

1

PSALMS: PRAYERS FOR EVERY OCCASION

- ☪ Prayers for every occasion
 - Psalmists communicate to God in every emotion and event of life
 - ☪ Lament and praise
- ☪ Psalms content inspired by graduate seminars on Psalms
 - Clint McCann (*NIB* commentary on Psalms)
 - Bill Brown (*Seeing the Psalms*)
- ☪ Hebrew title (*Tehillim*) for Psalter (Book of Psalms) means “hymns”
 - Hymnbook of Judaism, church, and Bible
(Mike Morgan, “Psalms in Worship,” Psalms Class Lecture, Atlanta: Columbia Theological Seminary, 13 April 2005.)


2

STRUCTURE OF THE PSALTER

– Introduction	1-2
Book I	3-41
Book II	42-72
Book III	73-89
Book IV	90-106
Book V	107-149
– Conclusion	150

☪ Royal psalms at seams of first 3 books (Pss 2, 72, 89) (McCann)


- Psalms 2 and 72 and start of Ps 89 recognize authority of human king, but close of Ps 89 laments downfall of Davidic monarchy



3

BOOK IV'S RESPONSE TO EXILE

☪ Immediately after Psalm 89, editors place the only psalm dedicated to Moses. Why might referring to the figure of Moses have been a relevant way to respond to the collapse of the monarchy?



4

BOOK IV'S RESPONSE TO EXILE: GOD IS REFUGE

- ☪ "I say to the Lord, 'You are my refuge, my stronghold! You are my God—the one I trust!' God will save you from the hunter's trap and from deadly sickness. God will protect you with his pinions; you'll find refuge under his wings. His faithfulness is a protective shield. Don't be afraid of . . . sickness that prowls in the dark . . . Because you've made the Lord my refuge, the Most High, your place of residence—no evil will happen to you; no disease will come close to your tent" (Ps 91:2-10 CEB).



5

TABERNACLE IMAGERY IN PSALM 91 & "MOTHER'S EVENING PRAYER"

- ☪ Please consider the lyrics of Mary Baker Eddy's "Mother's Evening Prayer" in light of the tabernacle, especially the Holy of Holies.

- ☪ "O gentle presence"
- ☪ "His habitation high is here, and nigh"
- ☪ "Beneath the shadow of His mighty wing; In that sweet secret of the narrow way, Seeking and finding, with the angels sing: 'Lo, I am with you alway,'—watch and pray."

Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1896), 389.

Balentine, Samuel E. "The Tabernacle and the Court." Course Handout. Old Testament I. Richmond, VA: Union-PSCE, 31 October 2006.



6

PSALM 91 IN MARY BAKER EDDY: CHRISTIAN HEALER (AMPLIFIED EDITION)

- ☪ In response to the question, "On what is Christian Science based?," Mary Baker Eddy mentioned the following biblical texts: "The Ten Commandments, the Ninety-First Psalm, The Sermon on the Mount, The Revelation of St. John the Divine" (pgs. 203-204).
- ☪ She stated that Psalm 91 "contains more practical theological and pathological truth than any other collection of the same number of words in human language except the Sermon on the Mount" (pg. 192).
- ☪ In 1898, she described "the secret place of the Most High" as "spiritual Love" and as "man's spiritual state in God's own image and likeness" (pgs. 193 and 580).

Yvonne Caché von Fettweis and Robert Townsend Warneck, *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer, Amplified Edition* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 2009).



7

BOOK IV'S RESPONSE TO EXILE: GOD REIGNS

- ☪ Psalms 93-99 respond to collapse of Davidic monarchy (Ps 89) by proclaiming that God is King
- ☪ "Joy to the World" is based off of Ps 98, an enthronement psalm
- ☪ Purpose behind editing of Psalter: encourage readers to take refuge in Yhwh, the true King, rather than trust in human power (Ps 118:8; Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSS 217, [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 18).

8

Structural Trends

☛ Doxologies at end of books give a tour through OT history

- Books 1-2: period of United Monarchy
- Book 3: collapse of monarchy
- Book 4: exilic prayer to be gathered from among nations (106:47)
- Opening of Book 5: postexilic gratitude to God for gathering redeemed from corners of earth (107:2-3) (Miller, Patrick D. "The Psalter as a Book of Theology." In *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler [Boston: Brill, 2004], 88-90).



9

PSALM 117: HYMN OF PRAISE

- ☛ Call to Praise: v. 1 "Praise the Lord"
- ☛ Reason for Praise: vv. 2a-b
 - "For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever."
- ☛ Call to Praise: v. 2c "Praise the Lord"
- ☛ Hallelujah: praise the Lord
 - "The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot." ~ Augustine
- ☛ Praise is "an act of communion that has no purpose other than engagement in this right relation. It is an act of extravagant homecoming when 'we come down where we ought to be' . . . an act of "glad self-abandonment . . . of gladly ceding all of life in gratitude over to this God."
 - Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 116-122.



10

NOMINEES FOR THE "MOST FREQUENTLY APPEARING TYPE OF PSALM IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS"

- A) the hymn of praise
- B) the royal psalm
- C) the lament psalm
- D) the song of thanksgiving



11

LESSONS FROM LAMENTS

- ☛ Be straightforward with God
 - "You don't have to protect God from how you feel . . . doing so is trying to *play* God rather than *pray* to God."
 - ~ Stephen McCutchan
- ☛ Lean on the "sustaining infinite" who can be turned to in both the ups and downs of life (Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, vii)




12

PSALM 13 AS MODEL OF LAMENT PSALM

1. **Address to God**
 “How long, O Lord?” (v. 1)
2. **Complaint, petition, or reasons God should help**
 “Will you forget me forever? . . . How long must I bear pain . . . Answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy will say, ‘I have prevailed’...” (vv. 1-4)
3. **Expressions of confidence or the assurance of being heard, praise, vows of offering**
 “But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.” (vv. 5-6)


Patrick D. Miller, “The Psalms and Pastoral Care,” *Reformed Liturgy and Music* 24 (Summer 1990): 132-33.



13

Psalm 22



- ☪ “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1 NRSV)
 - Only words Jesus utters from cross in Matthew & Mark
 - Psalm 22 encourages us to turn to God in every circumstance.
 - When first words are “my God,” last word will not be forsaken
- ☪ Intensity of pain at psalm’s start is transformed by intensity of praise at psalm’s finish



14

Psalm 22: 27-31


- ☪ “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it” (NRSV).
- ☪ Who does the psalmist invite to worship God?
- ☪ V. 29 hints at resurrection, challenging normal OT conception of Sheol (Clint McCann, Psalms Class Lecture, Eden Theological Seminary, 2 October 2002.)

15

Following Ps 22: Ps 23 & Gospels

- ☪ Gospels move from crucifixion to resurrection, just as Ps 22 moves from pain to praise.
- ☪ Lament psalms are foundation employed by Gospel writers to makes sense of Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection
- ☪ How does Ps 23 reply to the cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1 NRSV)




16

Reality of Praise

☛ The Psalter as a whole takes us on a pathway that moves the individual into community and that leads through the pain of lament to the joy of praise.


- “The final shape of the Psalter, though it acknowledges the . . . pain of human suffering . . . points to an alternative view of reality in which there is room in the human heart only for praise. Praise constitutes another reality in which the presence of God has become so real that anger has no point, pain has no hold, and death lacks all power to sting.” ~ Gerald H. Wilson, “The Shape of the Book of Psalms.” *Interpretation* 46.2 (April 1992): 139.



17

Job vs. Deuteronomistic Retributive Theology

- ☐ Most of book of Job likely authored during 6th-4th centuries BCE
- ☐ Deuteronomistic Retributive Theology: Obey God and prosper, disobey God and suffer.
- ☐ Prologue explores our motive for worshipping God as Job loses his animals, children, and health “for no reason” (2:3 NRSV)




18

Three Cycles of Wisdom Dialogue

	Eliphaz	Job	Bildad	Job	Zophar	Job
1 st Cycle	4-5	6-7	8	9-10	11	12-14
2 nd Cycle	15	16-17	18	19	20	21
3 rd Cycle	22	23-24	25	26	---	27

1st cycle: Reassuring Job—DRT is true in the long run
 2nd cycle: Fate of the wicked
 3rd cycle: Condemning Job and Collapse of Dialogue


Invigorated by the idea of a trial with God, Job’s speeches transform from rejecting (19:9; 22:24) to asserting his royal dominion (23:10; 31:35-37).



19

Lesson on (im)proper care from Job’s friends

“The tender word and Christian encouragement of an invalid, pitiful patience with his fears and the removal of them, are better than hecatombs of gushing theories, stereotyped borrowed speeches, and the doling of arguments, which are but so many parodies on legitimate Christian Science, aflame with divine Love.” ~ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* 366:30



20

From Retribution to Grace: The Book of Job's Lessons on Uplifting the Basis of Our Care

- ˆ Job moves from talking *about* God to talking *to* God
- Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 169.
- ˆ Gracious care in the divine speeches (Job 38-41)
 - ˆ God celebrates and provides for animals that Leviticus 11 labels an abomination.
 - ˆ Tabernacle terms in Job 38-41 reveal that we dwell in God's presence and are all holy to God.
- ˆ Model of God's care (Job 38-41) transforms Job's care from sacrificing in case his children have sinned (1:5) to praying for his accusers and granting his daughters an inheritance (42:15; cf. Num 27:8).

21

Living the Vision of Job 38-41

The divine speeches invite us "to extend our realm of care from our families to the whole cosmos and its denizens, to make a world where creative flourishing is available to all beings. The speeches urge us to be like the animals and like the monsters, Behemoth and Leviathan—wild, fearlessly ourselves, exuberantly alive. They call us to pulse with life, to be strong, to yell and shout like Job, to find our place in the world and to take no one else's." ~ Kathleen M. O'Connor, "Wild, Raging Creativity: The Scene in the Whirlwind (Job 38–41)," in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 179.

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