



# Spiritual Complaint: The Theology and Practice of Lament

*Miriam Bier, Tim Bulkeley*

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Personal and communal tragedies provoke intense emotions. In Scripture such emotions were given expression in complaints or laments. Such laments are the most frequent genre of psalm and are also found in the prophets and elsewhere in the Bible. The book of Lamentations is even named for this human response to tragedy. Yet neither lament nor complaint seems to be widely practiced in churches today, except at times of extreme communal catastrophe. Bringing together biblical scholars, liturgists, and practical theologians, this book begins to provide bridges between these worlds in order to enrich our ability to respond appropriately to personal and communal tragedy and to understand those responses. "[This is] an intriguing and helpful exploration of the biblical traditions of lament and penitential prayer, and their relevance to contemporary church and society. The context of the Christchurch earthquakes gives the book a particular poignancy." -- Iain Provan, Professor of Biblical Studies, Regent College, Vancouver "In a world torn apart by discrimination, greed, and the ubiquitous presence of anti-Christian forces, those who live for the kingdom of God find it increasingly difficult to understand the times, much less how to feel in such a world. . . . The contributors to this book have provided the church a timely and eloquent reminder of this ancient spiritual practice for faith in dark times; and they have reminded us we need not be afraid of the dark, for God dwells there." --Myk Habets, Head of Carey Graduate School, Carey Baptist College "Suffering is part of life, and there are times when pain faces us with such gruesome fierceness we are rocked to the core. . . . *Spiritual Complaint* is a salve for those who are wounded in a broken world. It teaches us how to wrestle with God faithfully, in prayer and tears and worship. Far from being simplistic in its instruction, however, this provides nuance and depth on how to negotiate pain on the foundation of biblical exemplars. I highly recommend this much-needed resource." --Heath A. Thomas, Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

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