

Wisdom Commentary: Lamentations. By Gina Hens-Piazza. Volume 30. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016. xlix + 110 pages. \$29.95.
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Gina Hens-Piazza's *Lamentations* is one of the most recent publications in the highly anticipated Wisdom Commentary series. The purpose of this series is to offer the first detailed feminist interpretation of every book of the Bible (xix) and to help the reader move toward "God's vision of dignity, equality, and justice for all (xxxvii)." Unlike traditional biblical commentaries, each of the fifty-eight volumes in this series includes not only the scholarly contributions of the lead author(s), but also voices and interpretations that emerge from diverse contexts around the world and appear alongside the authors' commentary in grayscale inserts. This "symphony of voices" highlights both the collaborative nature of feminist biblical studies and the importance of social location in the process of biblical interpretation (xx).

In *Lamentations* Hens-Piazza approaches the account of the Babylonian invasion and its aftermath with due caution. It is hardly a secret that the poetic liturgies of human suffering in *Lamentations* include problematic and harmful imagery of women. Of particular concern is the overarching metaphor of Jerusalem as an iniquitous woman, which is used to assign blame for the destruction of the city. As Hens-Piazza observes, the ensuing narrative of Woman Zion's rape, assault, objectification, degradation, and abandonment has been used to reinforce the misogynist notion that Woman Zion, and by extension all women, are culpable and deserving of the violence inflicted upon them (xl).

The commentary is divided into five sections, corresponding to the five chapters in *Lamentations*. As with the other volumes in the Wisdom Commentary, the biblical text is considered in blocks rather than verse by verse. Relying primarily on historical- and literary-critical methods, Hens-Piazza carefully examines the ways in which these cries of protest, despair, rage, and grief found in the five laments were understood in their ancient context and how they can be heard and appropriated today. At the forefront of her analyses are issues of gender, power, and authority, giving the reader fresh insight into a complex text that portrays women as victims of patriarchal society, war, and the theological tradition (xlii). Throughout the five chapters, Hens-Piazza also wrestles with the text's "untenable theology" that preserves the silence of God amid the horrific suffering of the innocent.

The heart of Hens-Piazza's stirring retrieval of *Lamentations*, however, is her contention that the silencing and erasure of Woman Zion as seen in *Lamentations* can be read as more than a narrative documenting the

victimization, pain, and suffering of women. She states, “While [the interpretation that follows] will offer unsettling glimpses of women’s pain and suffering during exile, it will also present Women Zion as a courageous female voice who rises up from her victimization and boldly confronts an insolvent theology and its deity with the injustice of innocent suffering” (xliii). As such, Hens-Piazza argues that the text can also serve as a means of spiritual and political agency insofar as it invites the community of women throughout the ages to proclaim their lament, their anguish, their rage, and their wobbly faith. This communal act of protest, she maintains, hears women into speech, giving witness to the depth of their suffering and loosening the feelings of isolation, shame, and numbness caused by their abuse (98–99). By confronting the patriarchal theological tradition in this manner, Hens-Piazza concludes that “women can move forward in an embrace of the full value of their lives as women and begin to recognize the real Holy Presence within their midst” (99).

In addition to Hens-Piazza’s treatment of Lamentations, the inclusion of the diverse voices of ministers, writers, teachers, psychiatrists, and scholars that accompany her commentary in the grayscale boxes serve as an asset for contemporary readers. These reflections highlight the timeless experiences of human suffering and the ways in which it continues to unfold across time, place, socioeconomic status, culture, race, gender, and so on. For example, Kelly Miguens offers a meditation of Lamentations 3:7–9 from the perspective of incarcerated women (56), and Yoon Kyung Kim discusses Lamentations 5:11 from the perspective of Korean Comfort Women during World War II (84).

Hens-Piazza’s work provides an accessible, careful treatment of Lamentations. While it is best suited for those preaching, teaching, or studying Lamentations, it may also fit well into some undergraduate and graduate courses on biblical interpretation, feminist theology, and theodicy.

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A House United: How the Church Can Save the World. By Allen Hilton. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018. xv + 227 pages. \$16.99 (paper).

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A House United is a clarion call to Christians to address the toxic political polarization that plagues American society. Hilton’s thesis is that the most important gift the church has to offer at this crucial juncture is the ability to help people come together across difference (xiii).