the potential to expose such behaviour for what it is!⁵⁹

But the poetic witness in Lamentations can also serve to open our eyes to the plight of Gentile nations. Lamentations can speak to the persecuted Jew but also, say, to the Palestinian suffering, in part, as a result of Israeli policies regarding the Occupied Territories.⁶⁰ ‘If you wish to really understand what is taking place in the Gaza Strip’, says Catholic priest, Fr Manuel Musallam from Gaza,

please open your Bible and read the Lamentations of Jeremiah. This is what we are all living. People are crying, hungry, thirsty and desperate ... Even if there is food for sale, people have no money to buy food. The price of food, of course, has doubled and tripled in the situation. They have no income, no opportunities to get food from outside and no opportunities to secure money inside Gaza. No work. No livelihood. No future. They have no hope and many very poor people are aimlessly

was crucified *under Pontius Pilate*. He, like Jerusalem, was a victim of lethal imperial violence designed not merely to kill but to humiliate. There is a need for Christians to consider the implications of Jesus’ standing in solidarity with political victims. And seeing the political implications of the cross opens up new political windows on to the resurrection and ascension. On this Christological reading see Robin Parry, ‘Prolegomena to Christian Theological Interpretations of Lamentations’ in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006): 393-418; Parry, *Lamentations*.

⁵⁹ On such interpretative strategies see Parry, *Lamentations*, 174-76.

⁶⁰ I affirm the right of the State of Israel to exist and to defend its citizens and I am well aware of the complexity of the situation in the Occupied Territories. But I also think that friendship with Israel is compatible with robust critique of Israeli policies and actions.

wandering around trying to beg for something from others who also have nothing. It is heart-breaking to see.⁶¹

Others have drawn on Lamentations in their grief over contemporary destructions such as those in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁶² and New Orleans.⁶³ All these laments, like Alice Thornton's back in the Seventeenth Century, bring the political poetry of Lamentations into contact with political catastrophes of our own times in powerful ways.

In this paper I have tried to show how profoundly political Lamentations is. I have argued that its contribution to our theo-political reflections is not so much in its provision of new conceptual categories, nor even in its sharpening of categories already in place. Rather its importance lies in its power for shaping the emotional, ethical-political response of its audience. The readers are invited to bring political calamity into God's presence and to seek salvation; they are encouraged to look with merciful eyes at victims of political violence even if those victims are not 'innocent'; they are encouraged to see political evil for what it is and to speak its name; they are guided towards becoming honest-to-God lamenters, God-dependent pray-ers who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who refuse the political violence of empire, and who pray 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'

⁶¹ Reported at <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/urgecarit118.html>, the Independent Catholic News, on 7/7/06.

⁶² Marija Koprivnjak, "Jeremianic Lamentations over Bosnia and Herzegovina" (1992). Quoted in Lee, *Singers of Lamentations*, 47.

⁶³ Clyde Fant, 'A Lament for New Orleans' (14 September 2005). Originally online and reprinted in full in Lee and Mandolfo, *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary*, 215-17.