

A BRIEF REVIEW

of

Billman, Kathleen D. and Daniel L. Migliore,
Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope.
Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1999.

By

Rev. Walter L. Michel, Ph.D.
(Hebrew and Semitic Studies)
Professor of Old Testament

LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CHICAGO

Telephone: 773-288-3889 (study/home)

presented at a faculty colloquy at the

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Please, report all mistakes, disagreements, etc. to me. I, constantly, look for deep, collegial, and scholarly discussions, no matter how heart-wrenching. Help me! Teach me! Yes, I have reached the point, after reading thousands of articles and hundreds of books (during my brief 67 years), that I am almost overwhelmed by my ignorance.

Oh, by the way, I detest all comments *ad hominem*, and despise and pity those who feel that such comments are necessary for their own self esteem.

The following review is not a *regular* or, strictly, *scholarly* review. It is not intended for publication. I will keep this review more or less in the area of personal reflections (ramblings, thoughts, concerns, ...) and, yes, reaction, to the content of the book.

By the way, my attitude towards publications is very ambivalent. I admire colleagues who have the fortitude to bare their ignorance, mediocrity and, occasionally, brilliance, in publications. I am very happy with a couple of my publications, but, in some of my publications I have made such stupid mistakes that I am ashamed to be associated with them. Fortunately, even colleagues in the field, very often, do not read everything.

A NOTE OF THANKS

Dear Kadi, I understand your request to respond to your book, during a faculty colloquy, as a great honor, responsibility and opportunity to continue to clarify my own views on the topic. Thank you!

I have read the book several times and I have lived with it for several weeks now ... and I will continue to live with it in my own work on the Biblical topic of the law-court pattern of prayer (mainly Psalms and Job).

The law-court pattern of prayer is the *ONLY* way open to biblical people to confront their covenanted God when that God treats covenanted individuals and the whole covenanted people in an authoritarian, pompous and abusive manner. Only, the law-court pattern of prayer can lead to re-birth and hope of living again in harmony with YHWH (ꞒL).

Pagans can not file a law-suit against the Supreme Being. Christians can not file a law-suit against the god Trinity. Moslems can not file a law-suit against Allah.

Christians who rely on the Gospels (well, I am not so sure about John) can file a law-suit against the deity because in the Gospels the deity (the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ) is the same as in the Tanakh, namely, YHWH (ꞒL).

For Pauline Christians it is not possible to file a law-suit against YHWH (ꞒL) because of Paul's view of sin as an overpowering evil power and the impossibility, therefore, to live a righteous life as a covenanted member of YHWH (ꞒL). Only acceptance of "Christ," the divine good power, which kills the divine evil power, can relieve a person from sin. Paul's view, although building on a particular Jewish strand of thinking during the inter-testamental period, is no longer Jewish and was completely rejected by emerging rabbinic Judaism and is one of the major reasons for the separation of gentile Christianity from Judaism.

And then came the Constantinian period of Christianity with political, legal and military power and authoritarianism in the religious realm, a realm which now belonged to the emperor. It is in this realm in which Augustine (354-430 C.E.) flourished and continued the Pauline paradigm of sin. In Pauline-Augustinian thinking

of sin it is not possible to live without sin and, therefore, there is no such thing as innocent suffering and, therefore, there are no grounds for a law-suit against God, who, since the fourth century, is no longer YHWH ('L) for Christians, but the Trinity. This makes it clear why the law-court pattern of prayer was not only neglected among Pauline-Augustinian Christians, but was impossible.

There never was a right place for legitimate lament against God in Pauline-Augustinian Christianity, and, therefore, a re-recovery of the law-court pattern of prayer is, completely, impossible.

Rebirth of Hope? As you very well know, the whole enterprise is terribly painful and I have not been able to find a way of not coming very close to total despair. I admire you and your colleague of being able to speak about "hope." I am not that far in my own thinking, actually, I think, that "hope" is a placebo, a lie ("opium for the people") in the face of the utter horrors which God (Yes, God!) visits upon us as an abusive "Father."

I will try to do my best (which may not be good enough) to respond to the content of the book, given my limitations and my particular involvement with the topic for more than forty years as a Christian, as a pastor, as a scholar of Biblical Hebrew, and as a teacher/professor in the Christian community.

Whatever I write, say and think is intended to increase our understanding of the difficult topic, under discussion. All the comments and thoughts I also address to myself, my own life as a person before God and as a student and teacher of the Word from God through the Bible.

Dear Kadi, dear colleagues, I see everything in the light of the fires which consumed more than one million Jewish children as vermin, *worthy* to be *exterminated*. And I see the abusiveness of God in these events. I understand and I agree with David R. Blumenthal, who writes in his book, *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1993, p. 247,

"*God is abusive, but not always*. God, as portrayed in our holy sources and as experienced by humans throughout the ages, acts, from time to time, in a manner that is so unjust that it can only be characterized by the term 'abusive.' In this mode, God allows the innocent to suffer greatly. In this mode, God 'caused' the holocaust, or allowed it to happen."

I live, daily, *as a Christian*, with the voices of two "brothers in Christ" ringing in my ears. Their words have been made available in many publications. I will quote from Berkovits, Eliezer, *Faith after the Holocaust*. New York: KTAV, 1993,

"M. D. Weissmandel, in his memoirs of his experiences in Slovakia, tells of two characteristic encounters with the Catholic hierarchy in that country. Among the German satellites there had been no puppet government more anxious to get rid of all the Jews than that of the Catholic priest Tisso in Slovakia. Shortly before Passover, **1942**, one of the most respected rabbis in Slovakia approached the Archbishop Kametko (n.20) whom he had known from happier days, to influence his former private secretary Tisso to prevent the expulsion of the Jews from his country. The rabbi spoke of the threat of expulsion only. The archbishop, however, with characteristic Christian love, decided to enlighten him regarding the true fate that was awaiting the Jews in Poland. These were his words:

'This is no mere expulsion. There--you will not die of hunger and pestilence; there--they will slaughter you all, old and young, women and children, in one day. This is your punishment for the death of our Redeemer. There is only one hope for you--to convert all to our religion. Then I shall effect the annulling of this decree.' (n.21)

As a result of Christian theology, teaching, and tradition, the feeling among Christians was widespread that the Jews were receiving what was due them. No one expressed it more succinctly than the papal nuncio in Slovakia. In the fall of **1944**, Weissmandel together with his family and hundreds of other Jews had been put into a temporary camp prior to their deportation of Auschwitz. Weissmandel escaped and succeeded in making his way to the residence of the papal nuncio. He described to his eminence the conditions of the families in the camp and asked for his immediate intervention with Tisso. Upon his urging, he received the following answer:

'This, being Sunday, is a holy day for us. Neither I nor Father Tisso occupy ourselves with profane matters on this day.'

Upon Weissmandel's wondering how the blood of infants and children could be considered a profane matter, he was taught a significant chapter in Christian theology. He was told:

'There is no innocent blood of Jewish children in the world. All Jewish blood is guilty. You have to die. This is the punishment that has been awaiting you because of that sin' (meaning the death of Jesus). (n.22).

One wonders whether in the entire history of the human race the concept of holiness has ever been more degraded and desecrated than in the mouth of that papal nuncio. He was on that, for him, holy day repeating with deep religious conviction the Hitlerite faith that all Jews are guilty. Hitler believed in it on racial grounds, the archbishop and the papal nuncio, for theological reasons. In practice it amounted to the same thing: death to all Jews. Not all Christians felt that way, but many in high offices in the churches did. The decisive accusation through the ages did its murderous work in the Christian subconscious making Christianity in many cases, an active accomplice in the Nazi crime and, in most cases, "a tacit party to the barbarities".

The above account is, e.g., also printed in Fleischner, Eva, ed., *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*. Papers given at the International Symposium on the Holocaust held at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, New York City, June 3 to 6, 1974. New York: KTAV Publishing House / The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith: 1974. BM 645 .H6 157 1974.

A correction to the claim that the Nazis added the racial component in the need to *SAVE* the world from Jews and Judaism (We forget that for the Nazis -- and for the Christians -- this was a holy mission) I was stunned to learn that the racial and theological distinction for the reason for the *necessity* of the *extermination* of Jews and Judaism had already begun to disappear in the time of the Inquisition in fifteenth century Spain. See, e.g., Netanyahu, B., *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*. New York: Random House, 1995. In the segment on "The Rise of Racism" (pp. 974-1004) the concept of *limpieza de sangre*, "the purity of blood," is discussed. Netanyahu writes, "The first converso document referring to the race question as a factor in the relationship between the Old and the New Christians is the letter of complaint that the conversos of Aragon addressed to Pope Eugene IV in 1437." (p. 977). The book has 1384 pages ... and I continue to read in it. Horrendous information!

The above information shocked me to my foundations. I thought, that I could, at least, excuse Christians from "racism." As horrible, stupid, and incorrect, as the Christian *theological* reasons are for the teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism and the eventual extermination -- I can understand these reasons -- but to learn that "racism" also has Christian origins is too much to bear. I thought that I could comfortably blame the Nazis for racism.

By the grace of "late birth" (I was thirteen in 1945) I have no guilt in the extermination of Jews, which my Christian parent generation either approved or even, actively, participated in the enterprise. BUT, I am an Austrian (and Austrians were the best Nazis) and I am a Lutheran Protestant Christian, eagerly trying to live a Christian life, but, I was inundated with anti-Jewish attitudes and statements by my fellow Lutheran Christians -- daily. Therefore, very early in my life, I knew that Christians *MUST* rid themselves, totally, of the teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism or bear the guilt of being even worse than the worst Nazis after the full extent of the Shoah became known.

BEGINNING SOMEWHERE ...

There is little doubt that the book takes its place of honor among the many books on pain, suffering, injustice, evil and abuse. I agree with the sentiments of colleagues printed on the back cover of the book. In only 150 pages the book attempts to bring some sense and guidance -- for Christians -- to THE most difficult problem of our pain and suffering in our relationship to our God. The scope of the book is stunning ... and, therefore, also its strength and weakness.

But, from the very outset, I need to raise an important problem for Pauline-Augustinian Christians and, therefore, also with the basic assumption of the book, namely that a RE-covering of lament, i.e., the arguing with God tradition, is possible for Pauline-Augustinian Christians.

According to the Pauline-Augustinian paradigm of sin it is not possible for a person to be innocent in the relationship to God, therefore, there is no possibility to file a law-suit against God. According to this paradigm there can be no proper lament against God, only repentant confession of sin and total submission to God. There can be no talk of RE-covering of lament, because there was no law-court pattern of prayer among Pauline-Augustinian Christians in the first place. Such a form of prayer is evident in about fifty (50) psalms and, of course, in the Book of Job (the main example of a long and powerful law-suit against God). In this book Job wins the law-suit and it is God who repents and tries, vainly, to rectify the abusive behavior towards Job in the Epilogue.

It would have been good, at the outset, to, clearly, state the two biblical views of sin and atonement, i.e., that of Paul and that of the rest of the Bible (including Jesus). Whenever that is not done things become very confusing.

BILLMAN AND MIGLIORE - A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

A professor of Pastoral Theology and a professor of Systematic Theology collaborating in such an important enterprise is very laudable. I had little problem reading the book. The paragraphs flow smoothly into the next and there seem to be no jarring jumps from one viewpoint to another. Amazing. I do not think that such an achievement would have been possible in a collaboration of two Old Testament professors. I do question, though, the absence of the participation of an expert in the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh. The reliance on translations and the, almost, exclusive reliance on Brueggemann's work.

I do lament the fact that I do not know who said what. Here and there, I think, I can hear Kadi's voice, but I can not be sure. I do not like collaborative publications. I also do not like so-called team-teaching, which is, usually, a sham, because each team member spouts forth his or her view without dialogue. I am not saying that team-teaching can not be done right, but, that it is very difficult and terribly expensive for the institution.

THE TITLE: RACHEL'S CRY ...

I find the title gripping, but problematic. Throughout the book it is not clear why Rachel was chosen and not one of the other suffering women in the Bible. Also, I looked for an extensive exegesis of the Rachel story and could not find one. I do not believe that the potential readers of the book are, generally, familiar with the Rachel story and the reasons for her cry. Do women identify with her despair and cry today? Did she have a right to her cry in the setting of her time?

Surely, the title will attract women and certain men. I am not so sure that men will pick up the volume on their own. I have a terrible feeling that some men will simply dismiss the book (before reading it) as another one of those women books. Men have been "put down" so many times in the last two decades, or so, that they, simply, have enough of being called insensitive clods and jerks.

There is no doubt that the book is very engaging and it cries out for a response to every paragraph and sentence. I could, easily, imagine that we, as a faculty, could use the book as a year-long study and meditation. It would give us an opportunity to clarify our views on many issues and help each other to illustrate our understanding and teaching of our view on God and humans.

TRANSLATION

It is not clear to me which translation or translations of the Bible the authors used. The impression is that the authors did not refer to the original languages of the Bible. Such a procedure is very dangerous.

Very early in my life I was forced to experience the truth about translations. The Italians are right: *traduttore e traditore*, "a translator is a traitor."

I grew up on the mission field in Yugoslavia, where my father served German congregations. So, in the family, the community and in church I spoke German, but outside of the German community I spoke Serbo-croatian. During secondary education I had to learn English (eight years), Latin (six years) and French (two years). During the first year of my theological education, at the University of Vienna (1953/54), I was *forced* to learn Hebrew (one year) and Classical Greek (one year) and ONLY then was I allowed to attend lectures on the Bible. When I worked towards my Ph.D. in Hebrew and Semitic Studies I had to learn most of the Semitic languages. It is true, that once one knows one Semitic language well, then one will know them all. I experienced Hebrew, and the other Semitic languages, as the easiest languages to learn ... they are so clearly and simply structured. The most difficult language to learn, for me, was English. Yes, English! When I met my wife she insisted that I learn Latvian.

It has been my experience that ONLY since I know Hebrew well do I hear the Word *from* God with a depth and urgency which was unavailable to me when I read the Bible only in German (twice, actually, by the time I was only 14 years old. My father forced me to do so). ONLY since I know Hebrew well have I begun to understand the New Testament. Knowing only Greek did not do the trick for me.

TRINITY

Here and there (see, e.g., p. 115f) wonderful statements are being made concerning the deity Trinity. Are they mere wishful thinking? We all know that the god Trinity is not biblical. Jesus, the Jew, did not believe in the god Trinity.

We all know that the god Trinity was "born," or, if you like, "revealed" to the Cappadocian Fathers in the fourth century under the pressure of the Emperor to find some solution to the Arian controversy. In this turmoil the Trinity

was born. The Cappadocian Fathers were Basil of Cappadocian Ceasarea (Basil the Great. +379), his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and their best friend, Gregory of Nazianzus. There was no Trinity before. Then the Trinity became the god of the empire. The god Trinity became identified with empire, military and political, authoritarian power. But, for quite some time, the Constantinian empire is gone and with it all of its infrastructure, philosophical, theological, etc. (Of course the Roman Catholic Christians continue the trapping - and the theology - of the Constantinian empire) Does this mean that the god Trinity is also dead? Does this mean that the trinitarian construct also ends up on the ash heap of history?

Even more seriously, can one file a law-suit against the Trinity? Can one file a law-suit against the Emperor? At this moment of my studies my answer is ... no. (Please, help me with this.) This explains, to me, why the lament literature not only was not used, especially, since the fourth century, nor that it can be used ... as long as we live in the myth/paradigm world of the Constantinian world, which includes the deity Trinity. There can be no talk of a REcovery of the lament tradition in Pauline-Augustinian and Constantinian Christianity.

Can the god Trinity do anything wrong? The god YHWH (♁L), the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, was experienced (by the covenanted people) as, quite often, doing something wrong and YHWH (♁L) expected the people to take YHWH (♁L) to task for unjust behavior. The people were expected by YHWH (♁L) to argue with YHWH (♁L), to file law-suits against YHWH (♁L).

But, now, YHWH (♁L), as part of a trinity, is no longer independent, but *reduced* to ONLY serving as the creator. It is no longer possible to file a law-suit against YHWH (♁L) ALONE and it does not seem possible to argue with the Trinity, i.e., with the Emperor. So, the lament and arguing with God tradition is no longer valid and appropriate. If we, REALLY, want to RE-cover the arguing with God tradition then we must shed the whole Constantinian era with its philosophy and theology, which includes the Pauline-Augustinian view of sin and atonement.

Have our people in the parishes not already shed the god Trinity? I have served as a pastor since 1960. Whenever I tried to explain "The Trinity" then the eyes of my conversation partners glazed over. And even when I was successful in explaining the world in which "The Trinity" was understood, then the people went right back to speaking about "God, the Father of our Lord Jesus." "Oh, ja, then there is also "the Holy Spirit."

Would the god Trinity do to Job what YHWH (♁L) did to Job? Could the Trinity be held responsible as was YHWH (♁L)? Of course, according to the Pauline-Augustinian paradigm Job can not BUT have committed a sin. He can not be innocent and, on that basis, file a law-suit against YHWH (♁L). Living with the Pauline-Augustinian paradigm the Book of Job can not be understood, and, neither can the fifty, or so, Psalms, which take YHWH (♁L) to task. It is also impossible to understand, and appreciate, Rachel's cry against YHWH (♁L), who is responsible for the shame and indignity of her infertility.

WOMEN AND MEN

Throughout the book the suffering of women is well documented and discussed ... as it should be. I do not find an equal discussion of the suffering of men. Millions of men died in hundreds of wars throughout the centuries. Of the 1.2 million men Hitler sent into the battle of Stalingrad only 30,000 survived. An equal amount of men suffered and died while defending Stalingrad ... and this is just one city ... in one war.

Rightly, or wrongly, men have been "emasculated" during the last two decades, or so. They have been silent and confused. They have added this particular disparagement and degradation to a long list of insults. There have been some "movements" to "rectify" the situation, but, I consider them all ill-advised and foolish, but the emasculation of men is, simply, in nobody's interest.

The, particular, pain of Jewish men is, hardly, on the horizon of any body. During the course of my preparations for the course on "God--in the Old Testament" (1997) I came across a very good and sensitive book, Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. If women have problems with a male deity how much more do men have a problem with a male deity ... and not only Jewish men. I happen not to be a homosexual person, but, in my younger days, I had problems with the "God News" that God "loves" me and that I, also, can and MUST "love" God and Jesus. Only during my studies at the University of Vienna did I, finally, learn that the deity of the Tanakh/Old Testament was a male deity, roughly, only until the sixth century B.C.E. and from then on was neither male or female. And, I also learned, during Hebrew classes, that "his, him," etc., referred to the masculine nouns and NOT to the sex of the deity. Wonderful! For some persons, today, to call YHWH (♁L) "her, she" is offensive and utter nonsense and makes YHWH (♁L) into a female entity.

YANCEY

I suspected, at least, a brief remark about the book by Yancey, Philip, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* New York: Harper Paperbacks. A division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1990 (1977). I am VERY happy that the authors did not even mention the book. My reasons are contained in a brief review for a friend. A copy of the review is attached.

SHOAH

I looked for a special chapter on the Shoah and the Christian responsibility for preparing the climate in which the Shoah, the “End-Lösung,” the “Final-Solution” of the Jewish *problem*, became possible. Yes, the End-Lösung, actually, hoped to solve, not only the Nazi problem with “the Jew,” but also the *Christian* problem of the continuation of the Jewish faith and the Jewish people. There is no special chapter on the Shoah. I try to resist the thought that this was done on purpose and that it is another sign of the deeply anti-Jewish attitudes among Christians, and, especially, among Lutherans.

There is also no separate chapter on Jewish voices in response to the Shoah. I am convinced that we Christians can learn much from such voices: (1) from giving up on God to holding on to God even more tightly, (2) calling God to account and reminding God that without worshippers ... God is dead or, simply, not relevant, etc.

PREFACE (... OF THE BOOK, p viif.)

I agree with the sentiment of the authors when they say,

“...we became convinced that the prayer of lament ... is vital ... Without ... the prayer of lament, Christian life, worship, and ministry can quickly become shallow and evasive.”

The problem is that with a Pauline-Augustinian paradigm of sin and atonement no justified lament is possible.

I would love to respond to every question raised here. The authors continue (p. viii, end of third paragraph), “Christian prayer, we contend, is neither denial nor distraction. It allows distress and alienation to come to voice.”

Correct, but, that is all. “Distress and alienation” can be raised, but NOT a prayer based on the law-court pattern of prayer, based on right, correct, justified, indignation at ... injustice, slander, the lie of perception, inequity, unfairness, injury, wrong, crime, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, unjustified dishonor and shame, violation, rape, abuse, ... by God.

According to Pauline-Augustinian, Constantinian Christianity there is no basis for a complaint against God: we are, basically, sinful and unclean and, without repentance and without faith in “Christ,” we DESERVE all of our pain, torture and death and the banishment into the utter regions of the underworld for ever.

INTRODUCTION: MEDITATION ON PRAYER (p. 1.)

“Summer prayer,” and “winter prayer.” Great. I like it. But, I also like winter. I know, I understand.

But, it is not made clear by the authors that “winter prayer” is based on the covenant. When I speak about this topic I, always, FIRST, give a presentation on “Covenant,” and the different views of sin and atonement by Paul and the rest of the Bible, including the New Testament. When Jesus is quoted to pray in Gethsemane and on the cross ... these prayers are Jewish prayers, based on the covenant, and the right of Jesus to hurl the injustice of the situation into the face of YHWH (ꞒL). Jesus’ prayers are not “Christian” prayers. Jesus’ prayers are impossible in the context of Pauline-Augustinian, Constantinian Christianity.

RACHEL’S LAMENT (p. 1f.)

This meditation on Rachel is VERY helpful, but, it is a meditation on a biblical, Jewish, theme and not a Christian theme. So, in the end, it is, actually, confusing for Pauline Christians. We, Pauline Christians, can not do what Rachel did. We deserve our horrors.

Yes, the authors say,

“In refusing to accept easy consolation, Rachel does what is right.”

Correct ... and more. YHWH (ꞒL) expected Rachel to coe to YHWH (ꞒL) with a justified complaint against YHWH (ꞒL). A justified claim against the Trinity is impossible.

Either the whole book misleads Pauline-Augustinian-Trinitarian Christians ... or the whole book is a “subtle” plea for the shelving of the Pauline-Augustinian-Trinitarian paradigm and a return to the God of the Tanakh. I am convinced, that few, if any of our students, or the readers of the book, will notice the deep, inner problem with the aims of the book.

MARY'S HOPE (p. 3f.)

Mary's prayer does not fit the law-court pattern of prayer. We have no report on Mary's response to her illegitimate pregnancy and birth and the danger of death (by stoning) which she faced.

Yes, Rachel and Mary, these courageous Biblical/Jewish women, are bound together as sisters of the Biblical/Jewish faith (p. 4), but, they are not Christians and can not be models for Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christian women.

PRAYER OF LAMENT AND REBIRTH OF HOPE (p. 4)

The authors write,

"Rachel's cry needs to be reclaimed in Christian prayer, the liturgy of the church, and pastoral ministry. Christian prayer is whole and strong only when it includes both Rachel's cry of sorrow and protest and Mary's cry of joy and praise. That is the theme of the book."

Wonderful. I love it. A thousand times, YES. But, what kind of "Christianity" is meant? Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christianity can not be meant.

The discussion, exegesis and meditation of, at least, one (of the fifty) psalms, based on the law-court pattern of prayer, would have enhanced the book immensely, and would have served as a welcome guideline and "canon" of thinking on the subject.

CHAPTER ONE

THE LOSS AND RECOVERY OF THE PRAYER OF LAMENT (p. 5ff.)

In Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christianity the law-court pattern of prayer never existed. Therefore, it can not be lost or recovered.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PRAYER OF LAMENT?

The authors write,

"By the prayer of lament we mean that unsettling biblical tradition of prayer ..."

For a biblical person, for a Jew, there is nothing unsettling about this form of prayer .. it is standard, beginning with Moses. It is unsettling for Pauline-Augustinian Christians because according to this paradigm it is never possible to be innocent.

An example and a brief exegetical study of, at least, one psalm, organized according to the law-court pattern of prayer, could have been included in this book and increased its value and clarity.

On p. 7f. the authors refer to several Old Testament scholars, e.g., Westermann, Brueggemann, etc. Excellent scholars, all of them. I, though, have always found it strange that these scholars did not define the difference between biblical/Jewish understanding of sin and atonement and the Pauline-Augustinian view of sin and atonement. And, none of the topic under discussion can be understood without a thorough study, meditation, and understanding of COVENANT. Such a study is lacking in the book.

THE EXPERIENCE OF LOSS AND THE PRAYER OF LAMENT (p.8f.)

This is the point. Even Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christians experience loss, *righteous* anger, ... The Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian view can not help, except with mute acceptance and submission to the will of God. There is no recourse to the Trinity, the god of the Empire. There is recourse to YHWH (YH), ... but that is ... biblical/Jewish.

THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION AND THE PRAYER OF LAMENT (p. 10f.)

Yes, not only individuals, but also entire nations, continents, and the whole planet experience suffering, destruction and death.

Austria was wiped off the map during the Nazis. They re-named Austria as Ostmark. There was no longer an Austria until after World War II. Latvia was wiped off the map during the Nazi time. There was no Latvia during the Nazi time. Latvia was re-named Ostland. Yes, there are ugly and opportunistic people among any nation and there were SOME Latvians who cooperated with the Nazis. Latvia lost ONE-THIRD of its population during the Nazi and

Soviet occupations, and from 1945 suffered horrendously, and continues to suffer, even now after Latvia regained independence and freedom in 1991. Hundreds of thousands of Russian occupiers continue to live in Latvia and refuse "to go home" or to learn Latvian and become "good citizens" of Latvia. Do German occupiers still live in France? ... and the world swallows the Russian propaganda about Latvians being terrible to Russians. Total nonsense.

So, to whom can we turn. Not to the Trinity. Not to the Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian God. This god tells us that we deserve to suffer, because of our sins and our refusal to accept "Christ."

QUIET DESPAIR AND THE PRAYER OF LAMENT (p. 11f.)

The authors write,

"The need and appropriateness of the prayer of lament are not always readily evident."

Correct. To whom is it not evident and why is this so? It is not evident to people who live in the Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian view of sin. According to this view it is never appropriate to lament, because we deserve to be punished for our sins. We are never innocent. Soooo, I have met innumerable persons during my ministry (since 1960) who not only suffered, but, added to their suffering, because they were indoctrinated to believe that "it is God's will."

The authors ask (12),

"Does the church's understanding of prayer and spirituality make room for the questions and protests of those who feel defeated, abandoned, and left to quite despair?"

The answer is clear, ... NO, not in a Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian church.

During the last few years I have given many presentations on "Arguing with God." (Either emphasizing Job or Psalms) The reception of my presentation was phenomenal. Dozens of people coming up to me and thanking me for the "permission" to be angry with God, the injustice of it all, etc. Finally, and only once, after a week-long presentation on "Arguing with God," one older pastor got up and said, "But, Walter, what you are telling us is not Christian." I agreed with him. I replied, "But it is Biblical, it is what we can learn from Jesus." Out of hundreds of people only ONE pastor noticed that the arguing with God tradition is not Christian and not appropriate for Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christianity. What does this tell us?

AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES TOWARD LAMENT IN WORSHIP AND LITURGY (p. 12f.)

... of course. No surprise. See previous remarks.

AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES TOWARD LAMENT IN AMERICAN SOCIETY (p. 14f.)

... of course, but for how will American culture be willing to accept the Un-American attitude of Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christianity?

The authors write (p. 16, end of second paragraph),

"... God's grace undergirds the freedom and courage not only to confess sin but also to refuse premature consolation and to persist in protesting injustice while awaiting the coming of God's justice and peace."

How is "protesting injustice" possible in Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christianity? The authors do not speak about the two views of sin and atonement in the New Testament. There is little doubt that they long for the view of sin in the Gospels and in the Tanakh/OT.

QUESTIONS UNDERLYING RESISTANCE OF THE LAMENT PRAYER (p. 16f.)

Legitimate views of suspicion and resistance to reclaim the lament tradition are outlined. Great. But, the real culprit, namely, Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christianity is not mentioned.

AIMS OF A RECOVERY OF THE PRAYER OF LAMENT (p. 19f.)

Four aims are given. All laudatory. But the kind of Christianity the authors imagine is not explained.

The authors claim (p.20, second paragraph),

“Christians believe in the goodness and justice of God who wills life rather than death for creation.”

This can only be said if the New Testament is not read attentively.

The phrase “in the image of God” is not explained. In Gen 1 we are told that humans are created ACCORDING to the vision, image, blueprint, ... of God AS God's agents, likeness, ambassadors, etc. Christian Systematic Theologians have been, singularly, unhelpful, throughout the ages, in their explanation of a simple and straightforward text in the Bible.

Do Christians believe in the incarnation of Jesus Christ or in the in-carnation, en-fleshing, history becoming Word from God, Communication from YHWH (‘L)? Are we Christians not invited to in-carnate, make flesh, the Word from God in every moment of our lives, just as Jesus did? Are we not asked to be “Christs,” examples of the Messiah-Christ Spirit, the Holy Spirit, in our daily lives?

I think, that the summary of the Christian faith is quite heroic, but very thin, and, therefore, due to its brevity, it leaves itself open to a number of serious questions and misunderstandings.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRAYER OF LAMENT IN THE BIBLE (p. 22f.)

I have little problem with this chapter, but, here and there, I would have used different words.

Yes, some Christians have found a “preferential option for the poor” in the Bible (p. 22, second paragraph). But, this is an illusion. God rejoices over the “*repentant*” sinner, may that sinner be poor or rich. According to God the poor also sin and will be treated accordingly. God helps the *oppressed*, may they be poor or rich. But, sometimes, it is God, who oppressed the people and treats them unjustly. What then? Then the law-court prayer kicks in.

THE MANY VOICES OF THE BIBLE (p. 23f.)

Finally, in the last line of paragraph three on this page (p. 23) the “covenantal life” with God is mentioned. I, always, begin with the covenant. It is only possible to understand the law-court pattern of prayer on the basis of the covenant.

LAMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (p.25f.)

Good, except, of course, for the term “Old Testament,” which can be severely misunderstood.

These pages (pp. 25-33) are a very useful summary of lament in the Tanakh/OT. The only critique I have is that the authors rely, mainly, upon Christian scholars. Why?

Throughout the book I, also, noticed a special reliance on Brueggemann's work.? Why?

Brueggemann is good, most of the time, but to rely on him, almost exclusively, is not very wise.

I happen to agree with Blumenthal's critique of Brueggemann. See Blumenthal, 182, 219, 243-246. I am a Christian scholar of Biblical Hebrew and also of the Tanakh/Old Testament and of Christian Old Testament Theology. My emphasis and expertise in Biblical Hebrew, and the Jewish interpretation of the Tanakh, give me a strong advantage over Christian Old Testament scholars. It is true that I have not published as much as Brueggemann, but, I dare to say that I understand the Tanakh/Old Testament in a very deep manner, which, at times, I am unable to detect in the work of many of my colleagues, including, Brueggemann's work. If you interpret this as bragging, well, so be it. I am, simply, stating the truth. Brueggemann is A Christian ... and so am I, but, he does not seem to grasp the depth of the law-court pattern of prayer.

So, I include a copy of Blumenthal, pages 243-246.

LAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (p. 33f.)

Again, this is a good summary. But, again, a few comments need to be made.

The authors write (p. 33),

“When we turn to the New Testament practice of prayer, we find remarkable continuity ...”

I do not understand why this is remarkable.

On p. 36, in the statement on “love your enemy,” the authors make the same mistake as repeated by millions of Christians and secular people. The authors do not study Leviticus 19 and the Hebrew term *אהב, אהבה, אהב, אהבה*, which means “love” (the way we talk about love) ONLY in erotic context. In ALL other context the word means “to show loyalty, fidelity,” that is, to treat the other, including the stranger and enemy, according to the expectations of the covenant. When Jesus says, “Love your enemies ...” he is quoting Leviticus 19 and repeats the Biblical teaching that strangers, foreigners and enemies must be treated in the same manner as fellow citizens are treated.

In the second paragraph on p. 36 the word “demonize” is used. I have found the word “demonize” to be *totally* offensive, whenever I hear it in whatever context. It is, usually, used “to put down” somebody. The legitimate cry against injustice is muted and denied to the injured party, “Oh, you are *demonizing* your enemy.” Hell, no! I am telling my oppressor, my enemy, my lawyer, the whole world (if it were listening), “This person has seriously injured me, has slandered me, has committed a crime against me, ... I *must* have justice, my honor *must* be reinstated, I *must* have compensations, ...”

The chapter, though, makes a serious mistake by not speaking about the two views of sin and atonement in the New Testament. Paul’s view is not discussed. And it is Paul’s view of sin which is the problem and makes lament, law-court pattern of prayer impossible.

LAMENT IN POST-BIBLICAL JUDAISM (P. 40F.)

This is a good, brief, discussion of Laytner and Wiesel. I have (and continue to use) Laytner’s and Wiesel’s books in my classes and presentations. Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christians have, usually, never heard of these books, nor of their content.

I highly recommend the study of these two books (and many others) to Christians.

RECOVERING BIBLICAL LAMENT IN THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY (p. 42f)

Four excellent suggestions are discussed. I agree with all of them.

The problem is that they can not be implemented in Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christianity with its view of sin and atonement.

CHAPTER THREE.

THE PRAYER OF LAMENT IN THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL TRADITION (p. 26f.)

Of course, Augustine struggles. He does not know YHWH (ꞒL). Augustin’s deity is not YHWH (ꞒL) but the Trinity.

AUGUSTINE AND THE PIETY OF DETACHMENT (p. 47f.)

Augustine’s views are not biblical and destructive to the human being in the relationship to YHWH (ꞒL)

Augustine’s Confessions (p.47f.)

Augustine on the Psalms (p.48f)

He does not understand the Psalms in the biblical way.

Augustinian Piety (p.49f.)

LUTHER AND THE PIETY OF THE CROSS (p.51f.)

Justification by grace through faith alone ... I never thought that this a new thought. The Tanakh teaches: (1) We are created creatures, all of us, sons and daughters of God, (2) we are part of the family of God (by grace and no effort on our part) and (3) we live and stay alive by implementing God’s covenant and loyalty in every moment of our lives. If we do not and do not return to the vision, which God has of us as God’s ambassadors, then we will be dismissed and destroyed.

The Psalms and Luther’s Doctrine of Justification (p.51f.)

Luther’s Theology of the Cross (p.52f.)

The authors write (p. 52f.)

“Luther’s radical doctrine of justification by grace rather than by works of the law ...”

What is *radical* about this? There is no “justification” by works in the Bible or in Judaism. In the Bible and in Judaism “Law” is understood as Torah, i.e., “teaching, guidance, revelation,” from God. There is nothing oppressive or legalistic about the Torah.

Luther on Lament in Christian Life (p.54f.)

... I am too much involved in this, and have have too many questions and concerns ... so, I prefer not to comment on Luther in writing.

CALVIN AND THE PIETY OF PATIENCE (p. 56f.)

Calvin's Humanity (p.56f.)

The Centrality of the Psalms in Calvin's Theology of Prayer (p. 57f.)

Providence and Patience (p.59f.)

I prefer not to comment. I think, though, that both, Luther and Calvin could learn much from Laytner and Blumenthal.

BARTH AND THE PIETY OF GOD'S VICTORY IN CHRIST (p. 60f.)

Barth's Theology of Prayer (p. 60f)

Barth's Christocentric Interpretation of Lament (p.61f.)

The authors quote Barth,

"... there is a *particula veri* in the teaching of the early Patripassians. This is that primarily it is God the Father who suffers in the offering and sending of [the] Son, in his abasement." (n. 72)

This is fine with me (and biblical) ONLY if the suffering, the agony, the pathos, of the Father, YHWH (ʿL), is meant, and not that YHWH (ʿL) "morphed" into the body of Jesus of Nazareth and played a little theater with us and the world. Nobody has ever been able to give me a satisfactory answer to the following questions: (1) Do we have to thank Judas and the Romans for executing Jesus? (2) Did God cause the capture and execution of Jesus in order to have people then dream up all kinds of theologies? (3) What would have happened if Jesus would have decided to stay, safely, in Syria without going to Jerusalem? ...

The authors quote Barth (p.64, second paragraph)

"No [one] but Jesus has ever known the true breadth and depth, the true essence and darkness, of human misery. ..."

It is impossible for Barth to know this. Too bad Barth is dead. If he were alive I would challenge him to repeat this statement after having read as much Shoah literature as I have.

The Dialectic of Barth's Theology of Lament (p.65f.)

MOLTMANN AND THE PIETY OF GOD'S SUFFERING LOVE (p. 67f.)

The Beginning of Moltmanns' Theology (p. 67)

Critique of Divine Impassibility (p.67f.)

Trinitarian Theology of Lament (p.69f.)

The authors write about Moltmann (p. 69, third paragraph),

"This communion of trinitarian love in which persons are identified by their mutual giving and receiving is actualized for us in the life and death of the incarnate God. ..."

When we pastors and teachers use the word "God" we have an obligation to be clear. I am convinced that when people hear the word "God," especially in Christian circles, they do not think of the Trinity, but of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, YHWH (ʿL). When Jews hear the word "God" there is no doubt that they understand YHWH (ʿL). Sooo, when Moltmann uses "God" he can not but be misunderstood that it is YHWH (ʿL), the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who dies on the cross and not, actually, Jesus of Nazareth, or that YHWH (ʿL) has *morphed* (so Sabelios) into the body and person of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is my contention that the above Christians do not understand the law-court pattern of prayer, because of their commitment to the Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian paradigm.

LIBERATION THEOLOGIES AND THE PIETY OF RESISTANCE (p. 70f.)

Feminist and Womanist Theologies (p. 70)

Suffering and Divine Omnipotence (p.71f.)

Feminist and Womanist Piety and the Biblical Prayer of Lament (p.72f.)

These are good summaries. It is my suspicion that the above "theologies" are not trinitarian and, therefore, can be quite vocal about suffering and injustice.

I think, that our engagement with God must not be limited to the above "theologies." It must not be limited to the Tanakh/OT, the New Testament, the Jewish and Christian literature after the Scriptures, and the thoughts of the many thinkers since that time until today. What if God, YHWH (ʿL), is constantly breaking the covenant and constantly tortures us. In the end God kills us anyhow.

THE BLESSING AND BURDEN OF TRADITION (p.73f.)

The authors write (p.73)

“The great theological traditions in which Christians stand are both blessing and burden.”

Absolutely correct. In the following, though, they do not mention the Tanakh/Old Testament, which provides the ONLY basis for the law-court pattern of prayer. Paul does not, nor do any of the other Christian thinkers.

In this section the authors also do not recall the experience of many psalmists (and of Job) of an *abusive* God. As long as this is not done we continue to fool ourselves and all of our talk of God (Trinity? YHWH [?L]?) leaves a deceptive, hypocritical, poisonous, and deadly taste in our mouth.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRAYER OF LAMENT IN RECENT PASTORAL THEOLOGY (p. 75f.)

“Pastoral Theology.” Wonderful. Will “Pastoral Theology” be honest and speak about the fact that the biblical deity, i.e., YHWH (?L), the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, can also be abusive? Will it, clearly, point out that the God Trinity served the Empire and the Emperor ... and not us ... and that the empire is dead and with it all of its infrastructure? Shall we return to YHWH (?L) or do our times call for a new “birth,” a new conception and revelation of “God,” “Deity,” ...? It seems that each age *deserves* its own deity.

BIBLICAL LAMENTS AND MINISTRY WITH PERSONS
SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION AND GRIEF (p. 76f.)

The review, on pages 76-80, is very instructive.

The authors write (on p. 79, third paragraph)

“The book of Lamentations is written in the acrostic form, which ‘serves the needs of the anguished lament’ because it ensures that grief and despair are expressed completely (grief is expressed from A to Z).”

Correct. Actually, grief is expressed from א to ז. But, that is not important. What is important is that the Book of Lamentations contains laments because of the sins and the deserved punishment of the people. The Book of Lamentations does not belong to the law-court pattern of prayer which is based on the covenant and on a legitimate claim of UNJUST suffering inflicted by God, YHWH (?L). How will “Pastoral Theology” deal with God’s injustice, God’s brutal, abusive behavior as “Father” and “Husband?”

COMMON CONVICTIONS IN PASTORAL THEOLOGY ABOUT LAMENT AND HOPE (p.80f.)

Again, an excellent survey on pages 80-87. But, again, it is not clear if YHWH (?L) is meant or the Trinity.

LAMENT AND HOPE IN THE FACE OF VIOLENCE AND SYSTEMATIC EVIL (p. 87f.)

What if YHWH (?L) or the Trinity are the source of violence and systematic evil?

The authors write (on p.88, second paragraph)

“How does someone survive an experience of radical suffering and evil?”

Indeed. And, especially, when this suffering and radical evil is inflicted by fellow Christians with power over the quality of life, salary and honor and respect? My father was severely mistreated by Church officials, even after he survived the Nazis and the brutality of the Russian prisoner of war camps. At times, even students and faculty members, in our own community, have complained, bitterly, ... but without any recourse to justice. Such a situation among Christians is desperately sinful and, plain, sick.

Job survived by telling YHWH (?L), finally, in Job 42:6.

The Masoretic Text	A Transliteration
<p>לְשִׁמְעוֹנָאֵן שְׁמַעְתִּי-כֹ וְעַתָּה יַעֲנֵי רַאֲתִי-כֹ: עֲלֶכֶן אֶמְאָס ... וְנִמְיַת עֲלֵעֲפָר וְאֶפְרָ:</p>	<p>42:5 <i>lě-šēma ‘ōzen šēma ʕ-tî-kā</i> <i>wě-ʕattāh ʕenî rā ʕt-kā</i> 42:6 <i>ʕal-kēn ʕemʕas ... wě-niham-tî -</i> <i>ʕal ʕāpār wā-ʕēper</i> rd, ʕal: : ʕl = Janusparallelism</p>

I suggest that Job 42:5-6 should be translated as follows (not, as yet, published)

- 5 By the hearing of (my) ear I have heard - **YOU**,
 and now my eye has seen - **YOU**,
 6 therefore, I despise - (ellipsis, **YOU**, is implied because of the parallelism)
 actually, I feel compassion/I have pity,
 Oh Most High :): a suckling of Dust-and-Dirt (=Sheol).
 :): is an attempt to indicate a Janusparallelism

This rejection of the abusive treatment from YHWH (ʕL) is then what YHWH (ʕL) accepted as נְכוֹנָה, *někônāh*, “appropriate,” behavior.

Sexual Violence (p.88f.)

In my presentations on “Human Secuality in the Bible” I have, often, said, “Well, may be all this horror in our treatment of our sexuality is, simply, the revenge of the Goddess by being mistreated by Christians.” There is little doubt that the Jesus of the Gospels *loved* the pleasures of the flesh. So, where did Paul go wrong? And why did we let ourselves be bamboozled by Paul?

In my courses on “Arguing with God” I use “Beth’s Psalm” (pp. 227-232) in Blumenthal’s book. Every time I use it there has not been a dry eye in the room.

Racial violence (p.91f)

According to Genesis 1 we are one human family. There is only one human race. According to this paradigm “racial violence” is, totally, wrong (and, actually, impossible) and no biblical person (Jew or Christian) can engage in even use the concept of several human races.

Internalized Violence (p. 93f.)

I am not a homosexual, but, I am very good at internalized violence. In this segment I was looking for a discussion of suicide. Well, there is none. I understand suicide and I understand murder.

LAMENT AND HOPE IN PASTORAL CARE AS AN ART OF EMPOWERMENT (p. 94f.)

The Importance of Cultural Context (p. 96f.)

To limit the discussion of multi-cultural context to only certain groups is not a scholarly enterprise.

On our own faculty we are highly blessed with colleagues who are bi-cultural or even multi-cultural. I would make it a requirement that all colleagues **MUST** be, at least, bi-cultural, i.e., they **MUST** be able to live and work and move and lecture, **FLUENTLY**, in two different cultures, two different languages. We are so blessed at LSTC that we have colleagues who are able to do this in three, yes, even four, cultures and languages. Praise the **LORD!**

A Methodology for Empowerment (p. 98f.)

THE PRAYER OF LAMENT AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY (p. 101f.)

The three central convictions are all correct. The, recent, four innovations in pasatorial theology, are also very important. But, there is no discussion of the view of sin underlying these paragraphs, nor is there a *clear* state-

ment about the possibility of suffering innocently. If I can not but sin then there is no discussion of a law-court pattern of prayer. Period! A clear definition of sin and atonement must be presented somewhere in the book.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARD A PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF THE PRAYER OF LAMENT (p. 103f.)

A footnote is necessary after the last sentence at the end of the first paragraph (p. 103).

My heart goes out to Wolterstorff. I wish he would have been able to read Laytner and Blumenthal and a number of psalms, together with me.

The authors write (p. 104, fourth paragraph)

In company with Wolterstorff and other seekers we take up the task of exploring the prayer of lament as 'a mode of address to God,' believing that such prayers of pain and protest arise not from faithlessness but from faith under duress. ..."

I totally agree. The only problem is ... which God do we address? YHWH (Y) or the Trinity?

In the list of items in a prayer, which can help to support the life of faith (p. 104, on the bottom, continued on p. 105), is included "purifying anger and the desire for vengeance."

This is a very important topic and, I think, usually, misunderstood by Christians. There is nothing wrong with righteous anger. There is something terribly wrong with trying to purify righteous anger or disallowing righteous anger against perpetrators of evil, may it be humans or God.

There is also a misunderstanding of what is meant by "vengeance" in the Bible. "Vengeance" or "re-stitution" or "re-compensation" or "re-payment," is an aspect of justice and holiness. Without "compensation" there is no peace and no justice. There must be "payment" (in whatever form). And if this is not possible ... then it is God who will and must execute "vengeance." If there is no "vengeance" then a mockery is made of justice, holiness and of God.

OFFERING A LANGUAGE OF PAIN (p.105f.)

I do not know of any more powerful "language of pain" than the language of our forebears in suffering, pain, agony and despair, than the language they offered to us in the more than fifty psalms. By now, I have studied all of the hundred and fifty psalms in painstaking philological and theological detail, of course, including the the law-court prayers.

The yearning for "spirituality," among so many, including Jews and Christians, is directly related to the lack of involvement with the Psalms.

CONFIRMING THE VALUE OF EMBODIED LIFE (p.107f.)

Bodily actions and consequences ... absolutely correct. The experience of injustice, ridicule, oppression, slander ... without ANY possibility or recourse to justice and recompense and restoration ... has serious physical, bodily consequences: hours of uncontrolled weeping, feverish rage and fury, which result in neglect of the needs of the body, attendance at work, or neglect of important work, self-destruction or the desire and need for the destruction of the oppressor, the victimizer or the actual murder of the victimizer, ...

By the way, throughout the book, I have noticed that there is no real fury about injustice and what to do about injustice. The focus is always on the victim, the sufferer.

On p. 109 the authors quote Bonhoeffer, "'Only one who cries out for the Jews may sing Gregorian chants.'" Good. But, Bonhoeffer still wanted to *convert* Jews, i.e., to "kill" them, i.e., to get rid of Jews and Judaism. This is not much different from what the Nazis did. One can kill the Jews also with compassion: We love them so much we want them to convert.

GRANTING PERMISSION TO GRIEVE AND PROTEST (p. 109f.)

The authors write (p.109)

"Do Christians have permission to lament?"

If persons "need permission" then they have some authority over them, an authoritarian system. Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christians would need "permission" from the Trinity. But, such "permission" to file a law-suit against the Emperor, against the Trinity can not and will not be given.

Do Jews have “permission” to file a law-suit against YHWH (‘L). The answer is ... NO! Jews not only do not need permission they have an obligation to file a law-suit against YHWH (‘L). It is part of the covenant. Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christians have never understood the concept of “covenant.” How can they?

The authors write (p. 109, last paragraph),

“... the sufferer may withhold permission from herself to ...”

The use of only “herself” without “himself” is offensive and detrimental of the intent of the authors. Just as it is, completely, inappropriate to speak of God as “She, Her.”

On p. 110 a portion of Psalm 88 is quoted. I have used this psalm, many times, in my presentations. Also, once, a congregation asked me to speak (a whole evening, three hours or so) on Psalm 22. The responses to these presentations are, usually, a feeling of liberation and tears, gratefulness, but, also expressions of frustration and anger.

PREPARING THE WAY FOR NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF GOD (p. 111f.)

Here, I expected a treatment of a number of Old Testament Theologies and, at least, the following books,

- Miles, Jack, *God: A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. - The discussion of this book is also a handy way to survey the whole of the Tanakh/OT. ... and of
- Armstrong, Karen, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Ballentine Books, 1994 (1993).

In my course on “God--in the OT” I provided the students with an extensive bibliography on “God.” You may have a copy, if you like one. Reading, only, the above books, will expand the familiar understandings of “God” a thousandfold. All one has to do is to read the Bible.

I agree with the authors in their assessment of Kushner’s book.

I disagree, though, *totally*, with the assessment of Blumenthal’s book. I consider Blumenthal’s book one of, if not THE most important book on this topic. One does not have to agree with Blumenthal’s in every paragraph, but, he is able to, quite skillfully, present the various views of many sufferers. It seems to be the first book which organizes the material in the same manner as the Talmud. This alone warrants a close reading of the book by Christians. The breaking up of linear thinking is, simply, breathtaking for those unfamiliar with the genre. I have used Blumenthal’s book many times, and I am discussing it, during this quarter (Winter 2000), with about nine students at Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies.

The verdict of the authors is (p.114),

“If Kushner’s view *sentimentalizes* (my emphasis) God’s power, Blumenthal’s view comes close to *demonizing* (my emphasis) it. Can an abusive God be worshiped, and if God is abusive, is a theological foundation for ethics any longer possible?”

These are excellent questions, but, clearly, identify the authors as Christians and not quite conversant with the Tanakh/OT and Jewish literature and thinking during the last two thousand years.

I agree, that Kushner wants to get God “off the hook.” The psalmists do not and neither does Blumenthal and nor do I. But, here is this word again, “*demonizing*.” This word will simply not do in a discussion of Blumenthal. I suspect that the authors have not read every word in Blumenthal’s book, nor have they suffered the joys and pain of serious study of each of the psalms ... in Hebrew.

I suspect that the authors would have been helped, tremendously, if they would have also engaged the Bible from a Jewish point of view and immersed themselves in serious discussions with very committed Jewish persons. After 1945 it is abundantly clear that Christians must leave the ghetto of merely Christian interpretation of the Bible and of the world, in order to survive and in order not to continue their murderous teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism.

“Can an abusive God be worshiped?” The answer is ... Yes. Namely, by calling God to account as did Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Naomi, ... Jesus. Calling God, YHWH (‘L), to account ... THAT is worship and that is also the theological foundation for ethics. The ultimate ethical challenge for a member of the covenant community is to call God to account. Job passed this test. We are invited to do the same.

The authors write (p.114, end of second paragraph),

“What would the prayer of lament mean if the one who prayed did not believe that God had the power to rescue and redeem?”

True, if this is what the one who prays would believe, then the whole thing would be nonsense and total stupidity. But, this is NOT what the psalmists, or Job, who threw their bitter frustrations, and righteous anger, into the face of YHWH (ꞑL) believed. On the contrary, they believed that through their actions of the law-court patterned prayer, they were doing the religiously, pious, correct thing: telling God to wake up and do the correct thing. THIS is also what the person, who wrote the prayer for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, also believed. This is what the person believed, who put the words of Psalm 22 into the mouth of the dying Jesus.

Of course God, YHWH (ꞑL), has *absolute* power. But, God, YHWH (ꞑL) *chooses* to let the covenanted people challenge YHWH (ꞑL). This is one of the most important tests which YHWH (ꞑL) imposes on the covenanted people. God wants the covenanted people to be, constantly, “on the ball,” on the lookout for mischief by God. That is real ethics, that is real worship.

Before YHWH (ꞑL) “groveling” would be idolatry and stupid, and, of course, killing YHWH (ꞑL) is not possible. Ignoring YHWH (ꞑL) is possible, but it is not possible to murder God. YHWH (ꞑL) can not die nor can YHWH (ꞑL) be murdered or executed.

Here, then is the real problem: YHWH (ꞑL) can and must be called to account. But, Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian Christians can not call the Emperor and the God Trinity to account. In the relationship to the Emperor nothing is left but groveling or assassination. The authors do not enter into this discussion and, therefore, the whole enterprise of the book is called into question ... or it prepares, ever so subtly, the way for the end of the Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian deity, Trinity. This is a very worthy enterprise and, I am sure that it will be noted by persons, who read this book in an unbiased manner.

STRENGTHENING OUR SELF-UNDERSTANDING AS RESPONSIBLE AGENTS

I love this sub-title. This is, exactly, what YHWH (ꞑL) wants: humans to be strong ambassadors and agents of YHWH (ꞑL). God said so in Genesis 1.

The authors write (p. 117),

“In prayer we are not only servants of God and children of God; we are also partners and co-workers with God. This is daring language, ...”

I do not understand. What is daring about this language. This is, exactly, the image and vision which YHWH (ꞑL) had of ALL humans ... from the moment of the conception of creation in the mind of YHWH (ꞑL).

PURIFYING ANGER AND THE DESIRE FOR VENGEANCE (p.119f.)

The content in pages 119-122 is *VERY* disturbing and, in my view, a distortion and misunderstanding of the biblical justice system and the right of the victims for justice and compensation. Not only that, I as a victim experience the advice, given in these pages, as offensive and as a further victimization of me as a victim. Where am I wrong by feeling and thinking this way? Is my understanding of sin, crime and justice and at-one-ment, in the Bible, wrong? Is my experience as a victim wrong? Help! My eyes are filling with hot tears.

The whole point of the law-court pattern of prayer is that the mistreated, brutalized, injured, wronged person, has a *legitimate* right to vent his or her anger and DEMAND justice and compensation, damages, reparations, restitution. ... and THAT is what I, as a victim, want ... and that is the reason why working on the psalms, based on the law-court pattern, has been so terribly helpful for me. The victim MUST have some form of compensation, justice, restitution ... otherwise the whole enterprise is nonsense and this whole business of God as a God of justice is nonsense (opium for the people).

The point is not the appropriate or inappropriate behavior of the victim ... to chide the victims is to victimize them again ... no matter how well intended the advice to the victim, e.g., “... don’t be angry, it will only hurt you more than your rapist,” “you must purify your anger ... otherwise it will kill you,” ... while the victimizer continues to laugh all the way to the bank and to further honors and dignity. It is the victimizer who MUST be exposed (in front of the whole community), who MUST repent, who MUST make restitution to the victim. If the victimizers do not do this they forfeit the right to remain in any human group ... according to the Bible and according to Jesus.

The Prophets were not just angry, but furious and DEMANDED the correction of the wrongs. Jesus of Nazareth, was, equally, angry and furious with oppressors and victimizers. There is no “sweet Jesus” and no “cheap Grace.”

Why the anger and fury? Because even one little sin--and victimization of even one little human being--throws the whole world out of kilter and MUST be righted again. The emphasis MUST be on the sinner, the

oppressor, the victimizer and NOT on the injured person or group. All the world seems to be against the victim and on the side of the oppressor. Why? ... is it further evidence of the continued success of the victimizer, who is now able to turn it all around and put the attention and blame (of physical, intellectual, and spiritual suffering) on the victim?

How does one purify God's anger? How does one purify the anger of the prophets? How does one purify the anger of Jesus? How does one purify the anger of the psalmists who wrote the psalms, based on the law-court pattern of prayer? How does one purify the piercing or silent screams of INNOCENT victims ... the raped, tortured, burned, ...? Yes, there are innocent victims ... no matter how much Paul insists that no-one is without sin and that we deserve our misery, torture and death.

Amos was furious about the sinful appropriation of religion at the cost of daily correct, right, just behavior and lets God say (Amos 5:21-24),

שנאת מאסית חגיגתם	21 I hate - I despise - your festivals
ואל אירח בעצרתותכם:	I have no satisfaction - in your solemn gatherings
כי אם-תלעויל	22 because - even if you you raise up - to Me
לעתו ומנחתותכם	- your burnt offerings and your gifts
אל ארצה	I will not accept them
ושלם מיריאתכם	- and your peace offerings and fat cattle
אל אטיב:	I will not approve
הרס מעיל המון שירך	23 Take away - from Me - the cacophony of - your songs
וזמרת נבלך	and to the music of - your string instruments
אל אשמע:	I will not listen
ויילג כמים משפט	24 But let roll on - like water - justice
וצדקה כנהל יאתן:	even righteousness - like a perennial stream

Jesus was furious with the forgiven sinner who is unwilling to forgive the one who asked forgiveness from him. According to Jesus such inappropriate behavior has serious consequences. Why is it so difficult to listen, hear and appropriate the teaching of Jesus concerning victimizers? Why? There is no such thing as a "sweet Jesus" in the New Testament. There is no such thing as "cheap grace." When will Christians wake up from their delusion? Read Revelation! What did Jesus teach us, e.g., in Matthew 18:23-35?

(23) "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. (24) When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; (25) and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. (26) So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' (27) And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. (28) But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' (29) Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' (30) But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. (31) When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. (32) Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. (33) Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' (34) *AND IN ANGER HIS LORD HANDED HIM OVER TO BE TORTURED UNTIL HE WOULD PAY HIS ENTIRE DEBT* (emphasis mine). (35) So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

AND IN ANGER HIS LORD HANDED HIM OVER TO BE TORTURED UNTIL HE WOULD PAY HIS ENTIRE DEBT ... this is the Kingdom of God according to Jesus. Jesus placed the burden on the victimizer. He does not even tell us how the victim felt ... that was not his concern. It does not matter to Jesus how appropriate or inappropriate or sick the reaction of the victim was.

Un-repentant sinners, according to Jesus, will be cut to pieces (Matthew 24:51), and they will be thrown into the most utter reaches of the underworld, into the furnace of fire, where there is wailing, weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

If we continue to avoid listening to these voices, exemplified here by Amos and Jesus, then we will continue to deserve the contempt of victims and the wrath of God.

The text *must* be read in Hebrew first and one *must* know, at the outset, that the text can ONLY be understood when the covenantal context is understood. The misunderstanding of this, and numerous other texts, has caused unbelievable suffering among millions of people, religious or secular. The Italians have it right *traduttore è traditore*, a translator is a traitor (i.e., to the intention of the author). The translation of the Word from God (beginning with the Septuagint) is a VERY mixed blessing. It is simply not true that we can understand the Word from God in a translation *without* a person who knows both languages extremely well. There are, of course, always persons who love to remain in their own world/prison of prejudice and bigotry ... this includes even wishy-washy people who do know Hebrew well. The whole attitude of telling victims to purify their anger is not biblical (neither OT or NT). Neither the prophets nor Jesus worked on purifying their righteous anger. Jesus did the right thing and, at least, told his victimizers that they are “hypocrites,” “white-washed tombs” (beautiful outside and a rotten stinking mess inside), “snakes,” “a brood of vipers.” (Matthew 23:13ff.) One source of this non-biblical attitude is the total misunderstanding of the phrase usually translated “love your enemies.” And one of the reasons for this misunderstanding is the lack of demanding a basic knowledge of biblical Hebrew at Christian seminaries. The reason for this lack are the ingrained Christian anti-Jewish attitudes.

Especially the following verbs **MUST** be understood as terms belonging to the language of the Covenant:
 . בהב, *hb*, “to love, befriend, respect (deal covenantally).” BDB, 12f.

This term means “love” (in our sense) only in erotic contexts. In all other contexts, especially, e.g., in Deuteronomy, it is used as covenantal loyalty, fidelity, i.e., doing acts of covenantal responsibility.

. *hb*, “lieben,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament I* (1978) 60-73 (E. Jenni). *‘āhabh*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament I* (1974) 99-118 (Bergman, Haldar, Wallis)

The following two terms are also to be understood as covenantal terms:

. נקם, *nqm*, “avenge, take vengeance, vindicate.” See BDB, 667f. The covenanted members are commanded not to take the law into their own hands, but, that there must be restitution, recompense, is not in doubt. The community must see to it in the name of God.

. *nqm*, “rächen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament II* (1979) 106-109 (G. Sauer)

. שנא, *śn*’, “to hate.” See BDB, 971f. *śn*’, “hassen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament II* (1979) 835-837 (E. Jenni)

Leviticus 19:1-2 and 15-18 and verses 33-34.

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה לְמֹשֶׁה אֲלֵמֹר: דַּבֵּר לְכָל־עַמֶּיךָ לְעֵתָהּ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ... -אֲלֵתְעֹשׂוּ עִלּוּ בַמִּשְׁפָּט -אֲלֵתְאִשׁ פְּנֵי־יָד וְאֵל תִּהְרַד פְּנֵי דָגֵלוֹ בְּצִדְקָה תִּשְׁפֹּט עִמִּיתְךָ: -אֲלֵתְלַךְ רְכִלִי בְעַמִּי: אֵל תַּעֲמֹד עַל־דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה: -אֲלֵתְשָׂנֵא תְּאֵאִי־חֶךָ בְּלִבְךָ הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ תְּאֵעֲמִיתְךָ וְ-אֲלֵתְאָשׁ עֹנִיל חָאֵט: -אֲלֵתְקַם וְ-אֲלֵתְרַט תְּאֵבְנֵי עִמְךָ וְאֵתְהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה: ... וְכִי־יֵגִירוּ אִתְּךָ רֵג בְּאֶרֶץ־כְּסָם תֵּן אֲלוֹנּוֹ תְּאוֹ: כְּאֲזַחֵר מִכֶּם יְהִדֵי לְכֶם תְּרַג	1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying 2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them You can/must be holy for I the LORD your God am holy 15 You must not commit evil in judgment(during court procedures) you must not lift up the face of the (=be partial) to the poor and you must not honor the face (=defer to) the great with justice you shall judge your neighbor(fellow citizen) 16 You must not go around as a slanderer among your people and you shall not stand by at the blood (murder) of your neighbor I am the LORD (i.e., when someone is murdered or mistreated) 17 You must not hate your brother (even) in your heart/mind you must decidedly reprove your neighbor so you will not lift up upon yourself error/sin 18 You (sing.!) must not take vengeance, you must not bear a grudge against any of your people (but the community must act!) but you must respect/deal covenantally (“love”) with your neighbor as you deal with yourself I am the LORD 33 For when a sojourner sojourns with you in your land
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הָרַג אֲתֶכֶם	you must not oppress him
וְאֶהְיֶה תוֹכְךָ	34 Like a fellow citizen among you must be to you a sojourner
כְּמוֹךָ	who sojourns among you
כִּי־יִגִּירֶם הַיִּתִּים	and you must respect/treat covenantally(“love”) the alien/enemy
כְּאֲרָץ מִצְרַיִם	as you (respect) yourself
אֲנִי הָיִתוּ אֲלֵי־הַכֶּם:	because you were sojourners
	in the land of Egypt
	I am the LORD your God (Translation by WLM)

Well, it is terribly hard (and almost impossible) for me to read this chapter in the book. It speaks of the legitimate and holy right of the victim for justice, compensation and the appropriate punishment of the victimizer ... AS SOMETHING NEGATIVE. ... or did I misunderstand this chapter, because of my own pain, as a victim, and because of my intense study of OT and NT?

It is, probably, best for me to say nothing more about this chapter. I am, probably, wrong in what I have said, and I may have misunderstood the intention of the chapter. If I have then I, definitely, need help. Help!

I have found most of the articles in Lampman & Shattuck much more biblically correct and much more helpful to me as a victim on the road to recovery and health ... although, I am not sure that recovery and health is possible after horrendous evil. There is little doubt about the fact that I will take my bleeding wounds to the grave.

Some very good and helpful things are being said in the rest of the book and they should be heeded.

PROMOTING SOLIDARITY WITH ALL WHO SUFFER (p. 112f)

REVITALIZING PRAISE AND HOPE (p. 124f)

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRAYER OF LAMENT AND THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY (p. 128f.)

THE PRACTICE OF WORSHIP (p. 130f)

THE PRACTICE OF PASTORAL CARE (p. 134f)

Silence and Screams: The Cry of Lament Begins in the Body (p. 136f.)

Bearing Witness: Lament as Tentative Speech (137f.)

THE PRACTICE OF JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION (p. 140f.)

THE PRACTICE OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION IN CONGREGATIONS (p. 145f.)

HOLISTIC CHRISTIAN PRAYER AND HOLISTIC CHRISTIAN MINISTRY (p. 149f.)

FINAL THOUGHTS

The book can be understood as a subtle (or not so subtle, for those with eyes and ears) attack on the Lutheran and Roman Catholic forms of Christianity (i.e., the Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian form). Sometimes it is easier to kill with kindness, instead of with a frontal attack.

I imagine that persons, living and breathing the American culture, will be very receptive to the content of this book. For many Americans the Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian attitudes (of course they don't know them by this name) are an embarrassing memory. If they care, at all, they will love this book. Most, though, will take exception to the section on “Purifying Anger,” p. 119f.

Even if I have different opinions, here and there, I congratulate the authors for their very hard work. What I like best is the challenge to all of us to take the prayers, which are based on the law-court pattern, very seriously in our own lives and in the life of our congregations. If this means the abandonment of the Pauline-Augustinian-Constantinian paradigm in order to be able to *return* to the healthy example of our forebears in the faith, well, so be it. We desperately need health and wholeness and the end of any type of hypocrisy.

Dear Kadi, I am deeply thankful to you that you chose me to respond to your book. The above response was a heart-wrenching exercise, but I have learned much and I will continue to learn much from your book. Thank you.

With best wishes for you, personally, and for your ministry, cordially, Walter.

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Among the books which I re-read, or read for the first time, while reading the Billman-Migliore book are the following:

. Armstrong, Karen, *A History of God: A 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993. - I very much appreciate her book on Jerusalem, which can also be read as “A History of God.”

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- . Armstrong, Karen, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996
 - . Blumenthal, David R., *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. - This is an enormously important book.
 - . Brueggemann, Walter, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*. Patrick D. Miller, ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. - Good, but I agree with the serious critique of Blumenthal, pp. 243-246.
 - . Heussi, Karl, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*. 1937. - I learned "Heussi" by heart for my exam in "Kirchengeschichte," in 1958, in Vienna.
 - . Laytner, A., *Arguing With God: A Jewish Tradition*. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1990. - Enormously important, especially, for Christians who are, usually, totally uninformed about this biblical tradition.
 - . Lampman, Lisa Barnes, editor and Michelle D. Shattuck, associate editor, *God and the Victim: Theological Reflections on Evil, Victimization, Justice, and Forgiveness*. Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1999. - I read this book while also reading Billman-Magliore. I was deeply impressed with the clarity of argument in some of the articles, especially, in the area of justice and victims rights. The call for restitution, repayment, etc., is not clear in Billman-Magliore. It is clear in a number of articles in this book. * = esp. clear and helpful.
 - Colson, Charles W., "Foreword," ix
 - Lampman, Lisa Barnes, "Introduction," xiii
 - Lampman, Lisa Barnes and Michelle D. Shattuck, "Finding God in the Wake of Crime: Answers to Hard Questions, 1f.
 - Volf, Miroslav, "Original Crime, Primal Care, 17f.
 - Allender, Dan B., "The Mark of Evil," 36f.
 - Henry, Carl F. H., "Responsibility toward Victim's Rights," 61f.
 - Trulear, Harold Dean, "Go and Do Likewise: The Church's Role in Caring for Crime Victims," 70f.
 - * Achtemeier, Elizabeth, "Victimization and Healing: The Biblical View," 89f. - only a few problematic phrases.
 - * Wolterstorff, Nicholas, "The Contours of Justice: An Ancient Call for *Shalom*," 107f.
 - * Zehr, Howard, "Restoring Justice," 131f.
 - Jones, L. Gregory, "Behold, I Make All Things New," 160f,
 - White, Mary, "Every Kneww Shall Bow," 183f.
 - * Allender, Dan B., "Forgive and Forget" and Other Myths of Forgiveness," 199f. WLM: to grant forgiveness *before* the victimizer repents and asks for forgiveness is a not biblical, it is a sin.
 - Young, Marlene A., "Assisting Crime Victims: A Continuum of Care," 217f.
 - Earls, Lee A., "The Spiritual Problem of Crime: A Pastor's Call," 235f.
 - Strong, Gregory, "Study Guide," 251f.
 - Recommended Reading, 298f.
 - About Neighbors Who CARE, 301f.
 - Neighbors Who Care Ministry Resources, 303f.
 - Acknowledgments, 305f.
 - NWC Theological Forum Participants, 307f.
 - Contributors, 311f.
 - . Miles, Jack, *God: A Biography*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1995. - I have used this book in a number of my classes and several Adult Forums. Interested persons will find this book very helpful.
 - . Neusner, Jacob, ed., *Evil and Suffering*. The Pilgrim Library of World Religions. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1998.
 - . Peters, Ted, *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994.
 - . Rubenstein, Richard E., *When Jesus Became God: The Epic Fight over Christ's Divinity in the Last Days of Rome*. New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999. - Brilliant! Since my student days (in the 1950ies) I have read and re-read books and articles about the Christological battles. This book is thoroughly researched and easy to read. I recommend to all of my students.
 - . Schmidt, Kart Dietrich, *Grundriss der Kirchengeschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954. - I used Schmitdt as an addition to Heussi.
 - . Tilley, Terrence W., *The Evils of Theodicy*. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991.
 - . Yancey, Philip, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* New York: Harper Paperbacks. A division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1990 (1977). - Sabellianism rages. See my review of Yancey
 - . Zenger, Erich, *A God of Vengeance? Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1996 (1994). - An extremely important book

and a corrective to unthinking Christians who think that “vengeance” has nothing to do with justice and only with sheer revenge and hatred. It is God who teaches us hatred of injustice and hypocrisy. This is not a book for squeamish Christians, who live with the idea of a “sweet Jesus,” and the idolatry of “cheap grace.”

Upon the advice of V. Westhelle I am, FINALLY, reading

- . Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993 (1980). - I am very impressed with what I have been able to read, so far, BUT, it is clearer to me now than ever before that the Trinity is not YHWH (?L) and that there can be no communication with Jewish people, or with Moslems, when we use the word “God.” We, simply, mean different “realities,” myths, paradigms. Unless and until we are able to make clear to our conversation partners what we mean by “God” we will only have monologues and never a dialogue.

By the way, a new, beautiful edition of the Hebrew Bible has just been published,

- . *JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH: The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation* - Second Edition. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.5759 (1985, 1917).
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SUPPLEMENTS

- . From Blumenthal, pp. 243-246 - a review of Brueggemann.
- . Sarna, Nahum M., et al., “Rachel,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 13 (1972) 1486-1491.
- . Michel, Walter L., “Arguing with God: Examples of Psalms based on the Law-court Pattern of Prayer.” Chicago: LSTC. Unpublished. I am working on the translation of ALL “Arguing with G-d” psalms. I enclose a selection, Pss 44, 88, 109.

While I am at it I might just as well also include excerpts from my preliminary work of Ps 119.

- . Michel, Walter L., “How to Thank God for God’s Teaching and Guidance: A Translation of Psalm 119.” Chicago: LSTC, 1998.
 - . Michel, Walter L., “An unpublished review of Yancey.” Chicago: LSTC, 1998 (1997).
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