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Introduction to the Festschrift for Prof. D.F. (Francois) Tolmie – “God, people, and persuasion in Scripture and theology”

1. INTRODUCTION

The articles in this *Supplementum* are dedicated to our colleague Professor Francois Tolmie to mark the occasion of his retirement in 2024. In the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of the Free State, Prof. Tolmie is regarded as the historical memory of the Faculty as he dedicated his life to this institution – both as a student and as a professor. In later years of his career, he also led the Faculty as Dean. He is notorious for being an excellent editor, focusing on detail and precision. Internationally, he is acclaimed as both a Johannine scholar and a Pauline scholar, a feat few scholars can claim. Those who know him will testify that he treats people with the utmost respect, and that it is hard to find a humbler person.

Prof. Tolmie is known, in the Faculty, nationally, as well as internationally, as a prominent scholar in New Testament literature, specialising in the Fourth Gospel, narratology, rhetorical analysis of Pauline Letters, the Letter to the Galatians, and the Letter to Philemon. Accordingly, important themes in his research were God, persuasion, and characterisation (people in Scripture) – issues that regularly surface in New Testament studies and related

theological disciplines. Therefore, the contributions in this volume, titled *God, people, and persuasion in Scripture and theology*, focus on a range of perspectives related to these aspects.

Research in the discipline of the New Testament is an ongoing project. The three aspects mentioned in the title identify some of the most important aspects in theological discourses over the ages – aspects that continuously need to be considered afresh. The various articles in this *Festschrift* contribute to one or more of these aspects in such a way that they deepen the current knowledge in the discipline. In particular, the combination of one or more of these themes adds valuable new scholarly insights. This is further illustrated with contributions from the perspective of the Old Testament and from early Christian writings.

Besides the topics that are of relevant significance to the field and practice of New Testament studies and other theological disciplines, the research profile of the authors, who took part in this *Festschrift*, enhance the excellent quality of this publication. All the contributions argue why the particular aspect(s) that is/are chosen is/are important for the discipline, indicating the current state of research with regard to the theme(s) and offering a new scholarly contribution. The authors of the articles include Prof. Tolmie's former students, research fellows, and colleagues. The articles are arranged according to the order of the biblical books in the Christian Bible, thematic perspectives, and practical appropriation of texts and themes.

The first three articles contribute to the overall theme from the perspective of the Old Testament. Stefan Fischer analyses and compares the testing of Abraham and that of Job in Genesis 22. In analysing the text of Genesis, the meaning of God testing Abraham is associated with other instances of God testing individuals in the Bible, and draws parallels with the book of Job. Lodewyk Sutton does a spatial comparison of the texts of Psalm 148 and Colossians 1:15-20. He focuses on the interesting chiasmic pattern observed in both texts concerning the traditional formula – “God is the Creator of heaven and earth.” Fanie Snyman argues for a fascinating and complex chiasmic structure in the text of Zephaniah 3:14-17. He identifies an overarching chiasm marking the beginning and the end of this unit, and the inner chiasm focuses on the two metaphors (king and warrior) for YHWH.

The next three articles approach the overall theme from the perspective of the New Testament Gospels. Marius Nel explores the persuasive function of Jesus' blood in Matthew 26:28. In doing so, he focuses on the forgiveness of sins as a penultimate step for the renewal of the covenant which he views as the ultimate goal of Jesus' death. Stephan Joubert

reads Mark 16:1-8 as a paratext that compels the intended readers to come to new terms with the “non-godly” Jesus of Mark and the slave-like Jesus of Mark, thus presenting Mark 16:1-8 as a re-lecture. Nina Müller van Velden focuses on the characterisation of Mary Magdalene as a key figure in the New Testament Gospels, and in the apocryphal writing, the Gospel of Mary. She critically engages the manner in which collective memory is employed in the characterisation of Mary Magdalene in these writings – especially from the perspective of gender.

The next four articles focus on Pauline literature. Jeremy Punt addresses the rhetoric of Pauline letters, focusing on using discourse as a broader category than rhetoric, and illustrating instances of discourse manipulation. Elma Cornelius focuses on the self-presentation of Paul and his opinion on the art of persuasion in 1 Corinthians. She argues that Paul displays a picture of dependence on God in his presentation of himself. Paul’s use of rhetoric in this letter confirms his avoidance of persuasive words of wisdom, as claimed in 1 Corinthians 2:1. Kobus Schoeman takes a different approach by reading Galatians 3:28 from a congregational perspective, specifically reading the text via an African hermeneutical model to develop a more contextual reading. An empirical reflection contributes to understanding the role of the text in a congregation. H.J. Prinsloo reads 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 from a text-centred rhetorical approach. He illustrates how Paul used a second thanksgiving for the believers’ actions to benefit his cause and to vilify his opponents.

Each of the final three articles contributes to the theme of persuasion from different perspectives. Rian Venter asks the question as to whether the use of an intentional reading approach such as the rhetorical one could generate innovative avenues for constructing a doctrine of God. He uses the Book of Revelation as a case study. Jan-Albert van den Berg makes a unique contribution by employing autobiographical pastoral reflections of persuasion on the newly composed polyphonic melody, creating a harmonious rhythm within identity and praxis. Paul Decock employs a number of common elements between Augustine and Origen that shed light on the existence of a Christian form of philosophical rhetoric with roots in Plato. He presents Socrates’ approach to this form of rhetoric in the Phaedrus dialogue.

As editors of this *Festschrift*, we trust that the various contributions will encourage further academic dialogue on the theme of “God, people, and persuasion in Scripture and theology”. We believe that each of these contributions will be valuable to the academic community and, as a *Festschrift*, bring honour and celebrate the academic career of Prof. Francois Tolmie. We thank all the contributors for their articles and the high standard of academic reflections.

2. DEDICATIONS TO PROF. D.F. TOLMIE

The vision of God in everything

In the market, in the cloister – only God I saw.
In the valley and on the mountain – only God I saw.
Him I have seen beside me oft in tribulation;
In favour and in fortune – only God I saw.
In prayer and fasting, in praise and contemplation,
In the religion of the Prophet – only God I saw.
Neither soul nor body, accident nor substance,
Qualities nor causes – only God I saw.
I opened my eyes and by the light of his face around me
In all the eye discovered – only God I saw.
Like a candle I was melting in His fire:
Amidst the flames outflanking – only God I saw.
Myself with mine own eyes I saw most clearly,
But when I looked with God's eyes – only God I saw.
I passed away into nothingness, I vanished,
And lo! I was the All-living – only God I saw.
Baba Kubi of Shiraz, Sufi poet of Persia (d. 1050)

*By Prof. Celia Kourie (Prof. Emerita: Christian Spirituality:
Unisa; Research Fellow: UFS)*

The fourth-year BDiv. students dedicated their *Lament Poem project* (TOTT4814/4834) to Prof. D.F. Tolmie. The poems are placed arbitrarily.

Praise the Lord all you heavens (By Ndumiso Dhlomo)

Praise the Lord, all the vast expanse of the universe, to whom
All the family of the inhabitants of the earth receive their name.
The starry hosts and the existence of life on earth points out the
Wondrous grace of the Lord Almighty, praise the Lord
All you heavens, Praise the Lord all the vast expanse of the universe.

Though your infallibility is without question Almighty God
Why is my soul so downcast, trampled and trodden upon by the
Anguish of life, I seek rest for my soul daily and delight in your
Presence. Yet I am confronted by the brutal end of my mortality.

It is death who is an enemy, constantly threatening my sanity
 He shows off his strength to many, who could wage war with him and win
 Tell me is there any! He mocks and scuffs the creation which thou has
 Endowed with glory and honour, putting these precious vassals
 To an oblivion, plunging them deep down into the realm of utter darkness.

Though death may strike again, because of sin and thick darkness covers
 My soul remind me Oh Lord that darkness couldn't withstand your
 glorious light
 Lead me beside quiet waters and refresh my soul, silence the voice of
 fear, uncertainty and
 Anguish as I fix my eyes on you, beholding your majesty. May the
 resurrection of our
 Lord be my portion, to the seed of Abraham that is throughout the earth.
 May those in the land of the living kneel down and give you praise
 For darkness is as light to you. Those who go down to the pit shall be
 restored in
 Your sight beholding the perfection of life forevermore.

God, you are the one who created me. I wish to live close to you
(By Nielbert Mostert)

It feels impossible to achieve. Every time I feel like I move closer to You, life
 happens and it rips me away from your embrace.
 God please be with me and guide me and help me to seek you even
 when life
 threatens to come between us.
 I believe that you are with me. Even if it feels like you are far away. I know
 that it
 is you who reaches out towards me and not me who is looking for you.
 I will continue to work on my relationship with you, and work on the
 things that
 life throws between us. I will continue to trust that you are there even
 when I
 cannot feel your presence.
 You are the creator of heaven and earth, you are in control of everything,
 yet you
 want to have a relationship with me. Thank you that I can have a
 relationship
 with you even if it feels undeserving!

O Lord of my loved ones (By Sarah Dreyer)

O Lord of my loved ones, Creator of all that is, was, and will be, hear the voice of my heart, listen to my silent song of disquiet and sorrow.

With each breath, thought, or decision that crosses my path, one future flickers into life and another faints out of reality. Yet it seems that I am out of step with every moment, every breath, every beat. My thoughts are insincere and sometimes quite intolerable. My choices are ill-fitting and leave me ill at ease.

Please, I am tired of trying to find my way through the incomprehensible hearts of humanity. Please, I am weary of disappointing myself again and again. Please, strengthen me to choose well. Strengthen me to stay under your guidance. Strengthen me to be who You think I could be. Let me become that possibility, let me fulfil that reality. Free me from myself, O Redeemer.

O God – You who pour and mould and carve – thousands of people before me You have made holy. You took them and carved at them and shaped them to be of best use to Your will and to themselves. I know that if I give to You myself, you will carve at me also, emphasising some parts, and softening others. Not a different me, just a me that you have always seen the potential to be.

Let Your will be done. Let me step into the dance with You. Please, do not let me go.

The lamentation of an individual (By Moses Davids)

Oh, Great Israel. You who created all and set it to perfection

The founder of creation, the Great I am.

Who am I to cry out loud to the heavens and demand to see You?

Forgive me Lord, but I cannot hide my grief,

So Lord,

Do you hear me? Do you hear the heaviness of my heart, do you hear my voice?

Lord, do you see me? Do you see the agony in my eyes, do you see the pain in my body?

Lord, just like Job I lament and weep for the things I lost.

Just like Job I sit and wait for your rescue, however I can't seem to run away from the

thought that You,

You might not show up.

Unlike Job, I do not have a heart that is willing to wait that long and
 Unlike Job, I do not have any defence to my case.
 Unlike Job, I do not have any friends to question my mourning.
 And unlike Job, I do not weep in your presence.

Oh, Great Israel. You who created all and set it to perfection.
 The founder of Creation, the Great I am.
 Who am I to cry out loud to the heavens and demand to see You?
 Forgive me Lord, but I cannot hide my grief, so Lord

I ask, that you give me a heart just like Job, so that I
 May be able to wait on you.
 I ask, that you give me defence to my case.
 I ask, but you give me friends who will hold me accountable, so that I
 may mourn in truth.
 I ask, that you teach me to weep in your presence so that my weeping
 does not go in vain
 Oh, Great Israel. You who created all and set it to perfection.
 I trust and believe that You will do all that I have asked for.
 Though my flesh be weary, my spirit is reminded of Your trustworthiness.

Oh, Great Israel. You who created all and set it to perfection.
 The founder of creation, the Great I am.
 The King of all kings, the Lord of all lords,
 The Sovereign One.
 Ruler of the cosmos, the Creator that lives outside the space of time.
 Let your name be lifted high, oh, Great Israel. You who created all and set
 it to perfection.

Forgiveness (By Thandokazi Mfengu)

Forgiveness, why have you forsaken me?
 Tears in her eyes, she cries, “forgive me my daughter.”
 Lord help me,
 My heart is stoned with hatred,
 My soul is clouded by rage.
 Resentment has found its resting place in me,

Lord, I cry to you.

She asks, "What do you see when you look at me?"

Words have forsaken me.

Eyes closed; I see ... I see it all,

Alcohol, negligence, hatred.

My heart is stoned with hatred,

My soul is clouded by rage.

Lord, I seek for your perfect peace

Take it all away, dear Lord,

The rage, the hate, resentment,

Take it all away.

Save me from becoming a slave to resentment.

Teach me to forgive,

Teach me to accept love,

Teach me to love.

Take it away Lord, free my soul.

Let forgiveness find me again.

In another lifetime I'd to be your son (By Jessie Hetekere)

Every day, I hope to get a phone call from you,

Hoping that maybe today you thought about me.

Remembered that you have a daughter,

A daughter that yearns for your fatherly love.

If I were asking for money,

I would understand why you have been ignoring me.

However, all I have been asking for was your attention,

Begging you, for at least half the love you give your adopted son.

Is it because the woman you claimed to love,

Only gave you daughters.

When all you have ever wanted was a son?

Is this why you treat your own kids,

As if we are not related to you?

Why has it been so easy for you to love,
Someone you have barely known rather than to love us.
What about the void you have created from not giving us that love?
Who is to fill that void, who are we too lean on,
When the world finally turns its back on us.
And shows us its true colours of cruelty.

I guess these are questions I will,
Forever keep asking myself.
Knowing very well that you will,
Never look at me or love me the same way,
You love him.

I have to accept that I was
Given a father who prefers loving strangers than his daughters.
For I will never make you proud,
Nor will I ever get a warm embrace from him.

In the midst of all my misery,
I found a loving Father.
Who does not care about my gender.
Or get disappointed when I mess up.

But always welcomes me with open arms.
Comforted me when life has shown me flames.
A Father, proud of the little things
I have accomplished.

And maybe just maybe I will,
Stop seeking your warm embrace.
And accept that I would never be loved by you.

In the name of our Father, Son and the Holy Spirit

(By Lulama Jacobs)

In the name of our Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, I want to thank you for the gift of life and the protection upon our lives. I pray that you take away all the pain and suffering that we are going through as a family. Instil in us a heart of patience and hope. We ask this in your Holy Name, Amen.

Why have you forsaken us? Why does it feel like you are far away from us? We feel like you have turned deaf to our cries. Our hearts are full of sadness due to the loss of our beloved grandmother. A lady who was a matriarch in her own right. Walked with pride, made her presence felt with her scent, beautiful warm smile and aura. She beamed with happiness. Her laughter filled the room with so much joy. She was a prayer warrior. E nne ele Masechaba which in English means she was a mother of the nation, very giving. A matriarch who was a pillar of our warm home. One that is currently cold and unbearable because of her absence. No one wants to be in the house because the silence is too loud.

Most of our hearts are shattered, we have lost hope for death came like a thief and took from us a life that mattered. A life that believed in our capabilities and our strengths. A life that we were looking forward to making proud one day. A life we hoped to shower with appreciation when we finally get to be stable in life. But right now, all of those dreams that we had, dreams that were encouraged and supported by her seem far and impossible to reach because our biggest cheerleader is no more.

We have never questioned your doings Lord because we know that our plans are not yours. But this time around, we are forced to ask because what we are feeling right now is extreme pain. Pain that you have inflicted, why? Is there something that we have done to deserve this kind of punishment? We keep asking ourselves if what we are trying to do to reach our dreams is still worth it? Is it still possible to do because it all seems like a big blur?

Oh Lord, I pray that you will restore our hope and mend our broken hearts. Make us understand the reason for such a big change in our lives. Remind us once again that You will never leave nor forsake us and that you are with us in this pain. We pray for healing. Save us from this pain.

We trust and believe that we are on this earth because we have a purpose and granny might have fulfilled hers. We trust that she is safe and happy under your care. We know that you are a God who is bigger than any situation. The winds and waves obey you, therefore we trust that you will save and heal us.

Thank you, Father for your Word that has power, to take us through each and every single day, despite the challenges that we are faced with. A Word that is full of life and positivity. Thank you for who you are in our lives. We worship and adore you, there is none like you, Father. Amen!

Dear Lord, I feel very distant from you (By Malehloa Kunyane)

Dear Lord, I feel very distant from you. Yet, all I ever wanted was to be in your presence. At this age, I cannot even pray not because I don't want to but because I have sinned so much, I feel like I do not deserve your mercy. I have broken almost all your commandments in the blink of an eye. I have so much anger and resentment towards my father and my mother for contributing to my misery. Today I lack trust because my own family broke it. So how can I expect other humans to not break it? Today I do not understand the concept of love because my own family couldn't give me the love I deserved. Today I can't voice out my opinions because my family always silenced me. Childhood trauma cannot seem to detach from me or should I say I cannot detach from it? The pain from the past has infected my faith so much so that I stopped believing. I am angry toward you Lord for letting this cruel world take my innocence. I feel like I do not know myself anymore because I was hurting, I ended up hurting others. When I thought the light had finally reached my doorstep, my only source of light at that time, my friend passed away. I had to build from scratch. Today I cannot make friends because I have a fear of losing them to death. Paranoia, depression, anxiety, and confusion are the drivers of my life. I want to break free.

In my academics, I don't know the direction I'm heading to. The business which I hoped would raise money for my graduation is going slow. It's just a lot.

Lord, I know I have sinned against You. But Lord, I plead with You to intervene in my life. I need you to break the generational curse of poverty. I ask you to break the generational curse of abuse. Help me reunite my family, Lord. I need power to rebuild my home. As of now, I do not have a place to call home. During the floods, we lost the only "one room" that we called home. I ask for strength and power to rebuild it. Give strength Lord to provide for my family. Give strength Lord to carry this cross and work hard for my family. Help me learn how to pray or talk to You. Help me restore my trust. Teach me how to love myself and others. Lord, help me find my voice again. I ask You Lord to grant me a long healthy life. Please intervene in my academic life and finances. Please heal my wounds physically and emotionally. Please restore my faith and take away my worry. I am your child Lord, I love You and trust in You. You promised Lord that you will never forsake me. But you will lead me into the light. You are worthy of all the praise.

Dear Lord (By Surprise Mahumane)

Dear Lord, I constantly find myself doubting whether I am good enough, whether I will be able to complete my studies this year. Dear Lord please help me overcome all this doubt that I have about my future and whether I will be able to make it. The problem that I am facing right now is doubting whether I am worthy, doubting whether I am going to complete this course this year, since it is my final year, I have been faced with many challenges when it comes to my academics this year and time management is not one of my best skills.

Please Lord, I request that you remove all the doubt in me, give me all the strength necessary to overcome the doubts that I have about myself, my studies, and whether I will be able to complete this course or not. Lord open my eyes, if there is something that I cannot see clearly please reveal it to me Lord. Lord guide me, lead me and I will follow. Lord I am your child, help me. I am nothing without you Lord, I have shown that I have faith in you. I love you Lord, you are the one and only true Lord, nothing is bigger than you, my problems are nothing compared to the power and strength that you possess, you are almighty.

I know Lord that you will guide me through this difficult period, I know that you Lord will give me all the strength I need to overcome the doubts I have. I will also do my part in making sure that I overcome this, part of that is talking to you Lord and presenting my problems to you, you are a God that does not fear anything, you are a God that never gives up, you are a God that does not get defeated. I know Lord that you will provide, you will give me strength. Hope everything will be well and hope I will do well in my academics and graduate next year. In all this doubt I have, I have hope in you Lord, that you will guide me and make me strong. The Lord will receive my prayer.

I praise you Lord, for you are always faithful, no matter what I am faced with. You never choose sides Lord, you are always with me no matter what. Lord, despite me not being perfect and sometimes not adhering to your word, you have always been there for me, your presence in my life has been constant and not once have you ever been absent. Amen

Concealed under the rainbow's vivacious colours (By Alex Makola)

At the core of the Republic of South Africa, concealed under the rainbow's vivacious colours, there is a story written in equal measures of pain and resilience: a story of poverty's assault and the disparities that shatter the unity of the nation. This dilemma runs across the fabric of everyday life, where fights intertwine with dreams, giving place to a fine weave of resilience and desire. In the face of adversity, the voices of the suffering rise like prayers to the heavens, which are similar to the ancient psalms of lamentation that can be found in the Book of Psalms. "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy" (Psalm 130:1-2). These verses are the echoes of a prayer, a prayer from the depths of despair, from the chains of poverty, and from the inequality of opportunities. Imagine the deserted streets, where the children's laughter should be the loudest, but hunger's cold grip destroys their happiness. Here, poverty is not only a statistic, but a cruel reality that is stamped in the lives of lots of families. The cycle of poverty spins out a tale of struggle, where dreams seem like light years away, trudging through the haze of deprivation. Inequality is like a dark cloud that is always hanging over the neighbourhoods all over the country. The gap between the rich and poor widens out like a chasm, almost as if privilege and destitution were holding hands, a blatant reminder of how unjust the system is and how much it insists on staying that way. The scales of justice are tilted precariously by the historical burdens and the entrenched disparities that seem unovercomeable. However, against this gloomy backdrop, a spark of resilience emerges. The marginalised people vocalise themselves, claiming respect and equality before the law. Communities unite in their solidarity, walking the path to a better tomorrow, where the wounds of poverty and inequality are healed, and the promise of a fairer society is not just a dream but a reality. We should not allow us to forget the courage which humans have. Let's take hope from the courageous stories of common people who are struggling and at the same time they go on dreaming about a bright future. Let us tap into the power of collective action and real change that is not just measured by economic indicators but by the lived experiences of every person, especially the most vulnerable among us. Let this lament be a reminder of our shared humanity and our mutual duties to support the people who are deprived or oppressed. May it be an inspiration to take action, to be compassionate and not to waver from building a South Africa where poverty and inequality are gone; where every individual can flourish and be prosperous led by the wisdom and compassion of the Psalms.

My cry as a youth for justice in our country (South Africa)

(By Ntwanano Maluleke)

O God, who created everything the heavens and earth, I humble myself before thee, beseeching you to listen to the cry of my heart. In the troubled days of my youth. Lord, I am just a scared young person, and not certain about what the future holds for us. Therefore, I seek your divine intervention, and your comfort. Lord, I ask you to heal my soul and bring justice to our broken society

O Lord, our country is sick, is polluted with unfairness. Corruption has become our mother though; our leaders are breaking the laws with no consequences. Leaders we once trusted have turned against us. Instead of being the voice of the poor, and the marginalised, they have become our perpetrators.

We are in a circle with no ending, a circle filled with suffering and sadness. O Lord, I cry out to you, the Holy One of Israel. O God, come to our rescue, please raise leaders of integrity and compassion who will propagate the gospel of justice, and make our country a better place for us?

Our hope is in you, O Lord, we know you're on the side of the oppressed. You're the safe place for those who are suffering. In your awe, we take our refuge. Therefore, in you O Lord, we're showered with your tender mercies, which become the source of our strength.

O Lord, I lift my voice in praise, because your love never ends. Even when our hope is lost, your love remains strong and steady.

In Psalms 10, the Psalmist feels like you're far away because things are tough. And because it seems like the enemy is prevailing all along. And the greedy are getting away with hurting us.

But we know you listen to our prayers when we cry and grant us hope. You're the Holy One of Israel and in thee we trust. O God, we cry unto you.

O most High GOD! (By Moleboheng Mofokeng)

I come to you with a very heavy heart.
Troubled by the pains and the sorrows of this world.
I sometimes wonder if you can still hear our prayers.
I sometimes wonder if things were meant to be this way.
I understand that we were never promised a perfect life.
However, I know that life is so much better with you.

I have witnessed the suffering of your children, O God!
I have seen the pain some carry in their everyday lives.
God, it is not easy. We need your intervention.
Accidents, leaving children as orphans,
Poverty, leading to crime and sicknesses,
Is this how you had planned the world to be?

Save us Almighty Father!
Save us from the attacks of this world.
I have seen you working in my life,
You have always had a touch in my life,
Please show yourself in the lives of the others.
The poor need you, the orphans need you,
Those living with sicknesses need you.
We need you, Lord.

I know you are powerful my God, I know you are so good.
You give us peace in the midst of our troubles,
You give us grace even when we are undeserving,
You protect us even when we return to the same danger.
We are so lucky to be your own,
We pride ourselves in being your daughters and your sons.
Keep working inside us, O God.
Help us to shame the enemy.
Thank you for listening to my prayers. Amen.

A daughter's lament of abandonment (By Boitshupo Moleko)

Oh, My Lord who created heaven and earth,
The righteous one I pray you hear my lament.
I cry to you, my God.
I pray with a deep wound in my heart.

Why have you filled my life with a paternal void?
My Lord, you made me crave a firm guiding hand.
For what is a father, if not a guide?
While your children enjoy the privilege of having two Fathers,

What sin did I commit to deserve this fate?
To be abandoned, left to contemplate.
Left to contemplate on the kind of life I would have if my father was present.
My restless heart is roaming around like a spirit.
I fail to understand why my father left me for Lady Folly.

My God the creator of all humanity,
hear the lament of a broken daughter, for my heart is filled with emptiness.
Soothe my pain from this sea of hopelessness,
and heal the wounds that have become a mockery to many.
In your arms, I find peace, comfort, and hope, oh Lord.
You are my shelter in the storm, a fortress strong.

Though the trauma of abandonment runs deep, like the ocean,
Oh Lord, you remain steadfast and true.
A Father to the Fatherless, in You I will forever trust.
Oh Lord, your unconditional love will stitch my deepest scars.

O Lord (By Johannes Mosala)

O Lord, in you I find my fortress, my refuge, and my deliverer.
How long will you be absent from me and leave me here in this miserable sorrow?
My brother, my beloved brother, you have been taken away from me by the most terrible force.

A gaping wound that never heals, a pain that keeps on going.
My sorrow is like David's, and my heart is also in pain.
I am blinded by tears, my strength is vanishing, I cannot say a word.
The sadness? It is too much; I cannot handle it.
I am just a hollow, tattered shell, ripped to shreds by the burden of pain
and grief.
O God, grant me mercy because I am weak and incompetent.
My heart is in a thousand pieces, my spirit is on the verge of collapse,
and I am nothing but a
faint voice of a sailor.
The sighs of languish cry me out, the waves of pain vibrate the shore.
And I am lost, nowhere to go, and without a map, not being able to get
out of this place.
Oh, God! Please, recall your mercy and love.
Indeed, for me, it is like I am just dust, a whisper that is gone in a blink of
an eye, a short
interval in time.
My brother, whom I loved so much, came before me like a beacon of
light, the major source
of light to me.
A bright star in the night sky, a lighthouse in the misty rain. He has
passed away, and now all I
have is my sorrow to carry on.
To mourn and to lament, to weep and howl, to sneer in derision.
The pain is a burning sword that penetrates me with truth and its edge.
Leaving behind scars that will never be repaired, I keep having the same
memories, over and
over again.
However, I will still trust in you, my Lord.
Because You are my Rock, my stronghold, my fortress and my deliverer.
In your kindness, you will direct me through it.
And as you always do, you will comfort me and help me get through the
days.
And so, I shall just wait on You, O Lord, and pray.
It is the reassuring thought of you being there that makes the break of
dawn not so scary.
You, O Lord, are my God, my Saviour and the one who really knows me.
And with you, O
Lord, I hope my brother's memory will always stay alive.

Oh, Dear Lord (By Puleng Ndlovu)

Oh, Dear Lord, I am going through a lot in my life ever since I was young yet I'm getting older nothing has changed. There are times whereby I feel lonely. My spirit is burdened, my heart is heavy and my tears flows, like a torrential river. I cry out to you in the dead of the night but silence greets me, no guiding light. I'm now losing hope in everything asking myself "where are you during this difficult time?" I find no peace, I'm struggling!

Oh Lord, please help me find peace in my heart and make me not to overthink, you are the only one who knows the struggle I've been through; you are my only trust in this entire whole. Please give me the strength to face the challenges that confront me, please hear me in my prayers. And may I find refuge in your love, please Lord!

Because I'm your child Lord, in my weakness, I acknowledge, I waver in my trust, forgetting
steadfast presence despite my doubts.

Oh mighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The father of heaven and earth, I
will forever choose you more than anything. I know, therefore, that you are a limitless
merciful God with unending might. Your loyalty does not waver, even in the midst of a
trembling world. And I am aware that you will always be there for me. Your plans, is not to
abandon us in our struggles but to lift us up and provide us with future filled with hope and
promises!

I promise you Lord if, I find peace in my heart and forget about what I've been through. I
promise my heart will I be at peace for the rest of my life. I will live a peaceful life
God, you are great because you are always faithful. You deserve all respect and devotion, so
even in the middle of my troubles, I shall raise my voice in praise. For everything you have
done for me, I am incredibly appreciative. I have observed your endeavours. I will worship
you until my last breath. Amen.

Dear God in Heaven (By Judidy Ngwenya)

“Dear God in heaven;
How long, oh Lord will I call for your intervention
Do my prayers reach your ears,
Have my sins blocked my cries to you.
Have you forgotten about me,
How long will my enemies mock me.
Many times they ask where my God is;
How long will I suffer,
How long will my burden put me down.
Are my cries not reaching your ears.
Have mercy on me oh Lord,
Hear my cries and come to my aid or I will perish,
Remove the dark cloud that follows me.
Turn my sorrows to laughter,
Let my enemies see your grace through me,
Let them marvel at your intervention in my life.
For you are my God and there is none like you;
You promised to be with me,
You have never forsaken me and you won’t start now.
I trust you Lord;
For no matter how dark it may seem you are with me,
My heart finds peace knowing that my tears fall in your hands,
And that you will never be silent about my cries.
I will praise and worship you,
I will honour you,
I will forever say of your gracious love,
And its warmth and comfort,
I will sing joyous songs to the almighty who has wiped my sorrow away, I
will always
trust you Lord.”

Wait what!? (By Tintswalo Ngwenya)

Haven't we the Lord of Israel?
Haven't we the God of the marginalised?
So broken, lonely, and afraid.
So confused, lost, and in constant fear.
It's like we do not belong.
For where were we when the Lord was calling out the young?
"LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME"
or is it us or our parents to blame?
Was it destruction or emptiness?
Mental wellbeing
So depressed, numb, and astray.
No ease, mending, and safety.
What have we the light?
What have we the wisdom?
Cannot we be happy?
For love is fully unconditional
Given in pain from sin.
Given freely to all.
TEMPTATIONS
Lord, how do we get out when there are no glams of light?
Feels good and seems perfect.
Calls my name with illusions.
For why have we been What we are?
For how long is the lightning going to strike?
For me to be captured by its glams.
Be saved again.
I promise you.
You take me out of here.
I will follow you forever.
I know you exist.
I feel you.
Saved me once, you can do it again.
Silence
WAIT. WHAT IS GOING ON?

Tribute in lament: A father's sacrifice (By Asano Ntlanti)

"O, merciful father above, keeper of my heart and soul.

Please hear this lament for my beloved Father (Papa).

In every sacrifice he made, from the dawn's first light to nightfall's fading glow,

He gave selflessly for our well-being.

You took away a woman of his dreams and a mother of his children.

You left him broken but he stood up though to be a mother and a father to seven kids you

blessed him with.

"He never left us, he became a man among the few in this world,

And he steadfastly stood by us till today.

With exertion and sweat, he curved a path for our dreams, vending his desire for our future.

"O, Lord, you said we must be weak for you'll be strong.

He is now weak, and he can't do everything for himself.

Make peace between us as his children for he will be at peace.

"Father, our lord, with your boundless mercy,

Shield him from the pain and worry, as he carries our burdens upon his weary shoulders.

Offer him your yoke for it is easy and your burden is light.

As his son, I stand before you, gracious father, I am humbled by his love and sacrifices.

May your grace surround him, Guiding him through the twilight years, Until I, and my grateful siblings,

We have a chance to thank him for every moment, every tear shed, and every sacrifice made in the name of love.

Amen!!

Father, O' dear LORD (By Rosemary Seruwe)

Allow me to come lay on your feet and tell you, my troubles.

Allow me to come in secret with you, and tell you, my worries.

I feel burdened Lord, I am so disheartened and full of anxiety.

I am constantly in fear of my future, I have this wish to want to do well.

Succeed and have a bright future so that I can be able to help my family.

I want to change the situation back home, I did not have it all in my upbringing,

But I surely want to give myself the best life can offer and help my family, because I believe that I can make a change; I can be the one to end the suffering we are faced with at home. Now at times I fear that what if things won't go as I hoped or what if I don't fulfil the promise, I made at home. I am their hope, I do help where I can with the little that I have. I am always a helping aid to my loved ones. I would rather sacrifice for my beloved, that's the heart I have, I am full of love and such a caring person, but sometimes I fear because I don't know what the future holds, I only want to see myself win, finishing this degree and making it, for my future depends on it, also want to make my mother proud from where she's resting, but the worries Lord trouble me at times.

Now I ask of you Lord to take away all my worries and fear, to reassure me that all is possible with you. I ask that you walk this path with me and hold my hand tight that even when enemies try to harm me and want to take away my dreams and goals, you will be there to protect me and guide me even during difficult times and always stay by my side. Because you are our father, who never forsakes his children, whom their children shall not be in fear, because he is always with them. Who has plans for us, plans not to harm us but to give us hope and a future. Father who takes all the worries away and put our hearts at ease, Father who also made a promise to Abraham and kept it; so, I also know even with me there's a purpose and you will walk with me through the days of my life. The Lord will wipe my tears and hear my prayers, he will put my heart at ease.

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