

**JUDSON, TIM. *AWAKE IN GETHSEMANE: BONHOEFFER AND THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN LAMENT*. WACO, TX: BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023. 220 PP. \$69.99.**

*Awake in Gethsemane* seeks to provide a Christian “lamentology” utilizing the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Tim Judson posits that the theme of lament appears regularly in Bonhoeffer’s output and that contemporary efforts to reclaim lament in Christian worship would benefit greatly from these writings. The book begins with a substantive introduction to the history of biblical lament and how Bonhoeffer might speak into its persistent absence in contemporary Christianity. Judson’s approach arises out of Bonhoeffer’s view that Christian life and community must intertwine “faithful theology, ethical adherence to Christ’s teachings, and a disciplined liturgical rhythm” (16). Resultingly, each of the first three chapters on theology, ethics, and liturgy includes a thorough treatment of Bonhoeffer’s work and a scriptural “interlude” (20).

Chapter 1 explores a theology of lament through Bonhoeffer’s Christology. Judson analyzes Bonhoeffer’s conceptualization of Christian community and how this “spiritual reality” (33) finds “‘vicarious solidarity’ with and for the world” (45) through the work of Christ. This chapter’s scriptural interlude considers the events of Genesis 3 as an example of “lament as a constructive mode of faithful human existence, rather than reducing it merely to serve as an after-response to sin or suffering” (36).

In chapter 2, Judson considers an ethic of lament alongside Bonhoeffer’s ecclesiology. In Bonhoeffer’s view, the Church demonstrates that it has taken the “incarnate form of Christ seriously” by the way it engages with the “penultimate” while anticipating that which is “ultimate” (51). Practically, “*lament is both prayerfully active, and actively prayerful*” (60, emphasis original). Judson’s second scriptural interlude interprets Jesus’s prayer and suffering in the garden of Gethsemane as the redemption of humanity’s relationship with God, the redemption of our “creatureliness,” and the supreme example of free obedience. Our call is to “participate in Christ’s sorrow” (68) by “staying awake with Christ in Gethsemane” (70).

Judson turns to the liturgy of lament in chapter 3, drawing on Bonhoeffer’s idea of “polyphony” in the individual Christian life and the wider Christian community. He extends Bonhoeffer’s analogy by interpreting lament as the “dissonant voice” that “ensures the Christological integrity of praise and thanksgiving” (81). The final scriptural interlude

examines expressions of lament in the Psalms. Building on Bonhoeffer's Christology once again, Judson probes the ways that the Psalter provides a framework and content for lament in the Church's liturgical life. He concludes with a reflection on the significance of the Psalms as a source of "liturgical courage" (93) for Bonhoeffer throughout his imprisonment.

Chapter 4 begins Judson's constructive work, commenting on three of the "multi-faceted, but not insurmountable" (95) obstacles to bringing lament into contemporary western Christianity. First, Judson navigates the concern that lament holds too low a view of God's providence. He argues that lament is a "faithful response to evil and suffering before God, in the humble fallibility of human finitude" (99). Second, the chapter addresses the role of silence in the Christian life. While the "silence of complicity" or "silencing those who suffer" (100) are never appropriate, there is a great need for Christians who are capable of silence. Judson considers how lament ought to include silence before God, silence from others (solitude), silence with others, and silence for others (listening). Third, Judson gives a sensitive acknowledgement of the reality of Christian despondence, especially mental illness. Leaning on Bonhoeffer's personal correspondence, Judson emphasizes that "continued struggles in mental health should not dissuade communities from the legitimacy of lament" (109).

Chapter 5 continues Judson's constructive work on lament "as a means of enfolding it (the Church) into Christ's *story* in the world" (111). It requires the "godly grief" of penitence, especially for the "structural and societal evils" that Christians have been complicit in. It also involves resistance, becoming an "act of defiance" against "suffering and marginalization" (120–21). He closes the chapter by interpreting lament as a "habitual practice of Christian liturgy" (122). Judson concludes the book with an overarching vision for the incorporation of lament in word, sacrament, and church community (129).

In some ways, the purpose of *Awake in Gethsemane* is hard to pin down. Is it a book about Bonhoeffer or a book about lament? The answer is yes. Judson's project deserves hearty praise for its methodological sophistication in seamlessly weaving together analysis of a significant (and often misinterpreted) theologian and a significant topic with immediate contemporary applicability. Judson's thorough compilation and engagement with the breadth of Bonhoeffer's output serves as an excellent guide, especially to Bonhoeffer's Christology. The book's chapter on the ethical components of a Christian lamentology constitutes a much-needed addition to lament

scholarship. Additionally, Judson's introduction represents the best and most comprehensive summary of lament I have encountered, synthesizing its history and contemporary hesitations with commendable clarity. At the same time, the deep and at times complex prose makes Judson's book most appropriate for an academic audience with some previous exposure to Bonhoeffer's theology.

One noteworthy omission from *Awake in Gethsemane* is the relationship between music and corporate lament. Judson's discussion of incorporating lament into Christian worship offers only a single paragraph on the topic of singing (129). Apart from a few well-rehearsed statements about the valuable nature of singing, no explicit connections between music and lament are drawn. This sparse treatment is surprising given that the first page of *Awake in Gethsemane* locates the contemporary absence of lament in evidence from CCLI lists and hymnals.

As is the case with many treatments of lament, a reader may walk away from *Awake in Gethsemane* without a clear idea of where to begin practical implementation. Nevertheless, we can empathize with Judson's "longing for us [the Church] to faithfully embody the suffering Christ *for* and *with* others" (xi) and hope that his powerful offering towards that end will have a lasting impact.

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