

The Necessity and Possibility of Lament

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Abstract: Lamenting is critical in times of crisis. Lament psalms give voice to our suffering and disorientation and are vital dialogues to restore our sense of agency and hope. Far from being merely a private expression, or a part of a communal liturgy, lament is a powerful public critique that shapes our discipleship and citizenship, thus forming a core dynamic of renewal. Creational desolation, injustice and economic deprivation are rooted in a poverty of relationship and poor stewardship. In our supplication to God, we express our yearnings for His intervention in interrupting the present and reconfiguring the future. It demands a deeper listening, a genuine mourning and a desire to be reshaped and redirected in our un-knowing. Thus, lamenting constitutes the beginning of new realities as it calls for a redesigning through divine intervention. It is at the core of our vocation and collective citizenship as we aim for an emerging future with a greater measure of human and creational flourishing. Biblical and contemporary examples exemplify the powerful nature of a politics of lament.

As societies have gone into lock down induced by the Corona virus and we hear daily reports of tragic deaths, existential questions arise about our way of life and faith. The suffering caused by the virus is compounded by poverty in densely populated refugee camps and shantytowns, in warzones and in deprived regions. The worldwide contraction reminds of Paul's poignant imagery of a groaning creation in the pains of childbirth (Rom. 8:22). Besides a virus spreading like wildfire, the world suffers bushfires, plagues of locusts, dislocation, war and terror. People are dying in hospitals without their loved ones present; huddle around graves next to the rubble of what used to be their home and scramble across the borders of what used to be their homeland. People see their faithful labour and livelihoods disappear before their eyes as the locusts descend on their crops and the virus ravages economies. The world is groaning, and so, numerous sighs and laments arise.

This paper explores the necessity of lament that involves the voicing of grief, anger and questions.

It also causes a deeper listening in the midst of mourning and not-knowing, which is key to a reorientation. Besides the human lament, the expressions of divine lament place the cries in creation, community and 'heaven' in a deeply relational context. Lament is vital in the restoration of life-giving stewardship and citizenship. Those who mourn over the wounds in their world discover their voice and recover a sense of agency. The paper concludes with four accounts of people rising up in their suffering love as they ache for a new day of justice. They thus intensify hope and forge new standards in communal life. As the lament resounds in a new collective infused with a new moral power it is core to a re-configuring of new possibilities of communal life, a moral economy, and a politics of love.

Communal lament

As suffering is an integral part of life, so are laments a crucial part of life's journey. The lament psalms are vital expressions of God's people in their suffering. In these dialogues, they list their hardships alongside the questions, protests, disappointment and even anger. "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?" (Ps.13:1). "Why Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Ps.10:1). "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?" (Ps. 22:1). God is seemingly absent, silent and aloof. Worse still, He is actively engineering their suffering and humiliation: "But now you have rejected and humbled us; you no longer go out with our armies. You made us retreat before the enemy, and our adversaries have plundered us. You gave us up to be devoured like sheep and have scattered us among the nations. You sold your people for a pittance, gaining nothing from their sale" (Ps. 44:9-12).

Lament psalms are cries of the heart amidst the suffering and subsequent disorientation. They are marked by an unwillingness to settle for the status quo. They are a vital critique.

Some lament psalms merely recount the hardships (Ps. 88). Others begin remembering God's faithfulness but end on a note of suffering (Ps. 89). Many though, dynamically move from despair to hope when the psalmist goes beyond a hardship catalogue and the arising questions or protest to reminiscing God's past faithfulness and expressing new hope. Psalm 44, for example, moves from praise for God's historic acts to lament (vv.1-9, 10-17), via a statement of innocence and protest against God (vv.10-20, 18-23) to questioning and crying for help on the basis of His

infallible love (vv. 24-27).¹ “Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression? ... Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love”.²

Far from merely being a personal rant, lamenting is often communal. Grief receives a structure. The frequent use of plural pronouns (we, us, our) characterises the lament’s collective nature and the people’s cohesion. The psalm evokes the image of a people whose suffering has shaken their confidence but who, through questioning prayer; find again their way to God. The juxtaposition of suffering and joy, grief and praise are essential elements of the lament. In this way, lament psalms may finish with deep trust, an assurance that God is with them as in days gone by. Recounting divine faithfulness, the people remind themselves of ‘the kind of God’ they are praying to. He will intervene. Reconfiguration is possible. As such, these dialogues about suffering are vital in the community’s journey of faith and its developing relationship with the Creator. Expressing frustration and submission; voicing questions and doubts; appealing to the One who can remove suffering, the laments give an insight into Israel’s faith that nothing lies outside God’s sphere of influence. Lament demonstrates that the people have a voice in the realm of suffering when talking with God.³ It restores their voice and a sense of agency.

When Paul reflects on the cosmic groaning, the contractions in creation, and the multiple hardships of the community (Rom. 8:17-37), we hear that collective sigh in the citation of Psalm 44:22: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (Rom. 8:36). The quotation of a single verse from this lament psalm will have triggered a file in the Jewish mind, evoking a reassuring effect. For, in the days of their predecessors, God powerfully intervened. He brought victory and scattered their enemies, for He loved them. Citing the verse about life’s pathos in the context of the cross (Rom 8:34) causes the psalmist’s words to be heard in a fresh way. Christ gives the Jewish tradition of the suffering righteous a new center: they share the path of the suffering and exalted Lord. Their life, including their endurance in hardship and overcoming, is located in relationship. The overcoming “through him who loved us” celebrates

¹ van Uchelen, N.A., *Psalmen* deel II. 2nd rev.ed. (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1986), 22.

² Psalm 44: 24, 26.

³ Brueggemann, W. “A Shape for Old Testament Theology, II: Embrace of Pain”. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47.3 (1985), 397-402; Boulton, M., “Forsaking God: a theological argument for Christian lamentation”. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55.1 (2002), 58-78.

Christ's lordship, love and faithfulness (Rom. 8:38ff). The psalm citation thus coincides with a core theological problem addressed in Paul's letter, the problem of God's faithfulness.⁴ The lament's characteristic move from pain to glory is found in Romans 8: the reality of suffering; the people's groaning and crying out; their expectation and praise; and the saving event.⁵

The cross in particular is portrayed as an expression of God's faithfulness (Rom. 8:32).⁶ Paul's lament citation enhances the idea of the cruciform shape of faithful living centred in love. The followers of Christ suffer with Him, groaning with, and on behalf of, the world and so conform to His self-giving example.⁷ The psalm quotation prepares the way for Paul's exhortation, calling the faithful to offer themselves as a living sacrifice in view of God's mercy (Rom. 12:1). He calls for true stewardship and the restoration of glory lost at the fall (Rom. 8:29).⁸ They are to steward in the way of love. Such lifestyle coheres with the theological vision emerging from the letter, namely "the vision of a God who in the person of the Son faithfully engages in a costly and vulnerable intervention into the world in order, through the gift of the Spirit, to roll back human selfishness and empower human beings to live faithfully in and for the world".⁹ Lament is at the core of that vocation.

Divine lament

Paul's repetitive 'groaning' term functions as a *Leitwort*¹⁰, linking God's creation, people and Spirit (Rom. 8:22ff, 26). The 'groaning' triad portrays a sense of identification. Paul develops his pneumatology in this unique depiction of a groaning Spirit. This is heightened by his choice of verb to depict the Spirit's help towards the faithful, choosing a rare verb in New Testament texts that

⁴ Hays, R.B., *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 59-63; 1:16f, 3:3, 21-26, 31; 8:32, 9:6, 14; 11:29. Keesmaat, S., *Paul and his Story. (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition*. JSNTSup 181 (Sheffield: SAP, 1999), 63.

⁵ Keesmaat, 125-133.

⁶ Dunn, J.D.G., *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 225n.95, 638n.145; Rom.1:17, 3:25ff, 5:8, 15:8, cf. 2 Cor.5: 20ff.

⁷ Hays, 61-63; Similar, Byrne, B., "Interpreting Romans Theologically in a Post -'new Perspective' Perspective". *Harvard Theological Review* 94.3 (2001), 240.

⁸ Keesmaat, 124.

⁹ Byrne, 241.

¹⁰ T. Longman III ("Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation". In Silva, *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation* volume 3. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1987), 153 defines a *Leitwort* as (a) word(s) that have prominence by virtue of frequent and strategic use, the identification of which helps to discover the structure or emphasis in a passage.

denotes ‘bearing a burden along with’, ‘joining with to help’.¹¹ He thus portrays, “the image of the Spirit shouldering the burden which our weakness imposes on us”.¹² The Spirit intercedes for us and laments within us – powerful divine advocacy in view of a cosmic redemption purpose (Rom. 8:26ff, 8:19-22).

The presumed Jewish origin for Paul’s pneumatology would support the linkage. Jewish authors speak of the Spirit’s involvement in God’s re-creation of the earth and its inhabitants (Isa. 32:15, 2 Bar. 21:4, 23:5).¹³ A sense of God’s suffering over the state of his creation occurs in the narrative of the flood (Gen. 6:5-8:22): God’s grief (6:6) causes him to act in view of his commitment, succinctly depicted in the phrase “God remembered” (7:1).¹⁴ In Second Isaiah, the prophet laments that Israel does not know, see or hear; has not been attentive; has not followed His ways or obeyed His laws; it does not know the way (Isa. 42:16-25). God laments. Jesus’ final public address is a powerful lament. “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing” (Mat. 23:37). His final cry on the cross cites a lament psalm (Mat. 27:46; Ps. 22:1).

Lament at the heart of stewardship, citizenship and renewal

In Jewish texts, the groans of the faithful also concern their grief over a suffering world as they identify with the world’s wounds. Job sighs: “Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?” (Job 30:25). His stewardship concerns his family, employees, the dispossessed, the judicial powerless, the orphan and widow, the stranger and neighbour, the homeless *and* the creation. Job listens attentively to the land. He links the groaning of the land, its barrenness and human suffering to unjust stewardship:

“If my land cries out against me [literally *groans*]¹⁵ and all its furrows are wet with tears.
If I have devoured its yield without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants,
Then let briers come up instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley”. (Job 31:38-40)

¹¹ Cf. Luke 10:40 for the only other occurrence in the NT.

¹² Dunn, J.D.G., *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38a (Dallas: Word, 1988), 477.

¹³ Welker, M., *God the Spirit* (Fortress Press, 1994), 143-147.

¹⁴ Brueggemann, “A Shape ...”, 407-409.

¹⁵ McComiskey, T., “Lament”, in C. Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology 2* (Exeter: Paternoster and Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 423.

In Jewish literature, the transgressions of the people, the social equilibrium and the ecological concerns are interwoven (e.g. Ex. 23:10-12; Deut. 15:1-11; Lev. 25:2-22).¹⁶

Jewish texts use 'groaning' language in relation to creation's ongoing hardship due to the violation in relationships since the fall.¹⁷ It includes the desolation caused by poor stewardship; provoked disasters; political oppression and tragedies of injustice.¹⁸ Creation yearns for its liberation from the effects of human sin. It longs for stewardship that reflects God's reign (cf. Rom. 8:19-22, 29). Analogous to Jewish texts, Paul places creation's groaning and travail in a prominent context of hope and eagerly awaiting (Rom. 8:19ff), as 'labour' itself also implies. The expectation of creation hoping to share in the restoration process that has begun in the new humanity, sketches a unique relational and emotive portrait.¹⁹

His threefold 'groaning', linking the creation, the community and the Spirit in a redemptive destiny, shows that all life is interrelated.²⁰ In fact, the community's groans may even be instigated or heightened by the Spirit. Having received the first fruit, having glimpsed perfection, the imperfect really begins to hurt because in the context of such hope, the pain, decay and brokenness ache even more (Rom. 8:23).²¹ The Spirit makes people sensitive again to the world's cries, thus restoring the relationship between the community and the creation disrupted at the fall.

In the enforced pause due to the Corona virus induced lockdown, questions about stewardship come to the fore. The crisis highlights the inequalities (poverty, dislocation) and oppressions

¹⁶ Uehlinger, C., "The Cry of the Earth? Biblical perspectives on ecology and violence". In Boff, L and Elizondo V eds. *Ecology and poverty: Cry of the earth, cry of the poor*. London: SCM Press, 1995), 41-58. The Sabbath has been held to embrace social and ecological justice (Isa. 11:6ff, 65:17, 66: 22), Keesmaat, 103-106.

¹⁷ στενάζειν

¹⁸ E.g. Job 31:38-40, *Sib.Or.*3:752ff. Uehlinger (47) comments that in antiquity political, military and social conflicts usually also had effects in an ecological sphere.

¹⁹ Esler, P.F. *Conflict and Identity in Romans. The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 261-262.

²⁰ Dunn, *Romans* 1, 313: The idea of interconnectedness is also expressed in his repetitive sun-compound for creation (συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει, 8:22), Christ (συμπάσχομεν, 8:17), the Spirit (συναντιλαμβάνεται, 8:26) and God (συνεργεῖ, 8:28).

²¹ Wolterstorff, N., *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 85-86; Pinnock, C.H., *Flame of Love. A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1996), 179. Welker, 333.

(domestic abuse, judicial vulnerability) that make life unbearable in 'the best of times', let alone in the worst. The people's spirit is broken by poor relationships, labour and housing contracts, and wages. Corrosive governance has a cumulative effect. Tax avoidance is a mortal threat to the world economy; crisis times show *how* lethal it is.

While the pandemic continues to take a terrible toll on human life, the lockdown constitutes a breather for creation, detected in the improvement of air and fresh water quality now the human footprint on the earth has lightened. The land has indeed been groaning against us; its furrows are wet with tears.

To reflect on stewardship, lament is a vital place to start. Listening deeply and compassionately to the cries around us and within us. Which voices have we missed; whom have we overlooked; whose laments have fallen on deaf ears; who have we talked over; who have we muted; which minority report have we not heard? Luke Bretherton calls for the "need to rebuild our ability to hear with our gut and to respond with deep compassion to the suffering around us". Then our constructive action will be fuelled by grief of what has been lost, a kind of anger more positively expressed as 'lament'.²²

N.T. Wright preferences lament over answers in times like these, "As the Spirit laments within us, so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell. And out of that there can emerge new possibilities, new acts of kindness, new scientific understanding, new hope. New wisdom for our leaders?"²³

Biblical and contemporary exemplars show how lament forges the emergence of a new leadership; new voices and realities; and inspires a new politics.

In Israel's history, we see audacious public expressions of lament. In a country marked by famine, the cycle of violence had claimed the lives of seven members of one family as all of Saul's heirs are being executed following David's victory. Rizpah, who lost two of her sons, stays on the mountain

²²Bretherton, L. "A Theological reflection" (July 2015) (accessed 30/4/2020).

https://cuf.org.uk/uploads/resources/CUF_2955__Growing_Stronger_Together__FINAL_2015.pdf

²³ Wright, N.T., "Christianity Offers No Answers About the Coronavirus. It's Not Supposed To" in *Time Coronavirus brief* (29/3/2020) <https://time.com/5808495/coronavirus-christianity/> (Accessed 29/4/2020).

where their bodies have been left. For months she pours out her love and grief by protecting them from the vultures by day and the wild animals by night. Rizpah's lamentations are directed to God, yet her public act is a powerful statement of righteous advocacy for human dignity, even in death. Reports of her unswerving wake eventually reach the corridors of power. The fearless vigil of a humble concubine changes the heart as well as the policy of a powerful ruler. Her stand against the dark forces by day and by night is key in the turnaround of a nation. King David orders the removal of the bodies and following a proper burial the famine is lifted from the land (2 Samuel 21:1-14).

In 1977, courageous women began to circle their town square weekly in a public act of lament confronting the dictatorship that had stolen their children. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo kept on marching to draw attention to the systematic murder of their children and disappearance of their grandchildren. The Mothers', and now the Grandmothers', relentless quest for justice has borne fruit. By 2016, more than 1,000 of the dictatorship's torturers and killers had been tried and 700 sentenced.²⁴ To date, grandchildren are still being reunited with their grandmothers, one of whom said, "God has given me a long life so that I could live to meet my grandson".²⁵ For others, the 'not yet' of time continues to loom large in their old age. The lament goes on. Not all is made well on this side of life. The philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff writes in his moving *Lament for a Son*, "The mourners are aching visionaries". They have a glimpse of God's new day. They weep over humanity's weeping in the light that they will be comforted (Mt. 5:4).²⁶

In 2011, the Nobel committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to three women for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace building. One of the women, Leymah Gbowee, is a Liberian peace activist who leads the women's peace movement Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace that helped bring an end to the Second Liberian Civil War. Mrs Gbowee, who had lived with her four children in a refugee camp, gathered

²⁴ Goñi, U., *The Guardian*, "40 years later, the mothers of Argentina's 'disappeared' refuse to be silent", 28/4/2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/28/mothers-plaza-de-mayo-argentina-anniversary> (accessed 30/4/2020).

²⁵ Goñi, U., *The Guardian*, "A grandmother's 36-year hunt for the child stolen by the Argentinian junta", 7/6/2015 (accessed 30/4/2020).

²⁶ Wolterstorff, 85-86.

the women weekly to pray as a crucial part of the peace movement. Their lament was directed to God, who could bring a reconfiguration of their world. Yet, their movement was also a public act. Receiving the news of her award, she said, "This is the recognition that we hear you, we see you, we acknowledge you".²⁷

Her sequence 'being heard, seen, and acknowledged' echoes dynamics of the Exodus narrative: "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out...and I am concerned about their suffering" (Exodus 3:7).

In the Exodus story, God heard Israel's groaning and cries in slavery. Their subsequent deliverance from Egypt is of fundamental significance to Old Testament theology. The Exodus theme becomes the paradigm of deliverance, reflected in language that permeates the prophets, psalms and narratives. The account, which is told time and again to the next generation, reminds Israel of God's powerful fidelity. Commenting on the Exodus, Michael Welker eloquently describes how the descent of God's Spirit results in the joining together of people who find themselves in distress, and thus, "a process of emergence sets in... that constitutes a new beginning, new relations, a new reality". The people experience the restoration of an internal order, a new sense of community and capacity for action.²⁸ Paul echoes the Exodus account in his portrayal of salvation when he contrasts the former slavery with the leading of the Spirit and the character of the new life. They are to attentively listen to the laments that surround them and act as part of the worldwide cry and search for redemption (Rom. 8:14-23).

Current expressions of lament in the public space remain as powerful as ever - the recent movement of 'taking a knee' being a case in point. Like all prayer, it is a form of protest against injustice. In support of the Black Lives Matter movement that intervenes in injustice and violence inflicted on black communities by the state and vigilantes, Colin Kaepernick bowed the knee during the national anthem. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that

²⁷ BBC Website "Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee: I'm out of words" (7/10/2011) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-15217240/nobel-laureate-leymah-gbowee-i-m-out-of-words> (accessed 30/4/2020).

²⁸ Welker, 55-106.

oppresses black people”.²⁹ His prophetic act resonated widely with others following suit, their constructive subversion rippling well beyond the football pitch.

Bretherton reflects, “New Testament stories describe people who kneel before Jesus in supplication or lament. With their kneeling, these biblical figures say: Something is desperately wrong, please hear us and use your power to help us. Their act of submission signals their faith that healing will come and their prayers will be answered. Kneeling as a sign of faith or lament is echoed outside religious contexts. It is also a sign of supplication, a plea for a new and deeper kind of relationship... The act of kneeling in a stadium during the national anthem is, therefore, an act of good citizenship. Drawing on a rich Christian heritage, it venerates a foundational and transcendent good of democracy: the rule of law. Without the commitment that all be treated fairly before the law, whatever their colour or creed, democratic citizenship is meaningless. If anyone is showing respect and deference to the American tradition, it is the players who have the courage to call on America to be all that it dreams it is.”³⁰

Politics of lament

The vignettes from Gibeah, Argentina, Liberia and America demonstrate that far from being merely a private expression, or part of a communal liturgy, lament is a powerful public critique that shapes our discipleship and citizenship. It builds a politics of lament. The expression of grief and the interrogation of the status quo constitute a strong dissonant. Those who lament believe in, and hope for, a counter narrative. Lament is vital in sustaining prophetic imagination, awakening consciousness in society, and courageously advocating in confronting the powers on injustices. The laments resiliently begin to move in the public space, gradually widening their reach and creating an anticipation of new possibilities, thus recreating and reconfiguring their world. Brueggemann considers the capacity to grieve to be the beginning of real criticism.

²⁹ Fraser, G., *The Guardian, Loose Canon column*, “Like the prophets of old, Colin Kaepernick uses prayer as protest” 28/9/2017 (accessed 30/4/2020).

<https://amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2017/sep/28/like-the-prophets-of-old-colin-kaepernick-uses-prayer-as-protest>

³⁰ Bretherton, L. “Taking a knee has always been a sign of reverence, not disrespect” in *The Washington Post*, 29/9/2017 (accessed 30/4/2020).

https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/taking-a-knee-has-always-been-a-sign-of-reverence-not-disrespect/2017/09/28/8e91981e-a3c9-11e7-8cfe-d5b912fab99_story.html?tid=ss_tw&utm_term=.fabac193531b

“Bringing hurt to the public expression is an important first step in the dismantling criticism that permits a new reality, theological and social, to emerge”.³¹

Merging social science and theology in his book *To Change the World*, James Davison Hunter demonstrates that resistance is creative. Church is “a community of resistance”, which implies the challenge to think through in an institutional way, in every sphere of life a constructive subversion of the frameworks of social life - thus challenging structures that dishonour God, dehumanise people and neglect or harm creation. Subversion is creative and constructive. The objective is to affirm the good and oppose ideals and structures that undermine human flourishing and to offer constructive alternatives for the realisation of a better way. He proposes the emergence of a new city commons.³²

In his *In Praise of Love*, the French philosopher Alain Badiou considers the goal of politics to discover what the collective is capable of.³³ Lament can be at the origin of a new *polis*; engaging a collective of new conversational partners; a new community with a variety of expertise and worldviews who resonate with the felt grief; who reimagine and call the hoped-for into being. A politics of lament calls for solidarity among overlapping networks of similarly oriented people in a common cause, creating multiple strategic alliances. The *polis* involves poet, play writer, priest, philosopher, artist, farmer, teacher, stranger, parent, rapper, pupil, pensioner *et al.* in shaping a new economic and political wisdom – A new city commons in pursuit of communal life and stewardship with a soul, which has its home in faith and virtue and is concerned with the wellbeing God intends for the world.

It calls for radical proposals, i.e. new at the root. The economist Kate Raworth threw out the economic textbooks to develop the paradigm of her Doughnut economics.³⁴ In *Economics of Good and Evil*, the Czech economist Tomáš Sedláček tracks the Hebrew and first Century Christian

³¹ Brueggemann, W., *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 12.

³² Hunter, J.D., *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 235-6, 273-286.

³³ Badiou, A., *In Praise of Love* (London: Profile Books, 2012), 53.

³⁴ Raworth, K., *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist* (White River Junction, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017).

wisdom, drilling down into the spirit, law and soul of economics. Tracing its roots, he reminds us that in the course of history, biblical values, principles and concepts have meaningfully shaped economics, which, in turn, always had an ethical content. The Hebrew teaching on love for God's law contains building blocks for a Sabbath economy in which land, animals and people thrive and the weak are provided for. The principles expounded in the New Testament are vital segments for a moral economy. He calls people from all spheres to think imaginatively to develop a Sabbath economy.³⁵

Laments arise in times of crisis in which we are confronted painfully with our human weakness. An integral part of our humanity and our disorientation is that we do not know (Rom. 8:26). Rather than quickly moving on from the place of mourning, we need to listen out for new ways of knowing and touching reality. We need to listen out attentively for new sounds. Thus, we maximise the possibility that lies dormant in the lament. In the composition of Isaiah 40:12-42:13, the road Israel will take (40:3) constitutes a central theme.³⁶ It also forms the immediate co-text for the second part in which powerful help is promised in human ignorance. For after a long divine silence, a dynamic sound emerges "But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant". This travail is promising for the road ahead. He will lead the faithful by ways they do not know; along unfamiliar paths He will guide them (Isaiah 42:14-16).

The necessity *and* the possibility of a relevant lament in our time are endless, precious and costly. The lamenters lean into the future. Such laments invite the Kingdom of God to come.³⁷

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³⁵ Sedláček, T., *Economics of Good and Evil: The Quest for Economic Meaning from Gilgamesh to Wall Street* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³⁶ Beuken, W.A.M., *Jesaja. Deel Iia*, 2nd ed. (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1979), 147-148.

³⁷ Brueggemann, *Prophetic...*, 57.

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