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Kimberly Renee Wagner Date

From the Depths:
Preaching in the Wake of Mass Violent Trauma

By

Kimberly Renee Wagner
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion
Person, Community, and Religious Life

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Abstract

From the Depths: Preaching in the Wake of Mass Violent Trauma

By Kimberly Renee Wagner

According to the Gun Violence Archive, there were 333 reported mass shootings in the United States in 2017 (where "mass shooting" is defined as an incident where four or more people are shot and/or killed, not including the shooter). Further, six of the ten deadliest mass shootings in modern U.S. history have happened in the last decade. Mass violence has become an unfortunate part of the American experience. As such, preachers and academics must take seriously the practice of preaching in the wake of violent mass trauma.

This dissertation works to understand the nature of individual and communal trauma experienced in the wake of a traumatic violent incident such as a public mass shooting. And, from that understanding, I seek to construct an emergency post-traumatic homiletic appropriate for the days, weeks, and even months immediately following a mass violent trauma. In conversation with theologian Serene Jones, literary trauma theorist Cathy Caruth, and sociologist Kai Erikson, I define the experience of personal and communal trauma as a wounding of the mind or wounding of communal bonds that occurs when an experience cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into pre-conceived meaning-making frameworks of the individual and/or community. One of the notable features of trauma is its impact on both individual and communal narrative sense. Both individuals and communities as a whole experience what I call "narrative fracture," marked by a loss of temporality and narrative coherence. This narrative fracture leads to a loss of trust in structures and/or metaphysical realities depended upon before the trauma, anxiety over the future, and communal disintegration and disconnection.

Given the nature of individual and communal narrative fracture experienced in the wake of violent trauma, and in conversation with Paul Ricoeur's narrative theory, I argue that preachers should preach in a way that names and honors the experience of trauma and narrative fracture. Such acknowledgment and even blessing of the broken reality in sermon content and form is necessary if the preacher and community ever hope to move on to narrative repair or reconstruction.

Finally, I point towards constructive solutions for how a narratively fractured homiletic may look in content and form. In relation to content, I argue preachers should proclaim a christologically grounded eschatology inspired by the work of Jürgen Moltmann. This christologically grounded eschatology summons preachers to speak in the tension between suffering and hope without collapsing one into the other. Considering form, I assert that preacher may honor personal and communal narrative fracture through utilizing a narratively fractured sermon form that is willing to forfeit temporality, coherence, or both as modeled in post-traumatic memoirs. An emergency post-traumatic homiletic, I argue, must take seriously in both sermon content and form, the narratively fractured condition of the congregation before the community might move toward narrative healing.

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation is rooted in the conviction that every one of us is shaped by the communities of which we are a part. Even as we weave our individual narratives or string together words on a page, we are challenged by, buoyed by, and marked by the communities that surround us. I consider myself blessed to have been surrounded by a multitude of wonderful communities that have strengthened me for the journey even as they have summoned me to bring my best to the task.

I give deep thanks for those faith communities that shaped who I am as a Christian, a minister, a teacher, a questioner, a theologian, a worshiper, and a preacher: Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church in Severna Park, Maryland; Forest Hill Church Presbyterian in Cleveland Heights, Ohio; Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia; Green Acres Presbyterian Church in Portsmouth, Virginia; Central Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia; and the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Thank you for your witness to the good news of Jesus Christ in this world and for modeling committed and engaged discipleship.

I have been blessed with wise and willing teachers and mentors who guided the development of this project in thoughtful and profound ways. I am grateful to Ellen Ott Marshall who jumped in with full enthusiasm and generative questions that guided me to a deeper understanding of the nature of trauma and the persistence of hope; to Steve Kraftchick who always challenged me to dig more deeply, consider more carefully, and read more critically the biblical text and scholarship while never losing sight of the people of God and their urgent concerns; and to Ted Smith who willingly stepped in as a co-advisor, and whose perceptive and

persistent questions, unfailing encouragement, and enduring commitment to shape me as a teacher and scholar mark these pages and their author. Finally, I am forever grateful to my advisor and mentor, Tom Long, who never stopped believing in the worth of this work or in my ability to meet the challenges posed by these difficult times. Thank you for shepherding me through this process, offering an editing eye and steadying hand, pushing me to grow as an academic, and for modeling how one can gracefully combine excellence in scholarship with a passion for teaching and a faith-filled commitment to witness to the presence of God in this world. I pray you will see a reflection of your commitment to this craft in these words.

I am grateful for the other communities and persons who generously gave life-giving support, companionship, and sustenance throughout my Ph.D. work and the development of this project. Most especially, to my parents, Jim and Debbie Wagner, thank you for your never-ending support, love, encouragement, listening ears, wise guidance, and outstanding puppy care! I could not have done this without you. Thank you for modeling lives of faith, commitment, and hope. I love you! Thanks to my sister, Christine Dayton, who makes me laugh and models daily what it means to love children of God with patience and joy. To my friends, extended family, and colleagues who cheered me on throughout this Ph.D. process: Katie Givens Kime (my "sister in the struggle"), Tony Alonso, Meredith Doster, Lauren Lobenhofer, Kathy and Randy Phillips, Kelly Gannon, Layla Karst, Lisa Portilla, Jojo Ledgister, Sarah Bogue, Brady Beard, Kathleen Royston, Jenelle and Chris Holmes, Parker Diggory, Doug Wagner, Lance Presley, Paige Swaim-Presley, Dave van der Meer, Brent Ivey, David Carr, Charles Barber, Judy Piersall, Lynda Richmond, Jeanne and Buddy Twine, the Emler family, the Brickey family, the Cales family, Jonathan Potter, Jennifer Wyant, Jenny Pietz, the "Fun Friends," and all of my colleagues

in ministry who inspire me every day with their commitment to their congregations, care for the world, and persistent proclamation of the gospel.

Finally, I dedicate this project to all those whose lives bear the scars of trauma and grief due to gun violence.

> *A voice was heard in Ramah,*
> *wailing and loud lamentation,*
> *Rachel weeping for her children;*
> *she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.*
>
> *Matthew 2:18*

Soli Deo Gloria.

Kimberly Renee Wagner

19 December 2017

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INTRODUCTION

On the morning of December 14, 2012, after killing his mother in the house they shared, Adam Lanza took his mother's rifle and shot his way into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. With the sound of gunshots ringing out over the school intercom system, Lanza went on a rampage through the school, killing twenty six- and seven-year-old children and six adults, before ultimately taking his own life. The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting remains the deadliest mass shooting in a high school or grade school in U.S. history and the fourth deadliest mass shooting perpetrated by a single shooter.[1] Both the scale of the carnage and the targeting of innocent children shocked and appalled the nation.

The quiet community of Newtown was shaken to its core as the unexpected and unanticipated trauma of a mass shooting drew local and national news crews to its doorstep. The news coverage was abundant as investigators traced the timeline of Adam Lanza's steps taken, clothing worn, and weapons used. Reporters interviewed families of those lost or teachers who were in the school. And journalists began to reflect on how this repulsive mass atrocity would shape the national conversation on gun control or mental healthcare in the United States. Newtown would forever be shaped and marred by this tragedy.

Sandy Hook remains a mark on the American consciousness but is not the first nor has it been the last mass or multiple-fatality shooting in the United States. Americans recall and recoil at the names of Columbine, San Bernardino, Charleston, Aurora, Orlando, Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs, and Virginia Tech, just to name a few. Violence is on the rise as mass shootings occur almost daily in the United States, though only a few garner national headlines. Gun-related

[1] After the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 (3rd), the Orlando Pulse Nightclub shooting in 2016 (2nd), and the Las Vegas concert shooting in 2017 (1st).

violence and mass shootings are impacting an increasing number of communities, requiring preachers to reckon with the traumatic impact of these incidents. The experience of traumatic violence has become an unfortunate part of the American experience.

Beyond the statistics, news cameras, and police tape, exist shattered communities and the preachers to whom they look. Whether at vigils the same evening or in the weeks following the incident, preachers must contend with what to say to a community that is hurting, shocked, and full of (sometimes unanswerable) questions. Preaching in the wake of violent mass trauma is a unique challenge that requires a particular preaching practice. In the words of clinical psychologist Irene Smith Landsman, a basic feature of trauma is its capacity to "overwhelm our usual abilities to cope and adjust."[2] And, as theologian Serene Jones writes, "[W]hen we are overwhelmed, what fails us most profoundly is our capacity to use language, to make sounds that communicate meaning from one person to another."[3] And, yet, the preacher is called on to speak in the midst of the unspeakable. In those situations when language is most at risk of failing, the preacher—as a member of the traumatized community—is called upon to "offer a word."

This dissertation seeks to outline a practice of preaching that is attentive to the condition and needs of traumatized communities in the wake of sudden violence like mass shootings. At the present time, there is no homiletics text that explicitly addresses this extraordinary (and yet all-too-ordinary) experience of preaching in the wake of mass violent trauma. This project seeks to begin to fill that gap.

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[2] Irene Smith Landsman, "Crises of Meaning in Trauma and Loss," in *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*, ed. Jeffrey Kauffman (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 13.

[3] Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 29.

PREACHING IN A TRAUMATIZED CONGREGATION

Preaching in the immediate aftermath of violent traumas such as mass shootings requires a particular kind of homiletic that is attentive to the experience of trauma and the needs of a traumatized community. In his seminal homiletics text, *The Witness of Preaching*, Thomas Long argues that preachers, theologically, "come from *within* the community of faith and not *to it* from the outside."[4] Nowhere does this become more obvious or more critical than in times of violent trauma. Preachers, as people interwoven into their communities, experience these violent traumas alongside their communities. They must speak to the traumatized community and for the traumatized community from within the traumatized community. Therefore, preachers need to know about trauma and its impact on individuals and communities.

What makes traumatic events extraordinary is not only their often surprising nature, but also, in the words of Serene Jones, the ways they "outstrip our capacity to respond to and cope with them."[5] While the term "trauma" has long been used by the medical field to describe the wounding of a body, the term is now used across a variety of non-medical disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology, literary studies, and religious studies in a broader way that includes a concern for the wounding of the human psyche.[6] Traumatic experiences are, by nature, disruptive. The experience of trauma pushes the edges of our understanding and emotional capacities.

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[4] Emphasis original. Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 2.

[5] Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 15.

[6] Elizabeth Boase, "Fragmented Voices: Collective Identity and Traumatization in Lamentations," in *Bible through the Lens of Trauma*, ed. Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 49–66.

Trauma is not the event itself, but the human reception and experience of the event. Thus trauma may be conceived as a blow to or wounding of the mind that occurs when an experience or event cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into pre-conceived frameworks of understanding.[7] Yet, this traumatic experience is not limited to individuals. As Kai Erikson (discussed in Chapter 2) argues, in addition to individual trauma exists collective trauma. Such collective trauma may be conceived as the wounding of the communal structure, leading to the deterioration of communal bonds and community strength. The preacher, as one who preaches not simply to individuals, but to the community as a whole, must be attentive to the collective trauma that exists alongside and in addition to the individual trauma.

One of the significant effects of trauma is the experience of individual and communal narrative duress. When a traumatic event occurs, the stories an individual or community have told about themselves and the world are no longer able to make sense of the traumatic event.[8] Due to both a loss of temporality and coherence,[9] the individual or community's narrative

[7] I develop this definition of trauma in conversation with Cathy Caruth in chapter 2.

[8] I define communal narratives and the relationship between personal and communal narratives with the help of social psychologist Julian Rappaport. Rappaport is a community and social psychology professor at University of Illinois and the recipient of the 1999 Seymour B. Sarason Award from the American Psychological Association for his work on the concept of empowerments in communities, relying a great deal on the power of shared narrative. Rappaport defines "community narrative" as "a story common among a group of people. It may be shared through social interaction, texts, pictures, performances, and rituals." Julian Rappaport, "Community Narratives: Tales of Terror and Joy," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 1 (February 2000): 4.While some community narratives may be transferred directly (e.g., public reading of Scripture, story of family tradition, etc.), "many well-known narratives are coded as visual images, as symbols, as stereotypes, and as performances of behavior so ritualized that we may be unaware of the narratives we implicitly accept and enact, even in our own personal stories" (Rappaport, 5). One such example of a community narrative is a cultural narrative, especially a "dominant cultural narrative" which Rappaport defines as "overlearned stories" that may be spread through media, large cultural or social institutions, and networks such as social media. Shared narratives help to define the boundaries and shared identity of a community and are reinforced and marked by shared rituals, symbols, and linguistic constructions. As Rappaport asserts, "A community cannot be a community without a shared narrative" (Rappaport, 6). Our personal narratives are, Rappaport asserts, constructed within the "current" of the context and sub-context of the community narratives in which we live and participate. While individuals may not adopt a community narrative whole cloth, they negotiate their own personal choices and narrative construction in conversation with the shared community narratives.

[9] Discussed at length in chapter 2.

becomes fractured into bits of one's story that no longer hang together as a connected, progressive, or cohesive whole. As a result, the structures, beliefs, or metaphysical realities upon which traumatized people once relied are deemed no longer dependable or sufficient. Or, as Landsman articulates:

> [T]rauma and loss are experiences that push us to our limits…calling into question the basic assumptions that organize our experience of ourselves, relationships, the world, and the human condition itself. The crisis of trauma is pervasive, altering emotional, cognitive, and behavioural experience, and the subjective experience of trauma not infrequently includes a crisis of meaning at a deep level.[10]

This experience of narrative duress or narrative fracture[11] impacts the ways congregations interact with one another as well as with the preaching event. Thus, preachers should be attentive to this narratively fractured condition in both the content and form of their sermon.

In this project I argue that the experience of mass violent trauma requires a post-traumatic emergency homiletic that is attentive to the experience of individual and communal narrative fracture that occurs as a result of such trauma. Sermons preached in the immediate aftermath of violent trauma must be able to bear and even honor such fracture in theological content and sermonic form. In relation to content, I argue that the preacher should preach an eschatological theology that is sufficiently attentive to suffering and brokenness without completely obliterating future hope. Using the christologically grounded theology of Jürgen Moltmann, I outline an eschatology that holds the tension between trauma and hope without collapsing into escapist utopianism or hopeless pessimism. I argue that in addition to theological content that is attentive to the narratively fractured condition of the community, the preacher's sermon form should also reflect and thus honor and resonate with the narrative fracture of the congregation. Similar to the

[10] Landsman, "Crises of Meaning in Trauma and Loss," 13.

[11] I develop the term "narrative fracture" in chapter 2 as the confluence of a loss of temporality and narrative coherence that occurs in individuals and communities as a result of a traumatic experience.

narratively fractured condition of the congregation, the narratively fractured sermon form is willing to sacrifice temporality, coherence, or both. Through modeling narrative fracture in theological content and form, the preacher is not only able to honor the experience of narrative fracture present in the community, but also is able to bless the narratively fractured condition as not other than or beyond the presence of God.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT, METHODOLOGY, AND CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

In this project I am seeking to develop a *post-traumatic emergency homiletic* appropriate for communities experiencing trauma in the wake of mass violence. In order to best understand the scope of this work, I will outline each of the terms used to describe this homiletic:

POST-TRAUMATIC: First, I want to develop a homiletic appropriate for communities impacted by trauma in the moments, days, and weeks *after* a traumatic event has occurred. As such, this project is not focused on exploring the contours of how the traumatic incident happened or considering ways it might be prevented in the future. More specifically, I am not interested in engaging a conversation around gun control or mental health treatment in this project. While these are incredibly important topics for another project and/or another scholar, this dissertation is focused on preaching to a congregation after the violent traumatic event has already taken place.

EMERGENCY: Second, I am imagining this homiletic as appropriate to preachers who find themselves in a situation akin to emergency room doctors. The traumatic event has occurred (as discussed above with the term *post-traumatic*) and now the task is to diagnose, quickly treat, and stabilize the patient (or, in the preacher's case, the congregation). Like the emergency room doctor, the preacher has an eye towards eventual long-term healing and restoration. But, also like an emergency room doctor, the preacher's main focus is to care for the congregation in the

condition in which they arrive. The task of the emergency preacher/doctor is to stabilize the traumatized persons so they may later move towards long-term rehabilitation and (narrative) healing. Thus, this project is not focused on the extended process of narrative healing that may be assisted through preaching. Instead, I am focused on the diagnosis of the traumatized congregation and the stabilization process that may be assisted by preaching. As such, I am interested in developing a homiletic that helps communities (and preachers!) recognize and honor their narratively fractured traumatic condition towards the eventual goal of narrative healing and reconstruction.

HOMILETIC: This dissertation is in homiletics, and as such, concerns the role of preaching in traumatized communities. I recognize that preaching is not the only way that clergy interact with their community after an incident of traumatic mass violence. A clergy person will take on the role of counselor, comforter, pastor, and community organizer after such events. However, clergy will also be called upon as *preachers* in the wake of such acts of traumatic violence. In this project, I am interested in helping clergy as preacher to think ahead about the condition of their congregation and so what they might say and how they might say it when they are thrust into the pulpit or in front of a microphone. I am also acutely aware of the interconnectedness of these clergy roles (preacher, pastor, community organizer, etc.), especially as clergy are called to care for a traumatized community. I hope that other scholarship in the area of pastoral care or counseling might help to inform clergy in their post-traumatic preaching task. Even more, I hope that some of the work of this project, especially thinking about the nature of trauma and the condition of the traumatized congregation, may help to inform preachers as they serve as pastors, counselors, community organizers, and worship planners in and for their community.

We will move towards this emergency post-traumatic homiletic by being attentive to the actual experiences of traumatized communities (most especially the community of Newtown, Connecticut in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting) alongside the work of theorists and theologians. This project is, by necessity, interdisciplinary. In order to understand the experience of individual and communal trauma, I use the work of a variety of trauma theorists including literary scholars, psychologists, theologians, and sociologists. To develop my understanding of trauma's impact on how individuals and communities conceive traumatic experience and narrative identity, I place narrative theory (especially that of Paul Ricoeur) in conversation with trauma theory. Finally, to imagine how preaching might honor[12] and speak to traumatized congregations, I look to theologians (especially Jürgen Moltmann) and authors of traumatic memoirs.

Chapter 1 focuses on understanding mass shootings and gun violence in America generally, and the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in particular. This chapter begins by establishing a clear definition for "mass shootings" and distinguishing between public mass shootings and domestic or gang-violence-related mass shootings. We then move to a discussion of the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Besides addressing the facts of the event, we will consider the makeup of the Newtown community and particularities of the event. As discussed at length in Chapter 1, the Sandy Hook shooting is neither the Ur event nor the normative model for mass shootings in America. Each mass shooting brings its own

[12] When I speak here and in future chapters of "honoring traumatized congregations," I define it as recognizing, respecting, and valuing the suffering and experience the congregation has endured. Similar to the way one "honors" a veteran, placing worth upon and acknowledging the value of the veteran's service and sacrifice, when a preacher "honors" a traumatized congregation, they place worth upon the experience of trauma and do not seek to push the horror away or move past it too quickly. Instead, by "honoring" the experience of trauma, the preacher makes space to name, acknowledge, and hold up as sacred and worthy of attention the traumatic experience the congregation has endured.

particularities and added concerns.[13] Therefore, the Sandy Hook shooting should be understood as a case study, selected for this project both because of its continued impact on the American consciousness[14] and the critical temporal distance we have from the event.

Chapter 2 focuses on defining "trauma" and understanding the impact of trauma on individuals and communities. I begin by defining the terms "traumatic event," "trauma," and "collective trauma," in conversation with theologian Serene Jones, trauma scholar Cathy Caruth, and sociologist Kai Erikson, respectively. In outlining the contours of these definitions, I pay special attention to the ways trauma impacts not only individuals, but also whole communities. With those definitions in place, we turn to explore the impact the experience of trauma has on individual and communal narrative sense. The experience of trauma disrupts both the temporality and coherence of individual and communal narratives—a condition I call *narrative fracture.* Due to this experience of narrative fracture, the narratives individuals and communities relied upon and constructed no longer function to make sense of the world. As a result, people often lose trust in those meaning-making frames or institutions upon which they traditionally relied including community organizations, government, church, or even God.

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[13] For example, the shooting in San Bernardino evokes questions of terrorism and immigration; the Charleston shooting at Mother Emanuel AME church includes concerns about white supremacy and racism; and the shooting at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando requires discussions around homophobia, xenophobia, and terrorism indoctrination.

[14] The impact of the Sandy Hook shootings on the American consciousness becomes clear when Sandy Hook is mentioned as a point of comparison or connection in the wake of other mass shootings. For example, the San Bernardino shootings were compared to Sandy Hook in order to show the large scale of deaths. See Willa Frej, "San Bernardino Massacre Is Deadliest Shooting Since Sandy Hook," *Huffington Post*, December 2, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/san-bernardino-massacre-is-deadliest-shooting-since-sandy-hook_us_565f7236e4b072e9d1c4a66b. The number of children killed in the Sutherland Springs church shooting caused many papers to evoke the memory of the Sandy Hook shootings. Additionally, many of the articles and editorials on gun control published after December 2012 refer to the Sandy Hook incident or quote gun control advocates from Newtown who now speak out politically from their experience of trauma. See "Texas Church Shooting: 'So Many Babies' among Those Slain in Sutherland Springs," CBS News, November 9, 2017, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/texas-church-shooting-so-many-babies-killed-sutherland-springs/; Associated Press, "Newtown Families Express Anger, Grief after Las Vegas Shooting," *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 2017, http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-las-vegas-shooting-newtown-20171002-story.html.

Building on the work of Chapter 2, Chapter 3 will consider more deeply the construction of narratives and study of narrative identities with the help of Paul Ricoeur. I begin by noting the history and attributes of narrative preaching in the vein of Eugene Lowry and Fred Craddock. Though the preacher, facing a community experiencing traumatic narrative fracture, may be inclined to offer a complete narrative or utilize a narrative form as a preaching response, I will argue that a deeper consideration of Ricoeur's work may lead us towards a homiletical response that pushes towards discordance and narrative fracture. In studying Ricoeur's work with narrative and identity in *Time and Narrative, Volume 1* and *Oneself as Another*, I note the importance and persistence of discordance on this side of the eschatological divide. From this journey with Ricoeur, I argue the importance of naming, honoring, lifting up, and positioning the discordant fragments of narrative sense, especially when preaching among a traumatized community marked by narrative fracture. The remainder of the project then imagines what this discordant homiletic might look like in relation to both sermon content and form.

In Chapter 4 I argue the theological content of a post-traumatic emergency sermon should be shaped by a christologically grounded eschatological theology, developed in conversation with Jürgen Moltmann. Such eschatology would be attentive to suffering and fracture without forfeiting hope and promise. At the same time the hope for redemption and promise that Christ will "make all things new" does not overshadow or discount the reality of pain, suffering, and trauma. Such a christologically grounded eschatological theology should not revert to secular pessimist apocalypticism (which sees the destruction of the earth as truly an end with no beginning); it should not become realized historical eschatology (which sees human effort and progress as the telos of creation); and it should avoid transcendent utopianism (which leads to escapist theology and a potential lack of responsibility for the troubles of this world). Preaching a

christologically grounded eschatology requires that preachers speak in the tension between suffering and hope, in the space between the "now" and the "not yet."

In Chapter 5 we move towards a consideration of sermon form, since (as I argue), the sermonic form not only carries theological content, but is the bearer of a theology itself. After reviewing our journey up to this point, I assert that the narratively fractured condition of the congregation immediately after trauma calls for a narratively fractured sermon form. Put another way, if preaching in the immediate aftermath of violent trauma requires theological content that takes seriously the reality of suffering and the broken narrative condition of the congregation, than the sermon *form* should also take this narrative fracture seriously. Like the condition of congregational narrative fracture, a narratively fractured sermon form may forfeit temporality, coherence, or both. In this chapter, I offer three traumatic memoir forms as models for narratively fractured sermon forms.

Finally, the Conclusion reviews the work and argument of this project through a study of the shortest ending of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16:1-8). I argue the literary form and eschatological content of the shortest ending of the Gospel of Mark offers a biblical model for those called upon to preach in the immediate aftermath of a violent communal trauma in ways that are consistent with the argument of this dissertation. As a gospel familiar with trauma, the abrupt literary ending and the eschatological content of the messenger's words in the text offer both a biblical model and blessing for the narratively fractured post-traumatic emergency homiletic outlined in the project.

MINDING THE GAP: A HOMILETICS LITERATURE REVIEW

Though incidents of mass violence are on the rise in the United States and ever more preachers and communities are impacted by the experience of violent trauma, there is no

contemporary text that directly addresses the unique circumstance of preaching in times of violent mass trauma. The most recent books in homiletics that address preaching in the wake of crisis, trauma, or suffering are Thomas G. Long's text, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith,* published in 2011; Joseph R. Jeter Jr.'s text, *Crisis Preaching: Personal and Public*, published in 1998; Samuel D. Proctor's text, *Preaching About Crises in the Community*, published in 1988; Ronald J. Sider and Michael A. King's *Preaching About Life in a Threatening World* published in 1987; and Kelly Miller Smith's *Social Crisis Preaching* published in 1984; and the sermon anthology *Preaching on Suffering and a God of Love* edited by Henry J. Young. While each of these texts contributes to the larger homiletical conversation, none of these texts is attentive to the particularities of the experience of violent mass trauma and the need for a unique homiletic in the immediate aftermath that is attentive to narrative fracture and the traumatized condition of the congregation.

Considering these texts from oldest to most recent, we begin with the 1978 book *Preaching on Suffering and a God of Love,* edited by Henry J. Young. This book is not a homiletics text (focused on the construction, design, and delivery of the sermon); it is a text filled with short reflections and homilies on Old Testament and New Testament themes. Each chapter contains models of black preaching and "suggests some of the ways black Americans have maintained integrity with God and themselves in spite of the continued presence of suffering, oppression, racism, poverty, violence, sickness, death, man's inhumanity to man, and other forms of social malfunction."[15] While not didactic in nature, the reflections/homilies offer a model for the kind of preaching that might honor true suffering but retain "a growing edge of

[15] Henry J. Young, "Preface," in *Preaching on Suffering and a God of Love*, ed. Henry J. Young (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 15–16.

hope and a determination to look toward the eschatological future for freedom and liberation both within history and beyond history."[16] The reflections show a deep attentiveness to the reality and pervasiveness of suffering while also pointing to the promise of God's eschatological hope and consummation—something this project advocates for strongly in Chapter 4. While *Preaching on Suffering and a God of Love* shares with this project an attentiveness to the suffering trauma may cause, its focus is on the historical trauma[17] of racism and oppression. While historical trauma may share some features of suffering with the experience of violent mass trauma, the two differ in the ways they impact communities, lead to a sudden experience of narrative fracture, and compound suffering with shock. As such, this book is a great resource for models of preaching in the face of historical trauma, but does not directly address the needs of preachers serving communities suffering in the wake of sudden violent traumas such as mass shootings.

Kelly Miller Smith's 1984 book, *Social Crisis Preaching,* based upon his 1983 Beecher Lectures, is an argument for socially-conscious preaching that allows the gospel to enlighten community and world crises. Smith argues passionately that preaching can make a difference in history and in the shaping of social realities, paying special attention to issues of racial discrimination and oppression. This text advocates for quality preaching on social crises since concern for the oppressed is at the heart of the biblical story. He calls such issues "crises" but

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[16] Young, 16.

[17] "Historical trauma is generally defined as the long-term, collective adverse impact of certain historical events, such as genocide, on a particular social group. Its symptoms occur over the lifespan of individuals and are transmitted from generation to generation, especially when a group has collectively experienced, or is still experiencing, historic situations of extreme humiliation, persecution, prejudice, oppression, anger, and, in some cases, massive extermination. The effects of historical trauma include such feelings as numbness, anger, rage, fear, helplessness, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation." *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Historical Trauma," Leonardo Fernandes Nascimento, accessed October 4, 2017, http://search.credoreference.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/content/entry/galerace/historical_trauma/0.

they could be better understood as chronic social conditions. While Smith broadly defines social crises as "those circumstances, situations, principles, decisions, and actions that impact people collectively and usually negatively,"[18] the overwhelming majority of his examples and references are connected with ongoing questions of equality, race, and economic and social justice. As such, Smith does little to address violent crisis or mass trauma in particular. Smith briefly discusses "sudden crises" such as the onset of war, but his main goal is to argue that responsible biblical preaching *is* preaching on social issues. Smith's text takes a very historical methodological approach—studying the sermons of preachers who have brought together the gospel and social concerns to shape history, including Richard Allen, Walter Rauschenbusch, Martin Luther King Jr., and Howard Thurman. (He includes an appendix of "quality" social crisis sermons at the end of the book.) Through a consideration of their work, Smith builds his defense for socially conscious preaching.

Smith's book, unlike this project, is primarily concerned with preaching on social issues and building an argument that socially engaged preaching *is* biblical preaching. He has little concern for mass violence or catastrophic trauma. As such, he pays little attention to the condition of a traumatized congregation after a sudden mass traumatic event. While Smith builds an effective and thoughtful argument for socially conscious preaching, especially around issue of racial equality and social justice, this project addresses very different concerns.

In Ronald J. Sider and Michael A. King's 1987 text, *Preaching About Life in a Threatening World,* the authors focus on "preaching about national and international concerns—the large, often global, concerns of our era and the issues of justice, peace, and freedom that are

[18] Kelly Miller Smith, *Social Crisis Preaching: The Lyman Beecher Lectures, 1983* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 34.

inextricably intertwined with them."[19] However, they advocate for this kind of homiletic toward the ends of more closely connecting the Bible, the preacher, and the congregation or, in their words, "to wrestle with some possible causes, and suggest some potential antidotes, for the malaise by which preaching often seems afflicted."[20] Sider and King are especially concerned about sermon form, arguing that a narrative form is best suited for preaching on national and global social concerns. They especially view the narrative principal of "reversal" as key to both the biblical texts and as a great tool for preaching on such social crises.[21] Sider and King advocate for a sermon-story that is able to take seriously the complexities of global or national concerns. And, towards the end of the book, they think very concretely alongside preachers about narrative sermon design and the role of the preacher as "fellow pilgrim" encountering the "savage," "empowering," and "comforting" grace of God in Scripture alongside the congregation.[22]

Like Smith's text above, Sider and King do not treat violent trauma as a unique crisis and pay no attention to trauma theory or the condition of narrative fracture brought on by the experience of trauma. Sider and King's focus is national and international concerns for justice, freedom, and peace. While incidents of violence may have national or global impact, they are remarkably local. Multiple-fatality shootings are usually specific to a community or region. In the third chapter, Sider and King *do* consider "key issues" of concern including abortion, human rights, and ecological justice. However, they treat violence and war as commensurate events. There is little recognition (or, perhaps, little need at the time this text was published) to treat

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[19] Ronald J. Sider and Michael A. King, *Preaching About Life in a Threatening World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 10.

[20] Sider and King, 9.

[21] The model they propose has a great deal in common with Eugene Lowry's sermon form that is strongly reliant on the concept of reversal.

[22] Sider and King, *Preaching About Life*, 108–16.

violent traumas such as mass shootings as distinct from the experience of war. Ultimately, the aim of Sider and King's text is to advocate and offer tools for preachers to bring national and international concerns around justice and peace into the pulpit.

Like this project, Sider and King do address the issue of eschatology in times of crisis, but they do so by turning to the power of story to "integrate the transcendent and the immanent." Because story is both "linear" and "transparent," they argue it is "ultimately an eschatological form" that launches us forward and hints toward a future beyond our expectation and imagination.[23] Though guided by the transcendent God, Sider and King's eschatology is very continuous with the present condition. They view the eschatological story as linear—from the present to the end—as it moves "forward to a glorious climax."[24] As such, in Sider and King's view, we are mere characters in this grand Story that will ultimately end in joy. With a highly immanent and linear eschatological theology in place, Sider and King fail to be attentive to the experience of suffering and sensed distance from the eschatological consummation in times of trauma, as well as fail to be attentive to the narratively fractured reality of the traumatized congregation.

Likewise, Sider and King's insistence on a linear and narratively shaped sermon form remains (as I will argue in Chapter 5) inattentive to the narratively fractured condition of the congregation. They advocate for the exposition of biblical narratives through narratively structured sermons, particularly commending the use of narrative reversal in the face of global and national crises. However, unlike in the present project, there is little attention paid to the experience of narrative fracture in the congregation in the face of crisis and whether or not such narrative can be heard by a narratively fractured congregation or be helpful as they reach for

[23] Sider and King, 27.
[24] Sider and King, 27.

eventual narrative healing. For Sider and King, narrative is clearly the answer—in both biblical content and sermonic form—but they fail to ask the questions about its accessibility and resonance in a community experiencing traumatic narrative fracture.

Samuel D. Proctor's text, *Preaching About Crises in the Community*, is part of the same "Preaching About" series as Sider and King's text. In his book, Proctor advocates for faithful preaching on pressing social issues. Written in 1988, Proctor is especially concerned with issues of drug abuse, poverty, and the deterioration of the family—problems he argues are symptomatic of a larger crisis of *morality* in the United States. Preachers, he asserts, are obligated to address this moral decline in general and these issues in particular. Proctor argues that we live in a time when "values are in flux" and there is a "climate of moral ambivalence."[25] As such, Proctor asserts that the preacher must speak prophetically, calling society back to the "moral model" of Jesus Christ.[26] Proctor grounds his argument in both the biblical mandate and the church's historical role as an institution of moral direction and instruction. Proctor interprets the biblical text in a way that positions Christ as the ultimate moral hero. With Jesus as moral model, Proctor argues that preachers may push beyond the moral ambivalence of the time to declare a timeless truth. Proctor furthers his argument by looking historically to the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the role of churches played in the fight for racial justice (albeit with a troublingly revisionist hand). For Proctor, the crisis at hand is not mass violence or violent trauma, but a crisis in morality as revealed by rampant drug use, poverty, and familial strife.

Being focused on a perceived crisis of morality, Proctor's work does not address concerns surrounding acts of sudden violence or mass trauma. Proctor is also unconcerned about

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[25] Samuel D. Proctor, *Preaching About Crises in the Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 28.

[26] Proctor, 28–33.

sermon form. Instead, he is focused on calling preachers to the prophetic task of moral leadership. Given this, Proctor does not address problems of mass violence or the narratively fractured condition of the community. He also does little in his book to address sermon form, communal narrative fracture, or eschatology.

Of the contemporary crisis/trauma preaching literature considered, Joseph R. Jeter Jr.'s *Crisis Preaching: Personal and Public* is probably most closely aligned work of this project. He begins by noting the unique challenge of preaching in crisis:

> Ironically, these [crisis] sermons, which are among the very most important that we preach, are also those for which we have the least amount of experience, skill, and preparation time. The general 'rules' on the preparation and delivery of sermons do not avail…there is not time for careful exegesis and leisurely preparation.[27]

Given these difficult circumstances, Jeter brings together insights from crisis counseling, psychology, and theology in order to supply homiletical practices suitable for a broad variety of public and personal crises. Jeter begins by parsing categories of crisis. First, he identifies three kinds of crises—personal, public, and congregational. Second, following the work of Ronald Allen, Jeter asserts that, theologically, there are crises of understanding (why did this happen?) and crises of decision (what should we do?). Third, Jeter utilizes the work of Howard Stone in *Crisis Counseling*, categorizing crises as either situational (exceptional, unpredictable) or developmental (natural, part of human growth and development).[28] He claims the focus of his book is on situational crises—both personal and public. From there, Jeter discusses ways to talk and think theologically about both crises of understanding and crises of decision. Jeter identifies remembrance, presence, and promise as the "three important theological affirmations that can be

[27] Joseph R. Jeter Jr., *Crisis Preaching: Personal and Public* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 10.
[28] Jeter, 17–18.

made in response [to crises of understanding]."[29] In addition to crisis categorization and reflecting theologically, Jeter offers suggestions on sermon form, worship construction, an annotated lectionary of texts appropriate to different kinds of crises, and suggestions for preaching and worship content. All of his suggestions point—subtly and overtly—towards the goal of helping the congregation heal. From the beginning, Jeter is unapologetically biased in his view shared with Harry Emerson Fosdick that preaching is "counseling on a group scale."[30] Jeter's homiletical suggestions primarily grow out of his study of pastoral care and crisis counseling literature. At the same time, they are anchored by strong theological convictions about God's presence, the centering power of liturgical worship and ritual remembrance, and his conviction that crisis preachers function most successfully in a prophetic capacity.

There is much to commend this book, not the least is Jeter's attention to the ways crises differ from one another. His use of multiple levels of categorization allows him to think more carefully about the nature of a variety of crises—everything from divorce or job loss to a scandal in the congregation to natural disasters. However, even with all these categories of crises, Jeter is not attentive to the specificities of mass violent trauma. While Jeter admits that many public crises can carry into the congregation, violence can find a home in all three categories—public, congregational, and personal—depending on the incident. Likewise, violence encountered in mass shootings can often, simultaneously, be crises of understanding and decision. In seeking to build a homiletic appropriate for a broad array of situational crises (personal and public, natural and human-made), Jeter fails to consider how violent crises, especially issues of gun violence and mass shootings, both blur and exceed his crisis categories. This project, in contrast, is not

[29] Jeter, 28.
[30] Jeter, 3.

seeking to address a variety of personal, public, communal, and national crises, but instead to suggest a homiletic that answers the particular needs of preaching in the wake of mass violence.

Jeter's text struggles to give sustained attention to any one topic due to its brevity and breadth. However, grounded in concepts from pastoral care and counseling, Jeter does acknowledge something like narrative fracture. Jeter identifies the "dis/membering effects of crisis," the ways crises breaks apart our world constructs and meaning-making sense. In conversation with pastoral theology scholar Andrew Lester, Jeter views some situational crises are "eruptive" which can cause "our future stories, including our visions of God's future and our part in it take a big and painful hit."[31] He connects such fracture to memory arguing that crisis may "cut us off from our memory" and proposes that the preaching solution is "re/membering" or "hoping backward."[32] Jeter advocates for such "re-membering," through both "naming the monster"[33] of the crisis and by "speaking the truth in the Book" of God's promises.[34] This truth of God's promises is highly eschatological, the truth that God's salvation is coming and already at hand.

As with Sider and King, Jeter's whole text is shot through with immanent eschatological hope—trust that God is present and is made present in preaching and worship, bringing the promise of healing and hope. As he articulates: "I know that the expression of grief and the confession of sin are but a short distance in the economy of God from the expression of hope and the gift of new life."[35] Likewise, Jeter proposes that one of the main theological tasks of preaching in crisis is to "hold out" before the congregation the promises of God, "the promise

[31] Jeter, 19.
[32] Jeter, 28–29.
[33] Jeter, 37.
[34] Jeter, 37.
[35] Jeter, 81.

that assures us tomorrow will come."[36] However, Jeter takes little time to analyze his eschatological position and though he acknowledges the pain of crisis/trauma, Jeter is quick to shift towards eschatological hope, collapsing the tension between the present circumstance and future redemption present in a robust eschatology that this project seeks to advocate.

One final book worth noting is Thomas G. Long's 2011 text, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith*. In this book Long tackles the question of theodicy and the role of the preacher in wrestling with these difficult questions from the pulpit. Long begins by considering the problem of theodicy created by the Enlightenment and on full display in the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. He then moves to elucidate the "impossible chess match" of theodicy in conversation with Bart Ehrman, Diane Komp, and Marilyn McCord Adams. Ultimately, Long argues, a ministry of presence is not enough "as a comprehensive approach to the questions of evil and suffering"[37]; the preacher must, in the midst of suffering, face these questions of theodicy head on. As Long writes, "Done most faithfully, pondering the question of suffering and the love of God is a form of prayer, and I think preachers owe congregations the benefits of this intellectual questioning, this form of prayer in which faith seeks understanding."[38] With this mission in place, Long offers preachers "road hazards" that they might encounter along the way, a history of how different thinkers and communities have answered questions of theodicy (including Kushner, process thought, John Hick, and free will), and an exegetical and theological exposition of the book of Job. Long concludes the book by encouraging the preacher that this

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[36] Jeter, 36.

[37] Thomas G. Long, *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering, and the Crisis of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 30.

[38] Long, 30.

call to speak of theodicy is "more a pilgrimage towards meaning than it is an answer to a logic problem."[39]

Long's book is a powerful contribution to the discussion of theodicy, evil, and suffering in the homiletics literature. Written with parish pastors in mind, Long empowers preachers to speak in the midst of suffering and not to rely solely on a ministry of presence. However, much like the aims of this project, Long offers no easy answers, solutions, or even preaching models for the reader to follow. Instead, Long encourages preachers to engage the journey of "faith seeking understanding." Long's project shares with this project an insistence that we take suffering seriously as a reality that requires response from the pulpit. Unlike this project, Long pushes towards narrative healing (though he does not use that language specifically). His reason for encouraging preachers to engage questions of theodicy from the pulpit is not so that preachers will construct some well-reasoned philosophical treatise, but instead to "repair a faithful but imperiled worldview."[40] However, this difference may be attributed to the scope of time considered by the project. This project is focused on preaching in the immediate aftermath of violent mass trauma while Long clearly has in mind the ongoing conversation of a congregation that has encountered (and continues to encounter) suffering and evil. Second, unlike this project, Long's work is not specifically focused on mass shootings or violent trauma. While naming traumas such as the Lisbon earthquake or the death of Ehrman's sister, Long has no particular kind of trauma in mind. Third, Long's focus in his project is on theological content and does not address sermon form. In contrast, this project seeks to speak to both sermon content and form. However, even with these differences, these two projects speak to one another in powerful ways as they both take seriously and wrestle with questions of suffering, evil, and

[39] Long, 114.
[40] Long, 55.

trauma. I would argue Long's text picks up where this project leaves off. Long is interested in the long-term "why?" questions that enter the congregational conversation over the months and years after a trauma has occurred while this project seeks to construct an emergency homiletic for the moments, hours, days, and weeks after a violent mass trauma.

The texts explored briefly above represent the most contemporary and sustained (i.e. book-length) treatments of preaching in crisis or trauma. There are brief treatments of this topic in articles or sections of homiletics books. Ronald Allen in his text, *Preaching the Topical Sermon*, addresses preaching in violence partially and circuitously by offering examples of violent events as times when topical preaching may be helpful, when "understanding or action is urgent."[41] Frederick Streets begins to address this question in article form in his 2005 contribution to *The Living Pulpit* entitled "Preaching and Trauma." In his article, Streets begins to consider trauma from a psychosocial point of view, encouraging preachers to view sermons as the opportunity to plant seeds of hope that remind victims of their power and freedom to move on.

Most recently, Joni S. Sancken published an essay entitled "When Words Fail Us: Preaching Gospel to Trauma Survivors" in *Theologies of the Gospel in Context*. In this essay Sancken seeks to hold together the multifaceted symptomatic responses to a variety of traumas including natural disasters, war, rape, abuse, traumatic death, and even the trauma encountered by a perpetrator of violence. She begins the essay seeking to understand people's physical, mental, relational, emotional, and spiritual responses to trauma, relying primarily on the work of Shelly Rambo, David J. Morris, and Carolyn Yoder. Sancken is especially interested in clinical diagnoses of trauma and PTSD as well as a theological assessment of trauma. She does not name

[41] Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching the Topical Sermon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 21–23.

narrative fracture or narrative duress explicitly in her brief evaluation of trauma, though later in the essay she pushes toward narrative identity reconstruction. In seeking to hold a variety of different types of trauma together, Sancken is only able to brush by the variegated nature of trauma and the particularities of individual and communal traumatic experience. After analyzing the nature and context of trauma, Sancken then imagines the role of preaching as assisting traumatized persons with the "(re)construction of the self through preaching the life of Jesus."[42] Working through the Apostles' Creed, the preacher might be able to participate "in the complex process of trauma healing as well as provid[e] language and theology that may help to rebuild and restore the identity of trauma survivors in part through a 'typological identification' with aspects of Jesus' life and ministry"[43] The remainder of the essay then walks through phrases of the apostles creed with Sancken's suggestion for how traumatized persons might identify with the character and story of Jesus as they walk through their own traumatic experience.

In her essay, Sancken offers a multifaceted consideration of the nature of trauma before moving to theological and preaching concerns. However, Sancken covers a broad array of potential traumatic situations. She imagines the necessity for addressing trauma not specifically after a communal tragedy, but more as an ongoing need due to the presence of traumatized individuals in a relatively non-traumatized congregation. Her contextual lens is wide as she argues for the role of preaching in post-traumatic healing. This project, on the other hand, considers a particular kind of trauma (mass violence), being addressed during a particular span of time (immediately after the traumatic event). Additionally, this project addresses the issue of

[42] Joni S. Sancken, "When Our Words Fail Us: Preaching Gospel to Trauma Survivors," in *Theologies of the Gospel in Context: The Crux of Homiletical Theology*, ed. David Schnasa Jacobsen (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 124.

[43] Sancken, 125.

narrative duress caused by trauma directly. Put another way, this project is intentional about considering the narrative wreckage of individuals and communities after trauma. While Sancken names the slow process of healing after trauma[44] and the fragmented and mysterious nature of the gospel,[45] Sancken moves fairly quickly towards preaching that emphasizes the "(re)construction of the self" and the ultimate healing of the traumatized person.

In the end, this project differs significantly from Sancken's work. In considering the particular nature of mass trauma, unlike Sancken, I am concerned not only with the condition of individuals, but with the experience of the traumatized congregation as a whole. Additionally, contrary to Sancken's thesis, I argue that preaching in the wake of traumatic violence should not be a catalyst for quick healing or personal identity reconstruction. Instead, I insist that preaching should take seriously the traumatized condition, and honor it through preaching sermons whose content and form reflects, names, and blesses the narratively fractured condition of the congregation. In response to her brief analysis of the traumatic experience, Sancken advocates for preaching that follows the narrative arc of the life of Jesus as articulated in the Apostles' Creed. Given my analysis of the nature of individual and communal narrative fracture experienced in the wake of violent trauma, I argue that preachers should preach in a way that names and honors the experience of trauma and narrative fracture. Such acknowledgment and even blessing of the broken reality in sermon content (through a christologically grounded eschatology that can hold suffering and hope in tension) and a narratively fractured sermon form

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[44] "Finally, treatment and healing from trauma take time. The journey is long. Marking Christ's descent into hell and the 'middle time' of Holy Saturday acknowledges that the move from death to new life may be slow and painful. Preachers may want to make this day as a way to slow the congregation down in the 'rush' to get from Good Friday to Easter." Sancken, 131.

[45] "One challenge concerns the unfinished nature of how we experience God's good news this side of Christ's return. We experience the in-breaking of God's realm and signs of resurrection life only in fragments. Our preaching rests on the promises of God. In light of the incomplete nature of how we experience the gospel, the practice of testimony or bearing witness holds promise of the circumstances of trauma survivors and broader discussions surrounding homiletical theologies of the gospel." Sancken, 134–35.

is necessary if the preacher and community ever hope to move on to narrative repair or reconstruction.

Even with Sancken's essay, there is a gap in the field of homiletics. There is no contemporary, sustained consideration of preaching in the face of mass violent trauma. Part of this failure to name violent trauma as a necessary point of sustained focus may be attributed to the fact that violent mass trauma was not as pressing a social issue historically as today. The United States has, in the last two decades, come face to face with terrorism at a new level, marked by the events of September 11, 2001. Our country has been scarred by mass shootings in Columbine (1999), Virginia Tech (2007), Ft. Hood (2009 and 2014), Aurora (2012), Newtown (2012), Charleston (2015), San Bernardino (2015), Orlando (2016), Las Vegas (2017), and Sutherland Springs (2017) among too many others. While the experience of violence may not be new in the United States, mass shootings continue to increase in regularity and in casualties per incident. Children now practice "Active Shooter Drills" in schools across the country. And conversations around firearms and mental health only grow more pressing and contentious. These homiletics texts from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s on crisis/traumatic preaching are written in response to a different time and a different understanding of the crises facing preachers and congregations. While neighboring disciplines such as pastoral care, theology, and liturgical studies have taken seriously the need to think about trauma and the person, somehow homiletics has written around this topic without addressing it directly. With mass shootings on the rise in the United States, the homiletics guild can no longer avoid or skirt the topic and preachers can no longer avoid the reality in their communities. And so, in an attempt to "mind the gap" (as our British friends say), let us venture into considering preaching in the wake of violent mass trauma.

CHAPTER 1:

SANDY HOOK AND MASS SHOOTINGS IN THE UNITED STATES

The experiences of traumatic violence in general and mass shootings in particular have become an all too common part of American life. As such, preachers and their faith communities cannot assume they are immune from having to endure such traumatic situations.[1] Places such as Aurora, San Bernardino, Charleston, Columbine, Newtown, Fort Hood and many others stand as emblems, marking the epidemic of mass shootings in our nation. In his eight years in office (Jan. 2009- Jan. 2017), President Obama offered words of condolence and challenge fourteen times to address fourteen different public mass shooting events. In his speech after the shooting at Roseburg Community College in Oregon on October 1, 2015, Obama lamented, "Somehow this has become routine. The reporting has become routine. My response here, from this podium has become routine."[2] Though such incidents may feel "routine" to the President and the American people, there remains confusion about what is meant by the term "mass shooting," the nature of such incidents, and the trends regarding such violence in America. While this project is *not* seeking to answer *why* mass shootings or violence occur or *how* they might be avoided (both important projects for another time/scholar), it is valuable for preachers, academics, counselors, and those dealing with the aftermath of such acts of violence to have a basic understanding of the condition of mass violence in the U.S. By facing the facts and nature of the problem of mass violence in the United States, preachers may recognize the pressing need to be prepared to

[1] In chapter 2 we will construct a working definition of "trauma" and outline the contours of what constitutes a traumatic experience. For now, let us define trauma as an internal blow or wounding of the mind that occurs when an experience or event cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into pre-conceived frameworks of understanding. Such a wounding has impact on one's spiritual and physical being as well.

[2] Gregory Korte, "14 Mass Shootings, 14 Speeches: How Obama Has Responded," *USA Today*, June 12, 2016, http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/06/12/14-mass-shootings-14-speeches-how-obama-has-responded/85798652/.

minister with a congregation experiencing trauma. Before moving towards a theory of trauma and the psychosocial experiences of traumatized persons, we will begin by analyzing the ongoing reality of mass violence in the United States. Towards that end, this project starts by considering mass shooting and gun violence statistics and trends in the United States. From the general to the specific, we will then examine the particularities of the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in Newtown, Connecticut.

MASS VIOLENCE: DEFINING A PERPLEXING PICTURE

While mass shootings are not a new phenomenon, there remains no single definition or system for reporting mass shootings. There are three particular difficulties in defining and evaluating the impact of mass violence in the United States: (1) subtle variations on terms and definitions related to mass violence; (2) inconsistencies in reporting; and (3) distinguishing between subcategories of mass violence.

First, in assessing mass violence in the United States, different agencies and organizations utilize a range of different categories—from "mass shootings" to "mass killings" to "active shooter situations"—as well as fluctuate in their definitions of those categories. The Gun Violence Archive (GVA) tracks "mass shootings," which it defines as any incident with "four or more people shot and/or killed in a single event [incident], at the same general time and location not including the shooter."[3] Under this definition, the GVA counted 383 mass shootings reported and verified in the United States in 2016. On the other hand, many federal agencies focus on mass *killings*. Generally, the term "mass killing" or "mass murder" includes both mass shootings

[3] "General Methodology," Gun Violence Archive, accessed December 29, 2016, http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/methodology.

and acts of mass violence that were not perpetrated through use of a gun, including stabbing, burning/smoke inhalation, and blunt force trauma.[4] Federal statutes, up until 2013, considered a mass killing as any singular incident in which four or more people were *killed* (not including the perpetrator).[5] This number was changed by authorization of President Obama and Congress in 2013 from four to three casualties.[6] Though the FBI has not offered a comprehensive study of mass killings or mass shootings, they did release a study in 2014 considering "a specific type of shooting situation law enforcement and the public may face" they call "active shooter" situations.[7] "Active shooter" is a law enforcement term to "describe a situation in which a shooting is in progress and an aspect of the crime may affect the protocols used in responding to and reacting at the scene of the incident. Unlike a defined crime, such as a murder or mass killing, the active aspect inherently implies that both law enforcement personnel and citizens have the potential to affect the outcome of the event based upon their responses."[8] The FBI counted 160 active shooter incidents from 2000-2013 with 486 killed and 557 wounded. (This tally does not include shootings that resulted from gang or drug violence.) Lastly, Everytown, a Gun Safety Support Fund, utilizes FBI data and media reports to analyze the frequency of "mass shootings," defining them as any incident in which four or more people are shot and killed (excluding the shooter, reporting 156 "mass shootings" from 2009-2016.[9] Even from these few examples, it becomes clear that the definitions and categories surrounding mass violence are

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[4] However, more than 75% of mass killings involve a gun. For more, see "Behind the Bloodshed: The Untold Stories of America's Mass Killings," *USA Today*, accessed December 28, 2016, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/mass-killings/index.html.

[5] A.J. Willingham, "A Visual Guide: Mass Shootings in America," CNN, accessed December 28, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/13/health/mass-shootings-in-america-in-charts-and-graphs-trnd/index.html.

[6] Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-265, 126 Stat. 2435 (2013).

[7] J. Pete Blair and Katherine W. Schweit, "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000–2013" (Washington, DC: Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014), 5.

[8] Blair and Schweit, 4.

[9] "Mass Shootings in the United States: 2009–2016," Everytown for Gun Safety, April 11, 2017, https://everytownresearch.org/reports/mass-shootings-analysis/.

slippery and often defined in inconsistent ways. This leads to a murky picture of the frequency of mass shootings in the United States.

Second, it is difficult to evaluate the phenomenon of mass shootings in the U.S. due to an inconsistency in reporting. Some organizations, such as the GVA, "utilize automated queries, manual research through over 2,000 media sources, aggregates, police blotters, [and] police media outlets" among other sources.[10] Everytown uses information from the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and media reports. However, even the FBI data is not always considered accurate as not all states (i.e., Florida, Nebraska until 2009) report homicides to the FBI.

Third, some organizations only record certain kinds of mass shootings based on their circumstances. Mass shootings may be categorized as public incidents, incidents of indiscriminate shooting, or incidents related to domestic violence, gang violence, or other crimes (such as robberies). Public mass shootings account for only a small portion (*USA Today* estimates 1 in 6) of total mass killings. However, they are the most widely reported incidents and often lead to the largest public response and outrage. These are incidents most American can easily name and identify—Fort Hood, San Bernardino, Sandy Hook, Emanuel A.M.E. church in Charleston, Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, etc. While organizations such as GVA report *all* incidents of mass shootings no matter the circumstances, some organizations are only interested in public mass shootings. Some Congressional reports exclude incidents of domestic or gang violence, focusing only on those incidents where gunmen "select victims indiscriminately," leading to single digit reports. Databases such as *Mother Jones* have reported only public mass shootings, using the criteria of "four or more killed in public attacks, but exclud[ing] mass

[10] "General Methodology."

murders that stemmed from robbery, gang violence, or domestic abuse in private homes."[11] Based on these criterion, *Mother Jones* reports there were six public mass shootings in 2016 and eighty-four mass shootings since 1982.[12] In an Op-Ed in the *New York Times* an editor from *Mother Jones* argued this narrow focus on public mass shootings is incredibly helpful in defining and analyzing this "unique phenomenon" of mass shootings. He argues, "While all the victims are important, conflating those many other crimes with indiscriminate slaughter in public venues obscures our understanding of this complicated and growing problem. Everyone is desperate to know why these attacks happen and how we might stop them — and we can't know, unless we collect and focus on useful data that filter out the noise."[13] However, this "noise" is statistically significant. Domestic disputes and relational/familial incidents make up over half of mass killings in the United States with the other 30+% related to robberies, drug deals or gang violence. In fact, over half of victims knew their killer in some way, whether or not they were the direct target.

It is difficult to deduce a clear definition and picture of mass violence in America due to shifting terms, differing definitions, and inconsistencies in reporting. Although we will engage a public mass shooting (Sandy Hook, discussed more below) as a case study for this project, I want to define mass shootings more broadly with the Gun Violence Archive. Mass shootings, whether they are public shootings, acts of domestic violence, or crime-related, have a traumatic impact on the community in general and church communities in particular. While there are distinctions

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[11] Mark Follman, "How Many Mass Shootings Are There, Really?," *New York Times*, December 3, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/04/opinion/how-many-mass-shootings-are-there-really.html.

[12] It is worth noting there is a difference between "mass murders" and "serial murders." While mass murders are executed in one incident within a relatively short amount of time, serial murders are a series of homicides "in which one or more offenders kill[s] a number of persons (at least 3) over a relatively long duration (i.e., days, weeks, months, or even years) with 'cooling off' periods between the murders." See Grant Duwe, *Mass Murder in the United States: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 8.

[13] Follman, "How Many Mass Shootings Are There, Really?"

between these different subcategories of mass shootings, the experience of traumatic loss is a common characteristic.

ARE INCIDENTS OF MASS SHOOTINGS ON THE RISE?

There is a sense that the numbers of mass shootings, especially public mass shootings, are increasing, especially over the last decade. Six out of the top ten most deadly mass shootings in modern United States history occurred within the last 10 years.[14] In addition, the FBI has also reported a rise in "active shooter" incidents, with 20 active shooter incidents in 2014-2015. That total is more than any other two-year period in the last sixteen years and almost six times the number of active shooter incidents in 2000-2001.[15] Looking at the broader definition of mass shootings claimed above (four or more victims shot and/or killed not including the shooter), the numbers have continued to increase according to the Gun Violence Archive with 275 mass shootings in 2014, 333 in 2015, and 383 in 2016.

While there is evidence that mass shootings or acts of mass violence may be on the rise, mass violence is not a new phenomenon.[16] As Duwe argues in his book, *Mass Murder in the*

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[14] Ciara Linnane, "These Are the 10 Deadliest Mass Shootings in Modern U.S. History," *MarketWatch*, November 6, 2017, http://www.marketwatch.com/story/these-are-the-10-deadliest-mass-shootings-in-us-history-2017-10-02.

[15] As described above, an "active shooter" situation is defined as "an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area." While possibly related to a mass killing or mass shooting, this kind of situation "implies that both law enforcement personnel and citizens have the potential to affect the outcome of the event based upon their responses." Jack Date, Pierre Thomas, and Mike Levine, "Active Shooter Incidents Continue to Rise, New FBI Data Show," ABC News, June 15, 2016, http://abcnews.go.com/US/active-shooter-incidents-continue-rise-fbi-data-shows/story?id=39876178.

[16] Of course, American history is littered with high-mortality massacres such as the Wounded Knee Massacre (with about 250 Native Americans killed by American Troops), the Mountain Meadow Massacre (with around 120 killed by a Mormon militia) and the Tulsa Massacre (with about 200 killed by white mobs). While these massacres are devastating and a traumatic scar on American history, they are often considered outside the bounds of contemporary definitions of "mass murders" or "mass killings." As criminology scholar Grant Duwe offered in an interview with NPR, "We don't tend to put massacres involving military or quasi-military actors and those perpetrated by a group in [the mass killing/shooting] category." See Eyder Peralta, "Putting 'Deadliest Mass Shooting in U.S. History' Into Some Historical Context," NPR, June 13, 2016, http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/06/13/481884291/putting-deadliest-mass-shooting-in-u-s-history-into-some-historical-context.

United States: A History, mass murder (in its contemporary definition) has "emerged as a new crime problem not because it was, in fact, historically new, but because key claimsmakers *perceived* it was new and began to make claims about it."[17] In fact, Duwe suggests that the research points to three eras of mass murder activity in the 20th century. The first forty years of the century saw relatively high mass murder rates with lower rates from 1940-1965. Since 1965 the mass murder rates have climbed and remained elevated.[18] However, Duwe argues, mass murders have been reported in a new way since the 1960s with the landmark massacres by Richard Speck in July, 1966 (where Speck killed eight student nurses in a dormitory in Chicago) and Charles Whitman in August, 1966 (where Whitman climbed the campus tower at University of Texas at Austin and began shooting passersby).[19] Both cases generated significant media coverage as well as were shocking in the ways the shooters indiscriminately targeted their victims. Even more, these two incidents were labeled by scholars Levin and Fox in their 1985 study on mass murders as the "onset of the age of mass murder in the United States."[20] As Duwe persuasively argues, it may not be that these incidents were the start of a new phenomenon (or even a new mass murder trend), but the beginning of increased reporting and public awareness. No matter whether the number of mass shooting incidents is actually increasing or merely the reporting of such violent events, the American people are increasingly cognizant of mass shootings and the looming threat of such an event.

[17] Duwe, *Mass Murder in the United States*, 12.
[18] In this text, Duwe only considers mass murder rates up until 1999.
[19] Duwe, *Mass Murder in the United States*, 5–8.
[20] Levin and Fox as quoted in Duwe, 9.

MASS VIOLENCE: AN AMERICAN PHENOMENON?

While mass shootings and acts of mass violence are certainly not unique to America, there are reasons for serious concern. The United States has the most mass shootings compared to other countries of the world. As the Wall Street Journal reported in 2015, the United States "represents less than 5% of the 7.3 billion global population but accounted for 31% of global mass shooters during the period from 1966 to 2012, more than any other country."[21] While Switzerland, Norway, and Finland had higher rates of mass-shooting deaths per capita, the United States had more mass shootings in terms of "raw numbers" than other country.[22] These numbers and reports reveal not only an increase in the amount of incidents but also an increase in the breadth of people impacted by violent trauma.

Organizations in the United States are starting to take notice. In June 2016 the American Medical Association declared gun violence a "public health crisis."[23] The American Psychiatric Association published an "Ethical Response to Mass Shootings" in January, 2016.[24] And beyond offering policy suggestions and critique, organizations such as the American Psychological Association have posted public information to help people who are coping with the experience of trauma that arises after incidents like mass shootings.[25]

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[21] This article defines a mass shooter as "one who killed at least four victims." Joe Palazzolo and Alexis Flynn, "U.S. Leads World in Mass Shootings," *Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 2015, http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-leads-world-in-mass-shootings-1443905359.

[22] There were 133 mass shooting incidents in the United States between 2000–2014. Though Norway, Finland, and Switzerland had higher fatality rates, they only saw four mass shooting incidents, combined, in the same years. Palazzolo and Flynn.

[23] The term "gun violence" includes individual incidents, shooting accidents, as well as acts of mass gun violence. Steven Sack, "AMA Declares Gun Violence 'A Public Health Crisis,'" interview by Steve Inskeep, *Morning Edition*, NPR, June 16, 2016, http://www.npr.org/2016/06/16/482279674/ama-declares-gun-violence-a-public-health-crisis.

[24] Claire Zilber, "An Ethical Response to Mass Shootings," *Psychiatrics News*, January 12, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.pn.2016.1a12.

[25] Dewey Cornell, et al., "Managing Your Distress in the Aftermath of a Shooting," American Psychological Association, accessed August 29, 2017, http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/mass-shooting.aspx.

Though national conversations around mass violence remain scattered and inconsistent without clear definitions, with little confidence in tracing national trends, and often co-opted by arguments over interconnected issues such as gun control and mental health care, the reality of mass violence remains a pressing issue for the nation and local communities. The reality of mass violence and its traumatic impact on individuals and communities in the United States cannot be denied. As will be discussed at length in the next chapter, the experience of trauma from violent incidents such as mass shootings breaks apart the narratives of individuals and communities use to make sense of their lives and world. Ironically, the narrative of mass shootings and mass violence in the United States is fragmentary at best. Even with thorough research and study we only gain small insights into the scope of these traumatic events. And often just as we begin to grasp the impact of one event, mass violence shape-shifts, taking on new dimensions and motives including terrorism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia (to name a few). We struggle to grasp these events and piece them together into some kind of narrative of mass violence that may inform and protect us against future incidents. No matter the statistics, definitions, or reporting agencies considered, it is clear that gun violence and mass shootings are too often a reality for many American families and communities. With little to no predictability, whole communities can be devastated in a matter of minutes and plunged into the experience of trauma due to sudden acts of violence. As a result, the American preacher is called upon to take seriously the ways mass violence may possibly or may already have traumatized their communities.

THE SHOOTING AT SANDY HOOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In order to think through the experience of trauma and the work of the preacher in the wake of traumatic violence, we will refer to the Sandy Hook shooting as a case study. As will be

discussed more below, Sandy Hook is neither *the* definitive mass shooting in the United States nor the Ur event. Instead, Sandy Hook offers us a real event against which we can consider different theoretical understandings of trauma and its impact on individuals and communities. Even with its unique characteristics and particularities, it offers us a historical touchstone through which we may better understand the psychological, sociological, theological, and narrative impacts of trauma. In order for this case study to be helpful, it is important to first consider the events of the Sandy Hook shooting and its particular characteristics (even in relation to other public mass shootings).

On the morning of December 14, 2012, school was in session at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, with more than 500 students, teachers, staff and administrators in the building. That same morning, twenty-year-old Newtown resident, Adam Lanza,[26] shot his mother in her bed with a .22 caliber Savage Mark II rifle. He then drove to Sandy Hook Elementary School and parked his 2010 Honda Civic in a "No Parking" zone in front of the school. Dressed in all black with a pale green pocket vest, black fingerless gloves, and yellow ear plugs in his ears, the shooter carried with him a Bushmaster semi-automatic XM15-E2S assault rifle, two semi-automatic handguns made by Glock and Sig Sauer, and a large supply of ammunition.[27] He arrived at the school after 9:30 to discover the doors had been locked for the day.[28] The shooter then used the Bushmaster semi-automatic rifle to "shoot his way into the

[26] From this point on, I will refer to Lanza as "the shooter."

[27] An Izhmash Saiga-12, 12-gauge semi-automatic shotgun was also found in the shooter's car. There is no evidence the weapon had been fired. See Stephen J. III Sedensky, "Report of the State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Danbury on the Shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School and 36 Yogananda Street, Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012" (District of Danbury: Office of the State's Attorney Judicial District of Danbury, November 25, 2013), 2.

[28] The doors were locked at precisely 9:30am every day. The school was equipped with a camera security system that required visitors to be buzzed into the school after 9:30am. In fact, on the day of the shooting, a parent was buzzed into the school at exactly 9:30am, only a few minutes before the shooter arrived.

building through the plate glass window to the right of the front lobby doors."[29] People from the front office reported hearing the first gunshots and glass breaking at approximately 9:34am. A few doors down from the main office (in Room 9) the principal, Dawn Hochsprung, was in a Planning and Placement Team meeting with School Psychologist Mary Sherlach, a parent, and Vice Principal Natalie Hammond. When Hochsprung heard those first shots, she, along with Sherlach and Hammond ran into the hallway. Hochsprung and Sherlach were killed. Hammond was wounded as well as another staff member at the far east end of the hallway (both survived). Hammond remained still on the floor of the hallway until the shooter left.[30] Hammond then crawled back into the conference room (Room 9) and a call was placed to 911. Unfortunately, during the events, the telephone in Room 9 was also used (accidentally, it is assumed) to turn on the school-wide intercom system. Therefore, the sound of rapid-fire shots, screaming, and crying was broadcast across the entire school for the duration of the incident.[31] As the noises rang out over the speaker system, teachers and students throughout the school huddled into closets, bathrooms, and under desks, unsure of what was going on. It is reported that the staff tried to keep the children calm by reading to them or asking them to draw pictures.[32]

After killing the principal and school psychologist, the shooter proceeded into the main office where staff had taken shelter, but he did not shoot. He eventually left the office and headed towards two neighboring first-grade classrooms near the front of the school, Classrooms 8 and 10. In Classroom 8, the shooter killed fifteen out of the sixteen students as well as the

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[29] Sedensky, "Report of the State's Attorney," 9.

[30] Based on the autopsy report, it appears Hochsprung died while lunging at the shooter trying to take him down. As described in *Newtown*, directed by Kim A. Snyder (Mile 22 Production Company, 2017).

[31] Sedensky, "Report of the State's Attorney," 9.

[32] Sedensky, 11.

substitute teacher, Lauren Rousseau, and the behavioral therapist, Rachel D'Avino.[33] In Classroom 10, the shooter killed five first grade students[34] as well as their teacher, Victoria Soto, and the behavioral therapist, Anne Marie Murphy.[35] Nine students were able to escape Room 10 and police discovered two children who had survived hiding in the class restroom. At 9:40 a.m., approximately six minutes after entering the school, the shooter took out the Glock handgun and killed himself in Classroom 10.[36]

Police arrived less than four minutes after the first 911 call was placed. The Newtown police were immediately dispatched to the school with the state police dispatched only a few minutes later. Within a minute of arriving, police heard what would be the final shot, but were concerned about a second shooter. The first three officers entered the building at 9:44am through the boiler room and made their way into the school, finding the bodies of Hochsprung and Sherlach. By 9:46 state police arrived and entered the front of the school.[37] A minute later they had set up a perimeter around the school and began evacuating students to the nearby fire station while calling for ambulances. At 10:10 the state police sergeant radioed back to dispatch: "We have multiple, in the double digits, of death here...so it's not good...we have, we're still clearing rooms...we have one suspect...one suspect down...deceased."[38]

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[33] Fourteen students were found deceased in the classroom. One child was transported to Danbury Hospital and later pronounced dead. Sedensky, 10.

[34] Four of the children were found deceased. One child was transported to Danbury Hospital and later pronounced dead. Sedensky, 10.

[35] Many of the teachers were found killed shielding or trying to protect their students. "Remembering the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting Victims," *NY Daily News*, accessed December 31, 2016, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/sandy-hook-elementary-school-shooting-victims-gallery-1.1221180.

[36] The entirety of the event, up until his suicide, the shooter used the Bushmaster semi-automatic rifle.

[37] Sedensky, "Report of the State's Attorney," 11–12.

[38] Nichole Mischke, "Photos and Timeline of Events from Sandy Hook Shooting Released," KHQ, February 22, 2016, http://www.khq.com/story/24073207/photos-and-timeline-of-events-from-sandy-hook-shooting-released; "Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting: What Happened?," CNN, accessed December 31, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2012/12/us/sandy-hook-timeline/index.html.

Students were escorted to the nearby firehouse where parents had gathered, frantic and anxious, unsure of what was going on. Officers and teachers escorted children out of the school class by class, telling many to hold hands and close their eyes as they walked past the carnage, past the barricade of armored vehicles and around the corner to the fire station. With each new class that arrived at the station there were shrieks of relief and joy by parents, seeing their children safe and alive.[39] But, even in the joy there was a sense of trepidation about the condition of the children who survived. As one parent recalled, "My son's teacher looked solemnly at us, all the parents, and said, 'They heard everything. The speaker was on. They heard it all.'"[40] But, for the families of twenty children and six adults, there was no relieved reunion. After many families had left with their children in tow, a group waited, hushed, in the old brick firehouse. The parents whose children were unaccounted for were ushered into a separate room. There were, almost ironically, cartoons playing for the children and donated food, which remained untouched. Finally, an officer entered and confirmed that their children had been killed. As the *New York Times* reported, "The wails that followed could be heard from outside."[41] Twenty-six families returned home without loved ones that day. And the small community of Newtown was plunged into trauma and shock. As one teacher, Ms. Feinstein, said to the press, "I've been here for 11 years. I can't imagine who would do this to our poor little babies."[42]

The Sandy Hook shooting is easily categorized as a public mass shooting in which the gunman shot at victims "indiscriminately." In a matter of minutes a single gunman entered a

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[39] Peter Applebome and Michael Wilson, "Witnesses Recall a Nightmare That Took Shape," *New York Times*, December 14, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/nyregion/witnesses-recall-deadly-shooting-sandy-hook-newtown-connecticut.html.

[40] Snyder, *Newtown*.

[41] Applebome and Wilson, "Witnesses Recall a Nightmare."

[42] Applebome and Wilson.

public school and shot at random, killing twenty-six people, making Sandy Hook the third deadliest mass shooting in the United States to date.[43] This event of mass violence became a national sensation. As many Americans remember, the incident was covered at every angle by news stations, national networks, magazines, and newspapers for weeks (and even months) on end. This story did not just impact Newtown or Connecticut, but sent shockwaves nation-wide. While certainly not first mass shooting or school shooting (other prominent public mass shootings like Columbine and Virginia Tech came before) nor a representative example of all mass shootings, the Sandy Hook shooting has left an indelible mark upon the national consciousness.

While Sandy Hook is often held up as a point of comparison for other shootings or acts of mass violence,[44] there is no such thing as a "typical" mass shootings. Each carries its own unique story, social, and political conditions. In addition, mass shootings regularly shape-shift and take on different social concerns and motives even as they may still be categorized as mass shootings. For example, the shooting at Charleston's Mother Emmanuel AME Church required attention to issues of race, religion, and white nationalism. In a similar way, the shooting during "Latin Night" at the Orlando gay nightclub, Pulse, requires the consideration of issues like terrorism, xenophobia, racism, and homophobia. Each shooting brings its own "baggage" of motives, demographic particularities, and social circumstances.

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[43] As of August 25, 2017.

[44] Sandy Hook is often mentioned as a point of comparison when other incidents of mass violence occur. Sandy Hook is also considered a point of national moral failing in regards to gun control legislation. See German Lopez and Soo Oh, "Mass Shootings since Sandy Hook, in One Map," *Vox*, August 21, 2015, http://www.vox.com/a/mass-shootings-sandy-hook; Jodi Upton, "What Newtown and Orlando Have in Common," *USA Today*, June 13, 2016, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/06/13/what-newtown-and-orlando-have-common/85832432/; Nora Kelly, "Are Mass Shootings Contagious?," *The Atlantic*, December 14, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/mass-shootings-contagious-sandy-hook-san-bernardino/420396/; Hayley Miller, "There Have Been Over 200 School Shooting Incidents Since Sandy Hook," HuffPost, December 14, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/school-shootings-since-sandy-hook_us_58503d99e4b04c8e2bb232eb.

The shooting at Sandy Hook certainly carries its own social, demographic, and incidental particularities. To begin, Newtown was painted as one of those places where people, especially the residents themselves, never expected something like a mass shooting to happen. Newtown, Connecticut is a self-described "scenic small town" located approximately sixty miles northeast of New York City. It is advertised as having "an enviable combination of good schools, low crime, college-educated neighbors,…and a high rate of home ownership" making it the kind of place "that families look for when choosing a good community to raise children."[45] With a population of 27,560 in 2010, over a third of households had children under 18 years old.[46] It is a "decidedly white-collar town"[47] with an estimated mean income (in 2013) of $116,489 (as compared with $67,098 in Connecticut in 2013).[48] According to *Neighborhood Scout*, "Newtown home prices are not only among the most expensive in Connecticut, but Newtown real estate also consistently ranks among the most expensive in America."[49] Notably, the town is largely racially homogenous, with 90.8% of residents who are White, 3.5% are Hispanic, 2.3% are Asian, 0.3% are African American, 0.5% are American Indian, and 1.5% identify as two or more races.[50] The six public schools in Newtown (including Sandy Hook Elementary) consistently receive high marks and in December 2012 *Neighborhood Scout* ranked Newtown as safer than 79 percent of cities and towns in the U.S., placing it fourth on a special list of 100 safest U.S. cities.[51] In many ways, Newtown was a homogenous haven with a significant majority of residents being white,

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[45] "Newtown, CT Real Estate and Demographic Data Overview," accessed August 29, 2017, https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ct/newtown.

[46] As of 2010, 3,797 households out of 9,459 had children under eighteen.

[47] "Newtown, CT Real Estate and Demographic Data Overview."

[48] "Newtown, Connecticut Profile," accessed December 28, 2016, http://www.city-data.com/city/Newtown-Connecticut.html.

[49] "Newtown, CT Real Estate and Demographic Data Overview."

[50] These numbers were calculated in 2013. "Newtown, Connecticut Profile."

[51] Jordan G. Teicher, "What Kind of Place Is Newtown, Conn.?," NPR, December 14, 2012, http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2012/12/14/167283705/what-kind-of-place-is-newtown-conn.

wealthy, and educated. Parents in the *Newtown* documentary describe moving to Newtown for the excellent schools, the family-friendly neighborhoods, the close-knit community, and the safety Newtown provided as a small town away from the city.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that Newtown was so shocked by the experience of a shooting in their elementary school, as was much of (white) America. The statistics lied and the image of the "idyllic"[52] American town was shattered in a matter of six minutes. The severe juxtaposition of the picture of Newtown as a safe, wealthy, tight-knit community and the sudden loss of 20 children and seven adults at the hands of a member of the community created a large degree of cognitive dissonance. Community members and the American public in general (especially those who could identify with the residents of Newtown) grappled with the reality that no place was safe from such mass violence.

Additionally, the Sandy Hook shootings are characterized by a distinct lack a motive. Unlike a situation as in Columbine where peers shot teachers and classmates out of a desire for vengeance, the Sandy Hook shooter had little connection to these children, these teachers, or this school.[53] He had no clear vendetta and no strong motive other than to cause deadly chaos. As CNN reported, the shooter "took [the] motive to his grave."[54] While investigators were able to trace the shooter's long descent from "shy pre-teen to a mentally ill recluse obsessed with school shootings," there was no motive given as to why Lanza would wake up one morning and shoot twenty children and seven adults, including his mother.[55] The official report offers a conflicting

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[52] Crystal Malachi and Bob Waite, "Newtown—A Nice Place to Visit," *Bucks County Magazine*, September 14, 2016, http://www.buckscountymag.com/api/content/56e37868-7ad2-11e6-b3b4-0a161eac8f79/.

[53] While the shooter had attended Sandy Hook Elementary as a child, there is no evidence he had any ongoing connection with the school or any student, teacher or employee. See Sedensky, "Report of the State's Attorney," 29.

[54] Matt Smith, "Sandy Hook Killer Adam Lanza Took Motive to His Grave," CNN, November 26, 2013, http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/25/justice/sandy-hook-shooting-report/index.html.

[55] Smith.

picture of the young man, but states that despite his fascination with mass shootings, "he displayed no aggressive or threatening tendencies."[56] In fact, the Connecticut authorities opted to complete their report without a recorded motive, stating, "The evidence clearly shows that the shooter planned his actions, including the taking of his own life, but there is no clear indication why he did so, or why he targeted Sandy Hook Elementary School."[57] This differentiates Sandy Hook from many other mass shootings in which there is at least a vague sense of motive such as racism (i.e., Charleston) or homophobia (i.e., Orlando) or revenge (i.e., Columbine or Virginia Tech or Minneapolis) or political anger (i.e., the Planned Parenthood shooting in Colorado Springs) or a shooter's associations with terrorist organizations (i.e., San Bernardino). This lack of motive can increase a sense of communal vulnerability with no logical reason as to why the shooting happened on that day, in that community, or among that group of people.

While the Sandy Hook shooting had its social and circumstantial particularities that contributed to a heightened sense of shock and vulnerability both within the Newtown community and for those who identified with them, the in-depth study of this incident should not diminish the shock, pain, and trauma caused by the many other mass shootings that happen in the United States characterized by very different circumstances. As mentioned in the introduction to this project, Sandy Hook is meant to serve only as a helpful case study as we consider the larger question of preaching in the wake of violent trauma. With all of its commonalities with and distinctions from other events of mass violence, Sandy Hook is not meant to be representative or emblematic of all mass shootings. Each event of mass violence brings its own set of social, political, racial, and economic factors. Yet, all events of unexpected mass violence share one

[56] Sedensky, "Report of the State's Attorney," 29.

[57] From Sedensky, "Report of the State's Attorney" as quoted in Smith, "Sandy Hook Killer Adam Lanza Took Motive to His Grave."

common characteristic—they all evoke the experience of personal and communal trauma. In the aftermath of such violence, the reality of trauma embodied in the community and congregation is one of the primary challenges and concerns of the preacher. Therefore, we now turn to construct a working definition of trauma, consider the nature of trauma, and think specifically about the work of the preacher in the midst of a traumatized community.

CHAPTER 2:

THE EXPERIENCE AND IMPACT OF TRAUMA

THE NATURE OF TRAUMA

Before considering proposals for preaching in times of violent trauma, we must first identify the characteristics of traumatic events, define the nature of trauma, and consider the impact of trauma on communities as well as individuals. In order to understand the complex nature of trauma and to craft a suitably nuanced working definition, I will explore trauma from the distinct perspectives of three significant trauma specialists. Serene Jones, a respected feminist theologian and trauma theorist, will provide the basic structure of our definition with her clear description of seven key characteristics of a "traumatic event." Building upon Jones' description, then, we will next turn to the work of noted trauma theorist Cathy Caruth for a deeper understanding of the psychological dimensions of the experience of trauma, especially attuned to the work of caregivers. Since Caruth's work is concerned primarily with individual trauma—the impact of a traumatic event on an individual's psyche and self-understanding—and we are concerned, additionally, with the traumatic impact on communities of mass shootings, we will finally seek insight from sociologist and trauma theorist Kai Erikson. He utilizes Caruth's work, but he pushes beyond Caruth's definition of individual trauma toward an understanding of "collective trauma" borne out of his ethnographic and sociological work with traumatized communities in Buffalo Creek, East Swallow, Three Mile Island, and Ojibway Indian Preserve (among others).

Defining Traumatic Events

We begin by considering what constitutes a "traumatic event." In her book *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*, Serene Jones, drawing upon the work of clinical psychologists Bessel van der Kolk and Judith Herman, crafts a complex definition of a traumatic event upon which I will build:[1]

> A traumatic event is one in which a person or persons perceives themselves or others as threatened by an external force that seeks to annihilate them and against which they are unable to resist and which overwhelms their capacity to cope.[2]

From this definition, Jones parses out seven key characteristics of a traumatic event:

1. Traumatic events are "distinguishable in their order of magnitude."[3] A traumatic event leads the victim to experience "the threat of annihilation," not just a sense of sadness or

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[1] In *Trauma and Grace*, Jones seeks to articulate a theology of trauma while asserting a remainder of grace present in the midst of any given traumatic experience. She grounds much of her book with stories of her own encounters with traumatized people. In the first chapter of her book (most pertinent to my work in this section of the project), Jones begins with the story of Leah, a young woman who was new to her church and asked Jones to serve as a kind of church membership mentor. Jones recalls sitting next to Leah when Leah first encountered the words of the Eucharist, which triggered emotions and recollections of Leah's childhood trauma in a powerful, visceral way. Out of a desire to understand Leah's experience of trauma, Jones explored the broad field of trauma studies and constructed an understanding that is "partly psychological and sociological, partly literary and poetic, and partly philosophical and theoretical" (12). Jones contends that, even among these broad fields, there is a "remarkable…consensus about the basic features of a traumatic event" (12). However, Jones leans heavily on the psychological literature, especially noting the work of Judith Herman and Bessel van der Kolk, in defining the characteristics of a traumatic event. That being said, professor of pastoral theology, Sharon G. Thornton, in her review of the book applauded the way Jones never collapsed theology and psychology and instead found resonances between the two. Another reviewer, Harold K. Bush Jr., writing in *Christianity and Literature*, praises Jones's work as a strong introduction to theology and trauma studies. While critical of some of her exegetical moves related to her work with the ending of Mark, he praises a variety of chapters (and the book, overall) for their mix of pastoral sensitivity and scholarly assertions. Ultimately, he writes, "[Jones's text] is up to date and full of good citations and compelling discussions, with the added benefit of providing some excellent theological reflection…" Margaret D. Komitsuka of Oberlin College lauded Jones's work as a "timely and profound theological contribution to current interdisciplinary discussions of trauma and the self." Overall, Jones's text was extraordinarily well-received by scholars for the ways it finds resonance and intersection between trauma theory and the theology and practices of the Christian community. See Sharon G. Thornton, review of *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*, by Serene Jones, *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 20, no.1 (Summer 2010): 103; Harold K. Bush Jr., review of *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*, by Serene Jones, *Christianity and Literature* 60, no.1 (Autumn 2010): 205; Margaret D. Komitsuka, review of *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*, by Serene Jones, *Interpretation* 65, no.1 (January 2011): 103.

[2] While this is marked as a quotation in her text, Jones does not cite the original source. After extensive research, I believe this is a statement Jones compiled grounded in the work of van der Kolk and Herman and simply wanted to set aside with quotations. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 13.

[3] Jones, 13.

discomfort. This "order of magnitude" marks the difference between an event that is merely painful or disappointing as compared to an event that is "traumatic."

2. An event is traumatic when a person experiences it subjectively as such. Put another way, an event *is* traumatic when it is experienced *as* traumatic. On the contrary, if a person does not experience, internally, a car accident or heated interaction with a coworker as life-threatening, the event does not carry the same wounding capabilities as a traumatic event.
3. Even though trauma is experienced subjectively, it is usually grounded in an actual, concrete event.
4. The impact of traumatic events can extend beyond immediate victims to nearby witnesses. As Jones asserts, the witnesses or loved ones may not experience the immediate threat of annihilation but "[t]he sheer force of such violence…can collapse—at an experiential level—the distinction we commonly make between 'you and me'."[4] Therefore, the violent event that destroys or threatens the victim can also be internalized by and wound witnesses.
5. Traumatic events can impact both individuals and whole communities, as we will explore more below with sociologist Kai Erikson.
6. Traumatic events may be one-time catastrophic events like mass shootings, earthquakes, or bombings; but traumatic events may also be long-term, ongoing experiences of violence like domestic abuse or sexual harassment.

[4] Jones, 14.

7. Traumatic events, in the words of Jones, are "'overwhelming' insofar as they are experienced as inescapable and unmanageable. They outstrip our capacity to respond to and cope with them."[5]

In summary, traumatic events may be defined as either singular or ongoing occurrences in which both victims and, often, witnesses, as individuals and/or communities experience a threat of annihilation that pushes them beyond their ability to cope or respond.

Measured by the seven features of a traumatic event outlined by Jones, mass shootings such as the one that happened in Newtown can be characterized as traumatic events. Mass shootings are certainly marked by their "order of magnitude" and make victims as well as nearby witnesses experience, at minimum, a threat of annihilation. In Newtown twenty-seven people were killed by the shooter the morning of December 14, 2012. Beyond those who were shot, the school was put on lockdown due to the immediate threat the shooter posed. The threat of annihilation was felt among the entire school community. David Wheeler, father of first-grader Ben Wheeler who was killed in the Sandy Hook shooting, recalls in the documentary, *Newtown*, "Within hours, my surviving son expressed fear. And what does a father say? What does every father in the world say? 'Don't worry. It's gonna be okay.' And his immediate response was, as you might imagine, 'That's what you said to Ben.'"[6] While it is impossible to get in the heads of the victims of any mass shooting, comments like the one above from David Wheeler's surviving son allow scholars, therapists, and psychologists to surmise that mass shootings like at Sandy Hook Elementary are internally and subjectively experienced as traumatic by both victims and nearby witnesses due to an actual life-threatening event.

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[5] Jones, 15.
[6] Snyder, *Newtown*.

True to the characteristics of traumatic events as outlined by Jones, mass shootings are cataclysmic events that have impacts on not only victims and nearby witnesses, but also whole communities. The *Newtown* film begins with an interview with Gene Rosen, a community member who lived near the school. He recalls the day of the shooting. He was on the phone with his brother-in-law, but hung up because there were kids standing on his lawn. "I walked up to them and they looked horrible," he recalled. "They were out of breath and I could tell they had been crying. But, they were quiet…in their abject fear and terror." And then Rosen begins to cry as he recalled: "And then the two boys just start talking—they start describing what had happened: 'Oh, he had a big gun and a small gun.' They just kept exclaiming: 'We can't go back! We can't go back to that school cause we don't have a teacher!'"[7] Rosen, alongside the community of Newtown, Connecticut experienced the deep threat of annihilation. The mass shooting was a "one-time occurrence of cataclysmic proportions"[8] and was overwhelming to the victims, families, and community as it exceeded the community's "capacity to respond and cope."[9] As Monsigneur Robert Weiss, the priest at St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown, observed, "I don't think a community can ever be prepared—especially a small town—can ever be prepared for something like this. It is fearful. It's really fearful that people's lives can be so disrupted so quickly—forever. There's no making up for this….The foundation got cracked. And everybody's not certain how wide that crack is going to get."[10] The overwhelming nature, threat of annihilation, and far-reaching traumatic impact caused by mass shootings such as the one that occurred in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012, all qualify mass shootings like Sandy Hook to be characterized, according to Jones' defintion, as traumatic events. With this label

[7] Snyder.
[8] Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 15.
[9] Jones, 15.
[10] Snyder, *Newtown*.

established, we will now turn to defining the term "trauma" and understanding the psychological impact and characteristics of trauma in relation to individuals and whole communities.

Defining Trauma

With Jones' seven-part definition of a "traumatic event" before us, we turn to Cathy Caruth, a comparative literature scholar and trauma theorist,[11] to help us move from simply identifying the characteristics that mark an event as "traumatic" to understanding the personal psychological experience of trauma that unfolds during and after a traumatic event. Put another way, Caruth's definition of trauma deepens our understanding of the subjective experience of trauma (Jones' #2 above) and helps to further explain how the experience of trauma is "overwhelming" and "outstrips our capacity to cope" (Jones' #7 above).

Caruth's working definition of "trauma" is especially aimed towards those who seek to understand and care for traumatized persons. As she remarks in the "Introduction" to the first part of her essay collection, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Caruth is not interested in further developing or pinning down a precise clinical definition of trauma. Instead, she is interested in understanding how trauma impacts individuals and "to examine how trauma unsettles and forces us to rethink our notions of experience, and of communication," especially as therapists, psychologists, teachers, and, I might add, preachers who may encounter people who have been impacted by traumatic events.[12] As Caruth notes, it is difficult to define "trauma" in a clinically-

[11] In his text, *The Trauma Question*, which traces the origins and development of the concept of trauma from the 1860s to the present, Roger Luckhurst asserts that Cathy Caruth is "one of the central figures who helped foster the boom in cultural trauma theories in the early 1990s." Throughout the text Luckhurst returns to Caruth as a central scholar of cultural trauma theory. Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008), 4. Caruth's work is often well-received by critics. In a review of *Unclaimed Experience*, James Berger asserts that Caruth's work is "full of brilliant insights" and especially commends her reading and analysis of both the text and writing of Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*. See James Berger, review of *The Trauma Question*, by Roger Luckhurst, *Contemporary Literature* 38, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 577.

[12] Cathy Caruth, "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.

precise way for two reasons. First, the term "trauma" has become an all-inclusive term that is used to describe human response to a broad range of experiences from returning from war to surviving a mass shooting to enduring ongoing abuse or oppression. Second, the phenomenon of trauma "brings us to the limits of our understanding" and anything psychoanalytics, literary theory, psychiatry, or sociology understands about the nature of trauma is gained only because "they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience."[13] For this "gap," this experience of "radical disruption" sits at the heart of the definition and experience of trauma.

Trauma is an internal blow or wounding of the mind that occurs when an experience or event cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into pre-conceived frameworks of understanding. Caruth asserts that trauma cannot be defined by the event since the trauma-inducing event can be singular and catastrophic or a persisting condition. Additionally, any given event does not traumatize persons equally. Instead, the experience of trauma is in the "structure of its experience or reception."[14] Trauma happens when the event is experienced "too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known" in the midst or even in the immediate aftermath of the traumatic event.[15] Instead, the traumatized person is continually "possessed" by that unassimilated image, experience, or event. Or, as sociologist Kai Erikson interprets Caruth, the trauma and traumatic experience become a "dominating feature of your interior landscape…and in the process threatens to drain you and leave you empty."[16] Symptomatically, the event continually returns in dreams, flashbacks, or images that bring the traumatized person, unwillingly, back to the original

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[13] Caruth, 4.
[14] Caruth, 4.
[15] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.
[16] Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 183.

event. With these ongoing returns, the traumatized person seeks to assimilate this information or make sense of the event. However, with each failed attempt, the experience of trauma continues.

The term "trauma," from the Greek *trauma* ("wound"), was originally employed to describe injury inflicted on the body. However, in its later usage, especially in psychiatric, therapeutic, and medical literature, trauma began to be conceived as "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind."[17] Sigmund Freud, especially in his text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, began to describe trauma as a wound in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world, which, unlike many bodily wounds, is not easily healed.[18] In his research on trauma, Freud noted the similarity between the pathology of his patients who, in 1920, returned from World War I with "war neuroses" and his patients he had long treated for "accident neuroses." In his writings, Freud noted the ways both accident victims and war veterans would be haunted by dreams that "have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident."[19] What surprised Freud and continues to impact Caruth's work was that such dreams or flashbacks were not expressions of unconscious meaning or wishes (which fit Freud's previous research frameworks), but were the "literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits."[20] But, this un-willed return of the experience or event in dreams, flashbacks, or images, points to the heart of the nature of trauma: "[t]he force of this experience [of trauma] would appear to arise precisely…in the collapse of its understanding."[21]

Based upon her literary study of Freud's work on trauma, Caruth conceives of trauma as a dual crisis—of history and of truth. First, the experience of trauma is a crisis of history. The

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[17] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 3.
[18] Caruth, 3–4.
[19] Sigmund Freud as quoted in Caruth, "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," 5.
[20] Caruth, 5.
[21] Caruth, 7.

traumatic event cannot be completely integrated and therefore remains a history that cannot be fully told or represented by the traumatized person. As the information cannot be entirely assimilated in the minds of the traumatized persons, they do not fully understand what has occurred and, therefore, do not have a full grasp on their own history. This is not, Caruth argues alongside Freud, amnesia—the forgetting of the event after the fact or a kind of blacking out during the event. As Freud recorded in his work with both war veterans and accident patients, these scenes come back to patients with clarity and force. Instead, it is that the full weight of these events and experiences are so overwhelming that the mind cannot fully integrate such events into its previously-constructed frameworks of understanding. This is what leads to gaps in memory or, put another way, a crisis of history. This crisis of history leads to the second crisis—the crisis of truth. Without full access to one's history, especially the history of a trauma-inducing event, the truth of what is real or imaginary, what is known and what remains unknown, is thrown into question. As Caruth articulates it, the truth of one's reality "cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language."[22] No longer can the traumatized person speak and act with confidence. Because they lack full access to their history, traumatized persons no longer feel secure in their assertions of what is true.[23]

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[22] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

[23] Caruth grounds her definitions and assertions about the nature of trauma in the concept of *aporia*, or unresolvable paradox, especially fueled by her reading of Freud in concert with thinkers from the Yale school. The aporia of trauma is that the traumatic experience is seared in the mind, but not fully processed. As Caruth writes, "Traumatic experience suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it." *Unclaimed Experiences*, 91–92. The aporia deepens with the Freudian paradox of temporality: trauma has a certain "belatedness" (or "afterwardness" as Jean Laplanche translated Freud's term) in that the experience can only begin to be grasped after the fact of the traumatic event. This central focus on aporia and Caruth's general definition of trauma finds its strongest foundation in Freud's engagement with the psychoanalytics of traumatic neuroses. Though Freud's consideration of trauma is intermittent within his written works, Caruth relies on two of Freud's later texts that explore trauma, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* published in 1920 when Freud needed to contend with the trauma of soldiers returning from World War I, and *Moses and Monotheism*, which explored Freud's idea that the origin of Judaism is grounded in the experience of trauma, written while reflecting on his own traumatic departure from Vienna in 1938. As a literary scholar and trauma theorist, Caruth builds upon Freud's concept of repetition compulsion—the ways that trauma continues to revisit the

This dual crisis of history and of truth is on full display in the testimonies offered in the documentary *Newtown*. Nicole Hockley, whose autistic son, Dylan Hockley, was killed in the shooting, talks to the interviewer over home video images of Dylan. "I have these memories," she says, "I have these pictures; I have hair and teeth. And yet, you go through these crazy motions of like, 'Am I just dreaming all of this?' I still keep expecting him to be there, but have I just gone insane? Is this real? Did he even ever exist?"[24] Later in the film she recalls the day of the shooting, being at the firehouse. "I had only recently seen a photo [of the gathering of parents at the firehouse]," she shared, sobbing, "and I suddenly looked at it and I thought, 'Oh my God. That's me.' And seeing me with my friend holding me—she just held me for the longest time. And that's kind of the last memory I have of being at the firehouse. I don't remember how I got home."[25] For Nicole Hockley, the event was so overwhelming that, as a traumatized person, she could not fully assimilate or understand it given her current psychological framework for how the world, or her life, traditionally worked. As a result, the memory of the event is not fully accessible to her—there is a crisis of history. She has incomplete memories of the day of the shooting. Even more, she did not physically witness her son's murder; such distance adds to the

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traumatized against their will. As Freud outlines in one passage: "Dreams occurring in the traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. This astonishes people far too little…anyone who accepts it as something self-evident that dreams should put them back at night into the situation that caused them to fall ill has misunderstood the nature of dreams." Freud as quoted in Caruth, "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," 5. Caruth dissects Freud's own analysis of this repetition compulsion, arguing that trauma is a crisis of history, truth, narrative time, and representation. (The crises of history and truth are discussed above. The further crises of narrative time and representation will be explored more fully in the second half of the chapter.) Especially in her text, *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth wrestles with the voicing or representation of the aporias of trauma in conversation with the Yale school and two distinct voices, Theodor Adorno and Jacques Derrida. Alongside Adorno, Caruth recognizes the ways that trauma shatters language as there is no comprehensive understanding. Yet, trauma asks us to find ways through the paradox of representing the unrepresentable. Caruth further develops her aporetic thinking with Derrida's commitment to recognizing the unknowability of significant, often traumatic, moments in history and that the responsible response philosophically, politically, and ethically, is to preserve the traces of the aporia of unknowability as opposed to suppressing them. Caruth's work reveals a strong dependence on Freud while thinking alongside Adorno, Derrida, and others of the Yale School of thought.

[24] Snyder, *Newtown*.

[25] Snyder.

incompleteness of memory. This crisis of history leads to a crisis of truth for Nicole. She begins to question her sanity; she begins to question what is real. She begins to wonder, at times, whether Dylan existed at all. Due to this fragmented memory—this incomplete reception of what has occurred—Nicole questions whether any truth she previously knew (especially related to her deceased son) can be trusted.

Understanding Collective Trauma

If Caruth helps us better understand the subjective experience of trauma that Jones suggests in her structure of traumatic events, sociologist Kai Erikson helps us to understand Jones's assertion that traumatic events impact both witnesses (Jones's #4 above) and entire communities (Jones's #5 above). While Caruth's definition and study of the nature of trauma is of value for those seeking to understand or work with traumatized people, Caruth's focus is on individual trauma—wounding that happens to an individual's psyche. However, as Jones outlined in brief at the beginning, when traumatic events such as mass shootings occur, the trauma can impact whole communities. And preachers must be attentive to both the individual and communal trauma when preaching in the wake of a traumatic event.

In his scholarship, Kai Erikson, a sociologist who has spent his career studying communities that have each suffered a traumatic event of one kind or another,[26] takes a definition of individual trauma very closely aligned with that of Caruth and pushes further to conceive of

[26] Erikson's work is well respected in the sociological world and in the area of trauma theory. His book in which he develops the concept of individual and collective trauma (see more below), *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of a Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, received the prestigious Sorokin Award from the American Sociological Association. Scholars such as Thomas J. Cottle recognized Erikson's work as a valuable contribution both to disaster literature (which documents the impacts and stories of disasters in given lives or communities) as well as a valuable contribution to trauma literature. Without utilizing personal images and stories of survivors as "grist for some theoretical mill," Cottle notes that Erikson is able to illuminate larger issues especially around the tenuous balance between the personal and communal longings, realities, and experiences of trauma. See Thomas J. Cottle, review of *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, by Kai T. Erikson, *New Republic* 176, no. 16 (April 4, 1977): 35.

communal or collective trauma. Erikson spent his career studying communities facing a variety of situations that, under Jones's criterion, qualify as traumatic events, including the dam failure and floods in Buffalo Creek, West Virginia, the defrauding of two hundred Haitian migrants in Immokalee, Florida, the partial nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, and the contamination of a key waterway in Ojibway Indian Reserve in northwest Ontario, among others.[27] Out of those studies and in conversations with scholars such as Caruth and Freud, Erikson defines trauma as a figurative blow to the tissues of the mind in which the experience overwhelms human capacity to make sense of the experience, causing a "continual reliving of [the] wounding experience."[28] Like Caruth, Erikson wants to define trauma not as the event, but as people's reception of an event, as trauma may be caused by a one-time calamitous incident or a persisting occurrence. Either way, it is the human reaction to the event, the ongoing inability to fully cope with or understand what has occurred that constitutes the experience of trauma. Or, as Erikson writes, "trauma has the quality of converting sharp stabs…into an enduring state of mind…The moment becomes a season, the event becomes a condition."[29] However, as a sociologist, Erikson takes this vocabulary of trauma he shares with Caruth and expands it to claim that scholars and clinicians should "speak of traumatized communities as something distinct from assemblies of traumatized persons."[30] We will refer to this type of communal trauma as "collective trauma."

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[27] Erikson makes a distinction between natural and "technological" disasters. Natural disasters are viewed as an act of God or part of the innate chaos of the world. On the other hand, technological disasters are blamed on human failure. Beyond a difference in blame, technological disasters tend to provoke outrage while natural disasters often lead to a sense of resignation. For more, see Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," 191–93.

[28] Erikson, 184.

[29] Erikson, 185.

[30] Erikson, 185.

If individual trauma describes, as Caruth and Freud assert, the wounding of an individuals' mind, collective trauma, according to Erikson, is the wounding of the tissues that connect the community.[31] In collective trauma the trauma inflicted on individuals persons "can combine to created a mood, an ethos—a group culture, almost—that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up." Collective trauma impacts the interrelationships between traumatized persons in a given community. Collective trauma can bring about two communal effects either separately or in combination—it can draw people together through a shared experience of trauma or cause fractures and corrosion of communal bonds.

At times, experiences of collective trauma can more closely bind a traumatized individuals together or even create a sub-community of the wounded. Survivors of a traumatic incident are changed by and, therefore, often feel different from others around them. This was the case with psychologist Robert D. Stolorow after the traumatic death of his first wife. In his book, *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytical, and Philosophical Reflections*, Stolorow recalls sitting at a conference dinner with longtime friends and colleagues and feeling utterly alone:

> [A]s I looked around the ballroom, they all seemed like strange and alien beings to me. Or, more accurately, I seemed like a strange and alien being—not of this world…An unbridgeable gulf seemed to open up, separating me forever from my

[31] Erikson builds his argument for the term "collective trauma" from his experience living with and interviewing the survivors of the Buffalo Creek disaster. Originally recruited by a law firm, Arnold and Porter, to assess the damage in West Virginia from a sociological point of view, Erikson stumbled upon a fascinating case study of trauma. His research was focused mainly on the conversation and stories of the survivors of the flood. With access to over thirty thousand pages of transcript material from legal depositions, psychiatric evaluations, and survivor statements combined with Erikson's own interviews at Buffalo Creek, Erikson identified that survivors had two "distinguishable facets" of trauma—individual trauma and collective trauma. The two were connected as one can exacerbate the other, but they are distinct as each can exist without the other (e.g. one can experience individual trauma without collective trauma or vice versa). See Kai Erikson, *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 153–54.

> friends and colleagues. They could never begin to fathom my experience, I thought to myself, because we now lived in altogether different worlds.[32]

This separation, feeling set apart by one's particular traumatic experience may actually lead to stronger bonding within the general community or the creation of a particular sub-community. For some survivors of trauma, this feeling of difference can "become a kind of calling, a status, where people are drawn to others similarly marked."[33] When traumatized persons encounter others who have been similarly traumatized, they sense a sort of traumatic kinship that can draw them together. Erikson notes that such communities are not brought together by "feelings of affection" (though, arguably, such feelings may develop later). This kind of bonding of the wounded may happen across the whole community (e.g. all of Newtown) or may be witnessed most powerfully in sub-communities of those wounded in a particular way by the traumatic event (e.g. parents in Newtown who lost children).

It is difficult to be part of a sub-community formed after trauma. Membership requires very particular wounds for entry. However, those shared wounds and shared experiences can lead to a strong bond. Erikson points to the study of a reunion of Americans who had been hostages together in Iran. One former hostage explained to a reporter: "It is easy to be together. We don't have to explain things. We carry the same pain."[34] Similar community-building happened in Newtown in the wake of the Sandy Hook shootings. In the documentary, *Newtown,* two different interviewees describe kinship found in their traumatized sub-communities. Early in the film Rich Thorne, the head janitor at Sandy Hook Elementary, describes his new-found communal connection with the other teachers and staff who were at the school on the day of the

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[32] Robert D. Stolorow, *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: The Analytic Press, 2007), 13–14.

[33] Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," 186.

[34] Erikson, 186.

shooting. “The teachers, the staff, we understand each other,” he said, “We don’t even have to speak and we know.”[35] Through their shared experience in the school that day (even though they were in different parts of the building), they found a kinship and tight sub-community of trauma. Similarly, Nicole Hockley describes her family’s relationship with the Barden family (especially Mark Barden) after the shooting. Both families lost children and now both Nicole and Mark are involved with the Sandy Hook Promise program which travels around the United States to educate and work to “protect children from gun violence by encouraging and supporting solutions that create safer, healthier homes, schools, and communities.”[36] However, it is not just working alongside one another, but the shared experience of losing a child in the mass shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School that binds them and their families together. The Barden and Hockley families have formed a tight community. As Nicole Hockley describes, “I do think of Mark as a brother because we work together very closely. We can sense what each other is feeling and protect each other when necessary. ‘Cause we’ve chosen a similar path of what we wanna do to honor our children. That’s a bond for life now with that family. I will always have their back and I believe that they’ll always have mine as well.”[37] Like the teachers and staff of Sandy Hook, the Barden and Hockley families share a very specific experience of trauma. These common traumas, in the case of both the Iran hostages and Sandy Hook, have drawn together and bonded particular sub-communities within the traumatized community of Newtown.

While a unique sub-community of the wounded may be formed after a traumatic incident, it is more common, Erikson asserts, for trauma to damage the connective fabric of the larger

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[35] Snyder, *Newtown*.
[36] Home page, Sandy Hook Promise, accessed August 18, 2017, http://www.sandyhookpromise.org/.
[37] Snyder, *Newtown*.

community (e.g. Newtown). As Erikson writes in his text on the Buffalo Creek community (and repeats in his 1995 essay almost twenty years later):

> By *collective trauma*…I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with [individual] 'trauma.' But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared…'I' continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. 'You' continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But 'we' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body.[38]

Collective trauma can lead to a corrosive collapse of community. As the bonds between people fall apart, the community no longer serves its function as a place for support, comfort, or enforcing social traditions and norms. Erikson witnessed this at Buffalo Creek. The Buffalo Creek community was incredibly tight-knit (which is becoming more and more rare in this country, he notes). The community served as the center for all individual activities. It was the community that offered support or comfort; the community was the "context for intimacy"; the community was the locus in which traditions were practiced and retained.[39] However, the experience of the flood damaged not just homes but the bonds of the community. People could no longer depend on one another. The support, continuity, and social structures of the community began to fade. The community experience collective trauma. Erikson notes that even those who were out of town and had not experienced the death and devastation first-hand, showed symptoms of trauma upon their return back to West Virginia. Erikson argues that they were traumatized by the loss of their community sustenance and structure—they experienced the corrosive weight of collective trauma.

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[38] Erikson as quoted in Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," 187.
[39] Erikson, 188.

Collective trauma, Erikson notes, often corrodes the community in two distinct ways. First, the community can begin to tear apart along "fault lines" that were already, silently, running through the community. Places of discord or disagreement that existed before the traumatic event are often exacerbated by the experience of collective trauma and communities begin to break apart along these places of previously-unmediated communal strife. Second, and more pronounced in Erikson's research, traumatized communities often split into factions along fault lines created by proximity to or impact by the traumatic event, separating those who were directly affected by the events (i.e. teachers, parents who lost children) from those who were spared from direct impact (i.e. parents whose children survived, community member not associated with the school). There is a discomfort that forms between the groups as those who were spared the "direct hit" of the traumatic event don't know what to do or may even try to create space between themselves and those more directly impacted as if to create a protected barrier between them and the contamination of the traumatic event.[40]

The kind of fissures Erikson describes in the experience of collective trauma is corroborated in the experiences of families in the Newtown community. When the Malin family first moved to Newtown they formed a great friendship with their neighbors, the Bardens, who happened to have three kids the exact same genders and ages as the Malin children. The children grew to be incredibly close and would move seamlessly from one house to another as if they

[40] Alexander C. McFarlane and Bessel A. van der Kolk explore this phenomenon in their essay on traumatic stress. They write: "Reason and objectivity are not the primary determinants of society's reaction to traumatized people. Rather, as noted earlier, society's reactions seem to be primarily conservative impulses in the service of maintaining the belief that the world is fundamentally just, that people can be in charge of their lives, and that bad things only happen to people who deserve them. Bearers of bad tidings are generally considered dangerous; thus, societies tend to be suspicious that victims will contaminate the social fabric, undermine self-reliance, consume social resources, and live off the strong. The weak are a liability, and, after an initial period of compassion, are vulnerable to being singled out as parasites and carriers of social malaise." See Alexander C. McFarlane and Bessel A. van der Kolk, "Trauma and Its Challenge to Society," in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. Bessel A. Van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisæth (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), 35.

lived on one big family complex. Most Friday nights were spent together with an impromptu pizza and movie. "It was a good life," Melissa Malin recalls in the *Newtown* film. However, everything changed the day of the Sandy Hook shooting. While the Malin's youngest son, Kyle, survived the shooting, the Barden's youngest son (and Kyle's best friend), Daniel, did not. Melissa Malin talks about not knowing what to do or how to interact with the Barden family: "Every day we would drive by their house, every day. And I didn't know what to do. Do we stop by? Do we not stop by? Do I bring them dinner? Do I…It was uncharted territory. 'Cause, I think, at the firehouse that day, there was such tragedy. And I don't think I understood that it would change everything."[41] Melissa even describes feeling timid about talking about Kyle in front of the Mark Barden and his wife, not knowing if doing so would bring up feelings of pain or even jealousy. While the oldest girls appear together in the film, there is an uneasiness that has settled between the Barden and Malin family. Due to the experience of collective trauma, the bonds between the families have become damaged, marked especially by the differences in their experience of the traumatic event.

Trauma is not just an individual pathology, but works its way into the foundation and daily life of the impacted community. Such collective trauma begins to shape and impact the "prevailing mood and temper, dominate [the community's] imagery and its sense of self, [and] govern the way its members relate to one another."[42] In other words, the dominating narratives of the community are changed.

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[41] Snyder, *Newtown*.
[42] Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," 190.

Trauma: A Working Definition

Before moving on to discuss trauma's impact on individual and communal narrative sense, let us synthesize the insights of Jones, Caruth, and Erikson into a working definition of trauma that will inform the remainder of this project. Trauma occurs when a given experience (in the case of a public mass shooting, a sudden, catastrophic experience) overwhelms the traumatized persons' ability to make meaning or assimilate the experience into their preconceived frameworks of understanding. The experience of trauma is subjective and since knowledge of the experience cannot be immediately fully integrated, the traumatic event often haunts the traumatized through unwilled returns of the event (i.e. flashbacks, dreams, images) or through the constant presence of the trauma as a "dominating feature of [one's] interior landscape."[43] The experience of trauma is not limited to individuals—trauma can be experienced individually and/or collectively. While the individual and collective experiences of trauma may influence and reinforce one another, they are distinct and can exist apart from one another. (This is especially critical for the preacher as she must be attentive to both traumatized individuals and communities, being especially aware of the ways both kinds of traumas work to corrode communal bonds and interpersonal relationship.) Overall, trauma occurs when previous frames individuals and communities used to make meaning are unable to contain or make sense of a particular experience. We call such experiences or events "traumatic." And this experience of trauma leads to a sense of disorientation as the failed meaning-making frames can no longer be trusted and the traumatized feels overwhelmed by their inability to make sense of their experience. This sense of disorientation, I will argue in the next section, is best understood when we consider the impacts of trauma on individual and communal narrative sense.

[43] Erikson, 183.

TRAUMA AND NARRATIVE

Why Narrative?

In the first half of the chapter, we looked to Serene Jones, Cathy Caruth, and Kai Erikson to help us clarify the definition of trauma, to recognize breadth of the impact of trauma on individuals, witnesses, and communities, and to establish that mass shootings like what took place at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut can be considered traumatic events. We now move to describe the impact of trauma on individuals and communities in the wake of a violent incident like a mass shooting. As Caruth offered earlier, the experience of trauma is difficult to describe in a precise way for one can only understand trauma by "listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience."[44] Of the many ways the traumatic impact is conceived, we will be considering the impacts of trauma on individual and communal narrative sense. We are privileging narrative interests in reference to our consideration of the impact of trauma for two reasons. First, in surveying the varied field of trauma theory, I have noted that theorists often represent the experience of trauma in terms of personal and communal narrative, describing the way trauma causes narrative duress.[45] Second, we are privileging narrative interests because our aim is to consider trauma in service to a homiletical view that often relies on narrative in sermon content and form (considered in Chapter 3).

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[44] Caruth, "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," 4.

[45] Even when considering recovery from trauma, a focus of foundational trauma theorist Judith Herman's work, *Trauma and Recovery*, is grounded in the narrative duress caused by trauma and the narrative repair required. Her three steps of recovery are (1) to acquire "Safety and Stabilization" by removing the victim from the traumatizing event(s), (2) to reconstruct one's historical narrative through "Remembrance and Mourning" and (3) to allow the patient to move forward through "Reconnection and Integration," in which the trauma is integrated as a part of the person's life story but does not overwhelm the story or define the traumatized person. Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

The Impact of Trauma on Narrative

As discussed at length above, the experience of trauma for individuals and communities, at its core, is an experience that overwhelms one's previously constructed frames of understanding and cannot be fully integrated. Considering this definition through a lens of narrative interests, the experience trauma can be understood as an experience that overwhelms one's narrative sense of their identity and how the world works. The stories an individual or community have told about themselves and the ways of the world previous to the traumatic incident cannot account for or make sense of the traumatic event. This narrative duress due to trauma can be parsed into two interconnected narrative crises: a crisis of temporality and a crisis of coherence. Taken together, I will call this experience of narrative in crisis due to trauma the experience of "narrative fracture."

Crisis of Temporality

Stories have the ability to structure our conception of time. They place our experiences into some kind of order. Phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur begins his three volume exploration of time and narrative with the presupposition that "the world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal work…time becomes human time to the extent it is organized after the manner of narrative; narrative in turn is meaningful to the extent it portrays the features of temporal existence."[46] He goes on to justify this statement in Volume I, Part I by holding in dialectical tension Augustine's struggle with the distention caused within the soul by the passing of time in the *Confessions* and Aristotle's conception of emplotment which, alone, gives no

[46] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

thought to time but can offer concordance.[47] This meeting of the distention of time and the concordance of emplotment brings to light the nature of human narratives to organize events and experiences in time. This temporal narrative logic provides continuity for our life-stories and allows us to make meaning out of what might otherwise feel like random or disconnected experiences. By organizing our experiences in time we are able to integrate our memories with our perceived present and anticipate a future. In the construction and telling of a narrative, there is a continuous dialectical tension between discontinuity and continuity as the subject/storyteller encounters new experiences and seeks to integrate new information. However, the experience of discontinuity becomes overwhelming and incredibly pronounced after experiences of traumatic violence and loss.

After incidents of traumatic violence like mass shootings, there is a crisis of narrative continuity and temporality. When a traumatic event occurs and defies full integration into the personal (or communal) narrative, the experience sits outside of temporal logic. Psychoanalyst and trauma theorist Robert D. Stolorow considers the way "trauma destroys time" in his autobiographical, philosophical and psychoanalytic text *Trauma and Human Existence.*[48] Concerned with the emotional impact of trauma and committed to the intersubjective, relational

[47] This dialectic and Ricoeur's consideration of discordance and concordance is more fully explored and developed in chapter 3.

[48] Stolorow, *Trauma and Human Existence*. Robert D. Stolorow is a scholar of psychoanalysis focused on the subjective emotional experience, intersubjectivity, and contextuality of the human experience, especially in relation to trauma. The book was well-received by colleagues, intrigued by his deep dive into psychoanalysis of trauma grounded out of his own traumatic experience of his wife's sudden death. Mufid James Hannush praised this "little gem of a book," asserting it is a "fertile byproduct of a creative synthesis of relational psychoanalysis and Heideggerian existential phenomenology and beyond." Likewise, Joan Rankin, in her review, praised Stolorow's diligent work in "trying to synopsize his exploration of the complexities of psychoanalytic, philosophical, and personally experienced dimensions of trauma outlined in this important, concise, and dense work." See Mufid James Hannush, review of *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Reflections*, by Robert D. Stolorow, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 217; Joan Rankin, review of *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Reflections*, by Robert D. Stolorow, *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 15, no. 4 (July/Aug 2010): 376.

nature of human beings, Stolorow defines the essence of trauma as "an experience of unbearable affect" when "in an intersubjective context…severe emotional pain cannot find a relational home in which it can be held."[49] One of the results of trauma Stolorow explores in his text is the shattering or "breaking up of the unifying thread of temporality" as a consequence of trauma.[50] He begins with Heidegger's understanding of time expanded from Husserl's concept of a "thick" present.[51] Heidegger labeled the past, present, and future as the *ecstases* of temporality. As Stolorow notes, this term is significant as the Greek word *ecstasis* means "standing outside." Heidegger viewed each of these units of temporality (past, present, and future) as moving beyond themselves, pointing to one another.[52] United together as a three-part whole, this "'ecstatical unity of temporality' means that every lived experience is always in all three dimensions of time."[53] One experiences life as stretched along the arch between past and future. However, Stolorow notes, using a series of clinical vignettes (including his own experience of trauma in relation to his wife's death), this experience of time—the stretching of experience between the three *ecstases* of temporality—becomes "devastatingly disturbed." The experience of trauma becomes "freeze-framed into an eternal present in which one remains forever trapped, or to which one is condemned to be perpetually returned through the portkeys[54] supplied by life's

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[49] As both Stolorow and Caruth build their understanding of trauma from Freud's work, Stolorow's definition aligns closely with Caruth's. While Stolorow is focused on the non-integration of the emotional pain or affect, Caruth is concerned with the non-integration of cognitive understanding of the event. Stolorow, *Trauma and Human Existence*, 9–10.

[50] Stolorow, 19.

[51] As a philosopher who believed phenomenological time was "fundamental to the genesis of all lived experience," Husserl resisted the idea of a punctuated present moment. Instead, he argued the experienced present is always "thick" as it holds both the past and the future. Stolorow, 19.

[52] Stolorow, 19.

[53] Stolorow, 19.

[54] "Portkeys" is a reference to the world of Harry Potter. Stolorow analyzes Potter as a child who has been severely traumatized in a brief vignette. He explains that in Potter's "post-traumatic adventures" Harry utilizes portkeys, which are "unobtrusive objects that transported him instantly to other places, obliterating the temporal duration ordinarily required for travel form one location in space to another." Stolorow, 18.

slings and arrows."[55] As the experience of trauma becomes an eternal present, it fractures the arc of the three *ecstases* of temporality. Put simply, the present-ness of trauma, disrupts both the past and future.

In the vignette of his own experience, Stolorow describes meeting up with longtime friends who shared that they had attended Stolorow's wife's memorial service eleven years ago. The wife, Dr. Z began describing the sadness she saw in Stolorow's children that day at the gathering. "In a flash," he writes, "the intervening years vanished into nothingness, and I was transported back to that sad event. I saw again the sadness in my children's faces and felt the soft touch of my daughter, Stephanie's, head resting sweetly on my shoulder, and, nearly eleven years later, I was once again consumed with sorrow."[56] Trauma breaks apart the interrelationship between the past, present, and future. With a brief reminder, even eleven years later, Stolorow experienced his past trauma becoming present again, and "the future loses all meaning other than endless repetition."[57] This kind of disruption in temporality is marked in Caruth's discussion (via Freud) of the ways trauma returns in flashbacks or the ways severe past emotional pain returns in the present.

In his study of testimonies by Holocaust survivors,[58] L.L. Langer[59] recognizes the way survivors who have never been able to create narrative continuity or bridge their past and present worlds cope with the ongoing march of time. He notes that these survivors live a kind of "parallel existence" where they move back and forth between the functioning of the surrounding

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[55] Stolorow, 20.
[56] Stolorow, 18.
[57] Stolorow, 20.
[58] While the experience of the Holocaust differs significantly from mass shootings like what took place in Newtown, CT, as established in the beginning of the chapter, the Holocaust qualifies (like mass shootings) as a traumatic event.
[59] Lawrence L. Langer analyzes and interprets Holocaust in *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

present world and the ever-present "timeless" experience of the trauma. They live in these worlds simultaneously (not sequentially) because the trauma has never been able to be placed in a story that moves from beginning to middle to end. He writes, "[Trauma] stops the chronological clock and fixes the moment permanently in memory and imagination immune to the vicissitudes of time."[60] No longer does the plot of the narrative make sense in its movement through time. The past that was lived did not lead to the present that was expected. Therefore, with such a loss of temporality it is difficult to imagine any kind of future. Or, as Langer articulates, "the past invades [the] present and casts a long, pervasive shadow over its future."[61] Without a sense of movement through time or some kind of continuity tying together life events and experiences, traumatized individuals are left without trustworthy narrative structures in place.

This kind of "eternal present" of trauma is well-documented in the film *Newtown.* Towards the end of the film, the film crew sits in the car with Nicole Hockley, the mother of victim Dylan Hockley. In the midst of her stream-of-consciousness monologue, she began reflecting on her inability to grasp Dylan's death: "And [the cops] came to the house at about 1:30 in the morning or some ridiculous hour to confirm to us that he was…that he was one of them and…And even then, I still thought something's gotta be wrong. This can't be. This just isn't supposed to happen." She takes a long pause, looking out the windshield, and then continues, "It's funny, I remember when I saw him in his casket on my birthday. I thought that that would be when I finally realized that he was dead. And even then, I couldn't even really accept it because that was his body but that's not D…You know, I was holding his hand and I could see there was his torn cuticles from where he bit his nails. My son was full of life. Even

[60] Langer, 175.
[61] Langer, 172.

then, I couldn't…And that's why I still just can't accept it. That's why sometimes traveling is easy for me 'cause it's like I can imagine he's home. So when I come home from traveling, it's just…it's having to accept it all over again." Even though Nicole Hockley's work is often related to the death of her son through the organization Sandy Hook Promise, small triggers like returning home serve as re-experiences of the traumatic loss that has yet to be fully integrated into a continuous narrative. The experience sits outside of time and disrupts the continuity of her story to such a degree that she lives the same sort of parallel lives as the Langer's Holocaust survivors. Even as she seeks to continue her day-to-day work, she also copes with the ever-present experience of the Sandy Hook shooting and coming to terms with the death of her son.

Crisis of Coherence

A second narrative crisis that occurs due to the experience of trauma is the crisis of coherence. By coherence we generally mean the idea that the story functions as an interconnected narrative that, taken together, makes sense. A coherent literary narrative implies that a character's actions and motivations make rational sense in a given context. Within the narrative, the world follows a consistent logic and the protagonist is empowered to act meaningfully within it. An incoherent story, on the other hand, often contains internal conflicts within the plot of the story; the journey of the protagonist makes little logical sense; the character's actions and motivations may shift erratically; and the world the protagonist inhabits may prove unpredictable and unnavigable.[62]

We may better conceive of the value and nature of narrative coherence by looking to the work of medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky. Antonovsky constructed a multi-faceted concept

[62] Discussed more in Karen D. Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 117.

of a "sense of coherence" that continues to be utilized by scholars in the medical, sociological, and trauma studies fields.[63] Antonovsky focused on the study of health and wellness ("salutogenesis," a term he coined) as opposed to the study of disease (pathogenesis).[64] Because of his aims toward establishing and maintaining health amidst the "microbial and psychosocial entropic reality of the world,"[65] he began to ask different questions than his colleagues studying pathogenesis. As Antonovsky wrote, when the question shifts from "no longer asking what causes or what prevents this or that disease, or even what leads to dis-ease but rather what underlies the movement toward health" then the central salutogenic question is about how humans establish "order out of chaos."[66] Recognizing that the "normal state of affairs of the human organism is one of entropy, of disorder, and of disruption of homeostasis," Antonovsky

[63] For evidence of its consideration in the medical field see Rosana A. Spadoti Dantas, Fernanda S. Silva, and Marcia A. Cio, "Psychometric Properties of the Brazilian Portuguese Versions of the 29- and 13-item Scales of the Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence (SOC-29 and SOC-13) Evaluated in Brazilian Cardiac Patients," *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 23, no. 1/2 (January 2014):156–65. For evidence of its study in the field of sociology see Bengt Lindstrom and Monica Eriksson, "Contextualizing Salutogenesis and Antonovsky in Public Health Development," *Health Promotion International* 21, no. 3, (May 2006): 238–44. For evidence of its utilization in trauma theory see Landsman, "Crises of Meaning in Trauma and Loss."

[64] Antonovsky coined the term "salutogenesis," defined as the study of wellness or factors contributing to health. As he writes, "Salutogenesis makes a fundamentally different philosophical assertion about the world than does pathogenesis. It directs us to study the mystery of health in the face of a microbiological and psychosocial entropic reality, a world in which risk factors, stressors, or 'bugs' are endemic and highly sophisticated." In reflecting on his own work in the field he concedes that salutogenesis will never surpass the study of pathogenesis, which is deeply entrenched in the medical culture. Aaron Antonovsky, "The Sense of Coherence: An Historical and Future Perspective," in *Stress, Coping, and Health in Families: Sense of Coherence and Resiliency*, ed. Hamilton I. McCubbin, Elizabeth A. Thompson, Anne I. Thompson, Julie E. Fromer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 5–6.

[65] Antonovsky, 5.

[66] Antonovsky admits that this question of "order out of chaos" was arrived at due to his interest surrounding "entropy in open systems" in relation to health. In other words, one of Antonovsky's central concerns in the study of a "movement toward health" is how one continues in and toward health in the midst of the naturally-entropic forces of microbes, stress, and, one might add, trauma. Antonovsky, "The Sense of Coherence: An Historical and Future Perspective," 6. This is in contrast to the pathogenic paradigm in which (he claims) they view the "normal state of affairs of the human organism [as] homeostasis and order." Aaron Antonovsky, "The Sense of Coherence as a Determinant of Health," in *Behavioral Health: A Handbook of Health Enhancement and Disease Prevention*, ed. Joseph D. Matarazzo (New York: Wiley, 1984), 114.

focused on the negentropic forces[67] that increase a sense of order (and thus, health) for the organism as a whole.[68] A central negentropic force, Antonovsky concluded, is that of coherence: "To the extent that the person…saw the world as ordered, believed that the myriad of stimuli bombarding the organism made sense or could be structured to make sense, she or he could mobilize the resources that seemed to be appropriate to cope with whatever bugs were current."[69] This sense of order, structure, and meaning in the face of the ongoing disorder of the world, Antonovsky labeled as a "sense of coherence." Antonovsky advocated for a "sense of coherence" as both a desirable condition and indicator of health.

Addressing cognition, belief, and emotions, Antonovsky outlines a "sense of coherence" as having three distinct but related parts.[70] First, and closely related to the cognitive, is *comprehensibility.* Comprehensibility is the experience of the world and our own movements within it making sense. Taken narratively, a narrative is comprehensible when it makes sense in light of previous experiences of others and the world. Second, a sense of coherence has a component of *manageability*. Manageability, linked to beliefs and motivation, is the sense that we are able (and have the resources) to function in this world, even able to navigate some forces of chaos that come as part of the realities of life in this entropic world.[71] Considered narratively,

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[67] "Negentropic forces" are defined as forces that reduce entropy/chaos and correspondingly increase order. Or, in the words of Antonovsky, negentropic forces "successfully screen out of doing battle with the entropic forces." Antonovsky, "The Sense of Coherence as a Determinant of Health," 117.

[68] Antonovsky, 116.

[69] Antonovsky, "The Sense of Coherence: An Historical and Future Perspective," 7.

[70] In addition to delineating these three components, Antonovsky constructed a Sense of Coherence Scale (called the Orientation to Life Questionnaire), which, through a series of questions, allows evaluators to categorize people's ease/dis-ease in relation to comprehensibility, manageability, and sense of meaning in their lives (or, one could assert, in relation to the sense of their own narrative).

[71] Antonovsky clarifies that this is different from Kobasa's "control component" as it is not about belief that the individual can control the world. While the person may feel they personally have the resources to feel in control of their movement through the world, they may also have confidence that they can navigate the entropic world due to "resources controlled by legitimate others—friends, colleagues, God, history." Antonovsky, "The Sense of Coherence as a Determinant of Health," 119.

manageability is our ability to accommodate new experiences into our narrative, which allows us to act confidently in the world. Antonovsky's third component is *meaningfulness,* which he describes as the "emotional counterpart to comprehensibility."[72] A narrative is meaningful when it matters to us and we perceive it as worthy of our attention, care, and energy. Taken together, comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness come together to comprise a "sense of coherence." [73] Unfortunately, the experience of trauma threatens to erode all three components of Antonovsky's sense of coherence.

Trauma threatens narrative comprehensibility. In defining trauma with Caruth, we recognized that at the heart of the experience of trauma is a lack of knowing, an inability to fully understand. Traumatic experiences are not able to be understood in light of previous experiences or understandings of others and the world. As Caruth writes, "the force of this experience [of trauma] would appear to arise precisely…in the collapse of its understanding."[74] The previous frameworks cannot accommodate the new, traumatic event. Thus, the narrative is no longer comprehensible. It no longer makes sense. Put another way, the experiences I have had up to this point, the life I have lived up to this point, the ways I have characterized those around me (family, neighbors, community) up to this point, the stories I have told about my own existence up to this point, cannot conceivably lead to or make sense of the (traumatic) experience I am now encountering. This experience of trauma does not fit and does not make logical sense in relation to what I know, narratively, about my life my world, and others. As teenager Natalie Barden

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[72] Antonovsky, 119.

[73] Antonovsky views this three-part sense of coherence as a continuum. One does not have to find the world perfectly comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful in order to be considered to have a high sense of coherence. Additionally, Antonovsky, in his research with patients, recognized that people set differing boundaries around their worlds. Whether narrow or broad, people tend to care about coherence within those boundaries, but "[w]hat goes on outside these boundaries, whether comprehensible and manageable or not, simply does not matter much, does not trouble us." Antonovsky, 119–20.

[74] Caruth, "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," 7.

(whose younger brother, Daniel, was killed in the Sandy Hook shooting) articulated in the film *Newtown*, "To me, Newtown was always just this perfect…I mean, I love Newtown,…It was always this perfect little town, and everything is so safe and everything is so…I mean, everyone is so nice here…So, I would never expect that somebody like that would be, like, just around the corner."[75] Natalie Barden's experience of Newtown before the shooting—the narrative she told about her life in that town—could not have predicted nor could accommodate the tragedy of the Sandy Hook shooting that violently disrupted her family and took her brother. The trauma was incomprehensible to Natalie in light of the narrative she had about her family, her life, and her hometown. By definition, trauma is incomprehensible—it overwhelms the traumatized person's ability to make sense or understand what has occurred in relation to their previous experiences, narratives, and frameworks of understanding.

This incomprehensibility that occurs in the wake of trauma contributes to the potential erosion of manageability. Manageability is the belief that one can navigate this (comprehensible) world and can, narratively, account for any irregularities or forces of chaos that may threaten to derail confidence in one's ability to move through the world. First, trauma, by definition, overwhelms the narrative and reveals that the narrative constructed thus far is unable to accommodate this new level of chaos brought on by a traumatic event. Second, if the world is no longer comprehensible as discussed just above, then the normal ways of functioning in the world—the ways that have worked in the past—threaten to no longer promise safe passage. Put another way, when my understanding of my community, my world, or myself has eroded—when my narrative constructs cannot accommodate this new traumatic experience—I can no longer depend on these narratives to guide my actions moving forward. This crisis of manageability is

[75] Snyder, *Newtown*.

directly linked to Caruth's assertion that trauma is a crisis of history and truth. Since the traumatized persons cannot fully understand (or sometimes even remember) the trauma, there is a gap in their narratives or, as Jones describes it, their stories contain "abrupt and ragged" endings. This crisis in history leads to a crisis of truth—the traumatized person no longer can discern what is known or unknown, real or imagined. Due to this dual crisis in history and truth, the traumatized person may no longer trust their narrative experience to help them move through the world with confidence. As Jones writes, this narrative disruption brings "the loss of a person's sense of agency and, along with it, a sense that one can positively affect the world through intentional acts of speaking, gesturing, and moving."[76] The world is no longer manageable and navigable. As Mark Barden described how he and his wife attempted to navigate life after the shooting of their son, Daniel, at Sandy Hook: "In the first year, we were alternating our meltdowns…Who knows how to do this? There's no way to do this…And we don't want to sweep it under the rug. And at the same time, we don't want to dwell on it."[77]

The third facet of coherence that is threatened due to trauma is that of meaningfulness. Antonovsky defines "meaningfulness" as the sense that something matters to us and is worthy of our attention, energy, and care. Understood narratively, it is the sense that our narrative is helpful to us as we navigate the world and worthy of maintaining or even repairing when faced with chaotic events that may threaten its continuity and coherence. Traumatized persons may experience a sense that their narrative is no longer helpful and thus not worth maintaining, investing in, or repairing after an experience of trauma. If the narrative is incomplete (i.e. encounters a crisis of history) and cannot be trusted to guide one in the present and into the

[76] Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 93.
[77] Snyder, *Newtown*.

future (i.e. a crisis of truth), then the traumatized person may not find their narrative to be meaningful.

It is here I would like to take the privilege of a small excursus to build upon Antonovsky's definition of meaningfulness and address specifically what "meaningfulness" entails in the context of trauma. Clinical psychologist Irene Smith Landsman, in her review of trauma literature, identifies two levels of meaningfulness—ordinary and existential. Similar to our consideration of Antonovsky, ordinary meaningfulness is trust in the systems and structures in place that make the world comprehensible and navigable. Ordinary meaningfulness "rests on unexamined assumptions about such things as safety, control, and justice."[78] These are the narrative structures that allow us to integrate new experiences, make sense of our current circumstances, and anticipate what is to come.[79] Trauma leads to a crisis of ordinary meaning; basic assumptions about safety, control, justice, and order are shaken and, at times, destroyed. When these ordinary meanings are lost and "cannot be restored to their original configuration, assumptive worlds or system of meaning are *changed.*"[80] Often traumatized people no longer feel safe or confident navigating the world. The systems, structure, and narratives that once offered meaning are no longer viable in this new and volatile landscape. Stolorow captures this experience asserting that what is lost is the "absolutisms of every day life," these semi-delusional concepts (like a friend promising "I'll see you later!") that offer a "kind of naïve realism and

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[78] Landsman, "Crises of Meaning in Trauma and Loss," 14.

[79] In Robert A. Neimeyer et al., "The Meaning of Your Absence: Traumatic Loss and Narrative Reconstruction," in *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*, ed. Jeffrey Kauffman (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 32, the authors use a constructivist and narrative approach to study the case of one of the authors' experiences of traumatic loss. Using constructionist theory, they begin the chapter by arguing that human beings make sense of their lives through narrative and the construction of narrative identity. One of the key pieces to this meaning-making work of narratives is the ways that narratives help people to anticipate what is to come. The narrative provides a kind of logic that allows the person to anticipate the repercussions of an action or act of speech.

[80] Landsman, "Crises of Meaning in Trauma and Loss," 14.

optimism that allow one to function in the world.[81] Trauma exposes the falsehoods of such absolutisms, deconstructing them and therefore taking away any sense that safety, predictability, or continuity can be assumed.

When ordinary meaningfulness is lost, the loss of another level of meaning—existential meaning—becomes more likely. Existential meaning is a spiritual or philosophical level of meaning, including belief in the trustworthiness of the world, faith in a higher power, and a general sense of self-worth, purpose, and hope.[82] When ordinary meaningfulness is lost, existential meaning and the ability to conceive of a future often collapses as well. This is the level of meaning social psychologist Ronnie Janoff-Bulman is concerned with in her study of the "Shattered Assumptions Theory" and in her conception of the "assumptive world."[83] Similar to Stolorow, Janoff-Bulman characterizes the "assumptive world" as a world of illusions that is constituted by the act of believing. What is then shattered is not the physical world, but the "sense of vitally valued illusions."[84] For Janoff-Bulman, schemas at risk in the wake of trauma include trust in a benevolent world, a sense of self-worth, trust in a higher power/deity, and

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[81] Stolorow, *Trauma and Human Existence*, 16.

[82] Landsman, "Crises of Meaning in Trauma and Loss," 26.

[83] Ronnie Janoff-Bulman's *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), outlines her general view of trauma toward the ends of establishing effective interventions that can help survivors reestablish ways to cope with trauma. One of the key insights Janoff-Bulman offers is her psychologically informed adaptation of Colin Murray Parke's concept of "the assumptive world" introduced in his thanatology literature. She moved towards a "new psychology of trauma" by thinking about how people seek to protect and retain their beliefs. As Janoff-Bulman writes, "Our penchant for preserving rather than changing knowledge structure suggests the deeply embedded, deeply accepted nature of our beliefs about the benevolence and meaningfulness of the world and our own self worth" (51). She then goes on to argue that what is lost in trauma is the normative constancy of beliefs, something she calls a "loss of the assumptive world." Her work was received with interest and excitement by the psychology, thanatology, and trauma theory communities—so much so, that her work is considered, utilized, and debated (alongside Parke's) in a collection with essays from thanatologists, traumatologists, psychologists, counselors, and survivors. See Jeffrey Kauffman, ed., *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002).

[84] Jeffrey Kauffman, "Introduction," in *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*, ed. Jeffrey Kauffman (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 3.

belief in an existential purpose.[85] When narratives fracture under the weight of traumatic violence, people lose not only the sense that they understand the structures of the world, but they also begin to lose trust in the larger narrative frames that offered them existential meaning.

From my review of trauma literature, whether experiencing the loss of ordinary and/or existential meaning, an individual or community often responds in one of two ways—either through denial or dwelling.[86] First, this loss of meaning may materialize in the form of defensive denial. As psychologist Irene Smith Landsman argues, "defensive denial" arises when one wishes to put of "a defense against internal wishes, fears, and conflicts that are potentially threatening to one's sense of self."[87] As she argues alongside professor of psychiatry Irvin D. Yalom, this defensive denial may be natural, but not helpful. However, when one no longer sees value in their narrative due to the disruption of trauma, a tool of choice may be to deny the reality of the trauma and not seek towards narrative repair or restoration. Second, a loss of narrative meaningfulness may also materialize not as denial, but as a dwelling upon the event. If there is no feeling that the narrative is meaningful any longer, the traumatized person or community may remain stuck at the point that their narrative broke down. As discussed above with Caruth, trauma, because it is not fully assimilated into the framework of understanding, has

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[85] Kauffman, 2–3.

[86] This is not to say that this response is where the traumatized reside for extended periods of time. The hope is that individuals and communities may rediscover meaning or rebuild their narratives to be able to have meaning for them again over time. However, in the immediate aftermath of a violent trauma, when meaningfulness has been lost, these are the two most prevalent responses considered in trauma literature.

[87] Irene Smith Landsman is a clinical psychologist with a Ph.D. in Psychology. In her overview of the impact of trauma and loss on patients, she moves to the role of denial, relying heavily on Yalom's existential psychological model. This model resists Freud's theory of instinctive drives and instead argues that conflicts within the person are "posed by the 'givens of existence'—of which the most central is mortality." The ways people go about denying death, in Yalom's view, help to define personality styles. But, the desire to defy death is shared among all people. While Yalom sees this denial of death to be natural, it is still not desirable. Yalom (and Landsman) advocate for the facing of death, something often required when encountering a traumatic event. Along with defensive denial, Landsman considers Trauma-Specific Avoidance (an often healthy numbing that occurs after a traumatic event) and adaptive illusions (focusing on a particular aspect of an experience in ways that reduce its negative impact). Landsman, "Crises of Meaning in Trauma and Loss," 21–22.

an "endless impact on life."[88] If it does not return in flashbacks or vivid dreams, it hangs as a cloud over the traumatized. Some traumatized persons and communities, instead of working to integrate the information or find a way to move forward, allows these returns to take over their entire lives. As Francine Wheeler, mother of Sandy Hook shooting victim Ben Wheeler describes in the film *Newtown*, "My brain says, 'Well I just wanna keep talking about Ben. Can I keep talking about Ben?'…I wanna talk about Ben all the time because I want him to stay alive…And people ask us about [our other children,] Nate and Matty, which is wonderful."[89] Even as her other children (Matty and Nate) are still alive, Francine struggles to move forward and to stop dwelling upon the crisis that disrupted her narrative. In short, her narrative struggles to be meaningful.

Taken together the concepts of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness contribute to a sense of narrative coherence. However, when any one (or more) of these aspects are eroded by the experience of trauma, the narrative is no longer coherent. The narrative no longer makes sense and, in the aftermath of a traumatic event, is no longer logically predictable or connected. The parts of the story no longer hang together in a way that makes sense.

Defining Narrative Fracture

The loss of narrative temporality combined with the collapse of narrative coherence due to the experience of trauma combines to form experience of what I have called *narrative fracture.* The word "fracture" is selected intentionally as a loss of temporality and coherence causes narratives to fall apart into pieces that no longer find connection or cohesion. When temporality is lost, the past no longer connects to the present and the present no longer projects a

[88] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 7.
[89] Snyder, *Newtown*.

future. The three *ecstases* of time (to use Heidegger's terminology) are no longer linked as the lingering or "eternal" present of the trauma has fractured the continuity of time. Likewise, when coherence is lost (including comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness), the narrative no longer hangs together in a logical and meaning-making way. The narrative becomes fractured into bits of one's story that no longer make sense as a cohesive whole. As discussed in the body of this chapter, this experience of narrative fracture can lead to a sense of distrust in the structures that previously made sense (e.g. institutions, natural processes, God, etc.), a sense of anxiety over whether or not one can understand or navigate their disrupted lives, and a loss of hope. So, how should preachers, who often rely on narrative in both sermon content and form, preach to communities that are narratively fractured? What is the correct emergency homiletical response in the fact of this post-traumatic narrative wreckage?

CHAPTER 3:

NARRATIVE PREACHING, NARRATIVE FRACTURE, AND A DISCORDANT EMERGENCY HOMILETIC

As explored in depth in Chapter 2, trauma theorists are fairly persuasive that narrative fracture is one of the consequences of traumatic events like Sandy Hook. The experience of trauma leads to the loss of temporality and narrative coherence. Thus, people experience their life story as fragmented and disconnected. As a consequence, the individual and community begin to lose trust in the structures and/or metaphysical realities upon which they depended before the trauma (e.g. government, communal organizations, God, etc.) as well as have anxiety over whether or not they will ever be able to make sense of their lives or experiences in the future. So, given this understanding of the effect upon people and communities of traumatic events, what should be the homiletical response to this narratively fractured condition?

THE NARRATIVE HOMILETICAL RESPONSE

As discussed in the Introduction, most contemporary homiletical theory does not address trauma specifically but focuses more broadly on addressing the "human condition," understood in a variety of ways. Recent homiletical theory has answered this call by advocating for some form of "narrative preaching." In his text, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, Thomas G. Long traces the arc of this narrative preaching trend among homileticians—from H. Grady Davis to Fred Craddock to Eugene Lowry. Long also identifies the variety of types of narrative preaching including short-story sermons, dialogue sermons, first-person sermons, and autobiographical confessional sermon. Long writes, "The varieties were endless, but all of them riffs on the notion

that good preaching was somehow story shaped, story saturated, and story driven."[1] Defined alongside Long, narrative preaching remains a significant approach in American preaching, taught in many seminary classrooms and practiced in many pulpits.[2]

Fred Craddock's and Eugene Lowry's work are two prime examples of this advocacy towards narrative preaching as the best response to both the work of the gospel and the needs of listening congregations. In 1971, Fred B. Craddock published his first version of *As One Without Authority,* a text Long names as "arguably the most influential monograph on preaching in our time." Craddock begins the book by diagnosing the reason for "the general low estimate of preaching…found in the nature of American Christianity."[3] He points to everything from the diminished value of language in the culture to the separation of form from content in preaching to the new relationship between speaker and hearer. This new speaker/hearer relationship was especially significant to Craddock as it embodied a post-Christendom shift from an authoritarian relationship to a more democratic relationship. These shifts, collectively, became the foundational arguments for Craddock's homiletic. Instead of speaking at hearers in a deductive form of preaching in which the preacher lays out a thesis and a fully-formed (often three-point)

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[1] Thomas G. Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 4.

[2] For example, UCC preacher (and preaching teacher) Lillian Daniel begins her sermon, "Why It's No Fun to Ride a Donkey When You're Pregnant" with a dialogical question to the congregation and fills this narratively-shaped sermon with stories. Lillian Daniel, "Nov 27, 2016 Sermon by Lillian Daniel on Why It's No Fun to Ride a Donkey When You're Pregnant," Lillian Daniel-Preaching, accessed August 17, 2017, http://www.lilliandaniel.com/preaching.html. Rev. Dr. Scott Black Johnston, head of staff at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, preaches in narrative form and with the use of narrative consistently in his preaching. For a great example of not only his narrative form and use of story, but also a discussion of narrative identity, see the sermon "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story: The Case for Church, Part 2; May 7, 2017," Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Sermons, accessed August 17, 2017, http://www.fapc.org/worship/sermons/P15.. At Candler School of Theology at Emory University, preaching classes include texts such as Cleophus J. LaRue, *I Believe I'll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011); Long, *The Witness of Preaching*; Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Preaching Life* (Lanham, MD: Crowley Publications, 1993); Thomas H. Troeger and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *A Sermon Workbook: Exercises in the Art and Craft of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013). While this list is in no way complete, many of these texts teach, offer, or advocate for some form of narrative preaching.

[3] Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 6.

argument, Craddock advocated for inductive sermons that involved listeners as more than "javelin catchers," leading them on a narrative "journey of discovery."[4] Inductive preaching began with the particulars of human experience that would "have a familiar ring in listener's ears" and traveled towards a larger conclusion. Ultimately, asserted Craddock, that conclusion is then claimed and even completed by the listeners as they have traveled alongside the preacher. Preachers were to construct rich, evocative images, to include narratives from the life of the congregation, and to have an "empathetic imagination" for the realities of life for the preacher's community. Craddock argued that an inductive homiletic does more than merely stay "relevant" in the midst of shifting listener/speaker power structures, but is also faithful to the nature of the gospel and the work of the church. Such inductive preaching takes seriously the listeners not only as the people of God but as those whose stories and experiences participate in the experience of the Word of God, even completing the narrative journey of the sermon with and for the preacher.[5]

Though not advocating overtly for a narrative form or use of narrative in *As One Without Authority*, Craddock's own preaching often included a great number of stories. In modeling his own structural strategies of inductive preaching, Craddock's sermons were both narratively-shaped and story-laden. As a result, Craddock's advocacy towards an inductive sermon form became connected with narrative preaching. In other words, Craddock the practitioner impacted the way homileticians and preachers read and interpreted Craddock the theoretician. This interpretation of Craddock as a proponent of *narrative* inductive preaching was further secured

[4] Craddock, 48.
[5] Craddock, 51.

by the work of Eugene Lowry who wrote as recently as 2012 that Craddock's inductive preaching "illustrat[ed] a particular form of preaching he called *narrative*."[6]

Eugene L. Lowry furthered the narrative impulse of the "new homiletic"[7] inspired by Craddock with his work in *The Homiletical Plot: Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, first published in 1980. Like Craddock, Lowry initially rejects the thesis and three-supporting-points sermon form that had come before.[8] Instead, Lowry grounds his narrative homiletic in the claim that humans experience life narratively and, even more, that our typical media—television, movies, even jokes—function in the way that is basically narrative, moving us from problem to solution or struggle to resolution. Sermons, Lowry then argues, should follow this same narrative arc that is natural for the listener. Instead of serving as "engineers or architects" piecing together sermons based on homiletical rules, preaching should be seen as a "[narrative] art form" with the preacher as artist.[9] The sermon, Lowry asserts, "is a plot (premeditated by the preacher) which has as its key ingredient as sensed discrepancy, a homiletical bind…Like any good storyteller, the preacher's task is to…resolve matters in the light of the gospel and in the presence of the people."[10] In short, "[p]reaching *is* storytelling."[11] Beyond the human inclination towards narrative, Lowry also contends that narrative[12] is the "fundamental context for" and "underlying

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[6] Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 38.

[7] A term coined by David James Randolph to describe the swath of narrative preaching that arose in the 20th century.

[8] Such thesis-with-supporting-points preaching is best outlined in texts such as Ilion T. Jones, *Principles and Practices of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954).

[9] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 11.

[10] Lowry, 12.

[11] Lowry, 12. Emphasis mine.

[12] Lowry defines narrative as "temporal art functioning in time." Lowry, 2. This temporality or temporal sequence by which sermons are organized and delivered makes preaching (or the sermonic event) fundamentally narrative. In the *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, Lowry writes that "A *narrative sermon* is any sermon in which the arrangement of ideas take the form of a plot involving a strategic delay of the preacher's meaning." Lowry as quoted in Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Beat: Why All Sermons Are Narrative* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 12–13. For Lowry, the narrative sermon is distinct from the "story-sermon"—a "story-sermon" tells a story

modus operandi" of preaching.[13] Thus the form of the sermon should embody that narrative impulse.

Over the years, Lowry has provided several modifications to his approach. The first version of *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* was first released in 1980. In this text, he originated a sermon form (often called the "Lowry Loop") that would move the preacher and congregation from "itch" to "scratch" or "problem" to "solution."[14] This loop had five stages. The sermon begins with "Upsetting the Equilibrium" (also titled "Oops!"), engaging listeners in the theme of the sermon and the problem the preacher hoped to address. Lowry argued this engaged the listener by activating the human desire to resolve ambiguities, arguing that the congregation will see such an ambiguity as a "foe to be vanquished."[15] The second stage was entitled "Analyzing the Discrepancy" ("Ugh!"). In this stage, the preacher analyzed the issue introduced in the first stage, assessing the nature of the human condition. In the third stage, "Disclosing the Clue to Resolution" ("Aha!"), the listener is surprised by a clue pointing to a resolution and creating a sense of "reversal."[16] The fourth stage was centered on "Experiencing the Gospel" ("Whee!") as moving the listener out of the reversal and into the good news the gospel offers to the situation. The final stage, "Anticipating the Consequences" ("Yeah!"), played out the implications of the gospel into the future. If the clue to resolution (stage 3) and

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while a "narrative sermon" unfolds a plot. Lowry argues there are three "levels" of narrativity. The first is "narrative as modality in time," focusing on how sermons not only are objects in time but unfold through time in a "homiletical plot." The second level is "narrative as strategic aim" in which Lowry considers narrative strategies used in preaching (and music) such as tension-resolution or evocative/provocative/causative language. The third, discussed above, is the "narrative as embodied form." Lowry, *The Homiletical Beat*, 6–18, 18–30, 30–47.

[13] Lowry, *The Homiletical Beat*, 1.

[14] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 19.

[15] Lowry, 29.

[16] Lowry, 53–54.

experience of the good news (stage 4) begin to release the "tension of ambiguity" created in stages 1 and 2, then the final stage serves as the "stage of effecting closure."[17]

In 2001, Lowry reissued *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. It was a replica of the 1980 version, with an added Foreword by Fred Craddock and an Afterword by the author.[18] Though Lowry opted to reprint the exact text from 1980, he offered some changes to the Lowry Loop in the Afterword. He stayed committed to the general narrative movement of sermon plots "which *always* move from *itch* to *scratch*…from issue to answer, from conflict to resolution."[19] However, he began to reconsider the relationship of stages 3 (Aha!) and 4 (Whee!). He began to recognize variations that may break the sequential order of steps 1-5. Specifically, he imagined instances when the clue to resolution (stage 3) might occur simultaneously with the experiencing of the gospel (stage 4) (as in the example offered in John 8). He also imagined ways that the experiencing of the good news (stage 4) could happen just before the clue to the resolution (stage 3) as in the Good Samaritan story.[20] Additionally, Lowry wanted to update some of the terminology used to name each stage, particularly stages 2, 3, and 5. Instead of calling stage 2 "Analyzing the Discrepancy," he wanted to broaden the description of this step to be the work "Complication," specifically complicating the "itch" named in stage 1.[21] Lowry also wanted to clarify the language surrounding the work of stage 3, changing the focus from "reversal" to a discussion of a "sudden shift" in the plot, recognizing that not all turns in the sermon are necessarily reversals of 180 degrees. Lastly, Lowry was discontent with the label

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[17] Lowry, 80.

[18] As the reader may have noticed, in the discussion of the 1980 version of *The Homiletical Plot* above I opted to quote from the 2001 version since the body of the text is identical to the 1980 version.

[19] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 118.

[20] Lowry, 118.

[21] Lowry, 120–21.

assigned to stage 5, "Anticipating the Consequences," noting it had a negative connotation. Instead, he renamed stage 5 as "Unfolding," which more fully describes the way a preacher "anticipates the future, made new by the good news."[22] For Lowry, these changes were more than cosmetic. They broadened the Lowry loop to make both more functional and flexible for the 21st century preacher.

Finally, the Lowry Loop received a renewed consideration in Lowry's 2012 book, *The Homiletical Beat: Why All Sermons are Narrative.* Based on his Lyman Beecher Lectures of 2009 at Yale University Divinity School and William Self Lectures on Preaching in 2011 at McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, this text focuses a great deal of attention on the nature of narrativity and the "three levels of narrativity" Lowry identifies: "Narrative as Temporal Modality," "Narrative as Strategic Aim," and "Narrative as Embodied Form." He then moves into a comparison of jazz and narrative preaching and argues for a re-evaluation of the importance of orality. The Lowry Loop is structurally identical to the one promoted in the 2001 Afterword, including the flexibility of the relationship between stages 3 and 4 and the updated labels—conflict (oops), complication (ugh), *peripeteia*/sudden shift (aha), experiencing the gospel (whee), and dénouement/unfolding (yeah). However, Lowry wants to offer more flexibility in the use of his sermonic form. He wants to make room for many different "embodied forms" of preaching that prove themselves to be narrative in their move from "'oops' to 'yeah'."[23] He especially identifies an "episodal narrative form" used (and advocated for) by homileticians such as Tom Troeger, David Buttrick, and even Fred Craddock. While Lowry views his sermon form as advocating for a continuous link between each stage, episodal preaching, such as is described by Buttrick, has "moves," each with their own openings and

[22] Lowry, 120.
[23] Lowry, *The Homiletical Beat*, 35.

closings. While each move is "a kind of self-contained identifiable episode," Lowry still sees these episodal sermons as "moving in a time sequence, and still delaying the final resolution" that marks narrative preaching and his model as well.[24] While Lowry advocates for more tightly connected transitions in his original model, he still sees the "transitional glue" placed between episodes as moving the plot of the episodal narrative sermon forward. By including variations such as episodal narrative preaching, Lowry further expanded the variety of homiletical possibilities of the Lowry Loop.

The Lowry Loop is a sermonic form that, Lowry argues, follows the narrative patterns of our living where we encounter difficulty or ambiguity and work through it towards a solution and subsequent recovery from ambiguity. For Lowry, sermons crafted in narrative form serve not only to engage the hearers more fully, but also allow the gospel to illumine the present situation. The narrative preaching form is not an option for sermons. For Lowry, it is the underlying nature of the "event-in-time" that is preaching.

More recently, in *The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence,* Richard Lischer argues that preaching, by its nature, hangs on a "narrative framework in Scripture and tradition."[25] Even with questions humming from the background of postmodernists claiming the collapse of master narratives, Lischer argues that preaching is grown from narrative bedrock, shaped by the narratives of Scripture and the stories of faithful saints the church communities pass on. Narrative preaching also shapes people's narrative identities by offering a "more excellent story"[26] in the marketplace of competing narratives. And,

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[24] Lowry, 36.

[25] Richard Lischer, *The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 94.

[26] Lischer, 104.

that preaching, naturally, should take a narrative form with a plot that "must unfold towards a destination, the way Jesus' ministry *moved* episodically toward the cross or the way God's love unfolds day by day in our lives."[27] Like Craddock and Lowry, Lischer continues to argue that humans are narrative beings—all "characters in search of a plot" that will give a logical order to their life experiences towards a "meaningful end."[28] Even with some critiques of the past use of narrative homiletics,[29] scholars like Lischer stand alongside Craddock and Lowry to advocate for preaching that is narratively rich in form and content. For, as Lischer, Craddock, and Lowry assert, we are "narrative beings." Therefore, preaching narrative not only draws the listener into the gospel, but also helps shape the listener's narrative identity.

IS NARRATIVE PREACHING THE ANSWER?

Given the prevalent use of narrative in theories of homiletics, one could assume that narrative preaching might serve as a source of healing for a congregation that has been narratively-fractured in the face of trauma. Scholars like Lischer, Craddock, and Lowry argue

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[27] Lischer, 98.

[28] Lischer, 98.

[29] Both Long and Lischer offer some critiques of the dependence on and utilization of narrative in the "new homiletic" stream of preaching. Lischer is critical of the inclination of early narrative preachers whom he accuses of celebrating the "narrative human experience" indiscriminately, identifying only the goodness of stories "without adequately examining the sort of story we tell and the nature of its competition with other stories." Instead, Lischer sees the Christian story, as embodied in preaching, in competition with the other narratives (those of empire, nation, progress, individualism, etc.) for people's attention and our identity. Put another way, Lischer argues that it matters *what* story preachers tell. Preachers should not tell personal or generic stories, but should tell stories and shape the narrative form of the sermon to tell God's stories and ultimately point towards Christ. *The End of Words*, 100, 110.

Likewise, Long, while still advocating for the value of narrative preaching (at least a "revised" version), takes seriously the critiques offered from the right, center, and left. The right, he asserts, reminds us that "humanity does not live by narrative alone" but must utilize many genres in their preaching (as in Scripture). The center offers an apt critique that stories may not evoke "deep theological memories" if the laity have not grown up in a church culture where such memories were formed and solidified. *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 13. And Long takes seriously the critique from the left that narratives in preaching can be coercive or seek to normalize one person's community or experience as universal. Even as Long takes seriously these critiques, he advocates for a revised narrative homiletic that is attentive to the need for a variety of preaching genres, uses narrative in a way that is appropriate and helpful to less theologically fluent parishioners, and seeks to advocate for storytelling that is inclusive as well as invitational for those who are often oppressed or left out.

convincingly that the value of a narrative homiletic lies in its ability to illumine (and even resolve) real-world conflicts in light of the gospel as well as shape a congregation's narrative identity. In fact, such narrative preaching strengths coincide with the overall goal of traumatic psychology and clinical treatment.

Trauma theorist Judith Herman takes just such a narrative approach toward healing the disruptions of trauma. In her text, *Trauma and Recovery*, begins by asserting that, "[r]emembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims."[30] Put another way, the victims and witnesses of trauma must eventually reassemble the "fragments of a picture" into a coherent narrative in order for healing and restoration within the community to occur.[31] Built from her work with trauma survivors, therapists, and clinicians as well as her study of the work of trauma theorist Pierre Janet,[32] Herman outlines three stages of recovery, all of which work towards the goal of reintegration—both the reintegration of the survivor's fragments into narrative sense as well as reintegration of traumatized individuals into their communities. Outlined briefly, stage 1 is focused on safety and stabilization, allowing survivors and witnesses to regain a sense of physical and/or emotional safety as well as learn how to regulate and manage difficult emotions and reactions that may come after a traumatic experience. Stage 2 is centered on remembrance and mourning. It is in this stage that the survivors or witnesses process the

[30] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 1.

[31] Herman, 2.

[32] Herman's book, *Trauma and Recovery*, is built on her personal research of incest survivors as well as how childhood trauma impacts adults with borderline personality disorder. Much of her research and clinical sources come from Herman's own work as a therapist (for twenty years) at a feminist mental health clinic as well as "ten years as a teacher and supervisor in a university teaching hospital." Herman, 3. Her research also includes testimonies from survivors of trauma as well as counselor and therapists who work closely with survivors. Her stages of recovery find their source not only in her work with trauma survivors and clinicians, but also are built off of the foundational work of Pierre Janet (1859–1947), a psychologist and neurologist who not only worked in the fields of hysteria and trauma but advocated for the bringing together of academic psychology and the clinical treatment of people with trauma or mental illness.

trauma, seeking to put words and emotions to the experience, reintegrating the experience into their own narrative sense. This stage may only be accomplished after Stage 1 is complete, when the person affected by trauma feels safe and secure enough to begin facing their experience and piecing the story together. The third stage is marked by reconnection and integration. At this stage those affected by trauma are invited to move towards a new self and a new future in which one is not simply marked by victimhood, but personal empowerment.[33] While this process takes place over time, the ultimate goal is for the survivor or witness of trauma to assemble a coherent and cohesive narrative which then empowers the traumatized individual to construct a new sense of self and rebuild (or forge new) relationships within their communities.

Employing narrative, as Herman does, as a means toward healing may point toward narrative preaching as a strategy to help in the process of rebuilding both individual and communal narrative sense after trauma. But, I want to challenge both Herman's approach to healing and the assumption that could be implied in much contemporary homiletical theory that offering narrative preaching from the pulpit is what is called for in the *immediate* aftermath of a traumatic incident. While affirming the overall goal of eventual repair of the narrative wreckage left behind in the wake of trauma and while situating myself within the general current orthodoxy of narrative homiletics as a helpful strategy for preaching, I will nevertheless argue that this particular moment—these days, weeks, even months after a community has been shattered by trauma—calls for an emergency homiletic that stands apart from the traditional wisdom of the narrative preaching tradition.

In the wake of violent trauma, preachers may be inclined to lean upon narrative preaching for two reasons. First, they have been trained in narrative preaching and it is their "natural"

[33] Herman, 155–213.

preaching form. Second, preachers may believe their responsibility is to offer the community a strong, whole narrative that may serve as a guide or stand-in for the community's fractured narratives. There is an inclination towards offering a cohesive response through narrative preaching when faced with the difficult reality of fractured communal and individual narratives in the wake of violent trauma. However, if we consider the construction and work of narratives with phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur, we will discover that narratives cannot (and should not) be categorized as only cohesive *or* fractured. Instead, narratives exist in the ongoing negotiation and tension between the concordance of plot and the discordance of fractured (and sometimes traumatic) temporal reality. Therefore, the preacher may need to make space in their preaching for the discordant realities, even as they seek to help parishioners construct cohesive narratives.

RICOEUR'S DIALECTICAL NARRATIVE THEORY AND THE PERSISTENCE OF DISCORDANCE

According to phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur, people do not simply have cohesive narratives (concordance) *or* fragments (discordance), but humans live in a dialectic, always moving between the two realities. Ricoeur begins his exploration of narrative in Volume 1 of *Time and Narrative* by positioning two counter figures—Augustine and Aristotle—opposite to one another. In the debate formed between these two scholars, Ricoeur is able to create a dialectical and nuanced understanding of how narratives are formed and continue to function as people and communities negotiate the experiences and narratives that inform their identity.

Ricoeur begins by exploring Augustine's well-known meditation on eternity and time. Augustine initiates his study in Book 11 of *Confessions* with the question "What, then, is

time?"[34] Augustine's exploration begins with the skeptical argument: "time has no being since the future is not yet, the past is no longer, and the present does not remain."[35] And yet, notes Augustine, we are able to rescue the nonbeing of time through experience and language, speaking of things that "were," "are," or "will be." We even measure time, as we are "aware of [sentimus] periods of time…compare [comparamus] them with one another…[and] even calculate [metimur] how much longer or shorter one period is than another."[36] But how can we measure time when the present is a fleeting instant? Augustine asserts that the past exists in the present as memory and the future exists in the present as expectation. From here, Augustine constructs the dialectic of the three-fold present: "The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct perception…; and the present of future things is expectation."[37] Thus, for Augustine, we measure time not through some cosmological reference or external movement of an object, but through its movement in the human soul as time is extended through the three-fold present. The mind moves from expectation to attention to memory, relegating the future to the past, through the present. This causes the mind to be stretched between the dialectic of expectation, attention and memory, thus causing the soul (where impressions of the past and sign-images of the future remain) to be stretched in its apprehension of time. This *distentio animi* (the soul's passive subjection to time) is of great cost to the human being for as the soul is stretched, there is a sense that experiences do not make any holistic sense; there is a fragmentation or ripping apart that happens when the soul distends with the passing of time.

This experience of fragmentation through the apprehension of time is intensified for Augustine when the human's experience with time is put in relation with eternity. The

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[34] Augustine in *Confessions*, Book 11, 14:17 as quoted in Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 5.
[35] Ricoeur, 7.
[36] Augustine's *Confessions* 16:21 as quoted in Ricoeur, 9.
[37] Augustine's *Confessions* 20:26 as quoted in Ricoeur, 11.

experience of *distentio animi* is "[i]ntensified….on the existential level, the experience of distention is raised to the level of lamentation….*Distentio animi* no longer provides just the 'solution' to the aporia of the measurement of time. It now expresses the way in which the soul, deprived of the stillness of the eternal present, is torn asunder."[38] The realization of the wholeness of eternity only exacerbates the human experience of time that distends the soul and fragments our experiences. Having reviewed his argument on time and eternity, Ricoeur situates Augustine on one side of a dialectic, recognizing that due to our experience of time (and the subsequent distention of the soul), we are fragmented selves, restless sinners who perceive our experiences as disconnected from one another and, therefore, largely non-sensical.

Ricoeur then moves on to examine the work of Aristotle and his concept of plot as described in *Poetics.* Aristotle's consideration of plot is centered around the relationship between mimesis and muthos. Mimesis, defined as "[creative] imitation or representation of the action in the medium of…language," is the activity through which the discordant fragments of temporal experience may find concordance in the formation of a plot (*muthos)*.[39] Aristotle contends that plots push for *dramatic unity*, a "single action" marked as having a beginning, middle, and end, over *temporal unity*, "a single period of time with all that happened therein to one or more persons, no matter how little relation one event may have had with another."[40] And so, with this dramatic unity, the episodic series of events finds cohesion and even causality within the act of emplotment. The plot gives both order and sense to human events and actions, sometimes at the expense of actual temporality. Put another way, the act of emplotment (muthos) emphasizes concordance over any concern for marking the actual passage of time.

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[38] Ricoeur, 26–27.
[39] Ricoeur, 33.
[40] Aristotle 59a22-24 as quoted in Ricoeur, 39.

Ricoeur finds Aristotle's concept of emplotment (*muthos*) a helpful reply to Augustine's consideration of time.[41] In contrast with Augustine's *distentio animi*, "muthos is set up as the poetic solution to the speculative paradox of time, inasmuch as the inventing of order is pursued to the exclusion of every temporal characteristic."[42] While in *Poetics* Aristotle only considered the work of *mimesis* and *muthos* (emplotment) in relation to the genre of tragedy, Ricoeur extends Aristotle's paradigm, arguing it can aptly apply to the "whole narrative field."[43] Whether comedy or tragedy, plots are able to put the fragments of experience into a cohesive form. They are mimetic, in that they creatively imitate life, while also organizing distinct fragments into a complete whole. In sum, Ricoeur utilizes Aristotle's concept of mimesis and muthos (imitation/representation and emplotment) to offer a response to Augustine's aporia of time: The distended soul may find meaning and order through the act of emplotment, as the narrative is able to sweep together the discordant fragments of experience into a concordant narrative plot able to be represented in language.

With Augustine and his discordant aporia of time on one side of a dialectic and Aristotle's concordant work of mimesis and muthos on the other, Ricoeur swings through the middle, constructing a narrative theory that takes seriously the concerns of both parties: the three-fold mimesis. Taking a cue from Aristotle's three-fold present, Ricoeur extends Aristotle's use of mimesis into three stages—mimesis (M_1), mimesis$_2$ (M_2) and mimesis$_3$ (M_3).

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[41] Ricoeur admits that this positing of Aristotle in relation with Augustine is grounded in his reading and interpretation (as opposed to a debate between the two scholars): "It goes without saying that it is I, the reader of Augustine and Aristotle, who establishes this relationship between a lived experience where discordance rends concordance and an eminently verbal experience where concordance mends discordance." In fact, Aristotle's *Poetics* is largely silent about temporality or the connections between "poetic activity and temporal experience." However, this sets up and secures a helpful dialectic for Ricoeur that allows him to engage in an "investigation into the mediating operations between lived experience and discourse." Ricoeur, 31.

[42] Ricoeur, 38.

[43] Ricoeur, 38.

The sequence begins at the mimesis$_1$ (M_1) stage where we are in a fragmented state, with pieces and parts of our lives, experiences, and ideas disconnected and in search of a plot. This is the pure Augustinian world—fractured and distended. But, all of these pieces are the raw materials for a narrative as the self that is distended is still a self that is capable of action with the potential for narrative and plot. As part of this M_1 stage, Ricoeur argues that we have a "pre-understanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character."[44] By having practical knowledge of the elements of narrative (answers to questions such as "what," "why," "who," "how," "with whom" or "against whom"),[45] the concept of the rules that order narrative,[46] the symbolic systems which mediate narratives (providing context, readability, and a sense of norms in regards to action),[47] and the relationship between the temporal measurement of time and narrative time,[48] we are able to distinguish "human action" from simple movement. And, as Lance Pape describes in his analysis in *The Scandal of Having Something to Say*, "Mimesis$_1$ is Ricoeur's acknowledgement that every experience worthy of the designation 'human' has already and necessarily been *prefigured*

[44] Ricoeur, 54.

[45] Ricoeur asserts that answering these questions ("what," "why," "who," "how," "with whom" or "against whom") is to have practical knowledge of the action and a familiarity with the core building blocks of narrative. More significantly, he argues that these terms/questions are linked, creating a web of "intersignification." Ricoeur, 55.

[46] Beyond familiarity with the building blocks of narrative (i.e. agent, goals, means, circumstances, conflict, etc. as indicated by answers to questions such as "what," "why," "who," "how," "with whom" or "against whom"), the M_1 person has a pre-understanding of the master "rules that govern [narrative] syntagmatic order." Ricoeur, 55–56.

[47] Ricoeur takes his definition of a "symbol" from of the work of anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and philosopher Ernst Cassirer. He asserts that "symbolic forms are cultural processes that articulate experience." He then moves to define "symbolic mediation" as the "structured character of a symbolic system" or, in the words of Geertz, "systems of interaction symbols," of patterns of interworking meanings." Symbolic systems offer context for actions and thus allow actions to be "readable" or understandable in that context. This leads to the idea of a rule or sense of norm for actions in a given cultural context. Symbols function within cultural codes and so actions can be understood or evaluated within the norms of that culture's values, leading to the question of ethical actions. Ricoeur, 57–59.

[48] This conversation on temporality stands as a preview to more work Ricoeur does in Volume 2 of *Time and Narrative*. In short, Ricoeur turns to Heidegger and his understanding of "within-time-ness" to break his reliance on a linear representation of time ("understood as a simple succession of nows"). Instead, within-time-ness makes the description temporality "dependent on the description of things about which we care." Ricoeur, 59–64.

within a framework that renders it patient of narration."[49] In this M_1 stage, all the chaotic shards are ready for a narrative that has not yet taken shape.

The mimesis$_2$ (M_2) stage is where the poetic work of emplotment occurs; M_2 serves a dynamic, mediating function. In an encounter with a narrative—whether a biblical story, fairy tale, or story of someone's life experience—we are confronted with a world opened in front of the text. What we receive as readers/listeners is not just "the sense of the work, but, through its sense, its reference, that is, the experience it brings to language and, in the last analysis, the world and the temporality it unfolds."[50] As this world opens, I am invited to enter the world of the text and have a "fusion of horizons"[51] where my own world intersects the world of the text. In that encounter, the fragments of my M_1 existence begin to be configured together in a narrative plot as I "try on" the plot and world displayed by the text. Through creative mimetic activity, my bits and pieces that were awaiting story in M_1 are given order and shape through the plot of the text. In M_2 the plot offered by the story mediates in three ways: (1) it is a mediation between the whole of the story and the episodic, individual events; (2) it brings together various narrative factors such as "agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, [and] unexpected results;"[52] and (3) it "combines in variable propositions" both the chronological temporal dimension and the non-chronological temporality of narrative time.[53] Through its mediating work, the plot invites the reader/listener to enter into the world of the narrative and begin to configure their fragments of experience and chronological episodes. However, this is not an act

[49] Lance B. Pape, *The Scandal of Having Something to Say: Ricoeur and the Possibility of Postliberal Preaching* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 94.
[50] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 78–79.
[51] Ricoeur, 77. Ricoeur borrowed the phrase "fusion of horizons" from Hans-Georg Gadamer.
[52] Ricoeur, 65.
[53] Ricoeur, 66.

of simple imitation. Through the utilization of poetic, "rule-governed" imagination, we are able to creatively place the fragments of our temporal experience into some kind of narrative whole.[54] Ricoeur relates this configuring act to Kant's consideration of the "productive imagination" from the first *Critique* which is able to "grasp together" disparate thoughts and experiences to create "syntheses that are intellectual and intuitive at the same time."[55] Likewise, emplotment functions at both the intellectual and intuitive level, bringing together the various fragments of temporal experience and giving them order. As Pape summarizes:

> Ricoeur speaks of emplotment as an activity that brings an array of sequential incidents under the unity of a plot. The "one things after another" of a raw episodic sequence becomes a plot through a number of devices including (1) the selection of events, (2) their arrangement and discursive expansion so as to achieve the more or less subtle attribution of cause and effect relationships between various features of the sequence, and especially (3) the demarcation of a beginning, middle, and ending, thereby supplying the governing framework within which all of the plot's incidents must be appreciated as belonging to an intelligible whole.[56]

In short, in the mimesis$_2$ stage, our world of temporal episodes and experiences is able to find configuration as it intersects the world of the text.

If the M_2 stage is marked by the act of configuration, mimesis$_3$ is the act of refiguration. Through the "intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader," the creative mimetic work invites us to configure our fragments into a fictitious plot (M_2).[57] We then emerge with our fragments figured and reconfigured in light of the text or story (M_3). And as we leave the world of the text and the fiction of the plot provided, we find our own temporal experiences reconfigured. As Ricoeur writes, "[t]his stage corresponds to what H.-G. Gadamer,

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[54] Ricoeur, 68.
[55] Ricoeur, 68.
[56] Pape, *The Scandal of Having Something to Say*, 95.
[57] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 71.

in his philosophical hermeneutics, calls 'application'."[58] M_3 is the refigured narrative self that results after moving through M_1 and M_2. But, this is an ongoing cycle. Ricoeur is the first to acknowledge that not all the fragments find a place in the narrative (discussed more below), and those remaining fragments along with the fragments of new experiences lead us to begin again in M_1 of the mimetic process. In other words, the refigured self of M_3, combined with new fragments of temporal experience, becomes the next cycle's M_1.

Ricoeur is quick to note, however, that this "circle of mimesis" is not a "vicious circle" in which "the end point seems to lead back to the starting point" or "the end point seems anticipated in the starting point."[59] Instead of describing this process as a circle, Ricoeur prefers to imagine it as a spiral (imagine a spring) where the mimetic movement may repeat, but at "different altitudes."[60] After moving from the fragments of M_1 into the configuration of M_2 and refiguration of M_3, one finds they have arrived at a new M_1. However, that new M_1 is a different starting point than the previous M_1, thanks to the configuration and refiguration that took place in the previous mimetic cycle as well as the entrance of new fragments due to ongoing experience.

This insistence on the spiralized mimetic activity makes this hermeneutical process both progressive and still connected to temporal reality. Such a spiral avoids two key dangers that might make the mimetic circle "vicious": "violence of interpretation" and "redundancy."[61]

First, if the mimetic cycle is vicious, it threatens to do violence to the reality of discordance. Put another way, a non-vicious mimetic circle/spiral will honor the reality of ongoing discordance in relation to concordance. Ricoeur notes that we are "tempted to say that

[58] Ricoeur, 70.
[59] Ricoeur, 71–72.
[60] Ricoeur, 72.
[61] Ricoeur, 72.

narrative puts consonance where there was only dissonance."[62] By somehow believing that the concordance of narrative configuration overrides the discordance of temporal experience *or* imagining that the consonance only belongs to narrative and discordance only belongs to temporality, misses the dialectical nature of the relationship between the concordant and discordant. To begin, temporal experience is not only marked by only discordance. Even Augustine notes that "*distentio* and *intentio* mutually confront each other at the heart of our most authentic experience."[63] As the mind intends, the soul distends. Therefore, temporality may be better categorized as *concordant discordance*. In the same way, the concordance provided by narrative is not without the presence of discordance. As Ricoeur writes, "Emplotment is never the simple triumph of 'order.' Even the paradigm of Greek tragedy makes a place for the upsetting role of the *peripeteia*, those contingencies and reversals of future that solicit horror and pity. The plots themselves coordinate distention and intention."[64] Ricoeur extends this understanding beyond Greek tragedies, noting the ways that discordance enters narrative plots through reversals, surprises, and then contingencies that make stories interesting and notable. The work of emplotment (and narrative generally) should be considered an act of *discordant concordance*. By keeping discordance and concordance—temporality and narrativity—in

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[62] Ricoeur, 72.

[63] Ricoeur, 72.

[64] Sticking close to Aristotle's study of tragedy, Ricoeur points out that such tragic plots are not acts of complete concordance, but *discordant concordance.* The first place of discordance Ricoeur identifies is the discordance of the "fearful and pitiable incidents" that serve as a threat to the plot's coherence. Ricoeur, 43. Such discordance is what triggers the spectator's emotional response and allows the spectator the experience of catharsis as plot unfolds. Secondly, discordant concordance is present in the element of surprise in tragedies. Aristotle labels surprises as those occurrences that "come unexpectedly and yet occur in a causal sequence in which one thing leads to another." Aristotle, *Poetics* 52a4 as quoted in Ricoeur, 43. It is the unexpected nature of the event that displays discordance, but the fact that such events still fit into the general stream of the plot that continues the concordance. Third, Ricoeur points to the act of reversal (*peripeteia*) as "the heart of discordant concordance." Ricoeur, 43. While in tragedy, reversal generally turns from good to bad, reversals occur in the opposite direction in other kinds of compositions. The moment of reversal is certainly discordant by nature—often unexpected and inconsistent with the general direction of the plot up to the point of reversal. However, in the art of compositions—specifically in tragedies—the reversal takes time and the artist works hard to "mak[e] the discordance appear concordant." Ricoeur, 73.

dialectical tension, the spiral is not flattened, and the mimetic circle avoids becoming a vicious circle.

Second, understanding Ricoeur's hermeneutical cycle a spiral of progressive mimetic activity (as opposed to a vicious circle) avoids the danger of "redundancy." This redundancy of interpretation would occur if $mimesis_3$ were identical to the $mimesis_1$ from which the mimetic cycle began. In other words, the mimetic process would be constant repetition from M_1 to M_3, which is equated to the original M_1, with no kind of new configuration or refiguration work done through M_2. This cycle becomes vicious because it discounts our experience of temporality and excludes real-life experiences from the mimetic spiral. If the cycle moves only from story to story and is unchanged or uninterrupted by the events and actions of real life, the spiral will collapse as no progress is made through time. To counter this danger, Ricoeur argues that our temporal experiences consistently insert themselves into our hermeneutical understanding of self. In fact, it is these "prenarrative" raw experiences that call for the work of narrative in the first place. In Ricoeur's words, "[w]e tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit to be narrated."[65] Therefore, the mimetic process in which we are engaged is not vicious, but progressive. We do no simply jump from narrative to narrative. Instead, our temporal experiences—the events, actions, sufferings, and joys of our lives—always insert themselves, pushing against the narratives we have constructed and pushing us toward new mimetic activity. These "prenarrative" experiences, these episodes of concordant discordance, intermix with the refiguration of $mimesis_3$, to form a brand new $mimesis_1$ at a new "altitude" in the hermeneutical spiral. Again, narrative and temporality hold together in dialectical tension without collapsing into complete discordance or concordance. Instead of a vicious circle in which one continually

[65] Ricoeur, 75.

jumps from narration to narration, returning to the same point each time, the dialectic of temporality and narration allow one to progress towards a better understanding of self in time.

Ricoeur's argument that both temporality and narrative need to be held in tension in order for the hermeneutical process to be progressive and not vicious, points to the larger idea of the persistence of discordance. As a narrative theorist, Ricoeur is often utilized to imagine how one makes narrative sense of their lives or constructs healthy narratives. As quoted above, Ricoeur, himself, notes our propensity for wanting to imagine emplotment as the concordant solution which eliminates discordance. However, Ricoeur's work continually emphasizes the persistence and presence of discordance at every stage of the mimetic spiral. As mentioned above, M_1 begins with concordant discordance. It is where the discordance is most obvious. And, while these experiences may be understood as "prenarrative" fragments (i.e. "all of the necessary ingredients for a narrative"[66]), they are still shards of disconnected, discordant experiences that are not yet placed in a narrative in which they find meaning. During M_2, while these fragments are being configured in light of a fictive narrative plot, Ricoeur emphatically claims that this is not an act of pure concordance—it is *discordant concordance*. Not all of the fragments may find a place within the plot; some of the fragments of discordant experience resist emplotment. Additionally, the plots themselves are not without surprises, reversals, gaps and contingencies. Ricoeur discusses this discordantly concordant nature of narratives in terms of time. On the one hand, even narratives have an "episodic dimension" that "draws narrative time in the direction of the linear representation of time."[67] On the other hand, the "configurational dimension" of narrative "transforms the succession of events into one meaningful whole" (i.e. into narrative time) with

[66] Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 48.
[67] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 67.

both the sense of an ending and a consistent flow of time from the past toward the future.[68] So, the fragmented self must imaginatively interact with the narrative constraints, gaps, and reversals as they undertake the mimetic task of emplotment. In other words, even in the configuring M_2 stage, the self must contend with discordance both within the narrative and as they seek to configure their fragments in the world projected by the text. Thus, it is unsurprising that the refigured narrative self of the M_3 stage is marked by the continued presence of discordance. The discordance of this stage comes about in two different ways. First, there is remaining discordance from the fragments of temporal experience that were not easily arranged by emplotment. These discordant remains do not disappear, but re-enter the mimetic process at the next level. Second, added to those discordant remains are new discordant fragments of experience that occur as a person moves through time. This combination converts the M_3 refigured person back into an M_1 prefigured person, as she must make sense of both the stubborn remaining discordant experience and new episodes of temporal experience in a new act of emplotment (M_2). Throughout the mimetic hermeneutic process as outlined by Ricoeur, there is a persistence of discordance that is important to retain. After all, the entire mimetic process is built on the interacting dialectic of time and plot, discordance and concordance.

This narrative spiral that holds concordance and discordance in tension has implications for one's personal identity as Ricoeur outlines in *Oneself as Another*. In the Fifth Study of the book, Ricoeur establishes that any personal identity is, in fact, a dialectic identity between the idem-identity (sameness) and ipse-identity (selfhood).[69] In the Sixth Study, Ricoeur then argues

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[68] Ricoeur, 67.

[69] Idem-identity is marked by "sameness" as three levels: (1) Numerical identity (multiple occurrences of the same thing, for example multiple human beings); (2) Qualitative identity (extreme resemblance, for example two people wearing the same dress); and (3) Uninterrupted continuity (for example, an acorn becoming an oak tree is still the same organism even as it changes visual forms). Ipse-identity has "permanence in time" in two ways:

that this dialectic between idem- and ipse-identity can only be fully understood in a narrative framework. A narrative conception of personal identity allows us to move from action to character, as the character is "the one who performs the action in the narrative."[70] Further, the identity of the character can only be conceived "through the transfer to the character of the operation of emplotment, first applied to the action recounted."[71] In sum, Ricoeur asserts, "characters…are themselves plots."[72] Therefore, as emploted characters, people's identities are conceived in the midst of the dialectic of concordance and discordance. The character finds his or her sense of unity from the concordance provided by a plotted life story that is distinct from others. However, this plotted, unified story is perpetually threatened by discordance, understood as those unexpected and unpredictable events that disrupt the concordant plot of the character. The paradox of emplotment is that "it inverts the effect of contingency…by incorporating it in some way into the effect of necessity or probability," though contingency is always a looming and lingering reality.[73] As Ricoeur suggests, a life truly lived is a series of random chances and fragmentation. However, through emplotment, we are able to give tentative order to the fragments.

While Ricoeur often refused the label of "theologian," there are clear theological and eschatological implications to his narrative hermeneutic. Ricoeur does not view the work of

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through the duration of character and keeping one's word. While both may show a "self" that is consistent through time, they both are at risk of changing with experience. For example, character is always in motion; as a person goes through time they acquire character by sedimentations of activities that become habits and eventually marks of an individual's character. Similarly, keeping one's word is not stagnant nor permanent in time by nature; it is a choice that can be altered or changed. This dialectic of idem-identity and ipse-identity as well as the sub-dialectic of change and permanence in time leads to an identity that is marked by concordance and discordance (discussed above). Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 119.

[70] Ricoeur, 143.

[71] Ricoeur, 143.

[72] Ricoeur, 143.

[73] Ricoeur, 142.

constructing a narrative personal identity as an autonomous task. While I may play the role of narrator and character in my own life story, "unlike the creatures of fiction, I am not the author but at most, to use Aristotle's expression, the coauthor, the *sunaition*."[74] In fact, we are unable to narrate the entirety of our life story or, in the words of Alasdair MacIntyre, "the narrative unity of life."[75] To start, there is no real beginning in the narrative of a human life and the ending can only be analyzed after death by those who are left behind.[76] Any sense of beginning and ending must be seen as "an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience."[77] At the same time, our narrative lives are bound up in the histories and narrative of others. Therefore, I cannot truly be the author of my story, but "I make myself its coauthor as to its meaning."[78] While never explicitly naming God as coauthor, Ricoeur gives a nod towards the Holy Other as he moves on to consider how the narrative person interacts with others and the Other.

In the Seventh Study: The Self and the Ethical Aim, Ricoeur considers what it means, more specifically, for an individual's narrative life to be in relationship with the other. Ricoeur concludes that because our personal identities are narrative, I can only understand myself in relation to the other. Unlike Levinas' argument that we must lose ourselves for the sake of others, Ricoeur argues that we gain ourselves when we lose ourselves for others.[79] There are two clear ways that our narratives become entangled with others. First is our response to the suffering of the other.[80] Through expressing sympathy ("distinct from simple pity"), the self is able to give

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[74] Ricoeur, 160.
[75] MacIntyre as quoted in Ricoeur, 160.
[76] Ricoeur, 160.
[77] Ricoeur, 162.
[78] Ricoeur, 162.
[79] Levinas' thoughts are considered and challenged in Ricoeur, 183.
[80] For Ricoeur suffering "is not defined solely by physical pain, nor even by mental pain, but by the reduction, even the destruction of the capacity for acting, of being-able-to-act, experienced as a violation of self-integrity." Ricoeur, 190.

as well as receive from the suffering other the gift of "suffering-with."[81] As Ricoeur so eloquently writes: "For from the suffering other there comes a giving that is no long drawn from the power of acting and existing but precisely from weakness itself."[82] So, it is in the sharing of strength in suffering that we find our narrative identities wrapped up with the other. Second, the "self is 'summoned to responsibility' by the other."[83] This summoning interaction is often attributed to the Other (the "figure of the master of justice"[84]) and the response is to receive the summons and respond with "benevolent spontaneity" (as opposed to responding out of a sense of obedience or duty).[85] So, ultimately, we are reliant on both the other and the Other. We live as plotted characters, narratively moving between unpredictability and stability (discordance and concordance). However, we recognize that our narrative lives and identities are fictional, but necessary. And so we wager that the Other will ultimately summon us and offer us a plot of complete concordance. But, on this side of that eschatological moment, there will always be discordance.

TRAUMA AND DISCORDANCE

While I do not want to be accused of collapsing Ricoeur's dialectic, traumatic experiences like mass shootings are the times when it may be most appropriate to acknowledge and honor the discordant side of the dialectic. As explored in Chapter 2, the experience of trauma destroys a sense of temporality and narrative coherence. In a Ricoeurian view, this is the very definition of discordance. The experience of trauma leads not only to the fragmentation of one's experience of the trauma, but fragments the narrative that has functioned up until this point as a

[81] Ricoeur, 190–91.
[82] Ricoeur, 191.
[83] Ricoeur, 189.
[84] Ricoeur, 190.
[85] Ricoeur, 190.

concordant narrative, helping to organize the discordant fragments of experience. So, the experience of trauma in a community that has sustained an event like a mass shooting puts on full display the reality of discordance. This is the condition of the parishioners in the pew—individually and as a community. This is the condition of the larger community to which the preacher is often called to speak.

And so, preaching in the immediate aftermath of trauma must account for the discordant realities in which the community is living. In fact, the ability for parishioners to develop their narrative identities and move through the mimetic process is dependent upon the recognition of this discordant pole alongside the pole of concordance. Therefore, preachers must resist the urge to push towards whole, healing narratives in the moments immediately after such events. Instead, the preacher must acknowledge the narrative fracture that has occurred. The preacher must name the discordant fragments of experience that appear to stand outside any kind of narrative sense. And, in doing so, the preacher may offer blessing upon not only the concordant narratives, but the discordant fragments of the community. This discordant preaching is not a permanent resting place, but a passageway to eventually offer some concordance and narrative wholeness. Eventually the time will come for the preacher to offer the whole biblical narratives as a place for the congregation to configure their fragments of fractured traumatic experience. Eventually the preacher will offer sermons that embrace a narrative form that allows listeners to enter with their discordant questions and experiences in order to find new order that helps refigure them to be healthier, faithful narrative selves in the world. Eventually. After all, as Ricoeur asserts, this is the telos towards which we are driving—we are being summoned by the Other towards wholeness and complete concordance. However, on this side of things, we are constantly navigating this dialectic of concordance *and* discordance. And, in the aftermath of traumatic

violence, we must recognize and honor the discordant pole of the dialectic, with the hope that we will acquire concordance once again.

The impulse of a preacher trained in the traditions of narrative homiletics is to preach towards concordance with less regard for the pole of discordance. Lowry, for example, treats discordance as merely the launching point of a sermon that ultimately offers solutions to problems or resolutions to conflicts. The dialectic almost collapses as the concordant solutions of Scripture seem to eliminate the discordant realities named at the beginning of the sermon. However, in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic incident such as a mass shooting, preachers should be attentive to the other side of the dialectic—the discordance—even as they move over time to concordant narrative goals. We need an emergency homiletic for the days, weeks, even months after an incident of traumatic violence that lifts up, names, and positions the fragments of temporal experience. In short, we need to preach our way into Mimesis_1. We need to bless the fragmented nature of traumatic experience and honor those fragments in order that they may be positioned towards eventual narrative healing.

So, what shape does an emergency homiletic that honors the reality of discordance take? Preaching discordance has implications both for the content of the sermon and the form. In Chapter 4, we will explore the content of this emergency homiletic with particular focus on the need for such a homiletic to have a deeply-textured eschatology that leaves space for discordance. In Chapter 5 we will look towards the narrative form of this emergency homiletic—a preaching form that does not push towards pure concordance but can tolerate incomplete narratives or even reflect back narratively fractured nature of congregation.

CHAPTER 4:

WHAT TO SAY: ESCHATOLOGY AND POST-TRAUMATIC PREACHING

A preacher speaking in the aftermath of violent trauma is more than simply a reporter or even a community counselor. The preacher must contend with the experience of trauma as well as the truth of the Gospel. The preacher must stand with one foot in the fractured stories of the community and one foot in the stories of faith. The preacher is tasked with not just seeking to understand the traumatic effect and its impact on the congregation, but also to place the experience of trauma in light of the gospel in a way that honors the reality of the event as well as the discordance that follows.

To offer suggestions for specific content for sermons preached in the wake of violent trauma is tricky at best and irresponsible at worst. Perhaps even more so than regular Sunday sermons, these emergency sermons are shaped by the particularity of the traumatic event, the community, and the time. For example, after the shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in which a white man killed nine African Americans during a Bible study, preachers spoke not just of grief, but also of the deep and evil roots of racism. Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III of the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York preached on the legacies of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., proclaiming, "Racism comes in many forms and you cannot allow this devilish activity to go unchecked."[1] On Sunday, June 21, 2015, the first Sunday Mother Emanuel reopened for Sunday morning worship, the preacher, Rev. Norvel Goff, began his sermons directly addressing the

[1] Tom Kutsch, "Charleston Church Re-Opens after Shooting, amid Nationwide Mourning," *Aljazeera America*, June 21, 2015, http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/21/emanuel-church-sunday-sermon-after-shooting.html.

traumatic reality: "The blood of the Mother Emanuel Nine requires us to work until not only justice in this case but for those who are still living in the margin of life, those who are less fortunate than ourselves, that we stay on the battlefield until there is no more fight to be fought."[2] In the same way, the particularities of the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida where LGBTQ victims were targeted and forty-nine killed, directly shaped sermon content. Rev. Broderick L. Greer, an Episcopal priest, recalls preaching at a LGBTQ Pride Month service in Nashville less than two weeks after the massacre. The text (assigned well before the shooting) was the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. With the voice of his preaching professor ringing in his ears ("Sometimes the news demands you change your sermon."[3]), he connected the experience of the marginalized eunuch with the experience of the marginalized LGBTQ community: "The eunuch, like so many of us, was devouring every inch of Scripture in order to find some word affirming his existence."[4] He went on to grieve with the Nashville LGBTQ community over the shooting in Orlando that had impacted all of them.

THE CENTRALITY OF ESCHATOLOGY

While it is impossible to prescribe specific sermon content due to the particular nature of tragic events and the communities they impact, it is important to think about the theological foundations of such preaching. Even before a traumatic event impacts a community, the preacher can nurture theological bedrock that can withstand the weight of violent trauma. Traumatic events and the subsequent fracturing of personal and communal narratives raise particular

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[2] "Transcripts: Charleston's Mother Emanuel AME Holds First Service Since Shooting; Themes of Forgiveness in Sermon," *State of the Union*, CNN, June 21, 2015, http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1506/21/sotu.03.html.

[3] Broderick L. Greer, "'There Was One Grief': A Priest Reflects on the Sermons He Gave After the Pulse Shooting," *Teen Vogue*, June 12, 2017, http://www.teenvogue.com/story/priest-reflect-sermons-after-pulse-shooting-orlando.

[4] Greer.

questions for Christian communities rooted in eschatological theology and the community's eschatological location. Communities wonder how immanent or distant God's Kingdom, presence, judgment, and redeeming hope exist in relation to their current situation. While eschatological theology should be important for preachers every week, the need for a strong eschatological foundation becomes especially vital in the aftermath of violent trauma in two particular ways. First, the way we understand the end time or last things filters back into our understanding of our present condition and how we are to act or react to present circumstances. Put narratively, the way we imagine the story ends impacts how we act in the story now. For example, if someone knows that after completing a large project their boss will simply throw the pages into the shredder, they will probably put in significantly little to no effort. However, if they knew that upon completing the project, their recommendations would go straight to the chair of the board for consideration, they would probably invest a great deal of time and effort. Framed theologically, in his letters to the young churches, the apostle Paul instills the need for present ethical and faithful behavior by looking to the impinging reality of the end times. For example, in Philippians 2, Paul urges the congregation at Philippi to live lives of love, compassion, generosity, humility and selflessness. He drives home the importance of these commands with a hymn of God's salvific work in the Jesus Christ, whom "…God also highly exalted…and gave him the name that is above every name,/ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend in heaven and on earth, and under the earth/ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[5] In Paul's view, the Christian community's understanding of the whole of God's salvation story and its conclusion in the glorification of the Son has immediate repercussions for how they behave and treat one another. Framed narratively, Paul

[5] Philippians 2:9–11 (NRSV).

Ricoeur can conceive of the ongoing mimetic cycle of narrative understanding that continually holds in tension concordance and discordance as he trusts that, in the end, the ultimate Other will give us our story in full concordance. The way we imagine the end, filters back to the ways we approach the present condition.

Second, a community's eschatological theology is deeply related to their narrative identity. As two eschatological theologians, Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, offer in their text *Hope Against Hope*, Christian eschatology is "itself a metanarrative—or, rather, it is an indispensable part of the Christian metanarrative, the story which Christian tell about the meaning of the world, the narrative that runs from creation to consummation."[6] However, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the ability for people to retain narrative temporality, coherence, and sense becomes severely compromised in the wake of violent trauma. Violent trauma exposes narrative weaknesses, shattering some of the less stable ones (i.e. I can completely control my environment and therefore keep myself and my loved ones safe). And violent trauma can unmask partially-formed narratives, revealing them to be inadequate to the task when all hell breaks loose. Preachers (and the homiletical literature that informs their work) must be attentive to explicating an eschatological theology that can withstand the test of violent trauma and therefore help Christians to retain even a fractured sense of narrative identity. These traumatized communities need an eschatological theology that can make space for the discordance of narrative fracture while not losing the hope in the promise of God's faithfulness. Such an eschatological theology needs to hold in tension the painful reality of the present and the promise of the Christian faith.

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[6] Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 9.

As one of the great theological minds of the last century, Jürgen Moltmann has spent a great deal of his career exploring and explicating an eschatology that holds together the broken reality of temporal existence while not losing sight of the redemptive promises of God. Building on a robust Christology that centers on the cross, Moltmann offers an eschatology that navigates the complicated concepts of time, death, hope, and redemption. As a theological scholar, Moltmann is especially attuned to the questions we are asking in this project due to his ongoing concern for those experiencing injustice, suffering, and oppression. Having lived through World War II (discussed more below), his theological work has been characterized as a "theology after Auschwitz" as his Christology and eschatology take seriously the atrocities of history.[7] In order to more fully grasp Moltmann's nuanced eschatology, we must first understand Moltmann's location—his experiences and points of view that shape him as a scholar and theologian. We will then explore Moltmann's Christology and theology of the cross as Moltmann's eschatology is built upon on his theology of the cross and resurrection. Having followed Moltmann's christological argument, we will then explore Moltmann's eschatology that seeks to navigate the reality of the present historical condition with the promise of God's redemptive work begun in Christ. With Moltmann's eschatology in view, we will lastly extrapolate the implications of this nuanced Christology and eschatology for preaching in the wake of violent trauma.

JÜRGEN MOLTMANN'S LOCATION

Jürgen Moltmann is a widely read German systematic theologian who writes out of his personal experience and subsequent hunger to explore theological topics. He begins his book on eschatology, *The Coming of God*, by reflecting on the "long theological road" of his thought and

[7] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 40th anniversary ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), xiv.

work, tracing it through not only his interactions with particular scholars such as Ernst Bloch, Franz Rosenzweig, and Augustine, but also tracing his "theological method" through the lens of his own experience. Without any "Christian socialization" as a child, Moltmann's first exposure to Christian faith and scripture was when he was given a Bible by an American chaplain in a prisoner-of-war camp in Belgium after being conscripted by the German army in 1944. Ever since, he views his theological method as one of adventure and exploration, writing:

> Since the moment when I began to study theology…everything theological has been for me marvelously new. I have first to discover everything for myself, and understand it, and make it my own. Right down to the present day, theology has continued to be for me a tremendous adventure, a journey of discovery into, for me, unknown country, a voyage without the certainty of a return, a path into the unknown with many surprises and not without disappointments. If I have a theological virtue at all, then it is one that has never hitherto been recognized as such: curiosity.[8]

Moltmann's experience as a prisoner of war (after surrendering to the first British soldier he encountered on the front lines in Belgium[9]) deeply shapes his understanding of the interaction of eschatology and history. Having witnessed and had time to reflect on the horrors of World War II after three years in three different prisoner-of-war camps, Moltmann is by no means ignorant of the horrors of this world. Yet he is still able to build a theology grounded in the hope of a grace-filled and sovereign God.

Due to his own experiences in World War II and beyond, Moltmann's theology reflects a deep concern for the oppressed, the poor, the forgotten, and the suffering. In his christological treatise, *The Crucified God*, Moltmann admits that his work is a "wrestling with God" in regards to human suffering and "the victims of injustice and violence in human history."[10] His theology

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[8] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), xiii–xiv.

[9] "Jürgen Moltmann," The Gifford Lectures, August 18, 2014, https://www.giffordlectures.org/lecturers/j%C3%BCrgen-moltmann.

[10] Jürgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 189–90.

of the cross therefore focuses on Jesus—and God's—suffering and his eschatology is steadily aware of the reality of suffering in history even as it reaches towards God's consummation of history. Because of his concern for those who are suffering from lack of food, shelter, education, safety, or care, he is neither content with a "metaphysical atheism" which sees the world as a "broken mirror of an unjust and absurd world of triumphant evil and suffering without reason and without end" that leads to "only the grimace of absurdity and nothingness"[11] nor with transcendental utopianism which seeks only escape from this world. At the same time, Moltmann resists limited utopianisms of political or revolutionary causes. While Moltmann's work reflects conversations with political revolutionaries and liberation theologies, his eschatology is not limited to the utopian vision of a particular political movement.[12] Moltmann's eschatology is concerned for the future of history and creation even as is concerned for redemption and hope in history. Thus, as Julie Clawson argues, Moltmann's theology is not "confined to the revolutionary present or the nostalgic past, or even just the coming future."[13] Due to his own experience as a POW and witness to the atrocities of the Second World War, Moltmann's concern for the liberation of the oppressed in history informs both his Christology and eschatology even as he makes space for the redemptive kingdom of God projected towards us from the future.

In addition to his own curiosity and experience, Moltmann builds his eschatology on the legacy left by a variety of 20th century scholars. Before beginning his own eschatological exploration in *The Coming of God*, Moltmann traces the path of eschatological thought through scholars such as Albert Schweitzer, Oscar Cullman, Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultmann, Ernst Bloch,

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[11] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 319.

[12] Julie Clawson, "Imagination, Hope, and Reconciliation in Ricoeur and Moltmann," *Anglican Theological Review* 95, no. 2 (2013): 296.

[13] Clawson, 296.

Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, and Walter Benjamin, among others. He especially traces the shifting eschatological perceptions of time, history, and apocalypticism. Out of these conversations Moltmann begins to stake his theological claims.

MOLTMANN'S ESCHATOLOGICAL FOUNDATION: THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION

Moltmann's eschatology is constructed upon and dependent upon his Christology. And, for Moltmann, Christology centers on the event of the cross and resurrection. In Moltmann's view, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is not simply an historical event, but an eschatological event in which the resurrected life of Christ is the beginning and prototype of creation's ultimate redemption, resurrection, and liberation in the future *parousia*. Therefore, we must begin with Moltmann's theology of the cross and resurrection in order to more fully understand Moltmann's eschatological theology for the latter is the fulfillment of the work begun in the former.

In Moltmann's view, "The death of Jesus on the cross is the centre of all Christian theology. It is not the only theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth. All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and death…about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ."[14] It is Christ's death and subsequent resurrection that is the source of eschatological hope. In the overcoming of death and sin on the cross through the resurrection, the faithful can believe in God's promised future in which all the sin, pain, suffering, and godlessness will be taken up, transformed, and overcome. As Don Schweitzer writes in his study of Moltmann's theology of the cross, "[T]his future can only be

[14] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 293–94.

understood as a negation of the negative, the overcoming of all that the cross represents in human experience of sin, suffering, and the absence of God."[15] In the cross, the faithful witness the ways that God takes suffering and godforsakeness into God's self and transform it into a new creation. This eschatological event in history not only offers the start of God's transformational work and prototype of God's future work, but also speaks to the very character of God. While God is defined by more than the cross, Moltmann claims we must "speak of God…within earshot of the dying cry of Jesus."[16] The crucifixion of Jesus speaks to God's willingness not only to be present with but also participate in the suffering of the world. The resurrection of Christ speaks to God's ability and desire to make a new creation from the old.

In order to avoid docetism and argue for God's full participation in the work of Christ on the cross, Moltmann asserts that we must recover a Trinitarian theology of the cross. In fact, Moltmann claims that "[t]he content of the doctrine of the Trinity is the real cross of Christ himself."[17] The cross, Moltmann argues, is the very location in which we see the Trinity at work. It is in the Christ event on the cross that we see the persons of the Trinity both divided and unified in their relation to one another. When Christ goes to the cross, we see the "image of the invisible God" suffering and crucified, which means that "*this* is God, and God is like *this*."[18] The will of Christ and God were joined when Jesus went to the cross and faced humiliation, helplessness and death. However, in the crucifixion, the three persons of the Trinity were also distinct. Christ suffered on the cross and experienced the abandonment by God, dying with "a

[15] Don Schweitzer, "Jürgen Moltmann's Theology as a Theology of the Cross," *Studies in Religion* 24, no. 1 (1995): 98.
[16] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 287.
[17] Moltmann, 363.
[18] Moltmann, 295.

cry of godforsakeness."[19] While the Son suffers forsakenness, God the Father "suffers in his love the grief of the death of the Son."[20] God the Father did not suffer and die like the Son, but the Father still suffered in the death of the Son. As Moltmann articulates, "The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has constituted himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son…In the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender."[21] It is from this interaction between the Father and Son that the Spirit proceeds. The Spirit "justifies the godless, fills the forsaken with love and even brings the dead alive, since even the fact that they are dead cannot exclude them from this event of the cross."[22] The Spirit is sent out from the Father and Son to gather all humanity and history to God. This Trinitarian view of the cross allows Moltmann to claim both God's participation in and redemption of the world's brokenness and suffering.

As suggested above, Moltmann takes seriously the crucifixion side of the Christ event as it is the suffering of God *and* of Christ which gathers up all suffering, death, and godforsakeness in order to be redeemed. Moltmann's theology of the cross views both the Father and Son as subjects with distinct wills that "express a deep conformity…in the event of the cross."[23] Therefore, he insists we are attentive to the suffering of not only the Son, but also of the Father (as the Father suffers the death of the Son). As discussed above, the suffering of the Father and Son are distinct, but are still suffering. The Son suffers death as he is forsaken by the Father, but

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[19] Moltmann, 278.
[20] Moltmann, 362.
[21] Moltmann, 359–61.
[22] Moltmann, 361. While Moltmann claims to be entirely Trinitarian, most of his attention is paid to the Father and Son components of the Trinity. This discussion of how the Spirit "proceeds from this event" is the majority of the discussion of the Spirit in *The Crucified God.*
[23] Moltmann, 360.

the Father suffers the grief of love in the death of the Son.[24] This is real suffering; not simply the suffering of the human element of Jesus or the appearance of suffering. For the suffering of the Son and the Father is grounded in the reciprocal nature of love and Moltmann views suffering as an inescapable component of love.[25] This "suffering of love" leads one—in this case, God—to "voluntarily open[] [one]self to the possibility of being affected by another."[26] This is suffering love freely given, not unwilling suffering (as too many humans experience). However, this suffering is central to God's very character and ultimate redeeming work. As Christiaan Mostert summarizes, "In Moltmann's view, passing lightly over the historical suffering in the course of declaring this world to be God's world implies an idolatrous view of God."[27] Moltmann insists that eschatological theology be constructed "within earshot" of Christ's suffering cry, "My God, why have you forsaken me?"[28] For it is in suffering that God—Father, Son, and Spirit—is able to participate in and ultimately redeem the human, historical world.[29] As Moltmann asserts, "[A] God who cannot suffer is poorer than any man. For a God who is incapable of suffering is a being who cannot be involved."[30]

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[24] Moltmann, 359. Moltmann clarifies this difference even more, writing, "We cannot therefore say here in patripassian terms that the Father also suffered and died. The suffering and dying of the Son, forsaken by the Father, is a different kind of suffering from the suffering of the Father in the death of the Son. Nor can the death of Jesus be understood in theopaschite terms as the 'death of God.'" Moltmann, 359.

[25] Moltmann, 362.

[26] Moltmann, 337.

[27] Christiaan Mostert, "Moltmann's Crucified God," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7, no. 2 (2013): 163.

[28] Mark 15:34.

[29] One critique raised regarding Moltmann's crucifixion theology is related to the passibility or impassibility of God. Moltmann insists that God the Father does not die, but still suffers. However, scholars such as David Bentley Hart and accuse Moltmann of "flirt[ing] with calamity" in being willing to give up the impassability of God. Generally, there are five critiques launched towards scholars who argue for the passibility of God in general, and Moltmann's work in particular. Such a theology is accused of: (1) underestimating and underrepresenting God's transcendence; (2) overusing anthropomorphism and anthropopathism when speaking of God; (3) misrepresenting the relationship between love and suffering; (4) assuming that God's impassibility (or *apatheia*) implies God's indifference; and (5) misunderstanding the relationship between the contingencies of history and the transcendent God. Mostert, "Moltmann's Crucified God," 175–79.

[30] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 323–24.

A theology that takes seriously the suffering of God in the event of the cross points to the fullness of God's love for the world and coming eschatological redemption. For the suffering of the cross allows suffering to be fully taken in to God. God becomes the context of all suffering. Put another way, due to the cross and the suffering of the Trinity, no suffering or pain or even death is beyond God. And this pain and suffering is in community with a God's eternal salvation and divine life, larger than death or suffering. Or, as Moltmann writes:

> The "bifurcation" [of suffering and divine life] in God must contain the whole uproar of history within itself. Men must be able to recognize rejection, the curse, and final nothingness in it. The cross stands between the Father and the Son in all the harshness of its forsakenness…The concrete "history of God" in the death of Jesus on the cross on Golgotha therefore contains within itself all the depths and abysses of human history and therefore can be understood as the history of history. All human history, however much it may be determined by guilt and death, is taken up into this "history of God,' i.e. into the Trinity, and integrated into the future of the "history of God." There is no suffering which in this history of God is not God's suffering; no death which has not been God's death in the history of Golgotha.[31]

Since God becomes the "measure and context of all suffering" (to use Rebecca Chopp's language), no suffering is beyond God. Therefore, no suffering or death is beyond the second half of the Christ-event—the resurrection.

If suffering is experienced by and taken up into the Trinity through the crucifixion, then the resurrection of Jesus proves God's power as life-giver and God's desire to make all things new. The cross becomes not merely a symbol of death and suffering, but the axis of God's action in the resurrection. When the resurrected Jesus is also the crucified Jesus, the resurrection can be seen as a source of hope for it proves God's capacity and nature to overcome godforsakeness and suffering with life and presence in the form a new creation. Moltmann emphasizes that what matters is not that some man was raised from the dead, but that the one who was "condemned,

[31] Moltmann, 363–64.

executed and forsaken" was raised.[32] In the "deliverance and liberation" of the "godforsaken, crucified Christ," those godforsaken of the world may find hope that they too will be "delivered up."[33]

The cross of Christ, therefore, is both an historical and eschatological event. The death of Jesus on the cross constitutes an historical happening in the life of Jesus. However, the eschatological novelty of the resurrection allows us to speak of "the *resurrection of the crucified Christ*, which qualifies his death as something that has happened for us, and *the cross of the risen Christ*, which reveals and makes accessible to those who are dying his resurrection from the dead."[34] The resurrection stands in contradiction to all the cross represents—suffering, death, pain, evil. As Schweitzer suggests, "[Moltmann's theology of the cross] acknowledges the suffering of the present as represented in the cross, yet sees its overcoming to be promised in the resurrection."[35] The Christ-event on the cross does not drown out suffering or ignore death. Instead, it redeems it, overcomes it, and delivers it into the God of life and resurrection hope. In the cross and resurrection, historical evil and suffering are not abolished. In the cross and resurrection, an eschatological event has been initiated in the bounds of history. As Moltmann describes, "with the raising of the crucified Christ from the dead, the future of the new creation of all things has already begun in the midst of this dying and transitory world."[36] For Moltmann, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the inauguration of and template for our understanding of God's eschatological work in and at the end of the history.

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[32] Moltmann, 250.
[33] Moltmann, 358.
[34] Moltmann, 294.
[35] Schweitzer, "Jürgen Moltmann's Theology," 104.
[36] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 136.

MOLTMANN'S ESCHATOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

Eschatology, understood as the future things (not the final things), is the fulfillment of the resurrection and reconciliation work begun in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Moltmann writes, "Every eschatology that claims to be Christian, and not merely utopian or apocalyptic or a stage in salvation history, must have a christological foundation."[37] In fact, Moltmann disqualifies certain eschatological theologies offered by other scholars based depending on that theology's connection and fidelity to a (often his) theology of the cross and resurrection.[38] For it is at the cross that we are able to witness God's eschatological gathering of history together—both the good and the evil—in order to be redeemed and made new. In Moltmann's words, "Christ's resurrection from the dead is not merely the endorsement of his death for the salvation of sinners; it is also the beginning of the transfiguration of the body and of the earth."[39] Additionally, a theology of the cross and of Christ's resurrection serves as the eschatological model or prototype of the redemption and consummation of all of creation. For it is at the cross that we can begin to grasp "the certainty of reconciliation without limits, and the true ground for the hope for 'the restoration of all things', for universal salvation, and for the world newly created to become the eternal kingdom."[40] Like his theology of the cross,

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[37] Moltmann, 194.

[38] For example, Moltmann responds to Kant's question "What can I hope for?" saying, "Christian theology must expel the messianic presumption and the apocalyptic resignation from modern attitudes to the future, and must answer Kant's question by holding in living remembrance the resurrection of the crucified Christ Jesus." Moltmann, 192. Additionally, Moltmann pushes against Hegel's "kingdom of the Mind" by arguing, "Let us test this against a theology of the cross…If history is supposed to be nothing other than 'Mind expended into time', then for those who perceive history in Mind 'time is effaced'. But there is something in the cross of Christ which resists every attempt to absorb it into it theological concept: and that is the pain of Christ and his death cry: 'My God, why…?" No theology of the cross can answer this cry, because it is not adequately answered by any explanation of his death, but only through his resurrection from death and the Easter jubilation of the raised…This also limits the optimist total claim of historical reason which Hegel propounded…" Moltmann, 329. Further examples of Moltmann's christological arguments against the adoptions of a secular apocalypticism, a realized historical eschatology, and a transcendent utopianism will be explored in this section of the chapter.

[39] Moltmann, 93.

[40] Moltmann, 250.

Moltmann's eschatology takes seriously the reality of the evils and sufferings of history, even as it holds fast to the ultimate redemptive work of God in and at the end of history. It is the resurrection of the crucified Christ that begins and points towards a restoration of all things and the all-reconciling love of God.

This christologically grounded eschatology is anchored by two key theological concepts—*adventus* and *novum.* In relation to Moltmann's concerns around time, he proposes *adventus* as the best conception of how God's eternity interacts with historical, linear time. Moltmann defines *adventus* against *futurum:* "*Futurum* means what will be; *adventus* means what is coming."[41] *Futurum* can best be understood as the experience of linear time, where the future grows out of the past and the present. Thus, the future is the result of a somewhat deterministic evolutionary process. Moltmann asserts that this kind of future "offers no special reason for hope, for the past predominates, inasmuch as that which is not yet, will one day no longer be."[42] In contrast, Moltmann proposes *adventus* as God's eternity coming into historical time. This *adventus* time defines God's future as "the origin and source of time in general."[43] As such, eternity does not abolish historical time nor is it swallowed up by historical time. This advent of God "throws open the time of history, qualifying historical time as time determined by the future."[44] The best example we have of God's *adventus* is the coming of Christ—understood by Moltmann as an expression of God's future redemption and reconciliation entering into historical time. The future defined by God's *adventus* is full of potentiality and hope for the future, present, and even past condition. This "transcendental future of time" opens the way for

[41] Moltmann, 25.
[42] Moltmann, 25.
[43] Moltmann, 22. Emphasis original.
[44] Moltmann, 26.

those in history to imagine a future that is grounded in holy expectation rather than historical determinism.[45] God and God's eternity is not defined by or confined to history. Therefore, eschatology may be conceived as neither a future event nor the hovering existence of some "timeless eternity;" it is the coming *and* arrival of God.

Moving from *adventus*, Moltmann also establishes the concept of *novum*—"the new thing"—as the "historical category which characterizes the eschatological event in history."[46] Moltmann asserts that the idea of *novum* "dominates the eschatological language of the whole New Testament."[47] As Brandon Lee Morgan suggests in his analysis of Moltmann's eschatology, "Summed up in the category of *novum* is the assumption that the world is not completed and thus still needs to be finished."[48] This novel future is not defined by a return to a former condition (i.e., the Garden of Eden), but instead describes a creation that is transcendentally new. In fact, Moltmann asserts that the category of *novum* implies discontinuity from what has come before. Such a concept is embodied most obviously in the resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrected self did not "develop out of" the crucified body.[49] The resurrected Christ is a new creation. However, the category of *novum* does not obliterate or completely leave behind history. The "new thing" relates to the old. For example, the "new Jerusalem" is completely other than what has been, but still refers back to the holy city of scripture by analogy. In sum, "[w]hat is eschatologically new, itself creates its own continuity, since it does not annihilate the old but gathers it up and creates it anew."[50] This continuity/discontinuity is key to understanding Moltmann's eschatology that is

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[45] Moltmann, 26.
[46] Moltmann, 22.
[47] Moltmann, 28.
[48] Brandon Lee Morgan, "Eschatology for the Oppressed: Millenarianism and Liberation in the Eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 39, no. 4 (2012): 379.
[49] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 28.
[50] Moltmann, 29.

characterized by walking the tension between the already of God's redemptive presence and the not yet of God's consummation.

In seeking to offer an eschatological theology that follows the model of Moltmann's Christology—namely, to be attentive to the fulfillment of the reconciling work done in the resurrection without denying the reality of the suffering in history and the historical present—Moltmann articulates an eschatology that avoids the trap of a realized historical eschatology, denies a secularized apocalypticism, and resists the temptation of a transcendent utopianism (described more below). In *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* Moltmann details this eschatology in relation to four horizons: (1) "hope in God for the resurrection and eternal life of human people"; (2) "hope in God for the history of human beings with the earth"; (3) "hope in God for the new creation of the world"; and (4) "hope in God for God's glory."[51] Moltmann argues this eschatological hope is born out of the memory of Christ's resurrection (*memoria resurrectionis Christi),* which allows us to see beyond our own death and the destruction of this world into God's new life and new world. At the heart of Moltmann's eschatological theology articulated at the horizons of humanity, history, creation, and God is a determination that God will bring about a new creation, which will be the consummation of all things, leading to a future indwelling (Shekinah) of God that has implications for our present and past.

Moltmann insists that God will "consummate" the whole of creation, not annihilate or merely continue the present existence on that "Last Day" or "Day of the Lord."[52] Arguing against a secularized apocalypticism, which imagines the end of all creation through some kind of nuclear, ecological or economic extermination, Moltmann asserts that history, humanity, and creation is not bound simply for destruction. Instead, all creatures, creation, and history will be

[51] Moltmann, xvi.
[52] Moltmann, 102.

swept up into God, transformed, and made new in the formation of the new creation. Moltmann persistently argues (even in the structure of the book) that the eschatological consummation is not just about the salvation of individual humans or simply human history; it is the consummation of all creation and of all time. The eschatological realization can be conceived as "the consummation of creation-in-the-beginning and therefore as the exit from time into eternity."[53] This eschatological consummation is not a return back to the original creation, but is the fulfillment of God's creative work. Put another way, the "*creatio ex nihilo*, the creation out of nothing, is completed in the eschatological *creatio ex vetere*, the creation out of the old."[54] All of creation is swept up in this consummation including persons, history, and time. In the eschatological consummation all things temporal will be transformed to eternal. The *adventus* of God will be complete, as, in the consummation, the creation will transition "from what is temporal into eternal life," "history into the eternal kingdom," and "temporal creation into the new creation of an eternal 'deified' world."[55] This consummation is not a restoration but a liberation from evil and the power of sin to the eternal creation.

In opposition to a realized historical eschatology, Moltmann argues for the importance of *novum*—that the future eschatology will be a new creation, not an uninterrupted continuation with what has come before nor the culmination of historical progress. Moltmann, over and over in his text, resists the idea that the eschatological kingdom of God can be achieved within the course of history. Thus, he emphasizes the discontinuity between this creation and the next, or, more precisely, history and the kingdom of God. Moltmann resists the modern myth of progress, which asserts that history's telos is some kind of realized historical eschatology. In different

[53] Moltmann, 294.
[54] Moltmann, 265.
[55] Moltmann, 265.

times and spaces, this telos has been imagined as "the kingdom of God and divine glory" or "the kingdom of human beings and the home of human identity."[56] Moltmann argues against those who would see history as progressing (positively) toward any kind of theological or secular "kingdom" telos. For, he argues, "this theological justification of 'the modern world' with its intentions and hopes overlooks the victims on the underside of its history—in the Third World, in nature, and among women."[57] But, even more than becoming a political ploy for maintaining the status quo on the part of the powerful, such a view of history as progressing towards the eschatological kingdom is no longer conceivable after the horrors of the 20th and 21st centuries. As Moltmann encountered first-hand as a conscripted German soldier and POW in the Second World War, humanity is not necessarily making forward progress in the ways they treat one another, themselves, or the natural world. Moltmann rightly insists, at this point in human history, "'[e]very sane person' is aware of the nuclear, ecological and economic catastrophes that threaten the modern world."[58] Therefore, he argues, the eschatological consummation is, indeed, apocalyptic in nature. It is a moment of necessary discontinuity. As Bauckham and Hart write in their explication and expansion of Moltmann's eschatology, "the only credible eschatology, given the failure of the myth of progress is a transcendent one, which looks for a resolution of history that exceeds any possible immanent outcome of history."[59]

This apocalyptic eschatology is not an apocalypticism of total destruction; it is a moment of *novum* (radically newness). While Moltmann sees the eschatological moment as bringing a "rupture of history and its end,"[60] this is not to say that history is lost or destroyed. Instead, as

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[56] Moltmann, 134.
[57] Moltmann, 134.
[58] Moltmann, 135.
[59] Bauckham and Hart, *Hope Against Hope*, 35.
[60] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 134.

discussed above, it is redeemed. The eschatological moment is a point of "conversion," where history will be gathered up, redeemed, and will be made into a new creation. However, the discontinuous apocalyptic nature of this transformation remains important for Moltmann. For, it resists the natural human desire (especially among those who hold power in the world) to believe that they can create or accomplish the new creation within the bounds of history. Or, even more, that their reign of power is equivalent to the reign of God. As Moltmann argues:

> Apocalypticism preserves the Christian doctrine of hope from facile optimism and from false prophets who say 'peace, peace, when there is no peace' (Jer. 8.11). Eschatology is not a doctrine about history's happy end. In the present situation of our world, facile consolation is as fatal as melancholy hopelessness. No one can assure us that the worst will not happen. According to all the laws of experience: it will. We can only trust that even the end of the world hides a new beginning if we trust the God who calls into being the things that are not, and out of death creates new life.[61]

The *novum* of the new creation is the work of God and requires the (*adventus*) coming of God. Unlike secular apocalypticism marked by ecological disaster or nuclear war, Moltmann's biblical apocalypticism retains hope for the arrival of God's kingdom and new creation in an act of radical disruption. This new creation can never be conceived as the end-product of purely human effort or historical process (though humans may participate in the kingdom's arrival—discussed more below). Though it is a consummation of the old, the new creation is distinct and a far cry from the painful realities of history. And, as Bauckham and Hart correctly suggest, this assertion returns to Moltmann's theology of the cross and resurrection of Jesus: "[T]he relationship between the crucified Jesus and the risen Lord must therefore furnish the gestalt for imagining the relationship between the tragic limits of this world and the surprising, cosmic

[61] Moltmann, 234.

dimension of God's new creation."[62] History does not transition smoothly into the eternal kingdom. Moltmann insists that there is a rupture between the current creation and the new.[63]

Moltmann defines this new creation as the place where God's ultimate indwelling or God's Shekinah occurs. Moltmann adopts the Jewish doctrine of Shekinah, which is "the act of God's descent, and…[God's] indwelling" in the world. Christians lay claim to belief in a Shekinah of sorts in their doctrine of the incarnation of God in Christ. On this side of the eschaton, the Shekinah refers to a "special presence of God" (which is not the same as God's "general presence").[64] It is a limited presence, in which God intentionally enters into creation, time, and history. Both the Christian and Jewish conceptions of Shekinah on this side of the eschaton recognize God's "special act of descent and self-humiliation" that is required for God to indwell in this creation.[65] However, the eschatological consummation of the old creation and formation of the new allows for God's full indwelling in and with creation.[66] Moltmann imagines

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[62] Bauckham and Hart, *Hope Against Hope*, 69.

[63] Some scholars, such as Brandon Lee Morgan in his "Eschatology for the Oppressed," 389–90, have labeled Moltmann as an Apocalyptic Millenarian. He is apocalyptic in the sense that he argues for the disruption of the old—even destroying of the old (i.e. death)—to clear a way for the new creation. At the same time, Moltmann argues for a millenarian eschatology as he writes in *The Coming of God*, "Christian eschatology—eschatology that is, which is messianic, healing and saving—is millenarian eschatology" (202). By millenarian, Moltmann is concerned for the "this worldly-side of eschatology, the side turned toward experienced history." He describes eschatology alone as the "future *of* history, the end of history." Taken together, Moltmann argues for "history's consummation and its rupture." Moltmann, 197. Moltmann is trying to navigate a *via media* between secularized apocalypticism and realized historical eschatology (or "historical millennialism"). See Morgan, "Eschatology for the Oppressed" 389. This label of Apocalyptic Millenarian is another way of conceiving Moltmann's balance between consummation and disruptive new creation.

[64] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 302.

[65] Moltmann, 302–03.

[66] The idea of the incomplete Shekinah in this age and the complete Shekinah of God in the age to come is wrapped up with Moltmann's understanding of creation. In Moltmann's understanding of creation, God restricts God's omnipresence in order to create something distinct from Godself (unlike the similar kabbalistic concept of *zimzum*. Motlmann, 298–99. Through the act of self-restriction and self-withdrawal, God concedes a "dwelling place" for creation that is distinct from and yet with God and in God. The Trinitarian, relational nature of God creates the potentiality for God to form community between Godself and humanity, between human beings and one another, and between human beings and the created ecology. God does not just make space within Godself for the creation, but chooses to humble Godself so as to dwell within creation. This self-restriction is not just conceding human beings space and freedom, but also allows God to journey with God's creation. In Moltmann's view, both the act of self-restriction in creation and self-humiliation required for God's special presence (i.e. as Jesus in the event of the cross) does not weaken or diminish God's power; instead it is a testament to God's sovereignty. Moltmann

that with the consummation of creation will come the consummation of God's Shekinah—God will dwell fully with and in God's creation. With the whole of creation redeemed and made new, "God and his Shekinah will be indistinguishably one."[67] Where God conceded dwelling space within Godself at creation, in the final redemption and consummation that creation will become God's dwelling space. "The history of God's indwellings in people and temple, in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, point forward to their completion in the universal indwelling of God's glory…With this the whole creation becomes the *house of God*, the *temple* in which God can dwell, the *home country* in which God can rest."[68] This is the ultimate aim or goal of God's work of redemption and consummation—a "mutual indwelling" of God and all God's creation. And in this final reconciliation and restoration, through this mutual indwelling of God and creation, we will experience the fullness of God and the feast of eternal joy.[69]

Moltmann is unapologetic in arguing that the aim or end goal of the eschatological new creation is the ultimate Shekinah of God where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"[70] and God will fully indwell with humanity in a reign of peace. However, scholars such as feminist theologian Wendy Farley[71] see this kind of eschatology as a utopianism

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argues that, "God is so sovereign that he does not have to assert himself but can give himself into the human world…" Moltmann, 303. While God's self-giving, self-restriction, and self-humiliation open God up to the possibility of pain, suffering, and even rejection by God's creation, these acts speak to both the power of God and the nature of the triune God as a God of reconciliation and relationship.

[67] Moltmann, 306.

[68] Moltmann, 307.

[69] Moltmann imagines the "fullness of God" as something we may only begin to grasp aesthetically. He writes: "In order to grasp *the fullness of God*, we are at liberty to leave moral and ontological concepts behind, and to avail ourselves of aesthetic dimensions. The fullness of God is the rapturous fullness of the divine life; a life that communicates itself with inexhaustible creativity; an overbrimming life that makes what is dead and withered live; a life form which everything that lives receives its vital energies and its zest for living; a source of life to which everything that has been made alive responds with deepest joy and ringing exultation…The glory of God is the feast of eternal joy…" Moltmann, 336.

[70] Revelation 21:4 (NRSV).

[71] Wendy Farley is a theologian whose work focuses on a variety of subjects from women theologians, interfaith dialogue, Christian spirituality, and suffering and social justice. While she currently serves as a Professor of Christian Spirituality and the Director of the Program in Christian Spirituality at San Francisco Theological

that risks leading to escapist theology and behavior. In her text, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*: *A Contemporary Theodicy,* Farley focuses primarily on the problem of suffering, and looks to challenge classic theological concepts of sin and theodicy in order to make space for the anomaly of the tragic in theology. She is especially concerned with the reality of "radical suffering," which she defines as "suffering that has the power to dehumanize and degrade human beings…and that cannot be traced to punishment or desert."[72] Such radical suffering "assaults and degrades that about a person which makes her or him most human."[73] It is the kind of suffering that cannot be given meaning, be explained, or be forgiven through some sort of atonement. Indeed, in Farley's view, such justification would only trivialize the experience of radical suffering and the roots of evil incarnate within such suffering.[74]

In contending with the reality of meaningless radical suffering and wanting to construct a theodicy that puts suffering (and not sin) at the center, Farley argues against an eschatology that looks to a transcendent God who will heal all wounds and right all wrongs in the future. She argues this on two primary grounds. First, such eschatology is insufficiently historical as it is dependent upon an omnipotent, sovereign God. Instead, Farley articulates (alongside process and feminist theologians) a conception of a historically-connected God who is a co-creator, creating out of divine love displaying power that is persuasive, not coercive. God's power must then be "conceived through the grid of love rather than sovereignty."[75] This co-creating God does not act in the world with omnipotent power that operates absolutely and definitively. Instead, God

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Seminary, she taught for over two decades at Emory University (serving as chair of theological studies) and received her Ph.D. from Vanderbilt.

[72] Wendy Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 12.

[73] Farley, 53.

[74] Farley, 69.

[75] Farley, 97. This kind of power respects the alterity of creation from God and conceives of the possibility that creation may reject the love and will of God (most notably represented by Christ on the cross).

employs an interactive, redemptive power that works to "share life and mediate love" through expressions of compassion and redemption within (not beyond) history in the midst of radical suffering.[76] This compassion does not remove suffering, but resists suffering by seeking to resist the cause as well as empowering those who suffer to resist. Compassion reveals the power of God as a redemptive power, seeking healing, restoration, relationship, and wholeness.[77] As Farley summarizes, "As history is ruptured by the radicality of evil, the power of love is intensified to become the more radical power that resists evil and restores what is broken. Compassion serves as a paradigm through which it is possible to understand how God is related to a world torn by evil."[78] Through compassion, God acts redemptively in history, immersing Godself in suffering in order to not only "suffer with" but also to resist suffering.[79] In Farley's theology, this co-creating, persuasive God does not, however, act omnipotently and definitively in the world to eradicate suffering or give blanket redemption at the end of history. In the words of Ellen Ott Marshall, "Farley does not envision a God who sits at the end of history, calling us to another, new creation. Rather, she understands God to be present within history and within the darkest moments of history, laboring 'to penetrate the suffering and despair.'"[80] In Farley's construct, this eschatological consummation is not God's nature; history is the location for God's redemptive power and work, not a time or space beyond history.

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[76] Farley, 124–25.

[77] Compassion—both God's compassion and its embodiment in humanity—begins with sitting in the pain of suffering with the sufferer and through this "communion with the sufferer…is the presence of love that is balm to the wounded spirit." Compassion then "mediates the courage to resist suffering." It is more than simply "suffering with" or exercising charity, but seeks to "heal the indignity of powerlessness…perpetrated against the human spirit" in experiences of radical suffering. The power of compassion works to resist suffering in two ways. First, it seeks to resist the causes or sources of such suffering. Second, compassion empowers those who suffer to not fall into a sense of hopelessness or fatalism, believing they somehow deserve to suffer. This empowering compassion can serve as an "agent" of redemption. Farley, 81, 86, 88, 86–87, 69.

[78] Farley, 111.

[79] Farley, 111.

[80] Ellen Ott Marshall, *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom: Toward a Responsible Theology of Christian Hope* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 62.

Farley's second objection to a transcendental eschatological theology such as (she claims) Moltmann espouses is primarily an ethical one. She asserts that a transhistorical, transcendental eschatology puts all hope in the future and leaves little hope for history. Put another way, a transcendental eschatology is insufficiently historical, which can lead to the problem of human passivity in the face of extreme violence and suffering. However, Farley insists that history is the necessary location for redemption: we exist in history and suffering happens in history and a God of love and relationship must offer redemption and consolation in history. If people of faith only look towards the future, Farley challenges, they might risk ignoring the needs of the present. People may simply translate this escapist eschatological theology into an escapist ethic in which they care very little for the present world. Instead, Farley asserts, through expressions of compassion, people may participate in redemption that is not "an otherworldly escape from history but a fulfillment of possibilities resident in it."[81] If we only look for redemption in the "sweet by and by" as the hymn says, we may not only miss the divine redemption at work in history, but fail to participate in acts of compassion and resistance so needed in a world filled with radical suffering.

While Farley is not alone in this critique of transcendental eschatology, Moltmann responds to and even shares some of Farley's ethical concerns.[82] Moltmann's nuanced and christologically grounded eschatology is not simply a utopian escape from the struggles of history—it is actually remarkably attentive to the suffering within history and the ways God is at work in the world. Just as Moltmann resisted the traps of secular apocalypticism and realized historical eschatology, Moltmann articulates an eschatological theology that avoids falling into

[81] Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, 130–31.

[82] There is less congruence in Moltmann's and Farley's view of God. Moltmann does maintain the omnipotence and sovereignty of God. However, like Farley, he sees God's power as grounded in love.

the trap of transcendent utopianism that serves as a future escape and potential scapegoat for shirking responsibility in this world. Though he still argues that the new creation and Shekinah of God are the telos of this creation and history, this future reality has redemptive implications for the present historical condition. Moltmann's theological and ethical concerns for the historical condition are most clearly articulated in his navigation of the tension between the "already" and "not yet" as well as the ways he conceives of human participation in history towards the coming (*adventus)* Shekinah of God.

First, Moltmann spends a great deal of the text contending with the issue of time, ultimately arguing that while the eschatological consummation still awaits there is a present-ness to God's eschatological work. As Julie Clawson names, Moltmann is often relegated to having a theology that is *either* "already" or "not yet," but Moltmann is really navigating the middle way between these two, requiring readers to "live with such paradoxes without constantly feeling the need to tame [these eschatological categories] into manageable forms."[83] Or, in Moltmann's words, eschatology offers "hope which is *both* this-worldly and transcendent."[84] On one hand, Moltmann disagrees with scholars like Martin Werner and Albert Schweitzer, rejecting the transposition of eschatology into linear time—the concept that the eschatological finale is sometime in the historical future. Instead, he asserts that eschatology is a transformation of time. At the same time, Moltmann resists the translation of eschatology into an ongoing hum or insertion of eternity into the present time without any sense of an end-time (contra Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann). For Moltmann, eschatology exists in the *tension between* the present

[83] Clawson, "Imagination, Hope, and Reconciliation," 294.
[84] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 317. Emphasis mine.

and the future, "the 'now already' and the 'not yet'; it is the tension between eternity and time in past, present, and future."[85]

The very contour of Moltmann's eschatology as the tension between the "now already" and "not yet" is due to its foundation in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With the resurrection of the crucified Christ, there is a need to reconcile the christological "once and for all" with the "apocalyptic expectation of new final struggles."[86] For, with the arrival, death, and resurrection of Christ the "new, eternal aeon has dawned in the midst of this old aeon which is passing away."[87] Put another way, there is simultaneity as the "old aeon" moves towards it end and "the new aeon, which has already begun with the coming of Christ and the outpouring of the divine Spirit" moves towards us and, indeed, overlaps in the present.[88] As discussed at length above, the work of Christ on the cross is the both the inaugurating event of God's eschatological life-giving work while also giving us a taste of the final consummation that is coming advent-like toward us. Thus, Moltmann's eschatology (and understanding of eschatological time) is shaped by the tension between the already of Christ's death and resurrection and the not yet of the final consummation.

Moltmann argues that God created the world not *in* time but *with* time, meaning that linear time is a part of the creation, yet the temporal creation is "projected towards a future" in which it will be transformed into an eternal creation. In this future-looking nature of creation there are tastes of eternity in temporal creation. There is a "now already" element that points to the "not yet." Moltmann points to the sabbath as the "presence of God in…time" or, put another

[85] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 15.
[86] Moltmann, 232.
[87] Moltmann, 194.
[88] Moltmann, 232.

way, "the dynamic presence of eternity in time."[89] He also argues that when we are fully present in a moment, giving ourselves wholly to it through "undivided presence in the present," we may experience eternity in time. Thus, we are not only waiting for eternity to transform time and history, but expressions of the future eschatological eternal condition can enter our present experience.[90]

This christologically grounded eschatology does not just have implications for the future or final consummation; it has implications for how Christians are to live in the present world. Similar to Farley's ethical concern, Moltmann begins his section on eternal life and personal eschatology by asserting that a focus on eternal life may "lead to fatalism or apathy" in which we treat this life as "no more than a preparation for a life beyond."[91] He pushes against such apathy or half-hearted participation in this world by arguing that the living God is "a lover of life" and that grasping the truth of life after death should give life on this side new meaning and depth. We should not be escapists, looking only to the life after death or consummation of creation. (Neither should we forget our mortality or live as if death and the death-dealing powers of the world aren't real.) On a larger eschatological scale, Moltmann asserts that, in this time between Christ's resurrection and the final redemption of the world, God is coming towards us. Put christologically, the risen Christ "draws all things into his future."[92] While we may be "citizens of the coming kingdom of God" and "refugees in all the kingdoms of the world," Moltmann insists that belief in the next world should not take our attention away from this one.[93]

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[89] Moltmann, 266.

[90] Moltmann's personal eschatology follows this logic as well. He does believe that the final resurrection and redemption of people will happen "at the last trumpet," in the end-time, but also believes that those who have died are immediately gathered up to be with Christ. Eternity touches the present time in the gathering together of those who have died, but even those who have died who are with Christ look to an end-time when all of creation will be redeemed, fulfilled, and death will no longer hold any power over creation. Moltmann, 102–10.

[91] Moltmann, 50.

[92] Moltmann, 338.

[93] Moltmann, 310.

Instead of anticipating the eschatological consummation as an escape from this world, Moltmann insists that the Christian community has a responsibility in history to welcome and even participate in those eternal moments of redemption. Knowing what has been enacted in the resurrection of the crucified Christ and, through imagination, conceiving what is to come, Christians should live in a way that opens historical time to the eternal reality of redemption, especially for those who feel trapped by the evils of historical reality. Though death, violence, and evil will only be completely destroyed in God's future, there is still hope for redemption and hope in history. Just as God's future reaches into the past through the eschatological Christ event, so our imaginative conception of the future should lead to an ethic that is "the response to [Christian eschatology] in [the] context of this world's conditions."[94] If eschatology includes the consummation, redemption and transformation of history, then our ethical behavior should anticipate the redemption, justice, and righteousness of the coming kingdom of God in the present historical time. This eschatological future "is at hand and 'will reveal itself'; and in so far *it thrusts us forward* to do what is right, and towards the actions that correspond to God's future in this present world, which is otherwise in contradiction to that future."[95] Christians are not to passively wait for God to act—to redeem and transform the historical present. Instead, Christians are to actively anticipate God's coming and the final consummation of creation through acts that will resist injustice and evil and offer glimpses of the eternal at work in the present. Consistent with Moltmann's eschatology the Christian faithful are to live in the tension between the "now already" of God's eschatological work and the "not yet" of the present historical condition. In fact, "those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with the reality as it is, but begin to resist

[94] Jürgen Moltmann, "The Liberation of the Future and Its Anticipations in History," in *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 266.
[95] Moltmann, 289.

suffering under it, to contradict it" in the present moment.[96] For, as the future is coming towards the present, Christians should be helping to move the present towards the future.[97] In the words of Clawson, "One is able to then live into the hope of future redemption and reconciliation by performing the text of the incarnation/resurrection through acts of hope in the present."[98] Ultimately, for Moltmann "Christian ethics are eschatological ethics."[99] They are eschatological because they participate in the eschatological work of Christ on earth by introducing novel redemption that both anticipates and participates in the ultimate eschatological consummation of God in the future.

In summary, Moltmann's eschatological theology is grounded in the resurrection of the crucified Christ and is marked by theological ideas of *adventus* and *novum.* As Moltmann argues, the redemptive and life-giving work begun at the cross will find its final consummation in that "Last Day" when all of creation (and history!) will be gathered up, redeemed, and transformed into the new creation, which will be marked by the complete Shekinah of God. Yet, we live in the in between time when the eschatological reality has already intersected our historical reality in the form of the Christ and before the final consummation. Living in the tension of the "now already" and "not yet," Christians are to live lives of justice and peace-making in anticipation and participation with this eschatological reality in the present historical moment. In constructing such a nuanced and christologically grounded theology, Moltmann ultimately resists the temptations of a secular apocalypticism, a realized historical eschatology, and a transcendent utopianism.

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[96] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967), 21.

[97] Moltmann, 100.

[98] Clawson, "Imagination, Hope, and Reconciliation," 307.

[99] Moltmann, "The Liberation of the Future," 289.

PREACHING IN THE IN-BETWEEN SPACE: AN ESCHATOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR AN EMERGENCY POST-TRAUMATIC HOMILETIC

In *Theology of Hope* Moltmann writes that Christian proclamation is the "announcing, revealing, and publishing of an eschatological event."[100] As an eschatological event, preaching content should exist in the tension between the "now already" and "not yet." This tension requires attention to the reality of suffering in history as embodied in the crucified Christ, to the contrast between *futurum* and *adventus,* and to the promise of the redemption and consummation of all history towards the *novum* of the new creation.

This in-between space between the "now already" and "not yet" may find a strong resonance in the congregational experience immediately after a violent trauma. In the hours, days, or weeks following an act of mass violence such as the mass shooting at Sandy Hook, communities stand in an in-between space—between the atrocity and rebuilding; between disbelief and understanding; between the evil that has happened and the healing yet to come; between the fracturing of narrative sense and the communal and individual work of narrative repair. The post-traumatic time is a liminal space where confusion, pain, mourning, anger, and even tastes of hope meet. In her theological text on trauma Shelly Rambo argues that this in-between space created by the experience of trauma reorients the relationship between death and life:

> The survivor [of trauma] occupies a space like Holy Saturday, between death and life, between an ending and a beginning. The stark opposition between events can no longer be maintained… Attributing theological significance to the middle involves resisting the forward pull of Christian narrative, from death to life. The

[100] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 299.

> middle suspends this forward movement and, in so doing, provides a necessary witness to the struggle of living in the persisting storm of the aftermath.[101]

In this middle space of traumatic experience there is no clear division between death and life, no clear linear move from death to resurrection. Instead, it blurs together in a middle space that is murky, broken, and yet searching for hope.

This middle space of traumatic experience may be best served by the middle space of Moltmann's christologically grounded eschatology. Such a preached eschatology honors in the "not yet" of the suffering of historical experience even as it points to the "now already" of God's eschatological, eternal work in the midst of history. Such an eschatology honors not only the Christian orientation towards a future where "[d]eath will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more,"[102] but *at the same time* acknowledges the historical condition often dominated by pain, evil, and suffering. To preach from the middle is to preach sermon content informed by an eschatological commitment to the *tension* between what is and what is to come. To do so requires preachers to not ignore the promises of God nor the horrid reality of the traumatic experience. For an authentic expression of God's good news—neither an exasperated surrender to the present circumstance nor a superficial "solution" offered in the bandage of quick grace or escapist eschatological promises—is found in the *tension* between the historical and the eternal, the "now already" and the "not yet."

Preaching in the eschatological tension will reflect a theological commitment to suffering as a participation in the crucifixion of Christ, creating an opening for God's redemptive work and participation in the larger eschatological narrative. Moltmann is insistent that if we purport a

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[101] Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 138.

[102] Revelation 21:4 (NRSV).

theology that "provid[es] christological answers for eschatological questions…we must not wander off into far-off realms, but must submerge ourselves in the depths of Christ's death on the cross at Golgotha."[103] And, as discussed above, the cross is not simply a symbol of resurrection, but actually the location of suffering—for Christ and for God. Thus, the eschatological event of the cross has, inherent within it, the reality of suffering. In God's suffering all of history's evil and suffering and brokenness is gathered up into God. Quoting Hegel, Moltmann writes, "'God himself is dead', as it is said in a Lutheran hymn; the consciousness of this fact expresses the truth that the human, the finite, frailty, weakness, the negative, is itself a divine moment, is in God Himself."[104] Thus, the reality of suffering is not antithetical to the holy; the experience of trauma is not removed from that which is in God. Instead, it participates in God and Christ's work. As Moltmann proclaims,

> If God has taken upon himself death on the cross, he has also taken upon himself all of life and real life, as it stands under death, law and guilt…[Humanity] is taken up, without limitations and conditions, into the life and suffering, the death and resurrection of God...There is nothing that can exclude [them] from the situation of God between the grief of the Father, the love of the Son and the drive of the Spirit.[105]

In Christ's suffering, suffering in this life is taken into God and sanctified. Thus the suffering and narrative brokenness of the experience of trauma should not be overpowered by expressions of eager hope or removed from the proclamation of the Gospel. Rather, the preacher may welcome people's pain, suffering, and fractured experience by naming those broken places as valuable and holy. This requires the preacher to have a certain tolerance for the painful, for the broken, and for the narrative wreckage that trauma inflicts knowing it is not beyond the work and care of God.

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[103] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 250.
[104] Hegel as quoted in Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 376.
[105] Moltmann, 415.

To preach in a way that is able to name the experience of brokenness, even in broken form (see Chapter 5), brings the traumatized faithful to the foot of the cross. To be willing to name, honor, and sit with meaningless suffering and the feeling of complete forsakenness by God is to carry the congregation to the very heart of God. For, as Moltmann articulates, in the wake of suffering, loss, and even trauma "the experience of our own lostness [is] joined by the feeling that God has forsaken us, and if these two experiences are intensified to such a degree…we can only sigh, 'my God, why have you forsaken me?'"[106] Yet, this is the very cry that Jesus issued from the cross in his most forsaken moment. And, when preachers serve the priestly role in these moments, issuing the cry, "My God, why have you forsaken us?" with and on behalf of their congregation, they position the congregation in a space where Christ "brings God into our most profound forsakenness, and brings our forsakenness to God."[107] By not only honoring, but being willing to dwell in the experience of narrative fracture and forsakenness, the preacher can lead the congregation into an experience of the presence of God where their suffering is met by the suffering of God and they are reminded they are not alone. More than that, their suffering participates in the eschatological future of God that is already coming toward us, even if it is not always easily visible in the immediate aftermath of trauma.

Being willing to honor and name the suffering and narrative fracture of a post-traumatic community also opens a space for hope as that suffering participates in the eschatological story. The eschatological "Last Day" is the time of God's ultimate redemption, consummation, and transformation of the laboring creation and the fractured stories of history. In naming the broken reality of historical experience (especially in the wake of trauma), the preacher offers the opportunity for participation in the larger redemptive work of God. Even as the preacher

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[106] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 126.
[107] Moltmann, 126–27.

acknowledges the "not yet" of the historical experience of suffering and trauma, she should also point to the "now already" of God's redemptive work in history and coming towards us in the new creation. Preaching in the tension of the "now already" and "not yet" means that preachers must take seriously suffering while also pointing to the resurrection and promise for redemption and healing. For participation in the suffering of God is also participation in the promised resurrection. As Moltmann offers, "If Christian belief thinks in Trinitarian terms, it says that forsaken men are already taken up by Christ's forsakenness into the divine history and that we 'live in God', because we participate in the eschatological life of God by virtue of the death of Christ. God is, God is in us, God suffers in us, where love suffers…Just as we participate actively and passively in the suffering of God, so too we will participate in the joy of God wherever we love and pray and hope."[108] In naming the suffering and fracture of the congregation, the preacher also is able to name the hunger for redemption and the promises of God even in the midst. Preachers may recite the promises given to us through the resurrection that God is already among us, even as God's healing and redemption feel far away. Preachers may claim the words of promise that "weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning"[109] even as they are honest about the reality of the weeping. To acknowledge the suffering of the present moment in the context of the resurrection and eschatological promises is to also name the promised transformation that is already on its way. Such preaching may, consistent with Moltmann's eschatological ethics, even point to the ways the works of comfort, resistance, and justice might offer glimpses of the final redemption in history and in the midst of suffering.

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[108] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 378.
[109] Psalm 30:5 (NRSV).

In the end, preaching from a foundation of christologically grounded eschatology requires that preachers speak in the midst of the tension of suffering and hope. The two need to be held in tension if a preacher is to be faithful to the eschatological reality of God's coming new creation and redemptive work in history. The temptation may be to cling to one or the other—preach *either* the "now already" or the "not yet." In the immediate aftermath of violent trauma, marked by deep suffering, confusion, and sadness, the temptation may be for preachers to only offer a message of hope. This risks the utopian escapism Moltmann works to resist in his eschatological theology. A sermon that preaches only the "now already" of God's healing and redemptive work may actually be received as inauthentic to the listeners' experience. At best, such theology appears as a quick fix or theological bandage to simply cover the gaping wound of suffering. At worst, such theology could provide a damaging narrative that convinces the listener that their experience of forsakenness is beyond the work or presence of God. On the reverse side, a sermon that only sits in the "not yet" of suffering and without pointing towards the eschatological promises of God is not authentic to the Christian story or nature of God. While the narrative fracture and suffering brought on by a traumatic experience needs to be named, honored, and recognized, it is only a holy act in light of the resurrection and final consummation of creation.

In a final note, eschatological preaching should also be deeply tied into the story and history of God in Christ. This may seem obvious, but at times, in the wake of suffering and trauma, preachers may default to sermons focused on people's responsibility to respond through acts of justice through protest or policy. These rallying cries are not wrong. As mentioned above, the eschatological reality of the "now already" of God's work in history allows us to participate in the kingdom even as we anticipate its fulfillment. However, when cries for justice or action or resistance overwhelm the sermon and become severed from the eschatological foundation of

God's suffering and redemptive work in the present and future, such preaching may fall into the trap of realized historical eschatology—believing that the we can somehow bring in the kingdom and our work completely shapes the conclusion and redemption of history. Just as Moltmann resisted the siren calls of secular apocalypticism, transcendental utopianism, and realized historical eschatology, so preachers who rely on a christologically grounded eschatology must resist those temptations in their own preaching.

LIVING THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TENSION: AN HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

On the night of November 14th, 1940, over 500 German planes blitzed the city of Coventry, England, destroying water lines, factories, businesses, hospitals, police stations, and damaging over 4,000 homes. The bombing went on for ten hours killing an estimated 568 people and injuring over 1,250. The raid began at 7:20pm, reached its height around midnight, and by 6:15 the next morning, all that was left was the burning embers of a once proud industrial and residential town.[110] The next morning, dazed by their ordeal, the citizens of Coventry who had been spared picked their way through their ruined city. And when they got to St. Michael's Cathedral, a beacon of hope and symbol of faith, their hearts sank. Before them was the shell of what was once a beautiful, grand, gothic cathedral. It had been hit in the first hour of the raid as well as multiple times throughout the night. Except for the stone exterior, everything was destroyed and much of it was still burning. And, without any functioning water lines they had to let it burn.[111]

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[110] Jennifer Harby, "The Coventry Blitz: 'Hysteria, Terror and Neurosis,'" BBC News, November 13, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-34746691.

[111] "Coventry Cathedral World War II History: Teachers Information Pack, New Edition," Coventry Cathedral, 2011, http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/wpsite/wp-downloads/Resources/Resources%20Teacher%27s%20Blitz%20Pack.pdf.

It would not have been surprising if, following the raid, another kind of flame were to have been fanned into being—the fire of bitterness, hatred, and revenge.[112] But, instead, the Provost of the cathedral, Rev. R.T. Howard declared that they would not seek revenge, but would seek reconciliation. Once the fires had subsided, people entered the shell of the old church to look for anything worth rescuing. It is said that the morning after the bombing a clergyman, Rev. A.P. Wales, found three large nails and bound them together the make a cross. (The "cross of nails" remains a symbol of the Coventry Cathedral and mission of reconciliation inspired by the community.)[113] The cathedral's stonemason, looking at his ruined cathedral, found two steel girders that had fallen across each other in the shape of the cross, apparent from the bell tower window amid the rubble. They were photographed by a reporter from the *Daily Mirror* and published, becoming an iconic picture of the cathedral's ruins. In January 1941 (less than two months after the bombing and fire), Howard directed Jock Forbes, the stonemason of Coventry Cathedral, to build an altar just in front of where the old altar had stood. Forbes built the humble altar from pieces of broken stone from the rubble and topped it with the slate from tombstones damaged in the raid. Forbes also constructed a twelve-foot-tall cross made of charred beams from the ruins, tied together with black wire, and Howard set it up in a bucket of sand just behind the rubble stone altar. Then, on the wall behind the rubble altar, where the previous high altar had once stood, Provost Howard inscribed the words, "Father Forgive."[114] And there, around that rubble altar and charred cross, the community worshiped. The suffering was all around—it was

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[112] Pictures of the Cathedral became a symbol of the evil of the war and served as a rallying cry for countries all over the world, especially the United States. The front page article from the *New York Herald Tribune* read, "The gaunt ruins of St. Michael's Cathedral, Coventry, stare from the photographs, the voiceless symbol of the insane, the unfathomable barbarity which has been released upon western civilization…No means of defense which the United States can place in British hands should be withheld." R.T. Howard, *Ruined and Rebuilt: The Story of Coventry Cathedral, 1939–1962* (Coventry, UK: The Council of Coventry Cathedral, 1962), 18.

[113] John Philip Thomas, *Coventry Cathedral* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 76–78.

[114] Thomas, *Coventry Cathedral*, 78; Howard, *Ruined and Rebuilt*, 22.

inescapable. And Provost Howard did not deny the suffering. He named all that had been lost. He mourned the massive death toll in the city and witnessed the destruction that continued to consume people's homes, businesses, and gathering places as the war raged on. However, he also spoke of the promise that their suffering was not beyond the work and redemption of God. As he wrote in his 1962 book, *Ruined and Rebuilt: The Story of Coventry Cathedral*:

> On the night of its destruction, in an amazing and miraculous way, Coventry Cathedral became the living embodiment of the tremendous truth that, through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all crucifixions in human experience can issue in resurrection. As I watched the cathedral burning, it seemed to me as though I were watching the crucifixion of Jesus upon His Cross. After all, the Cathedral was not primarily a church belonging to man; it was the church of Jesus Christ. That such a glorious and beautiful building, which had been the palace where Christian people had worshipped God for five hundred years, should now be destroyed in one night by the wickedness of man, was surely a monstrous evil that nothing could measure. It was in some mysterious way a participation in the infinite sacrifice of the crucifixion of Christ.
>
> As I went into the ruined Cathedral on the morning after the destruction, there flashed into my mind the deep certainty that as the Cathedral had been crucified with Christ, so it would rise again with Him. How or when, we could not tell; nor did it matter. The Cathedral would rise again.[115]

It was decided, immediately, that a new cathedral would be built—not as an act of defiance, but as a testimony to hope and as a sign of faith. And, indeed, another cathedral was built, though not opened until 1962, twenty-two years after the raid. This cathedral now stands next to the shell of the old one, attached by a brick walkway, a testament to both the destruction of sin and the power of hope. The community of Coventry on that horrendous morning in November 1940 knew true suffering, evil, loss, and pain. They acknowledged it as even their cross was charred wood beams from the cathedral ceiling and a small collection of nails. Yet, they didn't run away; they didn't ignore the reality. Instead, they stood in the midst of it and pointed to the eschatological future that was already and not yet. They pointed to hope even in

[115] Howard, *Ruined and Rebuilt*, 16.

the midst of literal flames of destruction. And, if you visit the old cathedral today and look very closely, those words of eschatological promise are inscribed in the cornerstone of the old smoke-stained shell of the church: “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace.”[116]

[116] Haggai 2:9.

CHAPTER 5:

HOW TO SAY IT: POST-TRAUMATIC PREACHING AND SERMON FORM

MAPPING THE JOURNEY

This project began with the assertion that preaching in the immediate aftermath of violent traumas such as mass shootings requires a particular kind of homiletic. I argued that such a homiletic needed to be attentive to the experience of trauma and the needs of a traumatized community. We began to understand the condition of this traumatized community by defining the features of traumatic events, the experience of trauma, and the nature of communal (or collective) trauma with the help of Serene Jones, Cathy Caruth, and Kai Erikson, respectively. Relying on Jones's work, we defined traumatic events as either singular or ongoing occurrences in which both victims and, often, witnesses, experience a threat of annihilation that pushes them beyond their ability to cope or respond. Building on Jones's definition, Cathy Caruth helped us to understand "trauma." As Caruth made clear, trauma is not the event itself, but the human reception and experience of the event. Thus trauma is difficult to define because (1) it is often utilized as an all-inclusive term that covers human response to a variety of situations and (2) trauma can only be understood by listening between the gaps of human experience. Yet, relying on her own literary study on the work of Freud, Caruth helped us to arrive at a tentative definition of trauma: an internal blow or wounding of the mind that occurs when an experience or event cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into pre-conceived frameworks of understanding. Due to the fact that the experience is unable to be fully assimilated in the mind, the traumatic event will often return, unwilled, in sudden dreams, flashbacks, emotions, or images. Ultimately, Caruth argues, the experience of trauma leads to a dual crisis of history and

truth, where when the history of one's life cannot be fully conceived, the person can no longer decipher between what is true or imaginary.

However, this crisis is not limited to the individual traumatic experience. Kai Erikson, relying on his studies among a variety of traumatized communities including Three Mile Island, Buffalo Creek, and Ojibway Indian Reserve, argued that *in addition* to individual trauma exists collective trauma. If individual trauma describes, as Caruth and Freud assert, the wounding of an individuals' mind, collective trauma, according to Erikson, is the wounding of the tissues that connect the community. Such collective trauma is different from and more than the sum of traumatized individuals. Collective trauma impacts the interrelationships between traumatized persons in a given community. While shared trauma may draw people together into a tenuous community of shared suffering and common experience, such collective trauma often causes a corrosion of communal bonds and even the collapse of the communal structure.

Taken together, I concluded that trauma occurs when previous frames individuals and communities used to make meaning are unable to contain or make sense of a particular experience. Further, this experience of trauma often results in a sense of disorientation or dissonance as the failed meaning-making frames people depended upon can no longer be trusted. As a result, the traumatized individuals and communities feel overwhelmed by their inability to make sense of their experience.

With these definitions in place, we then considered the experience of trauma narratively, noting how trauma often leads to individual and communal narrative duress. When a traumatic event occurs, the stories an individual or community have told about themselves and the ways the world functions previous to the traumatic incident often cannot account for or make sense of the traumatic event. This narrative duress can be seen as a dual crisis of temporality and

coherence. In terms of temporal impact, the traumatic experience becomes ever-present and timeless, continually invading and disrupting the present. This "eternal present" of trauma breaks apart the progression and interrelationship of past, present, and future. No longer does the plot make sense in its movement through time. The past traumatic experience invades the present and plunges the future into uncertainty Likewise, when coherence is lost, the personal and communal narratives no longer hang together in a logical and meaningful way. The narrative becomes fractured into bits of one's story that no longer make sense as a cohesive whole. The loss of narrative temporality combined with the collapse of narrative coherence at both the personal and communal levels due to the experience of trauma combines to form *narrative fracture.*

In the face of such narrative fracture, preachers by be inclined to respond with a narrative homiletic in the tradition of Fred Craddock or Eugene Lowry. However, when we consider the construction and work of narratives in conversation with the scholarship of Paul Ricoeur, we discover the sustaining power and necessity of the discordant side of narrative reality. Though, even to Ricoeur's admission, we often desire to respond to the discordance of traumatized reality with the solution of concordant emplotment, discordance is both present and vital at every stage of the mimetic spiral. The persistence of discordance is what keeps personal and communal narratives connected to historical experience and prevents the mimetic cycle from becoming "vicious." Such is the case on this side of historical existence, Ricoeur suggests, until the end when we wager that the ultimate Other will summon us and offer us a plot of complete concordance.

As such, I argue that preaching in the immediate aftermath of violent trauma such as mass shootings requires attention to the discordant realities, which impact the life of traumatized communities. Indeed, narrative healing may only occur (if we follow Ricoeur's mimetic process)

when we recognize the reality of discordance alongside concordance. Therefore preachers must resist pushing towards complete narratives and, instead, must name and honor the discordant fragments that stand outside of any kind of narrative sense. In this post-traumatic emergency homiletic, preachers should lift up, name, and locate the fragments of historical (and traumatic) experience in order that they may be positioned towards eventual narrative construction and healing.

In the last chapter, we imagined how this discordant post-traumatic homiletic might look in relation sermon content, specifically outlining an eschatological theology that is able to withstand the reality of trauma and suffering without forfeiting the hope of healing and reconciliation. Relying on the work of Jürgen Moltmann, we constructed a christologically grounded eschatological theology that summons preachers to work in the tension of suffering and hope—between the "now already" and the "not yet." Such eschatology resists the temptations of a realized historical eschatology, a pessimistic secular apocalypticism, and the escapist transcendental eschatology.

However, there are two parts to sermon development—content and form. Preachers must discern not only *what* to say but *how* to say it. Just as the theological content is born from the exegesis of a biblical text in conversation with the context of the community, so the form of the sermon should reflect the biblical exegesis, the claim of the text for that particular congregation, and the context of the sermon. With the entire argument in view, we now turn to the task of imagining sermon forms that may be appropriate to a post-traumatic emergency homiletic. Such forms should lift up, honor, name, and even bless the experience of individual and communal narrative fracture brought on by mass trauma.

CONSIDERING FORM

Every sermon has a form. Even if the content of the sermon is delivered in a scattered and disorganized fashion, the sermon still has a form, albeit a scattered and disorganized one. I define sermonic form alongside homiletical scholar O. Wesley Allen as "the overarching rhetorical structure of the sermon—the intentional ordering of ideas and imagery designed to convey a specific gospel message and offer a particular experience of that message to a particular congregation."[1] Concern for sermonic form includes concern for the kinds of stories, images, and quotes used in a sermon *and* how they are ordered and linked together in service to the focus of the message.

Form is essential to the work of the sermon. The form is not simply the vehicle through which sermon content is carried. The sermonic form is itself an expression of theological content. As Fred Craddock declared in *As One Without Authority*, "the separation of form and content is fatal for preaching, for it fails to recognize the theology implicit in the method of communication."[2] The stories told, the images offered, and the overall movement of the sermon embody a particular of Scripture, understanding of the incarnation, conception of humanity, and utilization of hermeneutical lenses. At its best, the form should function in harmony with the other aspects of the sermon content. The form should not call attention to itself or contradict the focus of the sermon. Instead, as Allen argues, the two should be inseparable to the hearer as in a great novel or poem.

If sermon form embodies content, than the same concerns regarding discordance that impacted the ways we thought about theological content should also shape our conception of

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[1] O. Wesley Allen, *Determining the Form: Structures for Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 3.
[2] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 5.

sermonic form in a post-traumatic emergency homiletic. Put another way, the condition of narrative fracture and argument for a discordant homiletic should impact not only *what* preachers say, but *how* they say it. If preaching in the immediate aftermath of violent trauma requires theological content that takes seriously the reality of suffering and the broken narrative condition of the congregation, than the sermon *form* should also take this narrative fracture seriously.

As discussed at the beginning of Chapter Three, many contemporary preaching textbooks advocate for narrative preaching forms. I define "narrative preaching" with John McClure as preaching "in which some aspect of narrative exerts a controlling influence on the sermon."[3] This influence may be seen in the overall shape of the sermon—the *narrative development*, as McClure labels it.[4] The preacher may utilize narrative logic to construct the sermon form, assembling a clear beginning, middle, and end in which the preacher and congregation move from problem to solution or disequilibrium to restored equilibrium. McClure also notes that this kind of narratively cohesive sermon form may take the shape of a story sermon where the preacher enters as either narrator or character. These sermons marked by narrative development offer the message in the form of a plot with both ordered temporality and narrative coherence. Second, this narrative influence may be seen in forms of *narrative enculturation*.[5] Narrative enculturation refers to the preacher's choice and use of metaphors, stories, or images to "illustrate where the sermon's ideas are found within contemporary human culture and experience."[6] Through the use of contemporary stories and images, preachers hope to connect

[3] John S. McClure, *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 90.
[4] McClure, 90.
[5] McClure, 91.
[6] McClure, 91.

the biblical text and message of the sermon to the life stories of the congregation.[7] Together, these cohesive narrative sermon forms and the use of narrative elements (such as stories and images) work to shape a congregation's narrative worldview and sense of self within that world.[8]

In the wake of violent trauma, faced with congregational "narrative wreckage" that threatens to lead to a loss of sense, meaning, and identity, preachers may be inclined to turn toward narrative preaching. They may seek to offer a cohesive narrative sermon forms to serve as a correction to or replacement for the fractured narratives that threaten the stability of their congregations. They may seek to tell complete stories or offer images that point away from the disequilibrium of traumatic experience and towards resolution. However, as discussed in conversation with Paul Ricoeur, preachers must attend to the discordance of narrative experience, especially as it is necessary for eventual narrative healing.

Therefore, in this chapter I advocate for a narratively fractured sermon form.[9] Consistent with the definitions developed in Chapter Two, a narratively fractured sermon form may lack

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[7] In his discussion of narrative preaching, McClure identifies that in the cloudy conversation on narrative preaching in the discipline, there are four "broad avenues" by which homileticians discuss and explore narrative preaching: narrative hermeneutics, narrative development, narrative enculturation, and narrative worldview. Narrative development, enculturation, and worldview are discussed above as they are directly related to the type sermon form and use of story I am concerned with in the work of this chapter. Narrative hermeneutics is preaching that reflects the practice of placing narrative "at the center" of biblical interpretation. McClure, 90–93.

[8] In discussing narrative worldview, McClure outlines an approach in which "narrative categories, such as mythic communication, parabolic communication, narrative characters, signs or symbols, are used to help preachers understanding how it is that preaching supports and promotes a particular metanarrative or worldview in a congregation." He further breaks the category into the biblical narrative model or the practical theology model. In the biblical narrative model, scholars like Charles Campbell argue for the biblical language and worldview as predominant in the sermon, inviting listeners to abandon their own narratives to adopt an identity, language, and imagery consistent with the biblical worldview. Under the practical theology model which emphasizes theological interpretation of congregations and preachers in relations to the biblical text. McClure, 91–92.

[9] I want to be clear that I am not arguing for *non-narrative* forms. There may still be narrative impulses that inform the sermon shape and stories may still be included within the sermon. However, I *am* advocating for a *narratively fractured* sermon form in which narratives do not always cohere to a clear beginning, middle, and end (sense of ordered temporality) or result in satisfying or connected conclusions (coherence). As narrative scholars such as Wesley A. Kort argue, the line between narrative and non-narrative is ill-defined. Both narrative and non-narrative discourse may "tell you who I am [not only what I am], and this suggests that it is good not to privilege one over the other but to recognize a reciprocity between them." See Wesley A. Kort, *Textual Intimacy: Autobiography and Religious Identities* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 38. While

temporality, coherence, or both. Sermons offered in the immediate aftermath of violent trauma should reflect, and thus honor, the congregation's narratively fractured condition. The sermonic form, alongside the content, should not seek to smooth over the sharp edges of dislocated and disconnected historical experience. Instead, the sermon form should name and lift up narrative fracture. And by embodying such fracture in the holy act of preaching and proclamation, the preacher will also honor and bless the experience of narrative fracture as not beyond the work and Word of God. [10]

SERMONS AND MEMOIRS

Using trauma-related memoirs and sermons, I want to suggest three narratively fractured forms that may help preachers in thinking about preaching in the wake of violent trauma. I will call these three the *Snapshot* form, the *Thematic* form, and the *Frayed Edges* form. However, before discussing these models, I want to offer a brief explanation for why memoirs of trauma might be helpful as conversation partners in relation to sermon form.

Before considering the similarities between memoirs and sermons, I want to assert that memoirs and sermons are distinct literary and discursive genres. Even at their most basic functional level, memoirs are primarily written to be read while sermons are constructed to be heard. Second, memoirs find their source material and are built upon life experiences and artifacts (i.e. letters, pictures, diaries, etc.). Meanwhile, sermons, while possibly including events from personal or communal life experience, are inspired by a sacred text and the work of the

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narrative may allow more particularity in self-accounts, the two forms complement one another. Taken even further, Kort notes that there may be no real line between narrative and non-narrative discourses as "declarative sentences can be concentrated or incipient narratives." Kort, 43. Likewise, narratives may contain a great deal of non-narrative statements. For more on this topic see Kort, 37–57.

[10] Again, this is towards the ends of narrative healing. I do not intend for the preacher to utilize these sermon forms for the duration of their preaching career nor for them to become the only form available.

Holy Spirit. Third, memoirs are generally written with a broad audience in mind as a way to share one's life experience with an amorphous reading community. On the other hand, sermons (at their best) are written with a particular congregation in mind to be preached at a particular moment in a particular place. Yet, even with their differences, memoirs and sermons share key features that may allow us to look to memoirs (especially memoirs of trauma) as potential models for sermon form.

First, like a sermon, memoirs have a focus[11]—a central theme or topic that drives the literary work and organization of the text. Memoirs are usually focused on a particular relationship, event, or question. The best memoirs then offer anecdotes, images, and insights that are all connected to the topic or event of focus. While both are written in the first person, this focused nature distinguishes memoirs from autobiographies, which are generally understood as being more comprehensive life stories.[12] In Elie Wiesel's memoir, *Night*, Wiesel does not relay the story of his whole life from first his memories up to the present. Instead, the book focuses on Wiesel's experience as a Jewish teenager during the Second World War, including his time in the concentration camps and the loss of his family. The book opens in 1941, at the beginning of the war and ends in 1945 a few weeks after the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp (discussed more below). Occasionally the book reaches outside the 1940s time frame, such as when Wiesel encountered a woman on the Metro in Paris he had worked alongside in the camp

[11] The word "focus" is intentionally chosen to reflect the discussion of "focus and function" Long uses in his well-respected and oft-used preaching text, *The Witness of Preaching*. In it, he encourages preachers, after doing extensive exegetical work on a text to deduce a claim from the text. From that claim, the preacher than develops a focus and function that drives the construction, design, and delivery of the sermon. Long defines the focus as "a concise description of the central, controlling, and unifying theme of the sermon in short, this is what the whole sermon will be 'about.'" The function is "a description of what the preacher hopes the sermon will create or cause to happen for the hearers." The focus and function, together, define the "compass settings for the sermon journey." Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 108–09.

[12] "Creative Non-Fiction," Writing in Your Major: Tips from Tutors, University of Vermont Writing Center, accessed November 11, 2017, https://www.uvm.edu/wid/writingcenter/tutortips/nonfiction.html.

warehouse as a young man.[13] But, even those anecdotes point back and help to define or illumine Wiesel's experience during World War II. Similarly, a sermon should have a focus—a driving message that that every part of the sermon content and form should work to illumine.

Second, memoirs have a function. Similar to the function of a sermon, a memoir hopes that the text will impact or change the audience. In her essay "Memoir and Gospel," Heidi Neumark explores the connection between the proclamation of the gospel and the memoir writings of homiletician Richard Lischer. She remarks, "The anatomy of a memoir can be, as [Martin] Luther would say, *incurvatus in se*, curved in on itself. But…[m]emoir can also be a way to love and serve one's neighbor, offering one's own life as a theater of God."[14] In tackling a particular issue, relationship, or event, many memoirs seek to reach beyond themselves—to inform, teach, comfort, or call others to account. In the memoir, *The Rules of Inheritance*, Claire Bidwell Smith explores the trauma of losing both her parents at a relatively young age and her journey to recover from that shock, loss, and resulting depression. She organizes her memoir according to Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief. But by structuring her memoir non-chronologically (discussed more below), Smith wants to disrupt the myth that grief is a smooth, orderly journey. In a blog post regarding the book, Smith wrote that she hoped to communicate that there is "no *right* way to grieve. There is no perfect formula or magic recipe for complete healing. No matter how universal the act of losing someone may be, we all have to create our own path to the other side of grief."[15] The function of her memoir was not just to process her own story of traumatic grief, but also to help others have a more sound and compassionate

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[13] Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 53–54.

[14] Heidi Neumark, "Memoir and Gospel: The Theater of God's Grace," in *Preaching Gospel: Essays in Honor of Richard Lischer*, ed. Charles L. Campbell, et al. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 120.

[15] Claire Bidwell Smith, "Claire Bidwell Smith: On Choosing a Non-Linear Structure for My Memoir," *Reading Group Guides*, March 19, 2012, https://www.readinggroupguides.com/blog/2012/03/19/claire-bidwell-smith-on-choosing-a-non-linear-structure-for-my-memoir.

understanding of their own grief journey. Authors such as Claire Bidwell Smith write memoirs in order to hold their own life up as a lens through which people can see the world in a new or unique way and thus be convicted to respond. In the same way, preachers hold up the claim of a particular biblical text for a particular group of people in the form of a sermon with the intention to create or provoke a response in hearers, whether it is to challenge, comfort, inspire, reassure, or chastise.

Third, memoirs, like sermons, are concerned with truth-telling.[16] For example in the book *Nola: A Memoir of Faith, Art, and Madness*, the author, Robin Hemley, struggles to understand the work, life, and mental health condition of his deceased step-sister, Nola. Through reviewing childhood memories, his step-sister's journal, his mother's journal, and information gathered from conversation with family and friends, Hemley ventures to discover who Nola was and how she viewed the world. Hemley's memoir is not simply a chronological review of Nola's life, but instead is a tapestry of artifacts and memories woven in ways that allow the reader to better understand Nola and the interconnectedness of her art, spirituality, and schizophrenia. In order to piece together a more complete understanding of his step-sister, he had to explore dark family secrets such as the story of his mother's first husband (Nola's father) and the painful and strained relationship between Hemley and his conservative Jewish brother. As he began to uncover the family secrets and memorialize the ghosts of the family tree in writing, Hemley's mother (also a writer) encouraged him to "Fictionalize it. Don't embarrass me."[17] However, he refused to do so. Further, Hemley had his mother send him Nola's own writing project—a cross between a spiritual memoir and a journal. Reading through it, he noticed his mother's editing marks—

[16] The same may not be said for the genre of novels.

[17] Robin Hemley, *Nola: A Memoir of Faith, Art, and Madness* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013), *xviii*.

editing sanctioned by Nola before she died. His mother crossed out controversial or embarrassing phrases (such as Nola calling her step father a "twentieth-century Faust…with his own half diabolical mind…[who] refused to question the limits of his intellect"[18]) and rewrote sentences or phrases in order to moderate strongly emotional or mystical concepts (such as when Nola describes the push of "an invisible and quiet hand" which led her life to "[take] on a more and more miraculous character"[19]). Hemley admits in his memoir that some of his mother's editing marks made sense, while others made him angry. He argues that his mother, "whose religion was writing…has an alliance to the facts, but shudders at the truth…"[20] And so, in a desire to tell the truth about Nola and open up the relationship between Nola and his mother, he publishes the excerpts from Nola's journals with his mother's editing marks intact. The reader can decipher the lines Hemley's mother deleted through crossed out type and note the places where Hemley's mothers added words or phrases, marked by italics. The reader can, simultaneously, read what Nola wrote *and* see what changes Nola's mom wished to make. By choosing to present one of the only remaining artifacts of Nola's own view of herself in this raw format, Hemley emphasizes his commitment to truth-telling. Memoirs at their best, like good sermons, are committed to truth-telling. Many of them, also like sermons, seek to say something true about God, the world, and the relationship between the two. In his homiletics text, Thomas Long argues for an understanding of preacher as witness—one who has an encounter with God by wrestling with a biblical text on behalf of her community and then returns to that community to bear witness to that encounter. Similar to the legal implications, a witness is one who is "willing to tell the truth…the whole truth and nothing but the truth."[21] In preaching, the witness goes to

[18] Hemley, 7.
[19] Hemley, 6.
[20] Hemley, 8.
[21] Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 47.

the text to seek out the truth about God for the community. This truth then shapes the way the preacher presents the truth they have encountered—in content and form.

With these shared concerns for focus, function, and truth-telling, memoirs may serve as helpful conversation partners in thinking about sermonic form, especially in the wake of trauma. Even more interestingly, memoirs of trauma are often written in unique "nonlinear" narrative forms. While some memoirs may opt to relay a complete, chronological, and cohesive narrative, some traumatic memoirs opt to reflect the broken reality of the author's experience through a non-narrative or non-linear form. The memoir genre gives authors the freedom to choose what parts of their experience they wish to share as well as how they wish to relay such information.

In my exploration of traumatic memoirs (i.e. memoirs about or inspired by traumatic events, incidents, or relationships), I noted that authors often choose narratively fractured forms. Molly Brodak, in her memoir, *Bandit*, discusses her choice to write in a fractured way. Brodak refuses to offer a chronologically organized or even complete picture of her childhood in this memoir that considers the character of her father and the impact his serial robberies had on her family. The trauma of her childhood with a criminal father and clinically depressed mother, she argues, is too much for her to process in a narratively cohesive form:

> I don't want to see these words touching these true things. They are all wrong. This whole language I'm using is wrong. Language itself seems to fall to pieces when it touches certain topics…No stories work for me. The "story" I have felt these facts through is just a simple and untranslatable darkness. A packed wet powder, dark navy blue, nothing I could fit in a rectangular package and place on a library shelf. If I move or just look too closely I am afraid this "story" will crumble. This is one reason I never wrote directly about these true things.[22]

[22] Molly Brodak, *Bandit: A Daughter's Memoir*, Kindle Edition (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2016), loc. 933–35, 955–58.

Brodak goes on to analyze the use of stories—the ways they help give "Form and Meaning to our formless, meaningless stumbling through time. In stories our minds link, emotional survival techniques are transmitted, moral models are codified, hows and whys are satisfied."[23] Yet, she grows frustrated with stories, especially the stories of redemption and hope born out of pain that she read again and again as a child. She follows the logic of such stories—that the reader "deserves" a happy ending marked by resolution and redemption after being "forced to endure along with the hero or sufferer."[24] Whether or not such endings are true, she contends, aren't they necessary? But, she argues, her own experience of childhood trauma is inconsistent with the redemptive hero narratives offered in, it seemed, every book on the library shelf. Instead, her memoir contends with the reality of unredemptive suffering. Brodak resists telling her story in a clean narrative form with a redemptive ending, insisting that sometimes "trauma is worthless. Grief has no meaning, it just is. Perhaps we have gained nothing from the psychological rending our dad enacted on my family. What if we aren't stronger or wiser, just hurt: the end."[25] And so Brodak and other authors such as Elie Weisel, Robin Hemley, and Claire Bidwell Smith write memoirs of trauma that bear the scars of narrative fracture. They refuse to offer narratives that are cohesive and redemptive. Instead, they write in ways that resist temporality, resolution, cohesiveness or all of the above. It is to these memoirs of narratively fractured writing that we now turn as they may serve as models for post-traumatic sermonic forms.

MODEL 1: SNAPSHOT FORM

In her memoir, *Bandit*, Molly Brodak explores the ways her life and family dynamic were traumatically impacted by her father's gambling addiction and life as a serial robber. As

[23] Brodak, loc. 938–39.
[24] Brodak, loc. 943.
[25] Brodak, loc. 945–47.

discussed above, she is straightforward about her inability to conceive of her traumatic childhood as a coherent or redemptive narrative. Between a father who consistently lied to and manipulated his family to her mother who suffered from clinical depression to an oft-estranged sister who was obsessively loyal to their father, Brodak insists, "no stories work for me." So, instead of writing her memoir in a coherent and chronological narrative form, Brodak offers a spattering of brief quotes, artifacts, thoughts, and anecdotes in no discernable order. It is as if she opened up a box of snapshots, video clips, letters, and memories and begins to throw them on the table in front of the reader in no apparent order. Her 240-page memoir contains eighty-two distinct chapters. The chapter lengths range from a paragraph long to a dozen pages long. The chapters are not arranged in any kind of thematic or chronological order. The reader jumps with Brodak from her first memory of stealing something with her dad to a quick review of her father's rap sheet to a memory of her parent's fighting when she is nine to a conversation with her sister as they sort through boxes in their mother's basement as adults to a letter Brodak's father sent from prison a few years ago. Each chapter is a fragment—a piece of an incomplete puzzle—and while the reader is invested in uncovering Brodak's story and the conundrum that is her father, the reader quickly loses any hope of attaining a comprehensive picture or satisfying conclusion.

Brodak leaves the reader with gaps and questions. For example, the reader never learns whether her mom continues to struggle with mental health; the reader is never privy to how Brodak and her sister reconciled as adults; the reader never knows if Brodak's father is truly repentant and a changed man. Even if the reader were to meticulously excise and reassemble the chapters in chronological order, the result would not be a whole narrative or cohesive story. Those narrative gaps were still be present. And, the choice to present these fragments without a sense of temporal continuity or chronology both further highlights the incomplete nature of the

narrative as well as discourages the reader from trying to create some kind of coherent or redemptive narrative.

Instead, the reader must stand witness to the images, stories, anecdotes, and artifacts as they arise on the page. And then the reader is invited to live in the tension of those fragments, to piece together what they can discern and exist in the discomfort of what they (and even the author) will never understand. This Snapshot form (as I am calling it) acknowledges the incomplete and broken nature of trauma, suffering, and historical existence by refusing to fill in the blanks or manufacture clear connections between the fragments of experience. The reader is asked to live in the tension of the author's experience, to recognize the broken and sharp edges that are left unexplained even as they encounter hints of redemption (in Brodak's case, her choice to face her family's shame and compose the memoir).

What, then, is the impact of this Snapshot form on the reader? As mentioned briefly above, this form invites the reader to exist in space of tension and discomfort between the known and unknown, the broken and hopeful. Being asked to sit in such tension is uncomfortable and often difficult for the reader. However, being required to do so in a book like *Bandit* also invites readers to be honest about and aware of the tension of pain and hope in present in their own lives. By modeling this Snapshot form in which the author arranges interesting, painful, funny, hopeful, and devastating fragments alongside one another with little connective tissue, the reader may practice living in the tension of a story that is not theirs and, perhaps, then be more willing to live in the tensions of their own lives. Second, when a variety of fragments are placed alongside one another, they may become more than the sum of their parts—their juxtaposition opens doors of interpretation and understanding for the reader that the reader might never encounter if the author constructed a coherent narrative.

Robin Hemley, author of *Nola*, reflects on his choice to write in fragments. Hemley lays fragments of his, his sister's and his mother's stories alongside one another in alternating chapters with little connective tissue. When asked to reflect on that such a fragmented writing form, he noted that there is a "silent commentary" that arises between the fragments.[26] Because work is required of the reader to hold the fragments together, there is room for more generative interpretation than if the whole picture were outlined for the reader. Finally, the Snapshot form invites the fragments of readers' stories. The reader may identify with a particular fragment of the author's experience or a particular image may inspire memory of a particular experience or emotion from the reader's own life. And because there are gaps and breaks in the form of the writing, the reader may enter the text with their own fragmented experiences, bringing them to the table to place down alongside the author's snapshots of experience. The Snapshot form of memoir writing as displayed in Brodak's book, *Bandit,* may be both invitational to and generative for the reader.

So, how would a *sermon* in Snapshot form look? In my own research, I have found it difficult to find a strong example of such a sermon.[27] Rev. Dean Snyder at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. preached one sermon that approximates this Snapshot form on December 16, 2012, two days after the Sandy Hook Shootings. He began by naming the disruptive nature of the mass shooting—how it changed not only his sermon, but plan for Sunday worship. He decided sharing communion was in order and that the sacrament would be the centerpiece of the service. Yet, he did offer a few brief words—a series of fragments that both

[26] Lee Martin, "Don't Give It to Me Straight: A Non-Linear Approach to Memoir," *Lee Martin*, January 23, 2017, https://leemartinauthor.com/2017/01/23/dont-give-straight-non-linear-approach-memoir/.

[27] This may mean that such sermons are not often preached *or* they are preached but difficult to find in published or recorded form.

invited people's own emotional responses and displayed the brokenness of trauma that follows a mass shooting. He offered "four brief statements."[28] In the first, he brought to mind the families of the children killed in Newtown, insisting that the congregation pray for them. He then acknowledged the anxiety and fear that it could have been "our child, our grandchild, our nephew, our niece, our neighbor, a child baptized here."[29] Without much transition, Snyder relayed a quick anecdote about how, after hearing news of the shooting, he traveled up to Philadelphia to hug his grandson. Second, Snyder called for prayer for the "families of the principal, school psychologist, and teachers who died Friday in Newtown."[30] He insisted on their Christ-like sacrifice and the importance of honoring teachers. Third, he moved to focus on prayers for the family of the shooter, Adam Lanza, attentive to the fact that we all have family, friends, and neighbors who struggle with mental health. And then, quickly, he jumped to his fourth snapshot, a call for the church to talk about gun violence, including an invitation for an upcoming forum.

Snyder's sermon had no connective tissue that helped transition from one topic to the next. There was no developed plot or narrative arc to the short sermon. Instead, reflecting the broken reality, shock, and suffering of a congregation still seeking to grapple with this difficult event, Snyder threw the fragments of reality on the table. He named the victims—both children and teachers—and their families. He offered his own response—visiting his grandson—as a model for the anxiety and vulnerability other parents, grandparents, and teachers might be feeling. He named the shooter and pointed to concerns over mental health care. And he finally brought up the policy issue of gun violence and the prevalence of guns in the United States.

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[28] Dean Snyder, "Newtown, CT," Foundry UMC, December 16, 2012, http://foundry.podbean.com/e/newtown-ct/.

[29] Snyder.

[30] Snyder.

As in the Snapshot form exhibited in the memoir, this snapshot sermonic form invited the congregation to occupy more fully the tension between grief and hope, invited the congregation to bring their own fragments, and was generative for the congregation's life together. First, this sermon did not seek to form a cohesive narrative or preach a redemptive solution to the problem of the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. At no point did Rev. Snyder point towards answers to why such a thing would happen or try to explain away the situation in order to reassure the congregation that they were immune from such violence. (In fact, he named the truth that "We all know that is could have been our child…"[31]). Snyder was willing to lead the congregation in the practice of sitting in the traumatic reality while still pointing towards hope. While naming the "overwhelming" grief and repeatedly returning the atrocity that had occurred, Snyder pointed toward the hope that "God [may] heal the violence in our hearts and…make us a people of peace."[32] The sermonic form furthers this work of sitting in the tension. The Snapshot form allowed all of those theological convictions and sentiments—grief, prayer, shock, forgiveness, peace, pain, and hope—to exist in juxtaposed relationship with one another. This form produces a tension that both honors and mirrors back to the congregation their own struggle to exist between the broken reality and a desire for hope.

Second, this Snapshot sermon form invites the congregation to bring their own fragments of experience. By not constructing a smooth narrative and leaving space between the snapshot moments, ideas, and concerns, the congregation is implicitly invited to fill in the gaps with their own experience. In the case of Snyder's sermon they were invited to express (along with the pastor) their fear for their children, their struggle to pray for the shooter, and their own concerns over gun violence. The Snapshot form invites listeners to bring to the table their own experiences

[31] Snyder.
[32] Snyder.

of loss, their own encounters with violence, their own insecurities about safety or community or fears for their children. This narratively broken form allows the congregation to bring their own fractured experiences and place them alongside the preachers' stories, theological convictions and experiences as offered in the sermon.

Third, and related to the two points above, such a snapshot sermon form as we see in Rev. Snyder's sermon can be generative for the work of the church. By juxtaposing these fragments of concern, experience, hope, and call to action, the congregation is welcomed to see how they may live and respond in a way that honors both the perpetrator and victim, that is both theologically sound and concerned for policy, that is both fully embracing suffering while not losing a place for hope. This Snapshot form can create opportunities for listeners to participate and understand more deeply their own experience of narrative fracture

While the Snapshot sermon form will necessarily take on different topics and configurations, this is one model of narratively fractured preaching that both reflects the narratively fractured condition of the congregation as well as names and honors those fragments of narrative experience towards the ends of eventual healing. However, the Snapshot sermon form should not be interpreted as indiscriminate information dump where preachers use the pulpit as a display case for their own experiences, anxieties, fears, hopes, and frustrations. A Snapshot sermonic form requires careful thought and planning. The memoir, *Bandit*, is not a stream-of-consciousness piece of writing or a random off-loading of information. Though it reads as scattered fragments, Brodak carefully designed the form of the text so that the chapters interact with one another in very particular ways that illumine both the author's experience and the character of her father. For example, the second to last chapter of Brodak's memoir is probably the closest thing to resolution within the book: the author shares a long letter her father

wrote from prison where he tries to explain why he committed the crimes, how he thinks he has changed, and his plans for retirement with his new wife after he gets out of prison yet again. There is a certain peaceful sense of conclusion to this letter, though it leaves many unanswered questions regarding the authenticity of his reports. But, instead of ending the memoir with that chapter, Brodak adds chapter eighty-two—a brief description of the pictures her mother gave her—one of her parent's wedding day and another of fireworks with no humans in sight. By adding this final chapter and ultimately ending the book without any people in the picture, Brodak both refuses to let her father have the last word and refuses to end with any clear resolution. In the same way, the preacher must think carefully about the way they organize and juxtapose the snapshots of a post-traumatic sermon. What is communicated when multiple stories of hope follow one brief story of struggle? What happens when the preacher reads a text of Jesus calming the storm after recalling the insanity that ensued in the hours after the shooting had occurred? The preacher must be intentional about the gaps that are left and concepts generated when composing a sermon in the snapshot form. The second model, the thematic form, is related to the first but offers a little more structure for sermon organization.

MODEL 2: THEMATIC FORM

In *The Rules of Inheritance* Claire Bidwell Smith reflects upon her struggles surrounding the traumatic loss of her mother when she was eighteen and the loss of her father when she was twenty-five. These deaths impacted her life choices, romantic relationships, education, and even choice of career. Smith structures her memoir according to the five stages of grief associated with the research of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. However, she purposively seeks to disrupt the continuity, temporality, and coherence of these stages by placing the fragments of her story in non-chronological order under the

headings to which they apply. For example, under "Part One: Denial" Smith's first chapter is "Chapter One: 1996, I'm Eighteen" followed by "Chapter Two: 1992, I'm Fourteen Years Old" and closes with "Chapter Three: 2002, I'm Twenty-Four Years Old."[33] Each part of the book (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) is composed of three chapters, marking three non-consecutive moments in Smith's life when she was felt entrenched in those stages of grief. The idea behind this model was to disrupt the myth of the smooth narrative coherence and temporality of Kubler-Ross's stages implies. Smith wanted to reveal "how fluid and dynamic [the stages of grief] really are…how [they] can come and go throughout the grieving process."[34] In the very form of her memoir, she wanted to show how trauma breaks apart the temporality and coherence of one's story and, therefore, how the experience of traumatic grief cannot be contained in a tidy narrative that moves from denial to acceptance.

This Thematic form shares quite a few features with the Snapshot model discussed above. Smith's book, like Brodak's Snapshot form memoir, offers the reader a series of disconnected anecdotes, thoughts, and images that arise as Smith wrestles with the hovering presence of death in her life. As in the Snapshot form, the fragments of experience are often disconnected and chronologically disparate. For example under the section of the book shaped by the "Anger" stage, Smith jumps from a chapter describing the days following the death of her mother to a chapter filled with stories about dating an emotionally abusive boyfriend, Colin, to a chapter of Smith's memories of being fifteen and befriending an exotic and rebellious girl, Zoe. Even within the chapters, the stories are not complete and cohesive. Smith jumps from one brief anecdote, reflection, or feeling to another. Put another way, even the narratives within the

[33] Claire Bidwell Smith, *The Rules of Inheritance: A Memoir*, Kindle Edition (New York: Hudson Street Press, 2012), loc. 3.

[34] Smith, "On Choosing a Non-Linear Structure."

disconnected chapters are fragments of thoughts, experiences and images related to that time in her life. However, unlike the snapshot form, the stories, images, and conversations are organized by theme. Though temporality and coherence are still disrupted, the snapshots of Smith's experience find some organization and connection through the themes of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

An example of a narratively fractured Thematic sermon form comes from the Christmas Eve sermon preached by a priest in Newtown, Connecticut a mere ten days after the shootings.[35] In our phone conversation, Msgr. Weiss set the stage by describing church and community life in the days between the shooting (on Dec. 12) and Christmas Eve. Msgr. Weiss and his parish had hosted eight funerals in five days, all for children. "The last funeral was on that Sunday," he recalled, "and Christmas was Tuesday…I thought at first, 'we can't do Christmas this year,' but then I realized they needed Christmas."[36] He recalls not knowing what to say—how to preach in the wake of such loss and communal trauma. Msgr. Weiss said he claimed the Advent message and began with the themes of darkness and light: "That became the theme and mantra for the whole first several months. It was important to recognize that evil had visited our land but we couldn't let it conquer us. That was the message they needed to hear—we were in darkness but light is coming."[37] For the actual Christmas Eve sermon, Msgr. Weiss decided to name their painful reality and point to God's promise thematically, using the paradigm of "Silent Night, Holy Night." Under "silent night," Weiss named for the congregation the "stunned silence" that

[35] I had the opportunity to interview Msgr. Weiss, who serves the St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church. During our conversation, I asked Msgr. Weiss about his preaching and requested to see any manuscripts he had. He told me he did not believe that he still had any of the manuscripts and that the church did not record the worship services. However, he was able to relay to me the general form and content of both his remarks the night of the shooting at the vigil and his Christmas Eve sermon. Robert Weiss, phone interview with the author, November 6, 2017.

[36] Weiss.

[37] Weiss.

the shooting brought about in the town; but he also named the "stunned silence" that must have occurred for the shepherds when they were visited by angels. Under the theme of "silent night" Weiss also noted the calm and (in some ways, challenging) quiet that came over the town after the last burial less than forty-eight hours before. There was nothing else to *do*—no more receptions to host or funerals to plan or food to deliver or paraments to clean. The town had attended twenty-six funerals in a matter of a couple of weeks. Now, their schedules were quiet; the town was eerily quiet. Silent night. But, Msgr. Weiss also noted the ways that, even in the wake of such violence, Christmas Eve was still a "holy night." It was a night that held promise, that reminded the people that God was willing to enter this grief-torn, violence-ridden world and be among us. "We were in darkness," he recalled, "but [Christmas reminded us] light is coming." Even after describing the hope he sought to offer he quickly said, "but that light is sure slow in coming."[38] His sermonic expressions of hope were tempered by the cruel reality of fear and grief. Under "holy night" he also named the ways the holy showed up in the midst of the grief of the town—the ways families banded together or served one another. He also named the desperate desire for the holy—the ways the town longed to once again "sleep in heavenly peace." The themes offered by the song, especially "silent night" and "holy night" allowed Msgr. Weiss to lift up and offer all the fragments of experience on Christmas Eve, holding together the reality of grief and anxiety alongside the biblical text and hints of the holy. Organized thematically with the carol, Msgr. Weiss tried to honor all of the community's stories and hold them next to the story of Christmas without trying to fabricate a sense of redemption or link the stories together into some kind of narrative whole.

[38] Weiss.

Similar to the Snapshot form above, the Thematic form still offers gaps for listeners to enter with the fragments of their experience. Perhaps even more helpful, the thematic sermon form offers a basic structure through which people may begin to recognize their fragments of traumatic experience. This is different than seeking to re-arrange or offer a plotted framework for people's fractured narrative wreckage. Instead, the themes that organize the sermon fragments may evoke the listener's memories. It invites them to reflect on the fragments of their narrative wreckage and see how their narrative fragments might come to light under the themes provided by the preacher. Further, through the use of themes, the congregants may recognize that all of their fragments of experience are welcome. If the themes (such as "Silent Night, Holy Night") allow the preacher to explore the holy, the hurting, the hopeful and the hateful in a sermon, then the listener may be affirmed in knowing that all of their fragments of experience are included and welcomed into the worship space.

The Thematic form also reflects and models for listeners a way to hold together the many fragments of experience, experiences that both encourage and haunt them. As Msgr. Weiss offered, "those weeks…they were full of so many things…unbelievable grief, anger, sadness…but there were also beautiful things."[39] In his thematic sermon on the text "Silent Night, Holy Night," he tried to hold together those many experiences—seeking to find resonances between them without trying to discount the pain or move too quickly to redemption. This sermon form offers parishioners a loosely organized way to hold together their many fragments of experience and to live in that tension between pain and hope, suffering and grace. By allowing themes to gather and welcome these fragments of narrative wreckage, the broad

[39] Weiss.

array of communal narrative fragments are able to be honored as of equal status and held together in an eschatological tension.

MODEL 3: FRAYED EDGES FORM

While the previous two models—the Snapshot Form and Thematic Form—resist any kind of narrative arc, the Frayed Edges Form retains some reliance on narrative, but fractures the narrative form by refusing resolution or total coherence. Memoirs and sermons constructed in the Frayed Edges form may still use narrative structures such as chronology/temporality, continuous character development or driving themes, but ultimately break the coherence of the story by rejecting any kind of clean resolution or redemptive ending. The Frayed Edges Form demonstrates an unwillingness to sacrifice truth for coherence. It asks listeners (or readers) to remain uncomfortable in the tension created by unresolved or unredeemed struggle, suffering, or confusion. And these frayed edges of narrative coherence may happen not simply at the end, but throughout the text.

Arguably one of the most well-known traumatic memoirs, Elie Wiesel's *Night* exemplifies the Frayed Edges form as Wiesel chronicles his experience as a Jewish teenager taken first to the ghetto and then to concentration camps during the Second World War. The book is written in a generally narrative format—in chronological order with a sense of connected scenes that develop and build on one another with broad themes and complex characters. Wiesel begins the story in 1941with his family at their home in Sighet, Transylvania where Wiesel, a devout young Jewish man, has put himself under the Kabbalistic tutelage of Moishe the Beadle. From there, the story takes off and jumps from the relatively peaceful familial existence of 1943 to the deportations of 1944. Wiesel then launches the story forward, describing the frightening and vile conditions of the train to the horrors of Auschwitz and ultimately Buchenwald

concentration camps. He describes his last look at his mother and sister as they are separated, men from women, in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The story plots on with both careful and excruciating detail as Wiesel recalls the sights, words, sounds, and smells of the camps, the SS officers, the work, and the barracks. The book continues in a narrative arc through the loss of Wiesel's father until he is liberated from Buchenwald in 1945 by the Allied forces. As the story unfolds, the reader journeys with Wiesel as he loses his innocence, tests his theological convictions, and learns more about the darkness within humanity and himself. The reader follows the shifting relationship between Wiesel and his father as they undergo the oppression and torturous conditions of the camps. And the theological themes of contending with God's providence and mercy in the face of such atrocities are always just under the surface of the narrative, holding it together and pushing it forward. Yet for its consistent chronology (minus a few mentions of encountering people later, such as the woman in Paris discussed above) and clear narrative arc with character development and thematic continuity, *Night* is marked by incoherence and irresolution. Both at the end of the memoir and throughout the text, Wiesel leaves anecdotes and questions with unfinished, frayed edges. These incomplete, unresolved threads of the storyline embody the incoherent and fragmented nature of Wiesel's historical experience in the book's structure and form.

Though the memoir ends with the liberation of Buchenwald, Wiesel does not offer the reader a clear or redemptive conclusion. In the very last chapter, Wiesel describes how even the liberation of the camp was torturous and painful. The first call to the *"Appelplatz"* of the camp was haunted by rumors that the SS were going to kill all the remaining Jewish children. Though that didn't happen there was great confusion throughout the camp. Finally they were told that the "Buchenwald camp would be liquidated. Ten blocks of inmates would be evacuated every

day."[40] With that announcement all meals stopped. Five days later, Wiesel remained with some twenty thousand prisoners—starving and weak. However, when they were lined up to evacuate, sirens went off and their evacuation was delayed. The next day, when the evacuation began the "resistance movement" descended upon the camp and a firefight ensued, with the children lying on the floor of the block. Finally, they were free and their first act was to find food. But, Wiesel does not even describe this moment as a time of celebration or liberation. Instead, he closes the book in with an unsettled sense that the pain and suffering is not over:

> Three days after the liberation of Buchenwald, I became very ill: some form of poisoning. I was transferred to a hospital and spent two weeks between life and death.
>
> One day when I was able to get up, I decided to look at myself in the mirror on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto.
>
> From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me.
>
> The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me.[41]

Wiesel refuses to end his book with any clear sense of resolution or narrative closure. The reader is left with the question of how Wiesel views himself and whether or not has reconciled his experiences. Does that "corpse" in the mirror ever fully come back to life? It is a haunting image that ends the book, a statement of defiance against easy answers and desires for redemption, resolution, or even hope.

Likewise, such inconclusive narrative elements are found throughout the text of the book, within the episodes of Wiesel's story. For example, when Wiesel's father dies, Wiesel closes the chapter with frayed edges and difficult questions. In Buchenwald concentration camp less than three months before the camp was liberated, Wiesel describes his father's moans and the way his

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[40] Wiesel, *Night*, 114.
[41] Wiesel, 115.

father begged for water and called out his name. Wiesel describes the beating his father received from the SS officer and how he slept in the upper bunk while his father died in the lower. Remembering waking up on January 29, 1945 to find another sick man in his father's bed, Wiesel wrote:

> No prayers were said over his tomb. No candle lit in his memory. His last word had been my name. He had called out to me and I had not answered.
>
> I did not weep, and it pained me that I could not weep. But I was out of tears. And deep inside me, if I could have searched the recesses of my feeble conscience, I might have found something like: Free at last!...[42]

This is how the circuitous and arduous narrative journey with his father ends—in utter ambiguity. Wiesel describes in rich detail the ways he and his father survived the camps together. Wiesel is honest about his frustration (at times) with his father as well as his love and gratitude for his father's strength and presence. Yet, Wiesel's lack of tears and final declaration, "Free at last!..." leave the reader confused. Is his father finally free from the prison of oppressive existence in the camp? Or is Wiesel free of the burden of his sick father? Or both? Is this a theological claim or a sarcastic proclamation? The trauma of this experience leads Wiesel to construct unfinished endings even within the plotted text of the story. The reader is left without any sense of resolution regarding his relationship with his father, Wiesel's attitude towards his father's death or even his own sense of guilt. The frayed edges of this narrative resist easy answers and quick conclusions.

It is these frayed edges, these rich narratives that refuse redemption, resolution, or conclusion that made it difficult for Wiesel to get published in France and the United States. Though having the help of (and an introduction written by) a famous French author and Nobel-prize winner, Francios Mauriac, publishers were not interested in a book that detailed the camps

[42] Note: the chapter ends with these ellipses. Wiesel, 112.

so precisely, without any sanitation or sense of resolution. Though *The Diary of Ann Frank* had been published in the United States in 1952, the gruesome details of the camps and the unresolved nature of the text scared publishers. They even resisted calling it a book. As an editor wrote to Wiesel's agent, "It is, as you say, a horrifying and extremely moving document, and I wish I could say this was something for Scribner's…However, we have certain misgivings as to the size of the American market for what remains…a document."[43] Publishers argued the book was too graphic, too difficult, and too unresolved of a testimonial for the American reader. I would argue that it is not only the content, but the form of the text that causes the reader (and publishers) to feel unsettled. It is the ways that stories within the arc of the narrative as well as the inconclusive end of the narrative itself is left ragged and unfinished, resisting easy conclusions or happy endings.

So, how might this model of narratively fractured preaching look in sermon form? On June 21, 2015, the Sunday after the shooting at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, the Rev. Sally Ann McKinsey Sisk (a native of Charleston) preached a narratively fractured Frayed Edges sermon on Mark 4:35-41 entitled "Don't You Care?"[44] She began by reading the complete pericope from Mark. It begins with Jesus and the disciples climbing into a boat one evening. However, during the night, a terrible storm batters the disciples' boat, yet Jesus is asleep in the stern. The disciples wake up Jesus and ask, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"[45] Ultimately, Jesus calms the storm, much to the amazement of the disciples who wonder, "Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?"[46] While she read the full

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[43] Rachel Donadio, "The Story of Elie Wiesel's 'Night,'" *New York Times*, January 20, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/books/review/Donadio-t.html.

[44] Sally Ann McKinsey Sisk, "Don't You Care? Mark 4:35–41" (Central Presbyterian Church, June 21, 2015).

[45] Mark 4:38b (NRSV).

[46] Mark 4:41b (NRSV).

pericope to start, Sisk was not willing to let the congregation travel through the entirety of the Markan story so quickly in her sermon.

Sisk began her sermon, "To be honest, right now it does not feel like the wind and the sea obey him….Maybe I could skip to the end of the story this morning and talk about the calming of the storm. But, I'm just not there."[47] She went on to explain that the wind and stormy seas, in the first century context, represented evil, trauma, and chaos. "Right now, standing in this pulpit while some of my Charleston colleagues' prophetic voices have been silenced, I find it more appropriate to linger in the middle—that moment when…the disciples ask of a *sleeping* Jesus, *don't you care that we are perishing*?"[48] Sisk insisted that we must linger in the middle of this story—that we can't rush our way towards the peaceful resolution of calm seas. We all, she argued, have to sit with the difficult questions that plague these kind of violent events. We must make space to wonder aloud where God is while "white supremacy still lives to destroy in brutal terror, while hate spreads as a cancer in the soul of society?"[49] The sermon began to arc towards a hint of hope as she pointed out that Jesus—the Jesus who can calm storms—was asleep in the back of the boat. "God is in the boat," Sisk asserted with some amount of comfort and hope, "God is weeping with and for the people of Charleston…God is weeping with the congregation of Mother Emanuel."[50] But, just as Sisk seemed to lean into the hope of God's ultimate triumph over the trauma, hate, and suffering of this world, she ripped open the sermon's (and Scripture's) narrative arc, making frayed edges of the story and refusing a decisive ending or redemptive narrative conclusion. She preached:

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[47] Sisk, "Don't You Care?"
[48] Sisk. Emphasis original.
[49] Sisk.
[50] Sisk.

> Jesus promises power that will put the demonic wind and sea in their rightful place…Jesus also promises to overturn evil once and for all. Love will have the final say.
>
> But, like I said, I don't feel like we're there yet.
>
> Meanwhile, we sit here in the middle, where the pain, the heartbreak, and the questions live…
>
> We are in a rocking boat surrounded by crashing waves. Jesus is here looking us in the eye as we ask, *don't you care*? He doesn't have to say anything. We can see the truth in his tears.[51]

Sisk's sermon, like Wiesel's memoir, model both the challenge and power of the Frayed Edges form. The form has some familiarity for preachers and listeners, as it borrows from the power of the narrative arc. Both Sisk and Wiesel's pieces are arranged with a certain sense of temporality or chronology—the ideas and anecdotes link one to another. Wiesel's story finds continuity and momentum through its march through time and the theological themes of God's presence and absence. Sisk's sermon finds continuity and momentum as she traces the events of Charleston in conversation with the arc of the Markan text. Yet, both Sisk and Wiesel's work resists complete coherence. They both refuse to offer clean answers, narratively satisfying conclusions, or redemptive endings. Just as Wiesel left the reader unsure after the death of his father or at the end of the memoir, Sisk refuses to let the congregation move into the unbounded hope of Jesus' storm-calming power. Instead, Sisk insists that the congregation stand with her in the middle of the story; she insists that the congregation fully feel the weight of the events in Charleston and not too quickly rush to theological platitudes. It is not only her content that offers that messages; the Frayed Edges form she employs does as well. By not allowing the language of eschatological promise or of Jesus' cosmic power mark the conclusion of her sermon, Sisk requires her listening congregation to return with her back to the middle of suffering, pain, and heartbreak.

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[51] Sisk.

While this sermon form differs from the previous two models, the Frayed Edges form reflects the narratively fractured experience of traumatized congregations by modeling a lack of narrative coherence, by discouraging traumatized persons from seeking easy solutions or overly quick healing, and by inviting narratively fractured people to enter the conversation even in the midst of their narrative wreckage. While the Frayed Edges sermon form (unlike the Snapshot or Thematic forms) does not fracture temporality due to its reliance on some features of narrative preaching (such as the narrative arc, character development, or consistent themes), this form still honors the experience of narrative fracture as it mirrors the incoherence of people's own narrative sense of self and community. By refusing to offer redemptive conclusions or answer all of the lingering questions raised by the biblical text or sermon, listeners may recognize their own broken and incomplete experiences represented and named within the form of the sermon. Similarly, by resisting the need to offer a complete narrative, leaving loose ends untied and disrupting the narrative arc towards a resolute conclusion, the narratively fractured congregation is reminded that they, also, need not push toward easy answers or appear to fabricate quick healing. By modeling a Frayed Edges sermon form, preachers sanction others in their congregations to sit in their narrative wreckage for a time, not pushing towards some fictitious narrative resolution or inauthentic sense of healing. The Frayed Edges form breaks open the narrative arc of the sermon so as to invite narratively fractured people into the conversation. With this form (combined with a christologically grounded eschatology), a narratively fractured congregation is affirmed where they are and promised, in the words of Sally Ann McKinsey Sisk, that "God is in the boat" with them.

TRAUMA AND NARRATIVELY FRACTURED SERMON FORM

One of the major impacts of trauma, such as what occurs in the wake of a mass shooting like Sandy Hook, is the experience of narrative fracture. Narrative fracture is marked by the loss of temporality and narrative coherence. Put simply, the stories that once helped individuals and communities to make sense of the world, their lives, and their relationships with one another no longer function as meaning-making frames. In regard to temporality, the present trauma distorts a person or community's conception of their past and makes it difficult to conceive an image of the future. At the same time, the narratives they told about their personal and communal lives no longer hang together. These narratives are no longer trustworthy tools for interpreting the world and do not help the sufferer make sense of the traumatizing event(s). The traumatized persons experience narrative fracture.

This narratively fractured condition calls for preaching that honors that narrative fracture and welcomes such fragments of narrative sense into the space of holy worship. Preaching in a way that honors the condition of the traumatized congregation, the preacher is able to reflect the discordant nature of the community's existence, naming and blessing the fragments of narrative wreckage towards the goals of eventual narrative healing. Preaching that honors the narrative fracture of the community is an act of hospitality as it welcomes those who feel lost and broken into a space where they are not asked to have a sense of healing or wholeness. Additionally, such preaching is necessary as the first step towards narrative repair and communal healing.

Sermons that honor and bless the narratively fractured state of a traumatized congregation in the immediate aftermath of an act of mass violence, may do so in both content and form. In Chapter Four I argued for a christologically grounded eschatological theology that holds the tension between hope and suffering—concordance and discordance—without allowing one to

overwhelm the other. In this chapter I have suggested three sermon forms that mirror the same narrative fracture, disrupting temporality and/or coherence. With the Snapshot form, both temporality and coherence are lost as the preacher holds fragments of anecdotes, images, and emotions next to one another, recognizing the possible resonances between them, but not seeking to link them through time or content. The Thematic form also disrupts temporality and coherence. Like the Snapshot form, the Thematic form allows fragments of experience, images, scriptures, and anecdotes to coexist. However, they are organized around themes, which may allow both preachers and listeners to begin to organize their fragments. Thirdly, the Frayed Edges form disrupts coherence, but may retain some temporality. This form is most aligned to types of narrative preaching inspired by the New Homiletic. While the sermon may follow a chronology or general narrative arc, with the Frayed Edges form, the preacher will refuse easy answers or complete narrative conclusions. By leaving fractured spaces open throughout and at the end of the narrative arc of the sermon, the traumatized congregation may see their own fracture honored and may be invited to examine their own narrative wreckage.

All three of these forms offer preaching models that have the potential to create sermons that identify with and honor those in the pews enduring the experience of narrative fracture. By being willing, even if only in the immediate aftermath of violent trauma, to preach a narratively fractured sermon, the preacher will help the congregation to name their narrative fragments as well as recognize that God is in the midst of all of the fracture. As it turns out, there is a biblical precedent for such preaching.

CONCLUSION:

MARK 16:1–8 AS A MODEL FOR POST-TRAUMATIC PREACHING

> *When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*
>
> *Mark 16:1–8 (NRSV)*

O. Wesley Allen, in his text *Preaching Resurrection*, asserts, "The ending of the Gospel According to Mark is so odd that preachers rarely approach [it] during the season of Easter. Why would they? There are no resurrection appearances…There is only an empty tomb about which no one hears."[1] The truth is: the shortest ending of Mark has vexed a great many homileticians, theologians, and biblical scholars. Don Juel argues, "The ending of Mark's Gospel provides a particular challenge to interpreters. The reason is its failure to resolve the tensions in the story and to provide some sense of closure that seems appropriate to 'good news about Jesus Christ.'"[2] Unlike the endings of Matthew, Luke and John, or the shorter and longer endings added by the

[1] O. Wesley Allen, *Preaching Resurrection*, Preaching Classic Texts (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 9.
[2] Donald Juel, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 111.

2nd century church, Mark's shortest ending contains no resurrection appearances.[3] And while the "man dressed in white" proclaims resurrection good news, the women flee the tomb saying "nothing" (ouden) to "no one" (oudeni). While some scholars such as David Catchpole and C.E.B. Cranfield build an argument that the women eventually said *something* to *someone*, Ira Brent Driggers notes that the repetition of the word ouden/i—the double negative of the text—"drives home Mark's point forcefully: the women spoke nothing, and it was to no one that they spoke. It is with this absolute silence that Mark ends his Gospel."[4] So, it is with this narratively unsatisfying ending we must contend.

But, this ending of Mark may offer more than just a conundrum to be solved. The Gospel of Mark as a whole, and the ending in particular, acknowledge the messy chaos of the world. The shortest ending of Mark offers scholars an expression of traumatic experience and a biblical resource with which to think about post-traumatic preaching. The construction and content of this traumatically-marked resurrection narrative in Mark offers preachers a model for preaching eschatological hope in a way that does not overlook or discount the pain or loss or destructive reality of trauma. Or, as Maia Kotrosits and Hal Taussig offer in their text, *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark Amidst Loss and Trauma*, the Gospel of Mark suggests that "giving meaning to

[3] While there is little scholarly debate among textual critics today that the most original ending we have for Mark's gospel are verses 1–8, the Christian community in the second century attempted to "fix" the end of Mark's gospels with alternative endings. In those additional twelve verses (including what is now called the "shorter ending" and the "longer ending"), the women end up speaking to the disciples and Jesus makes resurrection appearances, chastising his disciples for their unbelief and commissioning them for the great evangelistic work to come. These "alternative endings" are still printed in Bibles, either as footnotes or bracketed in slightly smaller type. They still linger on the page as temptations toward closure for an ending that often feels unfinished. And when not relying on the additional endings many interpreters seek to make sense of this fear-filled resurrection narrative by trying to fill the gap with other resurrection traditions from the gospels or 1 Corinthians 15. See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Exegetical Perspective: Mark 16:1–8," in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 2 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 353.

[4] Ira Brent Driggers, *Following God through Mark: Theological Tension in the Second Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 87.

various and overlapping experiences of pain, loss, and trauma does not need to mean redeeming them to a 'higher purpose.'"[5] In truth, the literary form and eschatological content of the shortest ending of the Gospel of Mark offers a biblical model for those called upon to preach in the immediate aftermath of a violent communal trauma consistent with the work of this dissertation.

The Gospel of Mark is a gospel familiar with trauma. Many scholars including Joel Marcus[6] argue that the gospel was written for a persecuted community around the time of the Jewish Wars and the destruction of the temple. If such a context is historically accurate, it is unsurprising that the author of the gospel emphasizes suffering, pain, persecution, and trauma throughout the gospel text. For instance, Mark 4, 10, and 13 directly address the persecution and suffering that one risks when choosing to follow Jesus. Pheme Perkins, reflecting a broad consensus among Markan scholars, sees the gospel as divided between two major themes, "the initial account of Jesus' divine authority in miracles and teaching and the preparation for the passion, which begins at 8:27"[7] The literary arc of the gospel points towards Jesus' suffering on the cross, with the entire second half of the gospel[8] moving Jesus towards Jerusalem and Golgotha. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 contain Jesus' own graphic predictions about his death including language of "betrayal," "suffering," "flogging," "mockery" and "rejection."[9] Moreover, the actual portrayal of Jesus' death in Mark is arguably the most stark and grim depiction within the gospels. The crucified Jesus of Mark does not gently "hand over" his spirit or bless a convicted

[5] Maia Kotrosits and H. Taussig, *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark Amidst Loss and Trauma* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 7–8.

[6] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 28–29.

[7] Pheme Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark Introduction," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 520.

[8] Some scholars, such as Lamar Williamsom Jr. and Joel Marcus suggest that this turn towards Jerusalem and focus on preparing the disciples begins at 8:22, while other scholars such as Pheme Perkins and William Placher argue it begins with Jesus' first passion prediction at 8:27.

[9] See Mark 8:27–33; 9:30–32; and 10:32–34.

thief or ask forgiveness for those crucifying him as in the Gospel of Luke. The crucified Jesus of Mark does not thoughtfully provide care for his mother or declare his moment of death peacefully as in the gospel of John. Rather, the crucified Jesus of Mark dies in utter abandonment, crying out with the psalmist's desperate plea, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" As Mary Ann Tolbert describes, "In that moment [Christ] expresses the agony of utter isolation in the cosmos, rejected by humanity and deserted by divinity. A state of such consummate loneliness and alienation is nothing short of hell itself for it probes the most dreadful fear of all, the fear of the absence of God."[10] This highly traumatic death of Jesus, marked by abandonment, isolation, and suffering leads to the trauma-marked ending of the gospel where the women, despite receiving resurrection news, run away saying "nothing" to "no one."

In this project I have suggested an emergency homiletic appropriate to traumatized congregations in the immediate aftermath of mass violence. Utilizing the narrative theory of Paul Ricoeur alongside the study of trauma theory and theology, I argue that, in the hours, days, and weeks after a traumatic incident, the preacher may best contribute to eventual healing by acknowledging and honoring the discordant nature of post-traumatic existence.

I define trauma, in short, as an internal blow or wounding of the mind that occurs when an experience cannot be fully understood in the moment or assimilated into pre-conceived meaning-making frameworks. The experience of trauma leads to both individual and communal narrative fracture, marked by a loss of temporality and narrative coherence. In terms of temporal impact, the traumatic experience becomes ever-present and timeless, continually invading and disrupting the present. This "eternal present" of trauma breaks apart the progression and

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[10] Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 287.

interrelationship of past, present, and future. No longer does the plot of an individual or community's story make sense in its movement through time. Likewise, when coherence is lost,[11] the personal and communal narratives no longer work together in a logical and meaningful way. The narrative becomes fractured and no longer make sense as a cohesive whole. This fractured story no longer functions to help people makes sense of the world in which they live. The loss of narrative temporality combined with the collapse of narrative coherence at both the personal and communal level due to the experience of trauma combines to form the experience I call *narrative fracture.* As a consequence of this narrative fracture, the individual and community begin to lose trust in the structures and/or metaphysical realities upon which they depended before the trauma (e.g. government, communal organizations, God, etc.). Narrative fracture also leads to anxiety over whether or not traumatized persons will ever be able to make sense of their lives or experiences in the future. With the experience of communal (or collective) narrative fracture, the community is no longer bound together by their story, which may have defined their origin and purpose. Instead, the experience of trauma risks undermining the identity and connective tissues of a community, leading to a disintegration of interrelationships.[12] It is to these kinds of fractured communities composed of fractured individuals that preacher must speak.

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[11] In chapter 2 we utilized the work of medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky. Antonovsky defines "sense of coherence" as having three distinct but related parts. First, and closely related to the cognitive, is *comprehensibility*. Comprehensibility is the experience of the world and our own movements within it making sense. A narrative is comprehensible when it makes sense in light of previous experiences of others and the world. Second, a sense of coherence has a component of *manageability*. Manageability, linked to beliefs and motivation, is the sense that we are able (and have the resources) to function in this world, even able to navigate some forces of chaos that come as part of the realities of life in this entropic world. Considered narratively, manageability is our ability to accommodate new experiences into our narrative, which allows us to act confidently in the world. Antonovsky's third component is *meaningfulness,* which he describes as the "emotional counterpart to comprehensibility." A narrative is meaningful when it matters to us and we perceive it as worthy of our attention, care, and energy. Unfortunately, the experience of trauma threatens to erode all three components of Antonovsky's sense of coherence. See Antonovsky, "The Sense of Coherence as a Determinant of Health."

[12] As sociologist Kai Erikson notes, we must "speak of traumatized communities as something distinct from assemblies of traumatized persons." Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," 185.

Given the nature of this communal and individual narrative fracture, I argue that preachers should preach in a way that names and honors the experience of trauma and narrative fracture. Such acknowledgment and even blessing of the broken reality is necessary if the preacher and community ever hope to move on to narrative repair or reconstruction. The preacher may honor the reality of traumatic narrative fracture in both the theological content of the sermon as well as the sermon form.

In regards to theological content, I have argued that preachers should preach a christologically grounded eschatology that can make space for the discordance of narrative fracture while not losing hope in the promise of God's faithfulness and ultimate reconciliation.[13] Such an eschatological theology needs to hold in tension the painful reality of the present and the promise of the Christian faith. Being christologically grounded, it does not ignore Christ's suffering on the cross, but understands suffering as not beyond God's work and ultimate redemption. Such a preached eschatological theology should not revert to secular pessimist apocalypticism (which sees the destruction of the earth as truly an end with no beginning); should not become realized historical eschatology (which sees human effort and progress as the telos of creation); and should avoid transcendent utopianism (which leads to escapist theology and a potential lack of responsibility for the troubles of this world).

Preachers who are rooted in a christologically grounded eschatology are enabled to speak honestly about both suffering and hope without collapsing one into the other. The two need to be held in tension if a preacher is to be faithful to the eschatological reality of God's coming new creation and redemptive work in the midst of the suffering of history. The temptation may be to cling to one or the other—to preach *either* the "now already" of immediate redemption or the

[13] This eschatological theology is developed in the larger project in conversation with Moltmann, *The Coming of God*; Moltmann, *The Crucified God*.

"not yet" of future redemption that leaves room for suffering. In the immediate aftermath of violent trauma, marked by deep suffering, confusion, and grief, the temptation may be for preachers to only offer a message of hope. This risks utopian escapism. A sermon that preaches only of God's healing and redemptive work here and now may actually be received as inauthentic to the listeners' experience. At best, such theology appears as a quick fix or theological bandage to simply cover the gaping wound of suffering. At worst, such theology could provide a damaging narrative that convinces the listener that their experience of forsakenness and brokenness is beyond the work or presence of God. On the reverse side, a sermon that offers only the reality of suffering without pointing towards the eschatological promises of God with us, is inauthentic to the Christian story and nature of God. While the narrative fracture and suffering brought on by a traumatic experience needs to be named, honored, and recognized, such brokenness can only be moved towards healing in the light of the resurrection and final consummation of creation. Preaching in the wake of trauma needs to find a way, in content, to honor and navigate that necessary tension between suffering and hope.

The shortest ending of Mark offers a model for this eschatological theology that is sufficiently hopeful while still fully acknowledging the reality of fear, suffering, and trauma. First, the message of the young man dressed in white holds the tension between future hope and present experience. The messenger acknowledges the traumatic reality: "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who *was* crucified" (Mark 16:6a). But, the messenger also announces the good news and points them on toward a future encounter in Galilee: "He has been raised; he is not here…But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you" (Mark 16:6b-7). Without an immediate resurrection appearance, the women who have encountered this messenger robed in white are not required to

move beyond their fear into instant joy. There is both physical and chronological space created between the trauma they have experienced watching from afar as Jesus was crucified, crying out in utter abandonment, and the future hope of encounter with the resurrected Christ. While they are given instructions to tell Peter and the other disciples, they are invited to journey on, as they are, trusting that the resurrected Jesus is coming towards them and will meet them at a later time in Galilee. There is also eschatological space created. As Beverly Roberts Gaventa writes, "The final words of the young man [in the tomb]…remain to be fulfilled…Only God's faithfulness will complete this story, and the God who has split open the heavens at Jesus' baptism (1:10) and torn the curtain of the temple at Jesus' death (15:38) 'will be put off neither by our failures, nor infidelity, nor by our most sophisticated interpretive schemes.'"[14] No matter the traumatic reality the women were still reliving, no matter the women's silence or the disciple's incompetence, the message of the man in white reveals Christ's resurrection promise to meet them ahead in Galilee.

Second, the messenger's good news of Christ's resurrection juxtaposed with the women's silence models the eschatological tension that both creates space for the reality of suffering and fear *and* offers the hope of redemption and reconciliation. Andrew T. Lincoln argues that, "the ending of Mark can be appreciated for the closure it provides and the response it was meant to evoke *only* if both verses 7 and 8 are stressed equally and the juxtaposition between them is allowed its full force."[15] Verse 8 embodies the failure and the disappointment of the women's silence in the face of fear while verse 7 contains the promise of resurrection and future hope. Don Juel furthers Lincoln's suggestions by arguing that this juxtaposition of verses 7 and 8 leaves readers in a remarkable tension between a satisfying and an

[14] Gaventa, "Mark 16:1–8," 357. Gaventa quotes Juel, *A Master of Surprise*, 121.
[15] Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 2 (July 1, 1989): 283.

unsatisfying ending. The satisfying ending of verse 7 is encapsulated, Juel argues, in the phrase "as he told you."[16] Thus far in the Markan narrative, Jesus has kept promises and so this promise to meet the women and disciples ahead in Galilee seems reliable. As Juel writes, "The announcement from the empty tomb that Jesus has been raised—as he said he would be—thus opens a gateway to the future…there is a reason to recount Jesus' story as good news because the reader can believe what Jesus 'told you.'"[17] The good news is one of promise—that Jesus will meet both us as readers and the disciples ahead and is, indeed, alive. However, verse 8 offers an unsatisfying ending marked by disappointment where the women hear the promise from the messenger and, instead, fail to follow through and flee in fear just like their male counterparts before the crucifixion. As Juel remarks, "There is a good reason to believe that Jesus' resurrection will mark the transition from one time to another. Yet, in the narrative world at least, that is not to be."[18] It is this tension between the promise and failure, the satisfying and unsatisfying ending which resonates with the kind of preaching clergy may offer in the immediate aftermath of violent trauma. There is promise that Jesus waits for us and is even coming towards us in the resurrected form, but there is also the reality of traumatic experience and human failure. This is the tension in which preachers should work as they honor the reality of suffering, pain, and grief, while at the same time making space for God's reconciling hope and presence to move toward their traumatized community.

I have argued that preachers may honor personal and communal narrative fracture not only in the content of their sermons but also through utilizing narratively fractured sermon

[16] Juel, *A Master of Surprise*, 115.
[17] Juel, 115.
[18] Juel, 115.

forms. I suggested three narratively fractured forms, taken from the study of traumatic memoirs: the Snapshot form, the Thematic form, and the Frayed Edges form. Just as in the experience of narrative fracture due to trauma is marked by a loss of temporality and coherence, I argue that narratively fractured sermon forms must sacrifice temporality, coherence, or both. Due to the experience of narrative fracture, the preacher may honor such fracture in their own preaching, not seeking to develop a cohesive narrative arc or tell complete or redemptive stories. Instead, preachers should be willing to offer sermons that mirror the fragmentary and unresolved structural character of their traumatic experience. In so doing, the preacher has the opportunity to model the eschatological tension of suffering and hope in sermon form as well as honor and bless the fragments of traumatic experience towards the eventual hope of narrative healing.

The original ending of Mark may also serve as a model for a form that sermons might take when preaching in the immediate aftermath of trauma. As discussed earlier, the ending of Mark is notably severe, and seems to end without reaching a conclusion that resolves the arc of the narrative. Instead of the expected response that the women might run and tell the disciples the good news they say nothing (ouden) to no one (oudeni). As if to emphasize the unfinished nature of the ending of this gospel narrative, the Greek text is constructed as to conclude with a conjunction: "they were afraid, indeed" (ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ). The desire to somehow "fix" the ending of Mark's gospel or at least find a way to smooth out the unfinished edges is natural to human nature. In the face of real life, which is rarely tidy and often does not include "happy" much less "clean-cut" endings, literary critic Frank Kermode argues that people like their art and their literature to sacrifice truth for order, to give meaning and hope through tidy (even if unrealistic) endings.[19] When Mark does not end with Jesus' clear victory in

[19] Juel, 117.

resurrection appearances, when the women hear the good news but flee the tomb, silent and afraid, the ending feels disappointing and unfinished. However, Kermode is willing to stick by Mark's shortest ending, suggesting that perhaps there "are no satisfying endings—in Mark or in life."[20] Such an ending honors not only the nature of existence but also the traumatic event that has just occurred—the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus—as well as the experience of trauma the women now carry with them. As Kotrostits and Taussig suggest, "Mark insists on an incomplete and ongoing ending, where pain, recovery, the future, and failure are connected. It implicitly invites the reader to see where these dynamics are at work in her or his own experience and how Mark's picture of powerful and contradictory elements within the story resist simplistic responses to trauma."[21]

The shortest ending of Mark's gospel offers preachers a model for the kinds of forms their sermons may take—forms that do not seek clean closure or simple resolutions. Such narratively fractured preaching forms, through a loss of temporality and an unwillingness to sacrifice truth for narrative coherence and order, may honor the fractured experience of the congregation while still retaining space for God's presence and promise to be made known. Mark's shortest ending, with an uncertain future and a hanging conjunction, launches the reader (or listener) into a future beyond the ending. It invites readers to journey in the tension between pain and hope.

Post-traumatic sermons, like the shortest ending of the Gospel of Mark, must not offer clean endings and easy solutions. Instead, such preaching, in content and form, should honor the fractured and broken reality of historical existence while opening the way for a future in which God's promises for reconciliation and healing, begun on the cross, will come to fruition, indeed.

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[20] Frank Kermode quoted in Juel, 112.
[21] Kotrosits and Taussig, *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark*, 20.

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