

On the Motif of the Weeping God in Moses 7

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And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains? And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? (Moses 7:28–29)

The Divine Lament in Moses 7

In one of the most striking passages in scripture, the prophet Enoch sees God cry. He is astonished. The sight is simply too human, too much of a contrast with God's unimaginable power, for Enoch not to be amazed.

Were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; ... how is it thou canst weep? (Moses 7:30–31)

God responds to Enoch's perplexity by describing his own internal, emotional conflict:

Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, ... And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them.¹ ... misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer? (Moses 7:32–34, 37)

Clearly, although justice calls for God to punish his children, he is unhappy about what he must do. It causes him genuine pain.

This is a striking portrayal and one quite inconsistent with the notions of God's "impassibility" developed in high Christian theology, according to which God should have no such emotions.² The Unmoved Mover does not weep. Indeed, he cannot be affected in any way by anything that humans or his other creatures do since he is "pure act" (never effect) and "pure form" (never matter).³ Furthermore, conflicting emotions within God are inconceivable on the common theological theory that God is utterly "simple," or indivisible—that he is, in the familiar phrase, "without body, parts, or passions."

"Th[is] doctrine," in the words of a standard reference work, "was a regular tenet of philosophical theology among the Greeks, and its foundation in Christian sources is probably due to direct Greek influences."⁴ The concept of emotionless, impassible deity was, of course, quite foreign to those familiar with the Olympian gods of ancient Greece, who were not only embodied but whose lives were filled with impulsiveness, irrational anger, lust, and violence. It had little to do with them, for they were not the gods described and worshiped by philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. Similarly, it has never been easily reconcilable with the data of the Bible, where God explicitly speaks of his own jealousy (as at Exodus 20:5) and his yearning (as at Hosea 11:8) and where his wrath is on clear and frequent display.

Hebrew religion ... freely ascribed emotions to God. In Christianity there is an acute tension between the Greek and the Hebrew conceptions. On the one side there is the immutability, perfection, and all-sufficiency of God which would seem to exclude all passion, and this has been the basis of the traditional emphasis among theologians. But on the other side there is the central Christian conviction that God in His essence is love, that His nature is revealed in the Incarnate Christ and not least in His Passion, and that He “sympathizes” with His Creatures.⁵

Nonetheless, philosophical theology has mingled with a particular way of reading scripture to produce in many Christians a view of God the Father that, even if it seemingly allows certain emotions to him, nonetheless denies others, and so contrasts sharply with their view of God the Son. As the Lutheran biblical theologian Terence E. Fretheim puts it,

The God of the [Old Testament] is commonly pictured ... as primarily a God of judgment and wrath, an “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” kind of God, who is often vindictive and punitive, seldom gracious and compassionate. God is often depicted in terms of a kind of fatherhood that smacks of a certain remoteness and coldness and sternness, even ruthlessness, a picture that is believed to need decisive correction in the light of the coming of Jesus Christ. This ... is at least in part due to scholarly neglect of those [Old Testament] images which portray God in nonmonarchical terms, not least those which depict God as one who suffers, as one who has entered deeply into the human situation and made it his own.⁶

This view of the God of the Old Testament is indeed in striking contrast to the picture given of Jesus in the New Testament. As Fretheim says,

The picture of Jesus presented often stands at odds with the commonly accepted picture of God. Attributes such as love, compassion, and mercy, accompanied by acts of healing, forgiving, and redeeming, tend to become narrowly associated with Jesus, while the less palatable attributes and actions of holiness, wrath, power, and justice are ascribed only to God. ... People often seem to have a view which suggests that Jesus is friend and God is enemy. An understanding of the atonement gets twisted so that Jesus is seen as the one who came to save us from God.⁷

For, if ever there was “one who ... entered deeply into the human situation and made it his own,” it was the man known to hundreds of millions of Christians now and throughout history as the divine Savior of the world. There is great depth of love and caring and, indeed, of sorrowful pain in Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem as it is recorded in Matthew:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (Matthew 23:37-38)⁸

Since, however, it is so difficult to blend the oil and water of a cold divine impassibility and Jesus’ unmistakable compassion, Christian theoreticians have not infrequently claimed that such passages as John 11:35 (“Jesus wept”) must refer to Christ’s human nature rather than to his divine nature.⁹ (This “two-natures” Christology is especially associated with the Council of Chalcedon, which was convened in A.D. 451.)

If Latter-day Saints held to mainstream Christian philosophical assumptions, they would find it just as difficult to explain how Jesus could ever have taken upon himself the weaknesses and pains of mortality “that he [might] know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12; cf. D&C 62:1; 88:6). For it would seem that the impassible God of traditional philosophical theology would be incapable of true incarnation, to say nothing of learning how to “succor” incarnate, mortal beings enmeshed in time and temptation. Fortunately, virtually from its beginning, latter-day revelation has allowed Mormons to bypass this traditional conundrum.

Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet

In recent years, both biblical and philosophical theologians have rebelled against a view of the God of the Old Testament that represents him as cold, violent, distant, angry, and uncaring. “The number of adherents to the doctrine of divine impassibility has continuously decreased during the present century,” observes Marcel Sarot, who regrets the trend. “Slowly but surely the concept of an immutable and impassible God has given way to the concept of a sensitive, emotional, passionate God. . . . By now most of the theologians who explicitly state their views on divine impassibility hold that this doctrine is to a greater or lesser degree false.”¹⁰ He goes on to cite Ronald Goetz, who notes that “the rejection of the ancient doctrine of divine impassibility has become a theological commonplace.”¹¹

In many instances, the rebellion against divine impassibility has occurred in the name of various theologies of liberation. The concept of God as a remote, unfeeling monarch—with whom his suffering Son or, in some Catholic images, his Son’s virgin Mother, representing the empathetic feminine, must intercede—has served, in these views, to legitimate oppressive social structures that have victimized the poor and excluded women from power. Walter Brueggemann speaks for this influential movement in Catholic and Protestant circles when he asserts that “Western preoccupation with dominance and power is no doubt linked to and derived from our imperial ‘image of God.’”¹²

Whatever motivates these modern thinkers, however, their willingness to entertain notions of a God who actively loves his children and is emotionally involved in what happens to them has freed them to take seriously the scriptural evidence for this notion. It has always been there, but centuries of philosophical and other kinds of misconceptions have, until the last few decades, largely managed to blunt its force. (As Sarot points out with regard to the greatest of all medieval Christian philosophical theologians, “When Aquinas tries to account for the usage of the Bible, which seems to ascribe emotions to God, he explains this language either as metaphorical or as denoting divine will-acts which are unaccompanied by emotions.”)¹³

While advocates of the new approach have sought and found support for their position throughout the Bible (including, relevantly to my purposes in this essay, a persuasive demonstration of how the sad story of Hosea illustrates “the mingled sorrow and anger of God the lover”),¹⁴ a major focus of such recent biblical scholarship has been the book of Jeremiah. This portion of the Bible is replete with images and divine statements that depict God as deeply caring and concerned about his children, worried even by the punishment that he himself is obliged to assign to them. Jeremiah 31:20 is typical of the kind of language that the prophet cites as divine speech: “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”

But there is much more to be said about Jeremiah than this. Lehi’s great contemporary has traditionally been regarded as “the weeping prophet.” The epithet is not without justification, for, as the late Abraham Joshua Heschel, an illustrious rabbi and scholar, observes, “God’s pain and disappointment ring throughout the book of Jeremiah.”¹⁵ There is, in fact, a whole lot of crying going on in Jeremiah; from the first to the last of the prophet’s writings, we hear “a voice of grief, a voice of weeping.”¹⁶ “Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day,” says

Jeremiah 14:17, “and let them not cease.” Jeremiah 9:18 even calls for professional mourners: “And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.”

But it is not only the prophet and his mortal contemporaries who have reason to cry. Because of the behavior of Judah, which will shortly lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and to the Babylonian captivity, God himself feels “shunned, pained, and offended.”¹⁷ In fact, he actually seems puzzled by their behavior:

O generation, see ye the word of the Lord. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number. (Jeremiah 2:31–32)

Although God will soon severely punish Judah, his mood as represented in Jeremiah is one of mingled “compassion and ... anger,” and “as great as God’s wrath is His anguish.”¹⁸ “It is,” says Heschel, who was a pioneer in the new theological approach (and one who cannot be faulted either for Christian apologetic or for currently fashionable political motives), “as if there were an inner wrestling in God.”¹⁹ Heschel can even speak of the divine “melancholy” of “God’s sorrow.”²⁰

Yet Heschel stops short of the view of God implicit in Moses 7. He will not allow that God can weep, and he insists that it is the prophet who is lamenting on God’s behalf, rather than God himself. “A sense of delicacy prevented the prophet from spelling out the meaning of the word: Mourn My people for Me as well.” There is, he says, “a divine pathos that can be reflected, but not pronounced: God is mourning Himself.”²¹

Fretheim, perhaps, comes closer to the view embodied in the Latter-day Saint Enoch text. “The suffering of prophet and God are so interconnected,” he says of Jeremiah, “that it is difficult to sort out who is speaking in many texts. Nor should one try to make too sharp a distinction.”²² Nevertheless, he, too, pulls up short. “These texts should be interpreted in terms of the prophet’s embodiment of God’s mourning. ... The prophet is an enfleshment of the emotions of God over what is about to occur.”²³ He asserts further, “It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the prophet’s laments are a mirror of the laments of God. ... The lamenting Jeremiah mirrors before the people the lamenting God.”²⁴

Just like Enoch, modern commentators on Jeremiah, virtually unanimously, have found astonishing the notion that God himself would weep. But what is surprising, even given an anthropomorphic view of God, becomes absolutely impossible when anti-anthropomorphism is assumed, as it often is, to be unquestionably correct.²⁵

A New/Old Perspective on the Book of Jeremiah

In 1992, J. J. M. Roberts of Princeton Theological Seminary published in a South African journal of biblical studies an important article entitled “The Motif of the Weeping God in Jeremiah and Its Background in the Lament Tradition of the Ancient Near East.”²⁶ Roberts concentrates in his study on Jeremiah 4, 8, and 14, all of which contain lamentation texts. In them and in the relevant surrounding chapters, he identifies three different voices. The first is that of the people themselves, which may be recognized without difficulty by its use of the first-person plural. A good example of this occurs in Jeremiah 14:7–9:

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name’s sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?

Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

Second, “There is also a feminine voice of the city or state personified as a woman and seen as the mother of her people.”²⁷ We might illustrate this, as Roberts does, by using Jeremiah 10:19–21:

Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.²⁸

Finally, there is a third voice in the laments, one that is generally identified as that of the prophet Jeremiah himself and the one that has led to his being characterized as “the weeping prophet.” Jeremiah 9:1, in which, within a larger lament, the speaker cries out with passion, is probably the most important verse in this regard: “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”²⁹ Other passages that are commonly invoked to sustain the image of Jeremiah as a “weeping prophet” include 14:17–18 and 4:19–21, although, strictly speaking, the latter does not actually feature the language of weeping.

A passage that undeniably represents God as sorrowful and “conflicted,” though not as weeping, is Jeremiah 12:7–8, which forms part of a substantially longer lamentation:

I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul [*yədidût napšî*] into the hand of her enemies. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it.

These verses combine unmistakably the fact of God’s abandonment of and harsh judgment on his people with the sensation of his deep love for them. The expression “the dearly beloved of my soul” demonstrates quite clearly that the God speaking here is no distant, uninvolved, unemotional monarch. As Roberts observes of the passage, “God is passionately devoted to his people, but their hostility toward him has driven him to punish them.”³⁰

The same emotions are clearly recognizable in Jeremiah 4:19–22, in which, argues Roberts, it is God and not Jeremiah who is the speaker:

My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.³¹

This “inner wrestling” within God is, obviously, very similar to the depiction of God’s conflicting emotions in Moses 7. Yet the parallel is even closer than that, for it is probable that the person lamenting in Jeremiah 9:1 and 14:17–18 is not Jeremiah, nor, indeed, any other mortal being. Roberts declares that “the figure portrayed as weeping in these passages is better understood as the figure of God. ... This striking anthropomorphic imagery powerfully

conveys Yahweh's passionate involvement in the fate of his people whom he loves though he must nonetheless hand them over to harsh punishment."³² As Roberts further observes, "The assumption that the speaker of these passages should be identified with Jeremiah has hardly been challenged in the scholarly literature, even though that identification of the speaker is less than certain." He finds this surprising, in view of "the recent popularity of the theological concept of God as a God who suffers with his people,"³³ but he suggests a plausible reason: "Though most commentators give no reasoned argument for rejecting God as the weeping figure, the comments that are made suggest that the anthropomorphisms involved in such a portrait of God are simply too striking for most commentators to entertain seriously."³⁴ Yet it is just such a portrait that the book of Jeremiah offers us.

The ancient rabbis, not yet under the domination of Greek-inspired philosophical theology, were much more willing to entertain the possibility of genuine emotion, even weeping, in God, though they still found it difficult to imagine. Thus, for example, the fifth-century Babylonian Talmud reports:

For three persons does the Holy One, blessed be He, weep every single day: for him who has the opportunity to study the Torah but does not engage in it, for him who does not have the opportunity to engage in study of the Torah but does so, and for a community leader who lords it over the community.³⁵

More to the point, the Talmudic tractate *Hagigah* 5b seems to suggest that it is God—and not the prophet Jeremiah—who, as described in Jeremiah 13:17, weeps.³⁶ So, likewise, does the third-to-tenth-century compilation of lore relating to the school of the prophet Elijah known as the *Eliyyahu Rabbah*:

He strikes both hands together, clasps them over His heart, then folds His arms as He weeps over the righteous sometimes secretly, sometimes openly. Why does He weep over them secretly? Because it is unseemly for a lion to weep before a fox, unseemly for a Sage to weep before his disciple, unseemly for a king to weep before the least of his servants, unseemly for a householder to weep before a hired man, as is said, *So that ye will not hear it, My soul shall weep in secret for your pride* (Jer. 13:17).³⁷

The *Eliyyahu Rabbah* exhorts Jews to "come and see how plentiful always are the mercies of the Holy One in behalf of Israel, for (off and on) all their days they had been idol worshipers, but no sooner did they resolve upon repentance, slight as it was, than He wept for them." It warns "the peoples speaking the earth's seventy languages"—that is, the nations of the Gentiles—that they "should not gloat" over the divine sorrow, "saying as God weeps: What benefit to the Holy One in that He gave Israel the Torah, etc." And, although it expresses uneasiness at the very thought of comparing God to any other being, the *Eliyyahu Rabbah* goes on to comment that, "in comparison with other beings, no one feels such compassion for Israel as does the Holy One, who from the beginning intended His world for them."³⁸

Finally, proem 24 of the *Midrash Rabbah* on Lamentations, a work dating to perhaps the fourth century A.D., represents God as weeping in a passage that is strikingly reminiscent of the scene depicted in Moses 7. Looking upon the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians, God begins to cry.

At that time Metatron [who is Enoch] came, fell upon his face, and spake before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe, let me weep, but do Thou not weep." He replied to him, "If thou lettest Me not weep now, I will repair to a place which thou hast not permission to enter, and will weep there," as it is said, *But if ye will not hear it, My soul shall weep in secret for pride* (Jer. XIII, 17).³⁹

Thus, while the concept of a weeping God may seem strange to the conventional theology of mainstream Christendom, it was well known, if still somewhat disconcerting, to ancient Judaism. Understood in this light, Jeremiah 8:18–9:3 becomes a dialogue between God and his people, but also—and even more intriguingly—a poignant dialogue within God himself.⁴⁰

When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her? (Jeremiah 8:18–19)

The Israelites wonder if Jehovah has abandoned his beloved city, Jerusalem, here described in feminine language. But he interrupts their cry with an angry question: “Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?” (Jeremiah 8:19). He has not forsaken his people; *they* have forsaken *him*. Then we hear the remainder of the Israelites’ cry, a plaintive expression of missed opportunity, of grace offered but neglected until too late: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jeremiah 8:20).

However, although God must punish his children, he is deeply sorrowful about the fact; and, in a passage reminiscent of the famous “suffering servant” poem of Isaiah 53—and, indeed, perhaps foreshadowing the atonement of Jesus Christ—he declares that he suffers with and because of his people:

For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (Jeremiah 8:21–9:1)

But mercy cannot rob justice (see Alma 42:25). In indirect answer to the question posed by “the cry of the daughter of my people,” the Lord indicates that, while he has not actually left Jerusalem, he would rather like to do so.

Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 9:2–3)

Perhaps he would like to go away from them precisely because their sinfulness allows him no option but to chastise them. And the just punishment of the wayward Israelites, his children, causes God anguish.

For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone. (Jeremiah 9:10)⁴¹

Notes from Mesopotamian Lament Literature

The motif of a deity’s abandonment of his or her people, despite that deity’s passionate love for them, has a venerable history in the ancient Near East—and, indeed, Roberts contends that Jeremiah’s laments are modeled upon much earlier precedents.⁴² This motif can be traced with particular clarity in the literature of ancient Sumer, in Mesopotamia. Early in the second millennium before Christ, the Sumerian empire entered a disastrous phase of its history. With the Amorites attacking from the Syro-Arabian desert, the Elamites attacking from the east, and dangerous intrigues within the empire itself, the Third Dynasty of Ur collapsed. It was a terrible and traumatic event. Roughly a generation later, about 1900 B.C., when the Sumerians had

made a partial recovery (they were never to recover fully), two poetic laments were composed, entitled “Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur” and “Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur.” Within the next century or so, three more “Lamentations” appeared, treating, respectively, the destruction of the cities of Nippur, Erech, and Eridu.⁴³

These five poetic laments follow a standard pattern in their explanation of the traumatic events they narrate: The decision to destroy the city is normally made by Enlil and the other chief gods in their divine council. The god and goddess of the affected city try to persuade the council to alter its edict but are unsuccessful. Finally, although they weep bitterly over the fate of their beloved city, the god and goddess are finally obliged to abandon it themselves, leaving it to its decreed destruction.⁴⁴

The “Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur” serves as a good model of the genre. It begins with a long list of the various gods and goddesses who have abandoned their temples.⁴⁵ (Much the same thing occurs in the “Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur,” where “one of the stanzas mentions briefly virtually every important Sumerian city that had been destroyed by the enemy, as well as the name of its weeping divine queen.”)⁴⁶ Thereupon, the city of Ur is summoned to take up lamentation, in response to which the god himself weeps:

O city, a bitter lament set up as thy lament; Thy lament which is bitter—O city, set up thy lament. ... Thy lament which is bitter—how long will it grieve thy weeping lord? Thy lament which is bitter—how long will grieve the weeping Nanna?⁴⁷

In the third section of the “Lamentation,” the goddess of the city speaks:

After they had pronounced the utter destruction of my city; After they had pronounced the utter destruction of Ur, After they had directed that its people be killed— On that day verily I abandoned not my city; My land verily I forsake not. To Anu the water of my eye verily I poured; To Enlil I in person verily made supplication. “Let not my city be destroyed,” verily I said unto them; “Let not Ur be destroyed,” verily I said unto them; “Let not its people perish,” verily I said unto them. Verily Anu changed not this word; Verily Enlil with its “It is good; so be it” soothed not my heart. For the second time, when the council had ... ed (And) the Anunnaki ... had seated themselves, The legs verily I ... ed, the arms verily I stretched out, To Anu the water of my eye verily I poured; To Enlil I in person verily made supplication. “Let not my city be destroyed,” verily I said unto them; “Let not Ur be destroyed,” verily I said unto them; “Let not its people perish,” verily I said unto them. Verily Anu changed not this work; Verily Enlil with its “It is good; so be it” soothed not my heart. The utter destruction of my city verily they directed, The utter destruction of Ur verily they directed; That its people be killed, as its fate verily they decreed.⁴⁸

Her appeal having fallen on deaf ears, the goddess is herself obliged to withdraw from her own doomed city:

Its lady like a flying bird departed from her city; Ningal like a flying bird departed from her city. ... Its lady cries: “Alas for my city,” cries: “Alas for my house”; Ningal cries: “Alas for my city,” cries: “Alas for my house. ...” Mother Ningal in her city like an enemy stood aside. The woman loudly utters the wail for her attacked house; The princess in Ur, her attacked shrine, bitterly cries. ... Her eyes are flooded with tears; bitterly she weeps.⁴⁹

Finally, via a spokesman, her people complain against her:

O my queen, verily thou art one who has departed from the house; thou art one who has departed from the city. How long, pray, wilt thou stand aside in the city like an enemy? O Mother Ningal, (how long) wilt thou hurl challenges in the city like an enemy? Although thou art a queen beloved of her city, thy city ... thou hast abandoned; [Although] thou art [a queen beloved of her people], thy people ... thou hast abandoned.⁵⁰

A similar scene is sketched in the “Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur,” in which Zababa, a war god, and Ba’u,⁵¹ a mother goddess, are obliged to leave their city and temples behind.

Zababa took an unfamiliar path away from his beloved dwelling, Mother Ba’u was lamenting bitterly in her Urukug, “Alas, the destroyed city, my destroyed temple!” bitterly she cries.⁵²

Another relevant passage depicts the reluctant departure of Nanna, the Sumerian moon god and the firstborn of Enlil, from the city of Ur when his appeal to save that city has been turned down.⁵³ His wife, Ningal, also departs the city:

“My son, the Noble Son ... , why do you concern yourself with crying? O Nanna, the Noble Son ... , why do you concern yourself with crying? The judgment of the assembly cannot be turned back, The word of An and Enlil knows no overturning. ... O my Nanna, do not exert yourself (in vain), leave your city!” Then, (upon hearing this), His Majesty, the Noble Son, became distraught, Lord Ašimbabbar, the Noble Son, grieved, Nanna, who loves his city, left his city, Su’en took an unfamiliar path away from his beloved Ur. Ningal ... in order to go to an alien place, Quickly clothed herself (and) left the city. (All) the Anunna stepped outside of Ur.⁵⁴

In the “Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur,” it will be recalled, Ningal protests that she had not willingly abandoned her city to the Elamites and the Su-people and forsaken her temple. Rather, she says, she had pled with the great gods An and Enlil. When that was not successful, she appealed to the council of the gods. But the decree remained unaltered, her city was destroyed, and, in the end, “Ningal, herself, had to flee the city.”⁵⁵ In yet other texts, the goddesses Ninisinna and Inanna, respectively the divine queens of Isin and Erech, are forced to leave their cities because of the cruel edict of An, their “father,” or Enlil, “the lord of all the lands.”⁵⁶

In the “Lamentation over the Destruction of Eridu,” we read of the desertion of the city by its god, Enki, and by Damgalnunna, a Sumerian mother goddess:

Its lord stayed outside his city as (if it were) an alien city. He wept bitter tears. Father Enki stayed outside his city as (if it were) an alien city. He wept bitter tears. For the sake of his harmed city, he wept bitter tears. Its lady, like a flying bird, left her city. The Mother of the Lofty Temple, the pure one, Damgalnunna, left her city. ... Its lady, the faithful cow, the compassionate one, the pure one, Damgalnunna, Claws at her breast, claws at her eyes. She utters a frenzied cry. She held dagger and sword in her two hands—they clash together. She tears out her hair like rushes, uttering a bitter lament. ... Enki, king of the Abzu, Felt distressed, felt anxious. At the words of his beloved, He wailed to himself. He lay down and fasted.⁵⁷

Still another interesting passage represents Nammu, the Sumerian goddess who was the mother of all mortal life, as lamenting the desertion of the city of Eridu by her son Enki and by Damgalnunna.⁵⁸ For all her sadness, however, it is noteworthy that Nammu herself deserts the city as well:

Nammu, the mother of Enki, went out from the city. Her hands have become heavy through wailing. She cries bitter tears. She beats her chest like a holy drum. She cries bitter tears. "Enki keeps away from Eridu!" "Damgalnunna keeps away from Eridu! Oh my city!" she says. "The ruined city! My destroyed house!"⁵⁹

Herbert Mason's verse rendition of the famous epic of Gilgamesh, while not translating a Sumerian city lament, is also of interest in this context:

Ishtar cried out like a woman at the height Of labor: O how could I have wanted To do this to my people! ... Old gods are terrible to look at when They weep, all bloated like spoiled fish. One wonders if they ever understand That they have caused their grief.⁶⁰

Certain differences between the Sumerian laments and the book of Jeremiah are immediately apparent. For one thing, the Yahweh or Jehovah of Israel is not merely the city deity of Jerusalem. Rather, he is the supreme God and the head of the divine council.⁶¹ (Elohim, as the Father, is largely—though not quite entirely—invisible in the Hebrew Bible.) No higher god overrules him. Thus, the judgment on Jerusalem and Judah is rendered by Jehovah himself, and, as recorded in Jeremiah, the conflict between divine wrath and divine compassion, which is objectified as a conflict between distinct gods in the polytheistic Sumerian texts, occurs within a single deity.

By the same token, in a text that mentions only one deity—and he a god—there cannot be any "weeping goddess" to serve as a parallel to the Sumerian Ba'u, Damgalnunna, Nammu, and Ningal. So is there no parallel at all to the goddess? Quite the contrary. Roberts is surely correct in arguing that "the weeping city goddess" shows up in Jeremiah in the guise of "the personified city as the mother of her people."⁶²

Implications for the Book of Moses

It will be recalled that Roberts distinguishes three voices within the laments of the book of Jeremiah and contends that these reflect very ancient Near Eastern literary motifs. The first voice is that of the people themselves. Second is "a feminine voice of the city or state personified as a woman and seen as the mother of her people."⁶³ Roberts connects this feminine voice with the "weeping goddesses" of the Sumerian laments. Finally, there is a third voice, which Roberts identifies as that of God himself, weeping for the sins of his people and the punishment they will necessarily undergo at his hand. It will, perhaps, be profitable to treat these three "voices" briefly and in reverse order.

To begin with the third, the portrayal of a God agonizing over what might be termed "internal conflicts" has only recently begun to be recognized as genuinely biblical. Roberts claims, furthermore, that the motif of a "weeping God" has gone unrecognized by biblical scholars but that it is authentically biblical and authentically ancient. The Book of Moses, which was received by the Prophet Joseph Smith between June 1830 and February 1831, offers a spectacular instance of a suffering and weeping God, far clearer than anything in the Bible.

As to the second, feminine voice, no mother goddess is mentioned in the Book of Moses, nor is there a city that laments with a feminine voice. But this is hardly surprising, for Enoch's prophecy applies to the whole earth, so that there is no single city—certainly not his own, which was proverbially righteous—and no single state that we would expect to break out in lamentation for the universal catastrophe, the flood, that is about to occur. However, a feminine voice is heard to lament in Moses 7:48–49:

And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my

children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face? And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth?

Note that the earth identifies itself, or herself, as “the mother of men.” The notion that the earth is feminine is a very old one, reflected in the fact that, in both Semitic and Indo-European languages, *earth* is generally a feminine word.⁶⁴ Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, an early Greek poem whose links to ancient Near Eastern mythology are increasingly recognized, will serve to illustrate the point: The poet speaks of Zeus as “the father of men and gods” and of “Earth, the mother of all.”⁶⁵ In the Book of Moses, since God has already identified himself as their Father, earth’s identification of herself as “the mother of men” would seem to make her, at least metaphorically, the consort of God.⁶⁶

Significantly, the personification of the earth as a vocal lamenter or accuser of human wickedness is an authentic feature of the indisputably ancient *Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch*. In that pre-Christian text, the earth brings an accusation against the wicked and oppressive “giants” otherwise known from Genesis 6:4, mention of whom also brackets the earth’s lament in Moses 7.⁶⁷

In consideration of the first voice, as a weeping, human, mortal speaker, Enoch himself may be the counterpart of “the voice of the people” recognized by Roberts among the lamentations preserved in Jeremiah.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook. ... He had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted. ... And again Enoch wept and cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the earth rest? (Moses 7:41, 44, 58)

It is instructive to compare and contrast the Sumerian laments with what we find in Moses 7. In the Sumerian materials, the people of the destroyed towns lament to their god or goddess his or her neglect, which has caused their suffering. By contrast, in Moses 7, a representative of the people of the earth laments the grief that the earth itself (or herself) feels for the sinfulness of its/her inhabitants. In the Sumerian laments, a mother goddess grieves the loss of her city, temples, and people. In Moses 7, in contrast, the earth mourns the sinfulness of those who inhabit her. Finally, in the Sumerian laments, the god of the destroyed city weeps for the city’s destruction and the exile or death of its inhabitants, which has occurred by decree of other, superior, gods, whereas in Moses 7, God weeps for the wickedness of the people, which will bring destruction down upon them by his own decree.

A pattern seems to emerge from comparing and contrasting the two. In the Sumerian laments, all grieve for the suffering and destruction itself, rather than for what led to it. All attempt to shift the blame. All concentrate on their own losses. The situation is quite different, however, in Moses 7. In that text, all mourn the consequences of sin. All recognize where guilt and responsibility lie, and all concentrate on the sufferings of others. In other words, while Moses 7 seems to employ venerable ancient forms, it improves upon them by elevating them from the human to the divine level and in other ways giving them considerably greater spiritual depth.⁶⁸

Conclusions

Modern revelation received through Joseph Smith clearly teaches of a God who is “passible,” who has emotions. The God of the Book of Moses, who identifies his “work” and his “glory” as being “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39), is not a God who dwells far away, transcendent in lordly and dispassionate isolation. Likewise, in Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree, that marvelous document from the Book of Mormon, “the Lord of the vineyard,” God, weeps over his vineyard (Jacob 5:41). And, indeed, modern revelation tells us that “the heavens wept over” Lucifer when he fell (D&C 76:26).

Although the literal truth of such depictions has long been rejected by orthodox Jewish and Christian theology, these portrayals offer a plausible picture of a personal God. As several contemporary philosophical theologians have argued,

God is a loving person, and love requires emotional passibility. To love someone is to care about him, and to care about him is to care about what happens to him, and to care about what happens to him is to be affected by what happens to him; it is to be happy when things go well for him and to be distressed when things go badly for him. If a purported lover was emotionally unaffected by the good and bad fortune of his beloved, by her joys and griefs, it would show that he was no true lover, and if God, the greatest conceivable lover, is emotionally unaffected by our ecstasies and our agonies then it only shows that he is no lover at all. But God is love. Therefore God must be thought of as emotionally passible.⁶⁹

Any expansion of the circle of one’s love and concern is, concomitantly, an expansion of its circumference and of one’s vulnerability. (The greater the volume of a bubble or balloon, the more space it encloses, the larger its surface area, and the greater its exposure.) Thus, in a very real and important sense, God, who loves more perfectly and more deeply than we can understand, is by that very fact rendered subject to pain.

The portrayal of God in Moses 7 has implications for us as well. It means that we should take very seriously the certainty that our sins grieve our Father and cause him pain. It may, perhaps, shed some light on the mechanism and process of Christ’s atonement. Furthermore, it seems to indicate that there will never be a time, on earth or in eternity, when we will be utterly beyond pain, disappointment, and suffering. This may be disquieting to some, but the alternative is infinitely less attractive. For the alternative to emotional vulnerability, it seems clear, is emotional deadness; the only path to emotional impassibility is a path that kills love and caring. But the Buddhist ethic of severing oneself from “attachments,” because they cause suffering, is not the Christian one. It is instructive that the Savior’s command to be “perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven,” comes in the context of, and concludes, a discussion of love (Matthew 5:48; cf. 3 Nephi 12:48).

The picture of a weeping deity offered by Moses 7, now belatedly recognized in the Bible, is much more attractive ethically—and much more available for prayer and invocation—than the cold and distant divinity of scholastic theology or the stern, loveless disciplinarian of many traditional readings of the Old and New Testaments. (Alfred North Whitehead once wrote that Aristotle’s metaphysical speculations on the nature of his Prime Mover “did not lead him very far towards the production of a God available for religious purposes.”)⁷⁰ But it does undeniably involve God in what Roberts calls “very anthropomorphic imagery ... very striking anthropomorphic imagery.”⁷¹

Thus, while some biblical scholars are now working their way through to a view of God that is, in its acceptance of divine emotionality, similar to the view revealed to Joseph Smith during the winter of 1830, they now face new problems: Whereas Latter-day Saints have long believed in a God endowed with both emotions and a body, those outside that religious tradition who advocate a suffering God will have to come to grips with the problem of anthropomorphism. And the problem may go beyond mere “imagery.” Sarot, for example, refers to the dilemma that, he says, faced St. Thomas Aquinas: “The denial of emotion in God seems to go against the witness of

Scripture, whereas the affirmation of emotion in God seems to be incompatible with the divine incorporeality.”⁷² Accordingly, observes Sarot, Thomas opted for a denial of divine emotion.

Professor Sarot agrees, contending that the concept of bodiless emotion is meaningless. For this reason, he says, advocates of divine emotion must accept an embodied deity—or else, if they are unwilling to do so, they must forgo divine emotion: “without corporeality, no emotion.”⁷³ Since, for him and, presumably, for those he is addressing, Sarot’s disjunction constitutes a devastating *reductio ad absurdum*, the choice is obvious beyond dispute: Because God obviously has no body, he just as obviously cannot have emotions.⁷⁴

The prominent Catholic philosopher Alfred J. Freddoso argues along similar lines, reacting against a very interesting recent book that argues for divine mutability and a genuinely open future for both God and humankind. “A metaphysical conception of the divine nature,” he contends,

helps us divide the Scriptural descriptions of God into the literal and the metaphorical. The authors of *The Openness of God*⁷⁵ object to the division made on the basis of the traditional conception of God; in particular, they claim that many Scriptural descriptions of God are unjustifiably classified as metaphorical by appeal to the negative attributes (immutability, eternality, impassibility, simplicity) constitutive of the classical notion of divine transcendence. However, it is not at all clear on what basis the authors are making their own division into the literal and the metaphorical. Why, for instance, do they cling to the idea that God is immaterial and thereby relegate a whole host of Scriptural descriptions of God to the realm of the metaphorical, given that immateriality is just another one of those “Hellenistic” divine attributes that has little appeal for the modern mind? The authors insist, after all, that God has genuine emotions, and many of us who reject Cartesian dualism think that in the case of human beings certain bodily changes are essential to the having of emotions properly so-called. What makes the authors think that this is not true in the case of God as well? One might even perversely suggest that the “whole emotional content” of the parable of the Prodigal Son is “profoundly altered” if we imagine that the father, because he has no body, is unable literally to embrace his son or to share the fattened calf with him.⁷⁶

And Yale’s Nicholas Wolterstorff, an eminent Calvinist philosophical theologian, takes essentially the same position. God cannot have emotions, he argues, “for a person can have an emotion only if that person is capable of being physiologically upset. And God, having no physiology, is not so capable.” Thus, Wolterstorff concludes, “The tradition was right: God is apathetic. He does not grieve, neither in sympathy nor, as it were, on his own.”⁷⁷

The new dilemma, for mainstream Jewish and Christian theologians, is this: The Bible seems clearly to teach of a God who has emotions. Traditional theology insists that God is unembodied. But God must be embodied to have emotions. The question is whether Christians will, in the final analysis, opt for their traditional theology or for the Bible.

Notes

This paper was conceived and begun, and its first draft substantially completed, during a two-month seminar sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and led by Professor John Gager at Princeton University in the summer of 1994. I am grateful to Professor Gager and the Endowment for the financial support that allowed me to work on this and other projects at that time. Of course, neither he nor the NEH are to be blamed for the arguments contained herein. (The actual formal project of the seminar, which brought together about a dozen classicists, biblical scholars, and anthropologists and one Mormon Islamicist, was to attempt to define the term *magic* and to distinguish it clearly from *religion*. We were, by the way, unable to do so.) I offer this essay as a tribute to Truman Madsen, whose “Know Your Religion” lectures

at a chapel in West Covina, California, in the late 1960s were a pivotal spiritual and intellectual event for me. The notion of a compassionate God discussed here is, I believe, congruent with one of his often-articulated themes.

On related issues, see Andrew Skinner's paper, "Joseph Smith Vindicated Again: Enoch, Moses 7:48, and Apocryphal Sources," in this volume, 365–81.

1. The contrast of God's angry action and his sorrowful pity is perhaps reflected in the distinction between, on the one hand, "the fire of [his] indignation ... kindled against them," his "hot displeasure," and, on the other, the instrument of his punishment ("floods," corresponding to his tears and those of "the whole heavens ... even all the workmanship of mine hands"), which will, presumably, extinguish his fiery wrath.

2. For a recent account, with abundant references, of one important strand of the scholastic theological position that insists that God is "immutable" and "impassible," see Marcel Sarot, "God, Emotion, and Corporeality: A Thomist Perspective," *Thomist* 58/1 (January 1994): 61–92, but esp. 76–82. The term *impassibility* derives from the Latin *passio* ("enduring" or "suffering").

3. According to Aristotelian cosmology (and according to the Neoplatonic views that, in this regard, depend upon it), the universe is a continuum ranging from pure form at the top (pure actuality, which acts but is never acted upon) to *hyle*, or "prime matter," at the bottom (which is acted upon but itself acts upon nothing and thus is "pure receptivity" or "pure potentiality"—not to be confused with the matter of everyday experience). The vast majority of beings in this scheme—which had enormous influence upon philosophical theology in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—fall into the intermediate realm: They are compounds of form and matter, of actuality and potentiality, both acting and acted upon.

4. Frank L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 823, s.v. "impassibility of God."

5. *Ibid.*

6. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), xv.

7. *Ibid.*, 2. Many Christian gnostics, of course, actually did regard the God of the Old Testament as a foreign and hostile deity, from whom Jesus came to save us.

8. One could certainly read this passage as implying Jesus' identification of himself with the God of the Old Testament.

9. The Book of Mormon also represents the resurrected Christ as weeping, at 3Nephi 17:21–22. Notice, incidentally, that here, too, the "multitude" found his weeping worthy of special remark. It is, I suspect, in this kind of reaction, analogous to Enoch's astonishment, that the psychological seed of later denials of divine emotion is to be found.

10. Sarot, "God, Emotion, and Corporeality," 61–62.

11. Ronald Goetz, "The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy," *Christian Century*, 16 April 1986, 385.

12. Walter Brueggemann, editor's foreword to Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, xiii. It is not clear to me that Brueggemann is right since it does not seem obvious that "the West" has been any more preoccupied with "dominance and power" than any other region of high civilization in human history. I cite him merely to show the direction in which advanced theological opinion is moving.

13. Sarot, "God, Emotion, and Corporeality," 82.

14. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 156.

15. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1:109–10.

16. *Ibid.*, 113.

17. *Ibid.*, 112.

18. *Ibid.*, 110.

19. *Ibid.*, 112.

20. *Ibid.*, 110, 111.

21. *Ibid.*, 111.

22. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 160.

23. *Ibid.*; cf. 157, 161. Compare the summary of Heschel's position offered by J. J. M. Roberts, "The Motif of the Weeping God in Jeremiah and Its Background in the Lament Tradition of the Ancient Near East," *Old Testament Essays: Journal of the Old Testament Society of South Africa* 5 (1992): 364.

24. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 158.

25. For an example of this, see Sarot, "God, Emotion, and Corporeality," 61–92, on which more will be said below. Sarot actually believes that, if one can demonstrate that divine emotion implies divine corporeality, divine emotion is self-evidently impossible.

26. Roberts, "The Motif of the Weeping God," 361–74.

27. *Ibid.*, 362.

28. This passage, incidentally, is prefaced by two verses (Jeremiah 10:17–18) beginning with a Hebrew feminine singular imperative: "Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress."

29. Readers of Roberts's article should know that, following the versification of the Hebrew Bible, he refers to Jeremiah 9:1 KJV as 8:23 and accordingly alters the numbering of the other verses in chapter 9. I have changed the versification to correspond to the KJV. Jeremiah is identified as the speaker in this passage by—among many others—Guy P. Couturier in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 1:311 [19:31–32]; M. McNamara, in *A New*

Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, ed. Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston, and Conleth Kearns, rev. and updated (Nashville: Nelson, 1975), 609; Thomas W. Overholt, in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 615; and Donald Wiseman, in *The International Bible Commentary*, ed. F. F. Bruce et al. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1986), 771–72.

30. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 364.

31. For the argument that this is God speaking, rather than Jeremiah, which seems rather obvious to me in view of verse 22, see *ibid.*, 368–70.

32. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 361. His argument is essentially found on pp. 363–64; the remainder of the article, to p. 372, consists of a discussion of ancient Near Eastern parallels that make his reading, in his opinion, more plausible. I shall not reproduce more of his argument than is relevant to my own somewhat different purposes.

33. *Ibid.*, 363.

34. *Ibid.*, 364.

35. Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation, Volume XII, Hagigah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 19.

36. *Ibid.*, 18.

37. *Eliyahu Rabbah* 154, in William G. (Gershon Zev) Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, trans., *Tanna de Eliyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981), 375.

38. *Eliyahu Rabbah* 154, in *ibid.*, 375–76; cf. *Eliyahu Rabbah* 115, in *ibid.*, 292.

39. English translation from A. Cohen, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Lamentations* (London: Soncino, 1939), 41.

40. On the identity of the speaker in these verses, see the argument advanced at Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 370–71.

41. The intervening verses, Jeremiah 9:4–9, catalog an array of sins committed by the Israelites against one another that will justify their punishment. One cannot fail to be reminded of Moses 7:33–34: “And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them.”

42. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 364–68.

43. For a good discussion of these documents, see Samuel N. Kramer, “The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the *Mater Dolorosa*,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 46/2 (1983): 69–80. Kramer dates the laments on 71; cf. Piotr Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 6. Kramer’s translation of the “Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur” is to be found in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with supplement (Princeton: Princeton University

Press, 1969), 455–63. A critical text and translation, with commentary, of the “Lamentation over the Destruction of Eridu” appears in M. W. Green, “The Eridu Lament,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 30/3 (1978): 127–67.

44. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 365.

45. Kramer, “Destruction of Ur,” 455–56.

46. Kramer, “The Weeping Goddess,” 72.

47. Kramer, “Destruction of Ur,” 456. Nanna (“Full Moon”) is, as his name indicates, a moon god.

48. *Ibid.*, 458. The ellipses appear in Kramer’s translation, as printed in Pritchard; I have omitted Kramer’s italics.

49. *Ibid.*, 459–61.

50. *Ibid.*, 462. The parentheses and brackets appear in Kramer’s translation.

51. The name Ba’u appears to be cognate with the Hebrew *bōhû* (“space”; KJV “void”) of Genesis 1:2. One is tempted to speculate, in the interests of one of the subtheses of this paper, that she might therefore have earth-goddess associations. But the point is not essential.

52. Michalowski, *Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, 42–43 (lines 116–18). The Sumerian text and an English translation are given on facing pages.

53. Nanna is also known as Ash-im-babbar (“New Light”) and as Su’ (“Crescent Moon”).

54. Michalowski, *Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, 58–61 (lines 362a–65, 370–77).

55. Kramer, “The Weeping Goddess,” 71.

56. For useful summaries, see *ibid.*, 71–75.

57. Green, “The Eridu Lament,” 132–33 (kirigu 1, lines 11–15), 136–37 (kirigu 5, lines 3–6), 140–41 (kirigu 7, lines 5–7).

58. Nammu is sometimes described as the mother of An and Ki, the archetypal Sumerian deities of heaven and earth.

59. Mark E. Cohen, *The Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Potomac, Md.: Capital Decisions, 1988), 1:85 (original Sumerian text at 1:76–77); cf. the comments of Kramer, “The Weeping Goddess,” 73, regarding the mourning of Ninisina and Inanna.

60. Herbert Mason, trans., *Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative* (New York: New American Library, 1970), 78.

61. I deal with this divine council in biblical thought in Daniel C. Peterson, “‘Ye Are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 471–594. See also Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, “The Throne Theophany/Prophetic

Call of Muammad,” in *The Disciple as Scholar*, 323–37; Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1Nephi 11:8–23,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 191–243.

62. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 368. Notice, however, that feminine and masculine can be neatly combined within God in such passages as Isaiah 42:13–15: “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.” Even so, the change in person (from third-person to first-person singular) may be significant.

63. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 362.

64. Thus, for example, Hebrew *eretz*, Arabic *‘ard*, Greek *ge*, Latin *terra*, and German *Erde*.

65. Hesiod, *The Works and Days* 59 and 563, trans. Hugh B. Evelyn-White, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 6–7, 44–45.

66. Widespread ancient conceptions in which rain represents the fructifying seed of the sky god, falling upon the earth mother, may not be irrelevant here.

67. 1 *Enoch* 7:6, readily accessible in translation at James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:16. For the “giants” in Moses, see 1 *Enoch* 7:15 and 8:18.

68. I thank Elizabeth W. Watkins for her analysis included in the preceding two paragraphs.

69. The argument, which he himself rejects, is summarized by Richard E. Creel, *Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 113–14, emphasis deleted. Contemporary supporters of the doctrine of divine impassibility include Friedrich von Hgel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ser. (London: Dent and Sons, 1926), chap. 7; John K. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1926); and E. L. Mascall, *Whatever Happened to the Human Mind? Essays in Christian Orthodoxy* (London: SPCK, 1980), 64–96. At the Council of Calcedon (A.D. 451), the divine and human natures of Christ were distinguished on the basis that they were respectively impassible and passible.

70. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World: Lowell Lectures, 1925* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 249.

71. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God,” 371.

72. Sarot, “God, Emotion, and Corporeality,” 77.

73. *Ibid.*, 82. See his entire article, 61–92, for a very serious argument against unembodied passibility. The position that emotions necessarily demand and entail corporeality is a venerable one, occurring in ancient and medieval philosophy as well as in modern philosophical theology. See, for example, Aristotle, *De Anima* 1.1.403a–b; also Averros, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima*, trans. Alfred L. Ivry (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2002), 6–8 (paragraphs 12–16).

74. Alfred J. Freddoso's comment is instructive: "Having pondered at length the philosophical doctrines of God fashioned by these two brilliant and holy men [St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Thomas Aquinas], I find it difficult to entertain the idea that we moderns will be better positioned philosophically to make progress in our understanding of the divine nature once we set aside their principal metaphysical claims. ... Again, having tasted of the spiritual riches contained in the extensive Biblical commentaries of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, I find it difficult to believe that we moderns will be better positioned theologically to make progress in our understanding of the Scriptural portrayal of God once we recognize that these commentaries and others like them are tainted with philosophical elements contrary to the Christian Faith." Alfred J. Freddoso, "The 'Openness' of God: A Reply to William Hasker," *Christian Scholar's Review* 28/1 (1998): 124. Intriguingly, though, Thomas himself seems to have rejected "Thomistic" doctrine at the end of his life. Here is the account given by the eminent Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain, in his *St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Joseph W. Evans and Peter O'Reilly (Cleveland: World, 1958), 54: "One day, December 6, 1273, while he was celebrating Mass in the chapel of Saint Nicholas, a great change came over him. From that moment he ceased writing and dictating." When his companion, Reginald of Piperno, complained that there remained much work to be done, Thomas replied, "I can do no more." But the other man pressed the matter. "Reginald," Thomas answered yet again, "I can do no more; such things have been revealed to me that all that I have written seems to me as so much straw." On 7 March 1274 he died, at the age of forty-nine.

75. Clark H. Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994).

76. Freddoso, "The 'Openness' of God," 132, emphasis deleted.

77. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Suffering Love," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 214.