

TRAUMA, EUCHARIST, AND THE CROSS:
COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IN BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

by

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ABSTRACT

“Trauma, Eucharist, and the Cross: Communion with Christ in Body, Soul, and Spirit”

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The traumatic Crucifixion of Christ is a prominent feature of Gospel narratives and is graphically recalled in the Eucharist. Yet for some trauma survivors, it may be an intolerable trauma trigger. How then might such people participate in communion with Christ by partaking of his body and blood? How might the Church celebrate the Eucharist in a trauma-informed manner? The ways the Eucharist may or may not be helpful for traumatized persons (or groups of people) is best addressed by the integration of theology and psychological traumatology. Accordingly, this thesis proposes, first, that *sacramental participation* in the suffering and death of Christ (not to be confused with the legitimization of trauma or re-traumatization) unites the communicant with Christ, so that, second, *union with Christ* offers the prospect of reintegration and healing via further identification with and participation in Jesus’ resurrection life (both present and eschatological), in the power of the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father. Or, to reorient the dynamic of participation, Christ participates in our human trauma, suffering, and death, so that we may participate in his life and wholeness, including the reintegration of the body, soul, and spirit. Communion, in other words, both promises and enacts healing participation in Jesus’ death and new life: it is, precisely, *communion* with

Christ in the fullness of his life. The fundamental claims of this dissertation are that we need God and that God saves and sustains us in and through Christ.

Therefore, this dissertation argues that within the incarnate life and ministry of Christ, the Cross is the crucial site at which God in Christ integratively processes the trauma of sin and death, inviting humanity to the healing, wholeness, and reintegration of salvation in Jesus Christ. Through trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist as the invitatory encounter with his crucified and risen body, the Church communes with/in Christ and participates in his life and ministry, both receiving and sharing the saving life of Christ, which includes recovery from the past, sustenance in the present, and hope for the future.

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ACW	Burghardt, Walter J., et al., eds. <i>Ancient Christian Writers</i> . 66 vols. Newman: Westminster, MD. Reprint, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1946–1963.
ANF	Roberts, Alexander, and James Donaldson, eds. <i>Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i> . 10 vols. New York: Christian Literature, 1885–1887. Reprint, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994.
APT	Payton, James R., Jr., ed. <i>A Patristic Treasury: Early Church Wisdom for Today</i> . Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith, 2013.
BZNTW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CAPS	Christian Association for Psychological Studies
Conf.	Augustine of Hippo. <i>Confessionum libri XIII</i> . Ca. 397–400.
DCH	Clines, David J. A., ed. <i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . 9 vols. Revised ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2019.
Epid.	Irenaeus of Lyons. <i>Epideixis tou apostolikou kērygmatos</i> . Ca. 189.
Haer.	Irenaeus of Lyons. <i>Adversus haereses</i> . Ca. 182–188.
ICF	Payton, James R., Jr. <i>Irenaeus on the Christian Faith: A Condensation of Against Heresies</i> . Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.
Ign. Eph.	Ignatius of Antioch. <i>To the Ephesians</i> . Ca. 107–110.
IVP	InterVarsity Press
JPTSupp	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i> Supplement
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, et al. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
Or. Bas.	Gregory of Nazianzus. <i>Oratio in laudem Basilii</i> .
NICABM	National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament

<i>NPNF</i> ²	Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace, eds. <i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> . 14 vols. Series 2. New York: Christian Literature, 1890–1900. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SVS	St Vladimir’s Seminary
WJK	Westminster John Knox

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TRAUMA AND HEALING IN BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT: AN INTRODUCTION

“Survival is insufficient.”
—Emily St. John Mandel¹

“To live is Christ. To die is gain.”
—Phil 1:21 (my translation)

Broken Eucharists and Trauma: A Personal Introduction

I grew up in a volatile, emotionally, verbally, and at times physically abusive household. My father, an Anglican priest, and my homemaker mother struggled financially. Financial insecurity cast a threatening shadow over daily life. Clashes of argument and explosions of desperate rage were common.

It is a virtual certainty that my father is on the autism spectrum (undiagnosed and unaware) and that my mother, having suffered various abuses throughout her life, did not realize how deep distrust and fear poisoned her thoughts and tainted her world with a sickly hue.²

My parents left the Anglican church of Canada when I was a teenager for reasons not entirely clear to me, though it had something to do with their engagement with the charismatic revival happening in Toronto in the mid-1990s (the “Toronto Blessing” at the church formerly called Toronto Airport Vineyard, now Catch The Fire). I have been a full-time member turned pastoral leader in that organization for the last twenty years, and my wife and I currently help

¹ Mandel, *Station Eleven*, 119. In interviews, Mandel says that she borrowed this phrase from a Star Trek episode (*Star Trek: Voyager*, S6:E2, “Survival Instinct,” 1999).

² Cf. *Hamlet* III.i.58–90.

lead an affiliated church in Kitchener, Ontario.³ But I should caution that *charismatic* may not be the best description of my own spirituality and theology since I am far more likely to be found in silence or contemplative prayer than what is typically imagined as demonstrative charismatic spirituality and worship.

Spiritual disciplines and encounters with the presence of God have literally kept me alive. In brief, it is not melodramatic in the least to say that if not for the voice and presence of the Lord, addiction and suicide would have been the defining, terminal features of my life. Thanks be to the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, the communion of the Holy Spirit, and the love of the Father that I am able to write a different story today.

My history with the Eucharist is complicated. Growing up in the Anglican church, I was baptized an infant and well-steeped in liturgical worship, including weekly Communion. Having inside access to the priestly paraphernalia and lifestyle gave me a rather common place perspective on the sacramental life of the Church. My father's miniature suitcase of Communion vessels and elements—the celebrant's sacraments, complete with wafers, Holy water, and anointing oil—was the sort of professional briefcase to which I was accustomed. Clerical garb—robes, stoles, collars, and so forth—were the usual uniforms that girded the journey out into the workplace and world. As a “man of the cloth,” it was all in a day's work for my father, and I took that to heart.

One day, when I was about 5 or 6 years old, I asked my father about Communion. Everybody in the church visited the altar weekly to receive wafers and wine, even the elderly folks—a disproportionately large part of the demographic—who had to take literal pains to reach

³ I do not, however, claim to represent the official theological positions of Catch The Fire.

the wooden boundary. I wanted to do that too, minus the back, neck, and knee pain. My father took my statement seriously—perhaps *too* seriously. He probably said something encouraging to begin with, but the only part of what he said that I remember was that once I reviewed some sort of catechismal booklet, then I might be able to participate.

It may seem childish and silly, but I objected in the extreme. Some deep part of me utterly rejected the notion of needing to study booklets in order to receive a bite of wafer “bread” and a sip of aged grape juice. Since when did you need to read an instruction book to share a meal with your family? And as I had been watching this happen at least once a week for my entire life, I suppose I thought that I understood enough about the ritual’s relation to Jesus to be able to honestly engage in adequately-informed participation. After all, the Liturgy does spell it out pretty well. Perhaps even more so, I figured (in the way children do) that as a member of my family and the church, this was something that was simply natural for me to be included in, like daily breakfast or the distribution of a birthday cake. In our home, we celebrated Baptism days with birthday cakes too.

My father, most likely in the sincere attempt to do his priestly and parental job properly, was insistent that I do some sort of study before participating in the Eucharist. I was equally insistent in my objection. Consequently, I never did participate in the Eucharist as a child. Not once. Sometimes I made my way down to the railing with the rest and received a verbal Aaronic blessing, but not the very body and blood of Christ. Other times, perhaps after a preservice morning full of paternal rage, I would abstain from all forms of involvement, staging silent protest in the pew, arms folded, fists clenched, jaw set, and gaze fixed, hot tears of pain and anger ready to boil over any moment. Sometimes I just left, wandering the church basement with

an aching mixture of bitter longing and resentment. These were the broken Eucharists of my childhood.

Thankfully, I was able to eventually make my way to the altar, kneel, and receive the gifts of God for the people of God from none other than my father's own hand. I never did read that booklet, though.

Yet somehow, throughout my childhood, I was sustained. Not only in body, but in soul and spirit. Though I struggled and hurt, somehow I kept living. I firmly believe that is because it is the Person of Christ, not merely the institutional rituals of the Church, who gives and sustains life since “in Christ, all things consist” (Col 1:17), and “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).⁴

Years later, while working on this doctoral degree, I revisited the memory of being denied free access to the Eucharist in sessions with my psychotherapist. We had been doing a couple of years of Internal Family Systems (IFS)-integrated, attachment-focused Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and other therapeutic modes to deal with some of the many episodes contributing to the complex posttraumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) that constantly ran in the background—and too often centre stage—of my life. I will keep the details of the session confidential, but suffice it to say that it helped deepen my conviction that the invitation to the Communion table remains radically open: a reflection of the arms of the Father, the heart of the Son, and the voice of the Spirit.

⁴ Scripture quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted. Col 1:17, my translation.

Keeping in mind that humour is often an adaptive coping mechanism, it is pretty funny that I planned to start my PhD once all of our three children were in school full-time, which happened to be September 2020—the first fall season of COVID-19.

It wasn't long before we had all three children in the house all day, attempting to do heroically hosted yet woefully inadequate online classes. It was a living nightmare. For me, a person whose sensory sensitivities and trauma triggers include yelling and crying in the house, grinding out doctoral coursework was nothing short of excruciating. I spent significant amounts of time completely incapacitated by anxiety, creating the perfect vortex of stimulus- and deficit-induced mental/emotional distress.

Somehow, we all got through that long, dark, lonely season, though I suspect the repercussions have not yet been fully realized and processed—for my family and others.

In any case, for me, trauma-informed theology and the Eucharist are not merely academic interests, theoretical speculations, or intellectual arguments. They are aspects of my life that have formed and reformed me and my relationship with God, myself, and others. They involve experiences that have cut deep and healed slowly along with painstaking recovery on an ongoing basis. Probably there are more wounds to uncover and heal—I suspect at least a lifetime's worth—but that is precisely why I advocate frequent, indeed, daily, participation in the eucharistic communion of Christ's salvific and sustaining body and blood. For without constant sustenance, life ebbs away and the mortal wounds fester and spread. But with the life of Christ in body, soul, and spirit, the wounds heal and, while they do not disappear, neither do they define me, and I trust they will be transformed into marks that testify to my life in Christ, crucified and risen. And I pray the same for my readers.

Trauma and the Life and Ministry of the Church

The ways the Eucharist may or may not be helpful for traumatized persons (or groups of people) is best addressed by the integration of theology and psychology, especially psychological traumatology.⁵ This approach considers Jesus' death and Resurrection not in forensic, legal terms but as a relational invitation to enter into communion with God in union with Christ and thereby participate in his life and ministry, including the Cross. This perspective emphasizes the (re)integration of the human body, soul, and spirit in relation to God, self, and others. In this view, the soul is comprised of the mind, will, and emotions (or reason/cognition, conviction/volition, and feelings/affect); that is, those parts of the human that generally fall into the category of the psychological.⁶ This perspective also highlights relational reconciliation (as the crux and telos of atonement); and suggests trauma-informed (or trauma-sensitive)⁷ ways to celebrate the Eucharist that promote healing and unity within the Body of Christ as we are drawn into union with the life and love of the Trinity. Accordingly, this thesis proposes, first, that *sacramental participation* in the death of Christ (not to be confused with the legitimization of trauma or re-traumatization) unites the communicant with Christ,⁸ so that, second, *union with Christ* offers the prospect of reintegration and healing via further participation in Jesus' resurrection life (both present and eschatological), in the power of the Holy Spirit according to

⁵ Portions of this section are drawn from Boerger, "Original Wound," 307–21.

⁶ Cf. Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness*, 5–6. See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

⁷ In the theological literature, there is no rigid, technical distinction between trauma-*informed* and trauma-*sensitive* theology. It seems to be considered generally self-evident that being properly trauma-informed results in being naturally trauma-sensitive, while being properly trauma-sensitive requires one to be trauma-informed to some extent. While *information* emphasizes theoretical knowledge and *sensitivity* emphasizes practical application, the two are inherently related. The relationship is much like Purves's argument regarding the practical nature of all theology discussed below. See Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xxiv. Cf. Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*.

⁸ My definition of *sacramental participation* is described and discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

the will of the Father. Or, to reorient the dynamic of participation, Christ participates in our human trauma, suffering, and death, so that we may participate in his life and wholeness. Communion, in other words, both promises and enacts healing participation in Jesus' death and new life: it is, precisely, *communion* with Christ in the fullness of his life.

Therefore, this dissertation argues that within the incarnate life and ministry of Christ, the Cross is the crucial site at which God in Christ integratively processes the trauma of sin and death, inviting humanity to the healing, wholeness, and reintegration of salvation in Jesus Christ. Through trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist as the invitational encounter with his crucified and risen body, the Church communes with/in Christ⁹ and participates in his life and ministry, both receiving and sharing the saving life of Christ, which includes recovery from the past, sustenance in the present, and hope for the future.

Considering the condition of sin as the *original traumatic wound* that Christ's incarnate life, death, and Resurrection address,¹⁰ the celebration of the Eucharist in the Church today must appropriately integrate psychological understandings of trauma (and other aspects of human psychology) in order for congregants to participate properly in the cruciform life and ministry of Christ, which brings healing, hope, and resurrection life to humanity. By understanding sin and salvation from a trauma-informed perspective, it becomes more clear how the Church participates in the cruciform suffering and death, the resurrection life, and the eternal hope of

⁹ The phrase *with/in Christ* is used frequently, referring to union with Christ, which is a mystery that does not erase personal identity yet is a real state of union and communion with Christ, ourselves, and others (in various ways).

¹⁰ While the Incarnation is not reducible to a divine response to sin, the traumatic condition of sin in the cosmos must be recognized as the context into which Christ enters and ministers divine love and healing. Chapter 4 will discuss sin and salvation in Christ at length. Portions of this section and the next are drawn from Boerger, "Original Wound," 307–21.

Christ—particularly through the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, a trauma-informed Christoform paradigm (or gospel) of death and resurrection provides the participatory image for (or invitation to) the transformation of suffering, the inspiration of hope, and healing in communion with Christ and others through the power of the Spirit according to the will of the Father.

Speaking of Trauma Faithfully

Trauma has been a universal human experience for millennia, yet modern theology, psychology, neuroscience, social sciences, arts, and other disciplines have only recently begun to understand more clearly the damage trauma causes to human bodies, souls, and spirits. This is not entirely surprising since a defining characteristic of trauma is that it is not merely stressful but overwhelming;¹¹ it is at the extreme end of the stress-trauma continuum, ranging from everyday hassles to unimaginable horrors.¹² Psychological traumatology is a relatively new field that explores many of the paradoxical elements of trauma, including that of the experience itself and its persistence, which is in part due to the struggle of the body and mind to process the experience into consciousness.¹³ Psychiatrist and leading trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk says trauma is “unbearable and intolerable,”¹⁴ it is “an inescapably stressful event that overwhelms people’s coping mechanisms.”¹⁵ Similarly, theologian Shelly Rambo says, “trauma is an

¹¹ See Resick, *Stress and Trauma*; cf. Mastnak and Resick, “Trauma,” 1002.

¹² McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 235. This also means that fundamental aspects of recovery and healing from trauma apply to the healing of lesser wounds as well.

¹³ See Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 3–12, 151–57; Warner et al., eds., *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*, 1.

¹⁴ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 1 (cf. 66, 197, 337).

¹⁵ van der Kolk et al., eds., *Traumatic Stress*, 279.

unknowing, unclaimed, unassimilable, unsayable experience.”¹⁶ Or, as Hilary Ison describes it, trauma is “that which overwhelms our capacity to cope with our experience and which breaks connections—to ourselves, to others, to resources, to our frames of reference.”¹⁷ In other words, trauma is an event (or events) that was so overwhelming it was never fully processed and remains in both mind and body: trauma is a paradoxically unbearable yet unshakeable burden and/or gap.¹⁸

At the same time, just as all humans are wounded and live with the consequences—whether healed or hurting, scarred or bleeding—the ancient meaning of the Greek word τραῦμα as a wound, hurt, or damage remains at the core of our current conception.¹⁹ Traumatic events are actually common.²⁰ As Judith Herman says, “traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life.”²¹ Likewise, the meanings of the ancient Greek word θεραπεία—healing, service, care, or cure—remain at the root of one of the main ways humans deal with trauma today: therapy.²² In fact,

¹⁶ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 4.

¹⁷ Ison, “Embodied and Systemic Approach,” 47; cf. Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 28–29.

¹⁸ See Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 3–12, 151–57; van der Kolk, “Body Keeps the Score,” 214–41; van der Kolk and van der Hart, “The Intrusive Past,” 158–82; Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*.

¹⁹ See LSJ; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 3. In examining the etymology of the word *trauma*, Papadopoulos (“Traumatizing Discourse of Trauma and Moral Injury,” 1) claims that the “metaphorical meaning of trauma in relation to psychological rather than somatic wounds is as old as the word itself.” However, in doing so he seems to misunderstand the physiological nature of psychological trauma recognized by modern traumatology, especially neurobiology: the brain is literally damaged not merely metaphorically harmed. Noting the current multidisciplinary engagement of trauma, Boynton and Capretto (eds., *Trauma and Transcendence*, 1) feel that “the very idea of trauma is becoming increasingly unclear.”

²⁰ See Alaggia and Vine, eds., *Cruel but not Unusual*; van der Kolk et al. eds., *Traumatic Stress*; cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*.

²¹ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

²² van der Kolk (*Body Keeps the Score*, 332–48, here 334) discusses ancient Greek tragedies as cultural/communal ways of processing trauma, perhaps as a form of “ritual reintegration,” noting the benefits of an embodied experience in modern theatre as part of trauma recovery as well. For further discussion of trauma, including moral injury, in relation to ancient Greek literature, see McCarthy, “Healing the Body of Christ,” 38–45; Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*; *Odysseus in America*.

McRay et al. suggest *psychopathology* could be called the *study of soul suffering*.²³ And since some of the most damaging effects of trauma have been called “soul murder,”²⁴ *psychotherapy* could be described as *soul healing* or *soul care*.²⁵

Before the advent of modern psychotherapeutic clinics and psychiatric care, ancient pastors were described as physicians of the soul.²⁶ Yet on their own neither pastors, psychologists, medical experts, nor others are able to restore the human body, soul, and spirit to their fully integrated state of abundant life. We must, as always, rely on Christ, “the physician of our being,” who has the power to heal our wounds and bring life from death.²⁷ Indeed, Ignatius of Antioch refers to Christ’s broken body received in the Eucharist as the “medicine of immortality.”²⁸ So while the presence of trauma and the necessity of healing have been recognized for thousands of years, humans are still attempting to come to grips with the issues of trauma and how to begin to prevent, avoid, cope with, and heal them, including within and through the life and ministry of the Church in Christ.

Therefore, sustained attention to trauma, to wounds and their aftereffects, remains imperative for the well-being of humanity.²⁹ This is just as true for pastors and church communities who focus on spiritual well-being as it is for psychotherapeutic and medical

²³ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 4.

²⁴ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 136.

²⁵ Put differently, humans have been speaking about trauma and healing to the best of their ability for thousands of years, and the modern English terminology with which we now do so is directly traceable to ancient Greek terminology: we are now saying many of the same things albeit in new, more sophisticated ways.

²⁶ E.g., Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. Bas.* 2.16–28. For summary and analysis, see Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 9–32; cf. O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 8. Regarding the influence of early Christianity on health care in the ancient world, see Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity*; Ferngren, *Medicine and Religion*; Rhee, *Illness, Pain, and Health Care in Early Christianity*.

²⁷ Ign. *Eph.* 7:2; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, “Letter 17,” (*NPNF*² 5:539); *Lord’s Prayer*, Sermon 4 (*APT* 285).

²⁸ In Greek, φάρμακον ἀθανασίας. Ign. *Eph.* 20 (*ANF* 1:58).

²⁹ Cf. Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 1–2.

professionals who focus on the mind, brain, and body.³⁰ The task of the Church is to offer belonging, wholeness, and healing life *in Christ* to the world.³¹ Vital to this task is the cohesive integration of various spheres of human existence, expertise, and relationships—academic theology, medical sciences, psychotherapy, pastoral leadership and care, Christian fellowship and spirituality, and so on. Therefore, trauma-informed theology is vital to the life and ministry of the Church today, including the celebration of the Eucharist, which is a graphic celebration of the traumatic Crucifixion of Christ.

Abstract theories and intellectual concepts are not well-suited to directly addressing shattered psyches and broken relationships, whether in the immediate aftermath of trauma or over a lifespan. Instead, the applied discipline of pastoral (or practical) theology (here, ministry studies) is best suited to the task of dealing with human experiences—especially traumatic experiences—in relation to God, self, others, and creation.³² As Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330–395) asserts, “The manner of our salvation owes its efficacy less to instruction by teaching than to what He who entered into fellowship with humankind actually did.”³³ And Reformed pastoral theologian Andrew Purves observes that “all theology, all knowledge of God, is inherently a practical theology or a practical and soteriological knowledge, by virtue of the subject matter: God with us and for us in, through, and as Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.”³⁴ The

³⁰ See the discussion of a domain-based approach to integration in the methodology in Chapter 3.

³¹ Cf. Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 43–77; Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*.

³² Cf. Warner et al., eds., *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*, 11–12.

³³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* §35 (APT 272). Elsewhere (*Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, Sermon 7 [APT 293]), Gregory counsels silence concerning God’s *essence* (οὐσία), but speech concerning his *operation/activity* (ἐνέργεια).

³⁴ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xxiv. He goes on to describe the limited yet real relational nature of our knowledge of God and the fundamental importance of the revelation of God through and in Jesus Christ: theology is “knowledge of God’s action grounded in God’s being” such that “the doctrine of the Trinity is the basis for Christian practical theology” (xxv). Hence, theology is “a personal knowing of God” (xxvi).

central and enduring way followers of Christ have practiced theology in the context of communal worship is the Lord's Supper, a simple yet profound act of eating and worshipping together. Thus, the Eucharist is not a ritual abstraction nor a token representation, but a real, practical operation of the saving life of Christ in which we participate. We encounter the life of Christ in his broken body and shed blood through the power of the Holy Spirit, particularly as we participate in a shared meal that sustains us in the life of Christ and unites us with God and others as well as ourselves. Indeed, Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann asserts that liturgical theology "must proceed not from abstract, purely intellectual schemata . . . but from the services themselves"—that is, from the context of worship.³⁵

Therefore, engaging the paradoxes and aporia of trauma in the area of sacramental theology is particularly appropriate because the sacraments are irreducible mysteries yet not irreconcilably obscure since they are operationally efficacious.³⁶ Partaking of and participating in the broken body and shed blood of Christ in the Eucharist is at once both irreducibly mysterious, transcendent, and inexplicable *and* a non-obscure, intelligible, meaningful, and practical encounter with God, self, others, and creation.³⁷ In short, we understand that the sacraments are

³⁵ Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 14; cf. *Liturgy and Tradition*, esp. 11–13, 38–41, 49–68. For theology to be faithful to Christ, the inseparable integration of theology and spirituality, worship and reflection, is a fundamental claim and methodological assertion of early church theology. Cf. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 10. This approach is reflected in the work of some modern theologians and biblical scholars. For example, theologian Volf (*Free of Charge*, 236) says, "Spirituality that's not theological will grope in the darkness, and theology that's not spiritual will be emptied of its most important content." And biblical scholar Gorman (*Cruciformity*, 370) says that "abstracting his [Paul's] thought or theology from [his spiritual] experience is fraught with problems. Paul did not primarily *think* about cruciformity, he *lived* it."

³⁶ An earlier version of this paragraph will be published in the Secularism and the Pursuit of Transcendence conference proceedings, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, April 27, 2023. Larson-Miller (*Sacramentality Renewed*, x–xii) notes that sacramental and liturgical theology (academically and pastorally) are interdisciplinary by nature, specifically naming psychology among other fields and disciplines.

³⁷ The multidisciplinary works in *Trauma and Transcendence*, edited by Boynton and Capretto (here, 2), specifically aim "to draw attention to the increasing challenge of deciding whether trauma's transcendent, evental, or unassimilable quality is being wielded as a defense of traumatic experience against reductionism, or whether it is

good for us and, indeed, essential to the ongoing life and ministry of the Church, yet to some significant extent they remain mysterious encounters with the transcendent God. Accordingly, approaching the Eucharist as participatory communion with God, self, and others in light of psychological traumatology recognizes that a crucial point of encounter with Christ occurs at the Cross, the pivotal point at which our suffering—traumatic or otherwise—is shared by, united with, and transformed by God.

Outline and Structure

Beginning with a summary of the main argument of the dissertation, the focus of Chapters 4 and 5 is to describe *why* the Cross is necessary and *what* the Cross does in ways that are faithful to Christ and, therefore, neither legitimize nor perpetuate harmful suffering, trauma, and abuse. Chapter 6 continues this discussion of the fundamental assertion that Christ *is* communion (not currency or commodity) in relation to the debated understandings of sacrifice and sacraments, which are not rightly understood apart from one another. Rather than theoretically speculating on or fully explaining *how* the Crucifixion of Christ overcomes death and transformatively processes trauma, this dissertation is aimed at describing the practical outworking of the Cross in the ongoing celebration of the Eucharist in an affirmative manner. Contributing to the work of practical theology, Chapters 4–6 build to discussion of trauma-informed, trauma-sensitive celebration of the Eucharist with a Trinitarian basis and Christological emphasis in Chapter 7. In practical application, a crucial aspect of *how* we engage the recapitulatory processing of trauma in Christ is in and through celebration of the Eucharist (not to the exclusion of clinical

promulgated as a form of obscurantism.” In part, this dissertation responds to this challenge from a trauma-informed sacramental theological perspective.

psychotherapy or other treatments), where we partake of and participate in his saving and sustaining body and blood: by entering into his brokenness—or, perhaps more accurately, by him entering into ours—we are made whole. Chapter 8 continues the discussion of the ongoing nature of the Eucharist and trauma recovery, which has a hopeful eschatological horizon as we anticipate the Return of Christ and resurrection life in and through Christ as the restoration of justice by God.³⁸

In more detail, Chapter 1 introduces and reviews psychological literature regarding trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It thereby presents an accessible yet expert-informed understanding of trauma that can interact with, inform, and be informed by theological inquiry. The demographics, key characteristics, proposed etiologies, and common treatments of trauma are reviewed. This chapter also begins to suggest why a proper psychological and not merely heuristic or metaphorical understanding and application of traumatology is significant for theology and the life and ministry of the Church.

Chapter 2 reviews theological works that incorporate psychological traumatology with attention to common characteristics and aims, differences and diversities, contexts and areas of focus, and trauma in relation to the Eucharist. Although there is rigorous research behind these works, some render psychological trauma metaphorical, apply it as an oversimplified heuristic device, or are simply outdated. Key differences and diversities in the literature include definitions of trauma (which are linked to understandings of sin and salvation), the extent of trauma in human experience, and varied stances regarding the Cross of Christ. This chapter

³⁸ Here and throughout, the phrase *in and through Christ* conveys the subtle nuance between ontological union (*in*) and functional empowerment (*through*) as something Christ makes possible or is the means of, which enables human agential participation. See the Conclusion for further summative discussion.

reviews these theological perspectives and establishes the need for and contribution of this dissertation.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology that will be employed in this dissertation; namely, a practical, constructive method that also takes a domain-based, multidimensional, relational, and personal approach to integrating (practical/pastoral) theology and psychological traumatology. This chapter also reviews various typologies and systems of integrating theology and psychological traumatology, analyzing, synthesizing, and constructively building on key frameworks and approaches.

It is a fundamental assertion of this dissertation that the Cross of Christ is necessary—not for God’s sake, but for the sake of humanity, which includes addressing sin, trauma, and death. In order to understand how the broken body and shed blood of Christ are active in God’s healing love and communion, a clear understanding (or diagnosis) of the traumatic wound, the terminal disease, and the enslaving condition of sin is helpful. Therefore, while various conceptions of “original sin” have dominated Western hamartiologies and soteriologies since Augustine coined the term (ca. 397–400), Chapter 4 considers what was previously said by Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–202) regarding human beings, sin, and salvation. While humans are made in God’s image and intended to grow into his likeness, sin imposes destructive conditions upon humanity. Described by Irenaeus as slavery, sickness, and wounds, the conditions and consequences of sin may be integrated with the insights of psychological traumatology, which help describe the disintegrating effects of sin while identifying the human need for Christ. Therefore, from a trauma-informed engagement with Irenaeus’s recapitulatory theology of sin and salvation, this chapter argues that the Cross of Christ is a crucial site of the recapitulatory integrative processing

of trauma that leads to salvation: the reintegration of the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit—in Christ by the Spirit according to the will of the Father.

Since a fundamental effect of the trauma of sin is the condition of alienation from God, self, others, and creation, atonement theology (when understood as reconciliation) helps describe how God addresses these relational ruptures. In order to further underpin a faithful, trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist, Chapter 5 correlates the objective, subjective, and classic/cosmic dimensions of atonement with (1) Christ's threefold ministry as high priest, apostle/prophet, and king; (2) Christ's self-identification as the Way, the Truth, and the Life in relation to the Father (cf. John 14:6); and (3) key elements of trauma recovery: safety, integrative processing and/or (re)narration, and reconnection. Rather than presenting a novel atonement theory, this chapter innovatively integrates and synthesizes various dimensions of atonement and relates them to the life and ministry of the Church today. This chapter argues that in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father, the Church participates in the priestly confession of sin (the way of objective atonement), the embodied apostolic and prophetic expression of divine love (the truth of subjective atonement), and the royal redemptive victory over sin and death (the life of classic/cosmic atonement) for the sake of the world and to the glory of God.

Since notions of eucharistic sacrifice and the nature of sacraments have been ongoing theological debates, Chapter 6 explores Christian sacrifice according to Christ and how sacramental participation in the broken body and shed blood of Christ contributes to the healing and wholeness of salvation in Christ. This chapter argues that according to the communing relations of the Trinity, true sacrifice is self-giving love as an act of trust in God (which is not to be taken as a rationale for abuse), and that, consequently, through the sacrament of the Eucharist

the Church participates in the saving and sustaining life of Christ in both receptive and active ways. Fundamental to these arguments is the assertion that Christ is communion, not currency or commodity.

If sin is a core traumatic wound that results in conditions of brokenness and alienation, and if the essence of salvation is the restoration of communion with God, self, others, and creation, then celebration of the Eucharist should embody and enact the theological diagnosis and treatment. Therefore, Chapter 7 seeks to describe practical ways that the Eucharist may be celebrated in Christian community without (re)traumatizing participants. Rather than erasing wounds or centring worship around trauma itself, Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, remains the centre and summation of Christian worship. This chapter argues that through participation in the Eucharist, the Church is invited into the wholeness of Christ through the brokenness of his own body. Full-bodied celebration of the Eucharist is discussed as part of communal worship that may contribute to trauma-recovery (though not replacing clinical psychotherapeutic treatment). At the same time, both the Eucharist and trauma recovery remain ongoing processes. Therefore, drawing on practical frameworks for applying attachment theory, trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist necessitates accessible, responsive, and engaged church communities, not just priests and pastors. Examples of sacramental worship practices and approaches are discussed throughout. While some trauma survivors will find communal church contexts too triggering, the Church must nonetheless find ways to affirm and support access to the life of Christ for such persons.

The ongoing nature of the Eucharist also has an eschatological horizon. The eighth and final chapter considers the Christian witness of hope, which is based on the restorative justice of God, in the midst of ongoing suffering and the process of trauma recovery. In other words, this

chapter describes the hope of reintegration in Christ according to an eschatologically oriented paradigm of restorative justice. It argues that according to the good news of Jesus Christ, trauma can be transformed into a testimony to God's enduring faithfulness, power, and love. Engaging Shelly Rambo's theology of remaining regarding the wounds of Christ,³⁹ this chapter reflects on the nature of life in Christ after trauma. And based on the transformation rather than erasure of wounds in Christ, this chapter further argues that justice in Christ is the full restoration of life in resurrection form (which is another way of saying trauma is transformed into testimony as well as recognizing the importance of communal witness to and support of trauma survivors). Judith Herman's recent work on justice in relation to trauma survivors provides key frameworks and highlights truth and repair as the key features of true justice.⁴⁰ While the Christian vision of hope in Christ has an eschatological scope, the Church must contribute to trauma recovery in the world today through participation in the life and ministry of Christ. Thus, communion—in its multivalent and multidimensional nature—is an essential form of witness in a trauma-torn world.

Finally, the conclusion reiterates the key arguments of this dissertation while recognizing areas of further theological exploration and practical application. Rather than standing as a self-sufficient work of trauma-informed constructive practical theology, this dissertation is intended to sit within and speak alongside many other diverse works in the task of witnessing both trauma in the Church and life in Christ. In particular, the tension between suffering and hope, brokenness and wholeness, running throughout the dissertation is identified and situated withing

³⁹ See Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma; Resurrecting Wounds*.

⁴⁰ See Herman, *Truth and Repair*.

the preeminent self-offering of the gift of Christ, which the Body of Christ receives, shares, and participates in through celebration of the Eucharist.

CHAPTER 1

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMATOLOGY: SCIENTIFIC INSIGHTS

“You have to pay attention to the parts of your body,
because they watch more carefully than you do.” —Freya, age 6

“The body keeps the score.” —Bessel van der Kolk¹

The following review of the current scientific understanding of psychological traumatology helps lay some of the groundwork required to integrate theological and psychological discourse.² This chapter presents an accessible yet expert-informed understanding of trauma that can interact with, inform, and be informed by theological inquiry.³ The demographics, characteristics, proposed etiologies, and common treatments of trauma are reviewed. Key psychological insights will be reiterated and discussed throughout the following chapters.

Demographics

Directly or indirectly, all humans are affected by trauma. Whether or not they have personally experienced a traumatic event or developed a traumatic disorder, it is safe to say that everyone knows someone who has experienced trauma of at least one form or another and who may suffer from a traumatic disorder as a result, whether diagnosed or not. “Whether we realize it or not,” say Cockayne et al., “our churches are full of those who have experienced and are living with the

¹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*.

² Thus, this chapter mainly deals with the theoretical domain identified and discussed in Chapter 3, but it also begins to connect theory to application and practice in other domains.

³ Portions of this chapter are drawn from Boerger, “Original Wound,” 307–21.

aftereffects of horror and trauma, whether as survivors, carers, or perpetrators.”⁴ While no one is immune from trauma, not everyone who experiences trauma (particularly isolated incidents, such as a car accident) develops PTSD,⁵ but approximately 10 to 20 percent of people who do will have persistent, functionally impairing symptoms,⁶ and 7 to 8 percent of Americans will experience PTSD at some point during their lives.⁷

As noted by Judith Herman, traumatic events are not rare nor confined to the battlefield.⁸ Traumatic events are tragically common, many occurring within domestic contexts, sometimes on a regular basis.⁹ Addressing a Canadian context, the contributions in the recent volume *Cruel but not Unusual: Violence in Families in Canada* expose the grim reality of the prevalence of trauma, including structural inequality and systemic racism.¹⁰ Recent recognition of the impact of intimate partner violence on infants (including the unborn) and of harassment and abuse in online and digital contexts highlights the fact that no one can be assumed to be safe from trauma, though some people are more at risk than others.¹¹ Indeed, based on numerous surveys and studies, van der Kolk says child abuse is “the gravest and most costly public health issue in the United States.”¹² America is not unique in the “hidden epidemic” of developmental and early childhood trauma that has life-long effects.¹³

⁴ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, xiii.

⁵ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 240; Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 28.

⁶ Korte et al., “Epidemiology of Trauma and PTSD in Adults,” 61–75; Norris and Sloan, “Epidemiology of Trauma and PTSD,” 78–98.

⁷ Kessler et al., “Lifetime Prevalence,” 593–602; cf. *DSM-5-TR*, “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” n.p.

⁸ See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

⁹ See van der Kolk et al. eds., *Traumatic Stress*; cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*.

¹⁰ See Alaggia and Vine, eds., *Cruel but not Unusual*.

¹¹ See Alaggia and Vine, “Radical Resilience,” 1.

¹² van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 150.

¹³ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 145, 151.

Characteristics

Forty years after the inclusion of PTSD in *DSM-III*, *DSM-5* (2013) and now *DSM-5-TR* (2022) is the current standard reference manual for North American clinical practice. There are eight main diagnostic categories of criteria for PTSD: (A) exposure to trauma, (B) intrusive symptoms and dissociative reactions, (C) avoidance, (D) negative cognition and mood alterations, (E) arousal and reactivity, (F) duration (more than one month), (G) significant distress and/or dysfunction, and (H) lack of other attributable causes.¹⁴ *DSM-5* describes the traumatic event itself as “exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence” through direct experience, witnessing in person, learning about it (in relation to a loved one), and/or “repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s),” such as first-responders endure.¹⁵

At the same time, van der Kolk cautions that “psychiatric diagnosis has serious consequences” and that “all too often diagnoses are mere tallies of symptoms” that further disempower, pathologize, and marginalize patients.¹⁶ In other words, “the presenting problem [the symptom], is often only the marker for the real problem, which lies buried in time, concealed by patient shame, secrecy, and sometimes amnesia.”¹⁷ That is not to say that accurate diagnosis is not necessary and helpful.¹⁸ However, van der Kolk is critical of the *DSM-5* (2013) in regard to its “veritable smorgasbord of possible problems associated with severe early-life

¹⁴ See *DSM-5*, 265–90; *DSM-5-TR*, “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” n.p.

¹⁵ *DSM-5*, 271. This dissertation focuses on trauma and PTSD in adults, but *DSM-5* (272–74) notes special diagnostic criteria for children six years old and younger; cf. *DSM-5-TR*.

¹⁶ See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 138–43, here 139.

¹⁷ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 150.

¹⁸ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 159.

trauma.”¹⁹ For example, 82 percent of traumatized children “seen in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network do not meet diagnostic criteria for PTSD” and are often labelled with other behavioural disorders and given ineffective and often damaging treatment as a result.²⁰ Therefore, while the identification and treatment of trauma have come a long way in the last 40 years, the process remains ongoing and has not yet reached a comprehensive consensus. However, these issues are all the more reason to pay heed to the problems stemming from trauma in both individuals and wider society.

The crucial major symptom cluster noted above—intrusive/dissociative, avoidant, negative cognition or affect, and arousal/vigilance symptoms—represents the key signs of a posttraumatic disorder.²¹ However, PTSD presents itself in various ways and combinations.²² For some, fear may be most obvious.²³ Others may seem more depressed and/or caught in negativity. Some may externalize in irritability and anger, such as seeming overreactions to relatively small stressors which are actually triggers. Still others may seem disconnected and withdrawn. The intrusive and dissociative symptoms can range from nightmarish dreams to full-on flashbacks in which the person thinks they are in another situation entirely. As van der Kolk says, “traumatized people have a tendency to [unintentionally] superimpose their trauma on everything around them and have trouble deciphering whatever is going on around them.”²⁴ Thus, hypervigilance and

¹⁹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 166–68, here 166.

²⁰ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 159. He also discusses the rejection of the proposed Developmental Trauma Disorder (DTD) from inclusion in *DSM-5* (it is not included in *DSM-5-TR* either). For discussion and proposed diagnostic criteria, see pp. 167–70, 361–64; cf. van der Kolk, “Developmental Trauma Disorder,” 401–8. These issues relate the ongoing influence of politics and ideology in the identification and treatment of trauma, particularly amongst the most vulnerable members of society.

²¹ See McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 242 for a helpful symptom summary table.

²² See *DSM-5*, 274–76; the symptoms below are drawn from this source.

²³ See Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 28.

²⁴ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 17; cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 234.

reactivity come to mark the lives of people with PTSD. Considering the stress-trauma continuum, it is helpful to note that even those who do not have diagnosable PTSD can have “sore spots” or sensitivities resulting from past wounds, particularly if they are still unhealed wounds.²⁵ Accordingly, virtually all people overreact at some point to a stressor that is not as critical a problem, threat, or loss as it is perceived to be.

Moreover memory can be jumbled and result in a lack of coherence in storytelling surrounding the trauma.²⁶ Therefore, rather than pressing people for details or disbelieving their fragmented narratives, it is crucial to recognize these issues as signs of real trauma that has damaged the person.²⁷ Withdrawal and isolation are other common results of PTSD. People suffering from PTSD often feel out of control and fear they are damaged beyond redemption or repair.²⁸ Lack of trust of self and/or others makes intimate relationships difficult if not impossible to sustain; and haunting shame and self-loathing often follow actions taken to survive during trauma or in the aftermath.²⁹ Given that people with PTSD are more likely to consider and/or attempt suicide,³⁰ empathetic acceptance and compassionate assistance are the appropriate and necessary responses.³¹

²⁵ See Johnson, *Created for Connection*, 109–32; *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy*; Johnson and Campbell, *Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy*.

²⁶ See *DSM-5*, 275; van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 15–17, 53; van der Kolk and van der Hart, “The Intrusive Past,” 158–82; Buczynski et al., “Traumatic Memory,” 1–23; NICABM, “How Trauma Can Impact Four Types of Memory,” n.p..

²⁷ See Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, 29–30; cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 237.

²⁸ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 2; cf. Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 28.

²⁹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 13.

³⁰ See *DSM-5*, 278; Panagioti et al., “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Suicidality,” 915–30.

³¹ Cf. Hunsinger, “Bearing the Unbearable,” 8–25.

Proposed Etiologies

Since the (re)discovery of trauma as an etiological factor in psychological disorders, the understanding of the (neuro)biology of PTSD has grown tremendously.³² Van der Kolk traces these developments to three new branches of science: neuroscience, developmental psychology, and interpersonal neurobiology.³³ Neuroscience sheds light on “how the brain supports mental processes”; developmental psychology helps reveal “the impact of adverse experiences on the development of mind and brain”; and interpersonal neurobiology explores “how our behavior influences the emotions, biology, and mind-sets of those around us.”³⁴ The research to date indicates that PTSD results from a combination of (neuro)biological, psychological, social, cultural, and systemic factors.³⁵ McRay et al. maintain that “it is a synergistic combination of biological, psychosocial and sociocultural factors that form the ‘critical mass’ necessary for a stress reaction to become pathological.”³⁶ From a theological perspective, spiritual factors should be included as well.³⁷

The (neuro)biological factors involved in trauma and PTSD are exceptionally complex. The key insight is that traumatic situations, including chronic traumatic circumstances, have real effects on the brain and body, most often through no personal choice or fault of the person experiencing the trauma. Many behaviours resulting from trauma and PTSD “are not the result of moral failings or signs of lack of will power or bad character—they are caused by actual changes

³² van der Kolk, “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the Nature of Trauma,” 19.

³³ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 2.

³⁴ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 2.

³⁵ See McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 249–53.

³⁶ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 250.

³⁷ Cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 262–67.

in the brain.”³⁸ The effects of trauma have to do with the way our brains literally work to ensure our survival at both conscious and unconscious levels.³⁹

Bessel van der Kolk provides helpful, non-technical summaries of these findings and their significance for traumatic disorders, including PTSD:

[T]rauma produces actual physiological changes, including recalibration of the brain’s alarm system, an increase in stress hormone activity, and alterations in the system that filters relevant information from irrelevant. We now know that trauma compromises the brain area that communicates the physical, embodied feeling of being alive. . . .⁴⁰

Cortisol (a stress hormone) puts an end to the stress response by sending an all-safe signal. . . . In PTSD, the body’s stress hormones do, in fact, not return to baseline after the threat has passed. . . . Ideally our stress hormone system should provide a lightning-fast response to threat, but then quickly return us to equilibrium. In PTSD patients, however, the stress hormone system fails at this balancing act. Fight/flight/freeze signals continue after the danger is over, and . . . do not return to normal. Instead, the continued secretion of stress hormones is expressed as agitation and panic, and, in the long term, wreaks havoc with their health.⁴¹

Therefore, it is essential to recognize that traumatized people, especially those with PTSD, are quite literally wounded and broken in tragically profound ways.

While the (neuro)biological etiological factors contributing to PTSD are important, there are also significant psychosocial and sociocultural influences.⁴² For instance, a person’s premorbid history (what they were like before they experienced the trauma) contributes to their risk of developing PTSD or their resiliency against it.⁴³ Healthy coping skills, strong social support systems, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life are all involved in how one deals

³⁸ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 3; see also Shapiro, *Getting Past Your Past*, 214–46.

³⁹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 55.

⁴⁰ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 2–3.

⁴¹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 30.

⁴² E.g., van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 145, 167.

⁴³ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 250.

with trauma.⁴⁴ A significant survey by Kessler et al. shows that interpersonal traumas (such as war or sexual assault) are more likely to result in PTSD than “natural” traumas (such as an earthquake or a fire).⁴⁵ When people experience trauma because of other people rather than through impersonal forces of nature, their perception of the safety and security of the world is more likely to be damaged and the tendency towards withdrawal and isolation in the wake of interpersonal trauma is increased.⁴⁶ Laurel Parnell defines relational trauma as “trauma that occurs in the context of a relationship—either something that happened or did not happen (e.g., neglect) to the [person] that has caused him or her harm.”⁴⁷ Thus, the power of people to harm or to help heal should not be underestimated.

Common Treatment Methods

One of the most basic yet challenging strategies (as always) is to prevent trauma in the first place; but good studies addressing the prevention of PTSD are rare.⁴⁸ However, in recent years, theory-driven proposals for the treatment of trauma have proliferated,⁴⁹ and rather than merely managing symptoms, there is expert consensus that PTSD is ameliorated when the victim “comes to grips with the traumatic incident.”⁵⁰ Communities, including churches, can play a

⁴⁴ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 250.

⁴⁵ Kessler et al., “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in the National Comorbidity Survey,” 1048–60; cf. van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 145. For comparison of the theological distinction between “moral evil” and “natural evil,” see Southgate, “‘In Spite of All This’,” esp. 108–16.

⁴⁶ Cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 251; van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 132–36.

⁴⁷ Parnell, *Attachment-Focused EMDR*, 6; cf. Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, 29–30.

⁴⁸ See McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 260–63.

⁴⁹ See McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 253–60.

⁵⁰ Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy*, 19. The 2023 Treating Trauma Master Series by NICABM provides some of the most up to date understandings and approaches from a variety of leading experts. See Buczynski et al., “Neurobiology of Trauma,” 1–25; Buczynski et al., “Neurobiology of Attachment,” 1–29; Buczynski et al., “Traumatic Memory,” 1–24; Buczynski et al., “Dysregulation and Hypoarousal,” 1–25; Buczynski et al., “Limbic System,” 1–29.

significant role in helping to reduce the likelihood that a traumatic event will lead to the development of PTSD. For instance, research indicates that many women who are members of a religious community will “seek help first from their faith community when violence strikes at home.”⁵¹ And when in distress, 40 percent of people will seek help from their pastor first.⁵²

Herman’s early observations remain influential and appropriate: “The fundamental stages of recovery are establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community.”⁵³ Herman has also recently suggested that the fourth stage of recovery is justice, involving communal vindication of survivors and repair.⁵⁴ Similarly, others suggest that effective trauma treatment should try to (1) help the person remain calm while processing and integrating traumatic experiences, (2) help them be present and differentiate between the present and the traumatic past, and (3) nurture their ability to cope with stressors and control themselves.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is “essential to talk through the trauma [and] physically experience efficacy, meaning and purpose, and social support.”⁵⁶

Van der Kolk describes three fundamental avenues of treatment: (1) talking through memories in safe connections with others (“top down”); (2) taking medication and/or using technological interventions; and (3) having bodily experiences that contradict traumatic

⁵¹ Nason-Clark et al., *Religion and Intimate Partner Violence*, 30; quoted in Moder, “The Changing Self,” 219. Nason-Clark et al. explore both the negative and positive ways the church affects Christian women in situations of domestic abuse.

⁵² Johnson and Johnson, *Minister’s Guide to Psychological Disorders and Treatments*, 2; cf. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*.

⁵³ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 3, 155, 266–76. But note that it is not always necessary or helpful to recall specific traumatic memories because it can be re-traumatizing. See Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 31; Hunsinger, “Bearing the Unbearable,” 17.

⁵⁴ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 1–4.

⁵⁵ Lee et al., “Meditation and Treatment of Trauma Survivors,” 275–89; cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 254.

⁵⁶ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 253.

experiences and their aftermath (“bottom up”).⁵⁷ He repeatedly asserts that there is no one-size fits all treatment program; instead, most trauma survivors and those dealing with PTSD need a combination of treatments.⁵⁸

Medication is a common adjunct in the treatment of PTSD (or its symptoms), though many experts are quick to caution that there is no quick-fix, cure-all drug for any sort of trauma.⁵⁹ For instance, those in a state of seemingly psychotic panic due to vivid flashbacks may be prescribed antipsychotics to alleviate these debilitating symptoms, but this will not cure them.⁶⁰ Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which cause serotonin to remain in the neural synapse connections longer, have been demonstrated to help those with noncombat PTSD to sleep better, control their emotions, and not be preoccupied with the past; however, in one study SSRIs did not significantly help combat veterans with PTSD.⁶¹ Instead, serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) may be more helpful for some cases of PTSD because they help stimulate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal or HPA-axis stress system in order to push through the state of hyperarousal and allow the body to begin its natural process of returning to homeostasis.⁶² Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy is a recent development,

⁵⁷ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 3.

⁵⁸ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 3.

⁵⁹ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 256; van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 33–38; Lee and Irwin, *Psychopathology*, 274–77, 293–95.

⁶⁰ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 15; Jeffreys, “Clinician's Guide to Medications for PTSD.”

⁶¹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 35. Common SSRIs for PTSD are sertraline (Zoloft), paroxetine (Paxil), and fluoxetine (Prozac).

⁶² Jeffreys, “Clinician's Guide to Medications for PTSD”; cf. Lee et al., “Psychotherapy versus Pharmacotherapy for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” 792–806. A common SNRI for PTSD is venlafaxine (Effexor).

involving the careful and guided use of psychedelics in a clinical environment.⁶³ The basic framework involves preparation sessions, medicine sessions, and integration sessions.⁶⁴

However, as van der Kolk cautions, “psychiatric mediations have a serious downside, as they may deflect attention from dealing with the underlying issues. . . . Being a patient rather than a participant in one’s healing process separates suffering people from their community and alienates them from an inner sense of self.”⁶⁵ Thus, active participation is crucial for those recovering from trauma.

In order to address the presenting symptoms, many psychotherapeutic approaches include various forms of exposure therapy (which may have both top-down and bottom-up elements) in which the therapeutic relationship plays a key role.⁶⁶ Some research and clinical findings seem to indicate that some form of exposure to a non-overwhelming stimulus coupled with cognitive behavioural coping strategies and a safe, secure therapeutic relationship comprises an effective treatment method.⁶⁷ At the same time, traditional exposure therapies, such as is employed in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), have been shown to have disappointing results in treating

⁶³ See NICABM, “Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy,” n.p.

⁶⁴ Ketamine is a commonly used psychedelic. One of the main risks is the temptation to experiment with psychedelics outside of a guided psychotherapeutic session. Additionally, NICABM (“Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy”) cautions that “Psychedelic substances do not have inherent healing properties—but they may help facilitate or accelerate the therapeutic process for some clients.”

⁶⁵ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 37–38. Less frequently, the serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SRI) nefazodone (Serzone), the tricyclic antidepressant (TCA) imipramine (Tofranil), or the monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) phenelzine (Nardil) may be prescribed for PTSD. For discussion of a variety of novel and integrative therapies, including medication with ketamine, see Yehuda et al., “What I Have Changed My Mind about and Why,” 1–9. Also, Daniel Amen (“The Impact of Brain Imaging on Psychiatry and Treatment for Improving Brain Health and Function,” 52–58) emphasizes that psychiatry is the only medical profession that does not look at the organ it treats: the brain. Therefore, Amen uses SPECT (single photon emission computer tomography) imaging to identify overactive, appropriately active, and underactive areas of the brain in order to help identify different types of various disorders, such as ADD or depression.

⁶⁶ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 255–56.

⁶⁷ McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 254–55.

traumatic disorders.⁶⁸ In fact, explicitly recalling traumatic memories can cause more damage rather than contributing to recovery and healing.⁶⁹ “It’s not about understanding or figuring things out because that’s not really where the trauma sits,” says van der Kolk. “Trauma sits in your automatic reactions and your dispositions and how you interpret the world.”⁷⁰ While trauma survivors may not consciously or explicitly remember, Pat Ogden says, “the body remembers. The body records everything.”⁷¹ Thus, traditional talk therapies alone are not enough to “cure” trauma and should be carefully administered.⁷² While (re)narrating the past is important,⁷³ it is fundamentally imperative that trauma and its memories be *integrated* in a profound way such that they no longer belong to the present.⁷⁴ In van der Kolk’s words, integration is “putting the traumatic event into its proper place in the overall arc of one’s life.”⁷⁵

EMDR has proved to be a versatile and effective form of treatment,⁷⁶ though the precise reasons for this remain somewhat uncertain and debated.⁷⁷ Since Francine Shapiro created

⁶⁸ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 196.

⁶⁹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 183–84, 196.

⁷⁰ In Buczynski et al., “Limbic System,” 19, here 23–24.

⁷¹ In Buczynski et al., “Limbic System,” 8.

⁷² See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 22, 27, 36, 72, 183–84, 232–39, 255.

⁷³ Listening to a person’s trauma story can help them feel seen, heard, accepted, and loved. Cf. Buczynski et al., “Limbic System,” 9–12.

⁷⁴ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 221–22.

⁷⁵ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 224.

⁷⁶ See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 250–64. Some other types of therapy include prolonged exposure therapy, anxiety management training (AMT), stress inoculation training (SIT), cognitive processing therapy (CPT), cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), present-centered therapy (PCT), and skills training in affection and interpersonal relations and narrative story telling (STAIR/NST). See McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 255–56; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 266–76.

⁷⁷ Although EMDR has achieved undeniable results, some critics argue that it is no more effective than other exposure-based treatments and that it does not operate by distinct mechanisms. Previously suggested explanations of EMDR are that it simulates rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, it helps synchronize the hemispheres of the brain, or it serves as a distraction. While other treatments may be as effective for some in treating PTSD, EMDR has also been used in the treatment of many other conditions. See Davidson and Parker, “EMDR,” 305–16; de Roos et al., “Randomised Comparison,” n.p; Herbert et al., “Science and Pseudoscience in the Development of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing,” 945–71; Lee and Cuijpers, “A Meta-Analysis of the Contribution of Eye Movements in Processing Emotional Memories,” 231–39; cf. Lilienfeld, “EMDR,” 1–3.

EMDR in 1987, it has been used in treating a number of conditions and has several variations.⁷⁸ The initial form involved bringing a bothersome or disturbing thought to mind while moving one's eyes back and forth, with the effect that the emotional charge of the thoughts or memory seemed to lessen or disappear.⁷⁹ The adaptive information processing (AIP) model is currently the best explanation for the effectiveness of EMDR therapy.⁸⁰ AIP recognizes that traumatic experiences (particularly in early childhood) may be embedded in mind and body as “static, insufficiently processed information.”⁸¹ EMDR efficiently and effectively addresses the memory itself while engaging the physiological system that helps transform disturbing information into “an adaptive resolution and a psychologically healthy integration,” which positively impacts both functioning in the world and identity constructs, including cognition, affect, sensation, and so forth.⁸² In other words, EMDR helps people integratively process trauma in mind and body so that they are not dysregulated or dissociated while also restoring a sense of personal agency.⁸³ Hence, unsurprisingly, EMDR is an integrative psychotherapy and compatible with psychodynamic, cognitive, experiential, behavioural, and somatic therapeutic orientations.⁸⁴

For example, the *Handbook of EMDR and Family Therapy Processes* provides perspectives on the integration of EMDR and family systems therapy (FST) and theories, the latter of which posits circular causality as a basic tenet.⁸⁵ From this perspective, “symptoms are

⁷⁸ See Shapiro, *Getting Past Your Past*; van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 250–64.

⁷⁹ EMDR was originally called EMD (eye movement desensitization); Shapiro, *Getting Past Your Past*, 24–28; Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy*, 1–12.

⁸⁰ See Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy*, 15–52.

⁸¹ Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy*, 15–16.

⁸² Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy*, 15–52, here 52.

⁸³ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 258.

⁸⁴ Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy*, 19–24; cf. Ogden and Kekuni, *Trauma and the Body*.

⁸⁵ Shapiro et al., eds., *Handbook of EMDR and Family Therapy Processes*.

viewed as a product of the system and as serving a function within the system. Seeking to understand the origin of A [trauma, for example] outside of A's role in the current system is considered 'pointless' . . . as the meaning is to be found within the system."⁸⁶ In other words, each factor influences and is influenced by others, particularly since human beings always exist in a dynamic rather than static state in relation to God, self, and others.⁸⁷ Although PTSD often results from an identifiable event, the insight of this FST tenet provides a framework for understanding why PTSD does not always result from trauma even in individuals who experience the same event. Key elements to consider are attachment, current family (and church community) relationships, and intrapersonal functioning (self-understanding).

Parnell's attachment-focused EMDR (AF-EMDR) is guided by the AIP model and is intended to treat relational trauma that may not arise from a single catastrophic event but rather from the context of abuse and trauma from close relationships that have lasting effects (often parental relations in early childhood).⁸⁸ The five main principles are client safety, quality of client-therapist relationship, client-centred approach, neuro-network repair (using Resource Tapping, which involves bilateral stimulation paired with positive imagery), and modified EMDR as needed.⁸⁹ Parnell's approach is one example of an adaptive approach to dealing with diverse forms of PTSD arising from various contexts and perceptual experiences. The attention to attachment theory and relationships highlights the importance of interpersonal bonds that are

⁸⁶ Shapiro et al., eds., *Handbook of EMDR and Family Therapy Processes*, 408; Goldenberg and Goldenberg, *Family Therapy*, 14.

⁸⁷ Although in a sense it is true that people can become "stuck" in trauma responses, trauma is also paradoxical. Moreover, human beings are not reducible to the disorders caused by trauma. So while a person may be profoundly "stuck" in certain ways due to trauma, that does not render them a static being, whether in relation to themselves, others, or God. Cf. Lanius and Buczynski, "Stuck in a Trauma Response," 2–10.

⁸⁸ Parnell, *Attachment-Focused EMDR*, 3–11, 18–19.

⁸⁹ Parnell, *Attachment-Focused EMDR*, 12–29.

safe and secure as well as the damage that can be done when relationships are not healthy or are harmful.⁹⁰ The unseen psychological and neurobiological damage of trauma should inform compassionate, attuned responses, especially within church communities.

Conclusion

The literature on trauma and PTSD helps inform this dissertation, which proposes to integrate trauma studies and theology in order to examine the soteriological significance of the Incarnation of Christ for the life and ministry of the Church today, particularly in regard to the Lord's Supper. On our own, we cannot heal ourselves, renew our minds (cf. Rom 12:2), or bring communities and creation back into harmonious communion; therefore, we are at the mercy of God meeting us wherever we are. In short, I believe it is critically important to understand human brokenness in terms of the spirit, soul, and body in order to begin to participate in the integrative wholeness and healing God offers the world.

Therefore, I suggest that pastors and church communities should be aware of the conditions contributing to and symptoms arising from trauma, PTSD, and other mental health disorders so that they assist in the early recognition of such issues and act as a point of connection between community members and mental and medical health professionals. Since the Eucharist itself can be a trauma trigger or even (re)traumatizing for some people, psychological traumatology cannot be ignored regarding the Lord's Supper. Loving acceptance, empathetic listening, and compassionate care and support are fundamental forms of grace which church

⁹⁰ Cf. Bowlby, "Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds," 201–10.

communities can offer to one another and the world as we participate in the life and ministry of Christ Jesus, including through Communion.

As a brief theologically integrative summation leading into the review of trauma-informed theology, psychological research supports the claim that accessible loving presence, which remains compassionately responsive and empathetically engaged, is at the root of all paths to the healing of the body, soul, and spirit.⁹¹ Fundamentally, the most essential presence for (eternal) life is the presence of God. The ability to be present and commune with God, with self, and with others is the opposite of the disconnection, dissociation, and alienation of trauma and sin. Further, I suggest that the presence of God with us is instrumental in and synonymous with our salvation. In the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph is told by an angel of the Lord to “name [his son] Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21)—the name *Jesus* means *Yahweh is salvation* in Hebrew.⁹² Matthew immediately follows with the claim that this fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 7:14) that “‘they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means, ‘God is with us’” (Matt 1:23–24). At first glance, it might seem like the angel and Isaiah are at odds, but Matthew recognizes that *salvation* and the *presence of God with us* are one and the same. Not only that, but the salvation and presence of God are embodied in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

⁹¹ Cf. Buczynski et al., “Neurobiology of Trauma,” 21–22.

⁹² Cf. France, *Matthew*, 47–59; DCH, 4:156–58, 337–38, 596 (ישע, יהושע); Ἰησοῦς is the Greek form of *Joshua*.

CHAPTER 2

TRAUMA-INFORMED THEOLOGY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

“Believers who have been traumatized stake their very lives on the power of the gospel to heal.”
—Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger¹

“Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.”
—Judith Herman²

“We are at the forefront of a new reformation,” says Elaine Heath, a “form of Christianity that heals the wounds of the world.”³ In the last three decades, theologians have gleaned many useful insights from the field of psychological traumatology and have begun increasingly to incorporate these understandings within theological works.⁴ Likewise, biblical scholars have begun to integrate psychological traumatology in various ways, and the literature is rapidly growing.⁵ This integrative area of study is relatively new, so neither an introductory nor a comprehensive review of the major trauma-informed works of theology produced to date yet exists. While most works display appropriate awareness of other studies, each has its own particular focus which does not include a full survey of such a broad range of literature.⁶ The following review of

¹ Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 1; cf. “Bearing the Unbearable,” 8–25.

² Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 133.

³ In Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 61.

⁴ Christian psychologists and psychotherapists also integrate psychology and theology with attention to trauma. E.g., Gillies, *Deep Impact*; Cook and Miller, *Boundaries for Your Soul*; Cook, *Best of You*; LaCroix, *Journey to Shalom*; McBride, *Wisdom of Your Body*; Kolber, *Try Softer*; *Strong Like Water*.

⁵ E.g., Allen and Doedens, eds., *Turmoil, Trauma and Tenacity*; Becker et al., eds., *Trauma and Traumatization*; Boase and Frechette, *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma*; Carr, *Holy Resilience*; O’Connor, “Stammering Toward the Unsayable,” 301–13; Warner, “Trauma Through the Lens of the Bible,” 81–91.

⁶ At times, further connections could be made. For example, in *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*, edited by Warner et al. (2020), Cynthia Hess’s 2009 monograph *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace* is not engaged.

trauma-informed theology outlines common characteristics and aims, significant differences and diversities, various contexts and areas of focus, and major views regarding trauma and the Eucharist, with attention to key contributors to the debate. This chapter also serves to identify the need for the contribution of this dissertation, including identification of questions that remain open to debate. The review is followed by some concluding considerations and a reiteration of the dissertation's thesis.

Common Characteristics and Aims

Anglican theologian Karen O'Donnell notes that trauma-informed theology in the post-9/11 period has been "[d]ominated by female theologians, particularly (although not exclusively) white, western . . . women."⁷ She observes that these trauma-informed theologies share three common characteristics: (1) taking embodied experience seriously (which impacts both methodology and application); (2) using trauma as a lens through which to view and challenge theology; and (3) highlighting the significance of witness, including the Church's role as a listening community.⁸ As representative of the importance of this theme in contemporary debate, the New Studies in Theology and Trauma series similarly aims to explore three key areas: (1) how trauma theory can inform theological method; (2) how theology can be a framework for

Hess's exploration of the church's role in creating faith communities in which those who have experienced trauma can survive and begin to heal would have undoubtedly provided good insights, connections, and discussion points.

⁷ O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 10. Rambo adds cis-gendered to this profile; see Rambo, "Foreword," 13. Monographs by Dirk Lange and Marcus Pound are two examples of trauma-informed male theological perspectives. Lange (*Trauma Recalled*, esp. 16, 93–124) primarily provides a close (re)reading of Luther's theology through the lens of literary perspectives on trauma, especially Caruth's work. The Christ event, he argues, is traumatic in that it cannot be grasped but only experienced in some way. It remains unclear how this work is likely to be helpful for traumatized members of the Body of Christ. Using a critical theory approach, Pound's work (*Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, here 22) argues that "trauma is a powerful metaphor for what takes place in the Eucharist." Thus, Lange and Pound fail to adequately account for the physiological nature of psychological trauma.

⁸ O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 10–11; see also O'Donnell and Cross, eds., *Feminist Trauma Theologies*.

understanding trauma (the inverse of point two above); and (3) how the Church can faithfully and effectively care for those who have experienced trauma.⁹ One question that remains is to what extent trauma-informed theology must attend to the entire human being as an integrated person—comprised of spirit, soul, and body¹⁰—in a balanced way. While an emphasis on the body may be an important corrective to hyper-spiritualized or overly abstracted theologies, the whole human requires attention and should not be disintegrated or dissected in theological discussion or ministry application.

In a systematic theological approach, Jennifer Baldwin identifies “four primary commitments of Trauma-Sensitive Theology: the priority of bodily experience, full acceptance of trauma narratives, natural given-ness of human psychological multiplicity, and faith in the robust resiliency of trauma survivors.”¹¹ Similarly, in their proposal for the creation of trauma-safe churches, Cockayne et al. apply Trinitarian theology according to four key principles with suggestions for accompanying practices: (1) “do no harm”; (2) “listen to survivors tell their stories of trauma”; (3) “take action to empower restoration”; and (4) “engage and bless the bodies of their members.”¹² While both approaches emphasize the importance of embodied safety in community, the latter places primary importance on God’s role in recovery and healing

⁹ See the series introduction in Travis, *Unspeakable*, vii–viii; Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, ix–x.

¹⁰ See discussion of Irenaeus’s view of tripartite theological anthropology in Chapter 4.

¹¹ Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 7–11, 94, here 7. She calls her approach a “systematic, contextual theology” (93).

¹² Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 153–203, here 155.

from trauma, which is subsequently manifested in the Church.¹³ Baldwin's approach places more emphasis on innate human resiliency.¹⁴

A key element of the challenges many trauma-informed theologies levy against other theologies is rejection of or strong caution against any sort of theology that risks contributing to the legitimization or perpetuation of oppression, abuse, or (re)traumatization.¹⁵ Shelly Rambo, a leading and longstanding contributor to trauma-informed theology, notes that early works of trauma-informed feminist theology were "committed to accounting for the absence of women in sacred texts, the scarcity of women in religious leadership, and the impact of violence on the lives of women."¹⁶ In Christian theology, it has by far been female theological perspectives that have found the insights of trauma studies most helpful in speaking faithfully of God and thereby challenging situations and systems of violence, oppression, abuse, and trauma in the Church, the academy, and the world.

At the same time, Karen O'Donnell and Katie Cross caution that trauma and feminist theologies are contested terms that do not always mean or say the same thing: the voices remain many and the perspectives remain multiple.¹⁷ Rambo, for instance, considers works such as M.

¹³ E.g., Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 57.

¹⁴ Also, rather than a fundamentally *relational* Trinitarian conception, Baldwin conceives of God as primarily *energy*; that is, she articulates an "energy centered ontology" that subordinates relationality to energy. See Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 94–98, here 97.

¹⁵ E.g., Hess, *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, 114–15; O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 79, 182, 187; Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 7–13, 94; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 85; Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 165; Grosch-Miller, "Sexual Scandals in Religious Settings," 239–55; Yoder, *Trauma Healing*.

¹⁶ Rambo, "Foreword," 12. For example, Rambo ("Between Death and Life," 7–21; "Trauma and Faith," 1–25) has also explored the trauma of Mary Magdalene and the hemorrhaging woman. Rambo also situates the work of Rebecca Chopp and Flora Keshgegian as foundational for later trauma-informed theologies. In *Power to Speak*, Chopp aims to "examine and construct feminist theology as discourses of emancipatory transformation that proclaim the Word to and for the world" (3). In *Redeeming Memories*, Keshgegian first brought historical trauma (of the Armenian genocide) into conversation with theology.

¹⁷ See O'Donnell and Cross, eds., *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, 16.

Shawn Copeland's *Enfleshing Freedom*, Emilie Townes's edited volume *A Troubling in My Soul*, and Nancy Pineda Madrid's *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juarez* to be womanist perspectives on trauma even though they are not explicitly self-identified or typically classified as such.¹⁸ Notwithstanding the diversity within the field, O'Donnell and Cross also observe that feminist theologians and trauma theologians are all seeking the same thing: "to understand people's experiences and to reshape theologies in light of that experience, so that they do justice to the real lives of real people."¹⁹ And they seek to do so with critical awareness, describing "feminist trauma theologies" in the following way:

Feminist trauma theologies can be understood, therefore, as theologies (in plurality) that seek to engage with experiences of trauma (that which overwhelms ordinary human adaptations to life) from a feminist approach that aims to pay critical attention to questions of power, knowing and representation as well as broader issues of social justice, with an eye to understanding the ways in which patriarchal societal structures both cause trauma and create the environment in which traumas can flourish.²⁰

Although other works may not be considered feminist, they may still seek to critically and compassionately engage human experiences of trauma from a theological perspective that contributes to freedom and healing within the Church and the world.²¹

Differences and Diversities

While there are many similarities among trauma-informed theologies, there are also important differences. Some are as fundamental as the definition and understanding of trauma. Theologians also differ on the question of the extent of trauma in human experience: is trauma universal or

¹⁸ Rambo ("Foreword," 15) insists that the classification of theologies is a political act. For additional discussion of feminist, womanist, and mujerista perspectives, see Scarsella, "Trauma and Theology," 256–82.

¹⁹ O'Donnell and Cross, eds., *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, 17.

²⁰ O'Donnell and Cross, eds., *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, 17.

²¹ E.g., Cockanye et al., *Dawn of Sunday*.

exceptional? And there are varied stances regarding the Cross of Christ, particularly in relation to various conceptions of sin, redemption, and salvation. Viewpoints regarding these three key areas of differences and diversities are outlined below.

First, trauma-informed theologies understand and define trauma in various ways, which have significant methodological, theoretical, and practical implications. Several works note that there is no universally accepted definition of trauma and that there is a range of valid understandings.²² Jennifer Beste, for instance, names four key categories of factors that influence traumatization: (1) “the nature of the trauma—its kind, severity, frequency, and duration”; (2) individuals’ unique premorbid conditions; (3) relational support; and (4) systemic factors (social, cultural, political, etc.).²³ Others claim more narrow definitions, such as that “[n]o event is inherently traumatic,” including crucifixion; instead, subjective experience is the fundamental cause and defining characteristic of all trauma.²⁴ Some lean on literary theory regarding trauma, emphasizing the disruption of language, memory, and cognition.²⁵ Some works, even recent

²² E.g., Beste, *God and the Victim*, 5–8; Rambo, “Introduction,” 3–9; O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 6; O’Donnell and Cross, eds., *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, esp. 16–17. Recognizing that understanding of trauma is still growing and that individual experiences vary greatly, Travis (*Unspeakable*, 9, 11–21) asserts that it does not have a fixed meaning and that no one is an expert on all trauma. Therefore, she seeks to define it as broadly as possible.

²³ Beste, *God and the Victim*, 6–7. Beste (8–16) proceeds to build on the work of Simone Weil, Dorothee Soelle, and Wendy Farley, who maintain that some extreme forms of suffering can destroy the human capacity for free will. She critiques views that suggest trauma victims bear (co)responsibility for their own traumatization. Cf. O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 4–6.

²⁴ O’Donnell, “Trauma Theology,” 4, 12; cf. Alexander, *Trauma*, 12; Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 25.

²⁵ Many of these works rely heavily on the groundbreaking literary trauma theory in Cathy Caruth’s works (which draw on Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan): Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*. E.g., Lange, *Trauma Recalled*, 5–13; O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 6–7, 79. More recent theological works that emphasize narrative, especially the Gospels include Scarsella, “Trauma and Theology,” 274–76; Peters, *Post-Traumatic Jesus*. Works that balance psychological and literary trauma theory include Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*; Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*. Regarding theology, trauma, and literary theory see Rambo, “Haunted (by the) Gospel,” 936–41; cf. Grosch-Miller, “Practical Theology and Trauma,” 28–44.

ones, relegate trauma to a metaphorical pseudo-psychological condition, thereby failing to account for current understandings of the physiological/somatic and neurobiological nature of psychological trauma.²⁶ Others emphasize the difference between suffering and trauma, yet the psychological conception of the stress-trauma continuum is not always recognized or applied.²⁷ In short, all trauma involves stress and/or suffering; therefore, the insights of psychological traumatology are useful and applicable in identifying and healing all sorts of wounds, whether or not they are considered clinically diagnosable traumatic disorders. However, that is not to say that all stress and suffering should be considered trauma(tic). And when stress is traumatic, it does not necessarily always cause an enduring trauma-induced disorder such as PTSD.²⁸ In other words, according to the stress-trauma continuum, all traumas are wounds, but not all wounds are traumatic in technical terminology.

Displaying a psychologically well-informed understanding, Rambo identifies the issue of integration (or processing) at the heart of traumatic experience such that a common denominator in (accurate) conceptions of trauma is that “traumatic experiences *overwhelm* human processes of adaptation.”²⁹ When traumatic experiences cannot be integratively processed, for whatever reason, trauma becomes “the suffering that remains.”³⁰ Bessel van der Kolk describes trauma as

²⁶ E.g., Pound, *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, esp. 20–24; Papadopoulos, “Traumatising Discourse of Trauma and Moral Injury,” 1.

²⁷ For example, O’Donnell (*Broken Bodies*, 3–8, 79, 167–83) distinguishes between *suffering* and *trauma*, conceiving of the latter primarily as a rupture. However, her analysis of trauma/rupture regarding Mary and the Annunciation-Incarnation event is questionable. There is a significant difference between the presence of God with us, incarnate in the Person of Jesus, and psychological trauma. Thus, trauma as a loosely-defined heuristic device for theology can be problematic. Cf. Boynton and Capretto, eds., *Trauma and Transcendence*, 3.

²⁸ Lee and Irwin, *Psychopathology*, 82–87.

²⁹ Rambo, “Introduction,” 3–9, here 3, original emphasis. Cf. Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 18–21; Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 3–8. Similarly emphasizing the overwhelming nature of trauma, Hilary Ison (“Embodied and Systemic Approach,” esp. 47–53) provides one of the most up-to-date psychologically-informed descriptions of trauma in a theological work.

³⁰ Rambo, “Introduction,” 3.

both an event *and* its imprint: “trauma is not just an event that took place in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience in the mind, brain, and body.”³¹ Therefore, *trauma* may refer to both cause (the event/s of wounding) and effect (the ongoing or unhealed wound and resulting dysfunctions), with context generally indicating the sense of usage.³² And as Serene Jones and Jennifer Baldwin maintain, trauma is essentially a *wound*—one with distinctive, devastating characteristics and effects yet not unlike many other sorts of wounds.³³

Second, the question of whether trauma is ubiquitous or exceptional is treated differently in trauma-informed theologies. Some theologians argue that existence is traumatically structured,³⁴ while others maintain that trauma is an exceptional experience.³⁵ These various standpoints have implications for how sin and salvation are viewed, theologically described, and liturgically and pastorally addressed, making them an important factor in both theoretical hamartiologies and soteriologies and practical ministry applications.³⁶ Karen O'Donnell connects

³¹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 21.

³² Baldwin (*Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 25) recognizes that there is not a one-to-one correlation between wounding event and the ongoing effects of the wound. However, she erroneously asserts that “‘trauma’ is the response to an experience/s not the event experienced.” In psychological understandings, not all traumatic events result in traumatic disorders (even among people who experience the same event), but that does not mean that the event itself is not accurately and properly described as *trauma* or *traumatic*.

³³ Again, this can refer to both cause/event and effect. Unlike external trauma, psychological trauma may involve “low-grade forms of misery lingering so long that they become normalized and cease to appear woundlike at all.” See Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 12–13, here 13; cf. Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 24–28.

³⁴ E.g., Rambo, “Foreword,” 12; *Spirit and Trauma: Resurrecting Wounds*; Farley, *Wounding and Healing of Desire*; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, esp. 101–3; Hunsinger, “Bearing the Unbearable”; *Bearing the Unbearable*; Beste, *God and the Victim*.

³⁵ For example, Jennifer Baldwin (*Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 10, 14, 21–38, esp. 27) is adamant that trauma is not an ontological category or a fundamental condition. Cf. O'Donnell, “Trauma Theology,” 6; Travis, *Unspeakable*, 42. See also Tina Chanter's (“Artful Politics of Trauma,” 121–41) engagement with Rancière's question: “If everyone is traumatized, what specific meaning remains for trauma?” But note that the *ubiquity* of trauma need not equate to the *uniformity* of all trauma(s).

³⁶ For further hamartiological and soteriological discussion, see Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 27, 94–98, 108–18, 123–38; Beste, *God and the Victim*, 14–16, 85–128; O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 12; Travis, *Unspeakable*, 41–43. In her substantial feminist revision to Karl Rahner's theological anthropology regarding freedom and grace, Beste explores the impact of sexual abuse. She argues that human freedom can be destroyed by severe trauma but also that God's love can be mediated to survivors through safe, loving interpersonal relationships (14–16, 85–106). Thus, the importance of Christian communal relationships rather than solely individual decisions

the prevalence of trauma to both ecclesiology and hamartiology. “If individual bodies of this body [the ecclesial Body of Christ] are traumatized,” she says, “then the whole Body of Christ experiences trauma.”³⁷ She goes on to discuss the trauma-induced ruptures between God and humanity, saying these could be referred to as sin, though she prefers to think of it as “a gulf between natures.”³⁸ From a similar relational perspective, Baldwin defines (volitional *behavioural*) sin as “the abuse of relational power,” while salvation is about healing and relational reconnection.³⁹ Speaking of the *condition* of sin, Serene Jones says that “to be in sin is to be alienated from God . . . to be unaware of grace,” while salvation begins here and now because to be saved is “to be awakened.”⁴⁰ Similarly, Angela Smith works to reformulate the Western doctrine of “original sin,” arguing that sin is a relational rupture, trauma is the original cause of sin, and secure attachment to God is a fundamental aspect of salvation.⁴¹ Clear distinctions and connections between sin as condition and volitional action are crucial areas of theological discussion that stand to benefit from trauma-informed perspectives.⁴²

Moreover, addressing the application of hamartiology and soteriology in the Church, Carla Grosch-Miller et al. point out that standard liturgies focus on behavioural sin—often by emphasizing repentance in the form of admission of wrongdoing—such that the experiences and

or actions comes to the fore (107–28). In agreement with Rahner, she also leaves open the option of a free response to God’s loving self-communication after death (106).

³⁷ O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, here 11, 59–60.

³⁸ O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 12.

³⁹ Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, here 115, 127–29. She also recognizes that “[w]ounding and sin emerge from . . . being on the receiving end of harm” (116). And she primarily objects to sin as “a given inheritance of humanity” (117).

⁴⁰ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 101–3, 165. She also discusses the appropriate aim and effect of hamartiology and a number of dialectical tensions.

⁴¹ See Smith, “Reformulating the Doctrine of Original Sin.” For further theological attention to the need for safe, secure attachment, see Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 33–54.

⁴² See Chapter 4; Boerger, “Original Wound,” 308–10.

needs of sinners (perpetrators) receive far more attention than those of the wounded.⁴³ At the same time, from a trauma-informed perspective, broken behaviours are seen as symptoms of the traumatic woundings of sin (which are not the fault of the survivors) that require honest recognition and compassionate treatment.⁴⁴ Thus, trauma-informed understandings of both sin and salvation remain a developing and necessary area of theological exploration and practical application.

Third, there are various viewpoints regarding the Cross of Christ among trauma-informed theologies. The Cross stands as a fault line of sorts in trauma-informed theologies, some seeking to decentre or displace (perhaps even replace) it,⁴⁵ while others maintain that the Cross is a crucial, central site for Christian theology, life, and ministry.⁴⁶ The former often object to triumphalistic theologies or theologies that legitimize or perpetuate oppression, abuse, and trauma by telling certain people (often those with less power) that they need to submit and suffer with Christ.⁴⁷ For example, Baldwin claims that the “traumatizing death of Jesus is not in any

⁴³ See Grosch-Miller et al., “Enabling the Work of the People,” esp. 165. Likewise, O’Donnell (*Broken Bodies*, 144) notes that a “focus on sin and unworthiness dominated the understanding of the Eucharist.”

⁴⁴ This dissertation first takes seriously the experience of being wounded before considering sinful actions. See further discussion in Chapter 4.

⁴⁵ E.g., Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories*, esp. 174, 196; Lange, *Trauma Recalled*, 9; Stone, “Trauma, Reality, and Eucharist,” 53–56; O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, esp. 14–15, 43, 55–58, 79, 90, 109, 117, 122–26, 182–84. O’Donnell argues that the central site of somatic memory in Christian theology is not Jesus’ death or Resurrection but the Annunciation-Incarnation event, focusing on “ruptures” in Mary’s body, in time, and in cognition (14–16, 57, 167–69).

⁴⁶ E.g., Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma; Resurrecting Wounds*, 6–8, 75–80, 94–106; “Introduction,” esp. 13; Hess, *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, esp. 113–20; Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, xii, 13–16, 89–90, 98; Travis, *Unspeakable*, 45–46; Moder, “The Changing Self,” esp. 209–12, 219–22. Jones (*Trauma and Grace*, 69–97, here 69) extensively meditates on the Cross, “the central trauma of Christianity,” as a redemptive source for re-narrating the world. Considering the Cross of Christ as central (and theology as a response to Crucifixion and Resurrection), Hilary Scarsella (“Trauma and Theology,” esp. 256–57, 276–77) considers the risk of re-traumatization and the potential for healing. She argues that the Cross must be remembered as traumatic for it to be appropriately beneficial such that it holds space for the diversity of both traumatic rupture and recovery.

⁴⁷ For examples of objections to triumphalism, see Travis, *Unspeakable*, 45–46. Drawing on William Placher, Michael Gorman (*Cruciformity*, 368–401, here 372) discusses abuse, triumphalism, and general objections to the Cross that do not specifically consider trauma. The key challenges are against (1) the Cross as a means of

way salvific or redemptive in and of itself.”⁴⁸ Those who centrally situate the Cross, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the Crucifixion as God’s radical incarnational solidarity with human suffering, identifying divine attention to human needs at the heart of the Cross.⁴⁹ This applies to both victims and perpetrators (which is to say, every single person). “The cross of Jesus Christ,” says Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, “is God’s response not only to the terror of human trauma but also to the anguish of human guilt.”⁵⁰ However, maintaining that the centrality of the Crucifixion is necessary to Christian faith and theology after the fact is not the same thing as arguing that the Crucifixion itself was necessary. Thus, even when the need to speak of the Cross is affirmed, the need for the Cross remains debated.⁵¹ Moreover, views regarding the Cross are often incorporated in theologies of redemptive suffering and theodicies that engage trauma.⁵² It should not be entirely surprising that Christ’s Crucifixion remains controversial in many ways. Therefore, it is vital to continue discussion of salvation and healing by way of the Cross and

atonement; (2) its association with and/or justification for violence; and (3) its invocation as “an ethical and spiritual paradigm for self-sacrifice.” Gorman also responds to these concerns by affirming the rejection of violent, abusive appropriations of the Cross while also affirming the Cross’s validity and, indeed, necessity in Christian life and witness in the world. Cf. Placher, “Christ Takes Our Place,” 5–20. For a discussion of objections to atonement theology in general, see Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 20–33. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel (“Feminist Theology of the Cross,” 94–98) provides a non-trauma-informed feminist perspective that critiques abuse and theological misuse yet affirms the Cross in three ways: as God’s solidarity in human suffering, as suffering within systemically embedded injustice and sin, and as a paradoxical image of life.

⁴⁸ Baldwin (*Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 131–33) objects to atonement theologies that identify Jesus’ death as the primary reason for his incarnate life, and she argues that the benefit of Jesus’ traumatic death is not for humanity but for God, whose capacity to understand and experience human suffering is expanded by the Cross. However, if that were true, then God would not truly understand the vast majority of humans throughout history, including all women.

⁴⁹ For an excellent balanced discussion of the risks, invitations, and benefits (including solidarity) of the Cross, see Hess, *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, 116–20. Similarly, Jones (*Trauma and Grace*, 164) urges us to remember that “the cross is not yours but Christ’s, and yet you remain and are utterly vulnerable to its mysteries and laid bare by its witness.”

⁵⁰ Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 15.

⁵¹ Cf. Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 80–84.

⁵² See, for example, the different views of Abbott, “Evangelical Practical Theology of Providence,” 92–105 (who affirms that God causes suffering for good reasons); and Southgate, “In Spite of All This,” 106–21 (who differentiates between moral and natural evil and argues that on the Cross God takes responsibility for human suffering, esp. 116).

Resurrection as aspects of the incarnate life and ministry of Jesus, who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6).

Contexts and Areas of Focus

Contextuality and focus are other considerations in trauma-informed theology. As Rambo suggests, the question of “whether the use of trauma theory is contextually specific and, more pointedly, raced” should be considered.⁵³ Thus, as with other fields of inquiry, gender, race, (dis)ability, and so forth are important contextual factors in trauma-informed theologies, which could be considered akin to etiological factors in psychological terms.⁵⁴ Other focal points include generational trauma,⁵⁵ congregational or group trauma,⁵⁶ trauma and pastors (whether as perpetrators, survivors, witnesses, care-givers, or otherwise),⁵⁷ trauma and evangelism and spiritual abuse,⁵⁸ sexual abuse,⁵⁹ individual trauma,⁶⁰ war,⁶¹ ecological trauma,⁶² trauma and

⁵³ Rambo, “Foreword,” 15; cf. “Theopoetics of Trauma,” 225.

⁵⁴ For example, Rambo (*Resurrecting Wounds*) explores trauma in terms of gender, race, and war, considering how Christianity has often sought to cover deep wounds rather than appropriately expose, live with, and (eventually) heal them. Regarding an Afro-Caribbean congregational context see Gardner, “Responding to Disaster,” 134–48. See also Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 167–89; Betcher, “Running the Gauntlet of Humiliation: Disablement in/as Trauma,” 63–88; Hauge, “Trauma of Racism,” 89–114; Abraham, “Traumas of Belonging,” 267–90.

⁵⁵ E.g., Chapter 3, “Christian Forgiveness: Healing the Emotional Wounds of Childhood,” in Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 42–69; cf. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xii–xiii.

⁵⁶ E.g., Hudson, *Congregational Trauma* and many of the essays in Warner et al., eds., *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*, such as Wiebe, “A Faith-Based Approach to Healing,” 64–80; Layzell, “Pastoral Response to Congregational Tragedy,” 197–210.

⁵⁷ In *Recovering from Un-natural Disasters*, Kraus et al. address both pastors and congregations. Hunsinger (*Bearing the Unbearable*, 19) identifies the unique dual role of pastors in faith communities as those who care for others even while being affected themselves when there is trauma in the community.

⁵⁸ E.g., Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*.

⁵⁹ E.g., Heath, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse*.

⁶⁰ E.g., Ison, “Embodied and Systemic Approach,” 47–63. In *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, Cynthia Hess considers both individual and communal issues in an integrated manner.

⁶¹ E.g., Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 109–43.

⁶² E.g., Wallace, “Elegy for a Lost World,” 135–54; McCarroll, “Embodying Theology,” 294–308.

spirituality,⁶³ and even the form of theology.⁶⁴ Further, there are varying degrees of emphasis on public and private contexts and implications.⁶⁵ And primary and secondary trauma are related yet distinct issues that receive varying degrees of attention.⁶⁶

While context and focus remain important for trauma-informed theology, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger recognizes that trauma affects every area of life. She envisages a series of concentric circles that describe the various levels/contexts: personal, interpersonal, severe interpersonal (involving betrayal of trust), intergenerational, structural (e.g., poverty, racism, and displacement), and finally ecological disasters and moral catastrophes (e.g., war, genocide, and terrorism).⁶⁷ Recognizing such far-reaching contexts and consequences, it becomes increasingly difficult to view trauma as an entirely exceptional (uncommon) experience or occurrence, though trauma is exceptionally (extremely) dehumanizing and damaging.⁶⁸

Trauma and the Eucharist

Trauma-informed theologies approach the Eucharist in a variety of ways. Many trauma-informed theologians insist that recognition of trauma in church communities is a fundamental point that

⁶³ E.g., McConnaughey, *Trauma in the Pews*.

⁶⁴ Rambo ("Theopoetics of Trauma," 223–39) explores the need to consider what forms of theology have the capacity to theologically speak of trauma, arguing for the need for poetic modes of release that resist full explanation and instead stir desire and create space for transformation. E.g., Zahnd, *Wood between the Worlds*.

⁶⁵ For an example that emphasizes the former see Arel and Rambo, eds., *Post-Traumatic Public Theology*. The chapters in Hunsinger's *Bearing the Unbearable* move back and forth between the two: Chapters 2, 6, and 7 emphasize the former; Chapters 3 and 4 emphasize the latter; and Chapter 5 addresses both.

⁶⁶ Primary trauma is first-hand experience and secondary trauma is less direct yet still overwhelming (e.g., hearing about another person's trauma). See Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xiii; Travis, *Unspeakable*, 12. For an example focusing on the latter see Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 70–82.

⁶⁷ She describes these as circles of hell (on earth). See Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, xi.

⁶⁸ For a contextualized view of trauma and dehumanization, see Scarsella, "Trauma and Theology," 263–70, where she names four aspects of human personhood: interpersonal relation; divine-human relation; the interconnection of freedom, vulnerability, and evil; and gift as a possibility for new life.

requires ongoing attention. Rambo, for instance, challenges Calvin's anti-transubstantiationist erasure of Jesus' post-Resurrection wounds after Thomas encounters him in the Gospel of John, a reading that she says effectively disembodies (i.e., hyper-spiritualizes and abstracts) both wounds and healing in the present age.⁶⁹ Most trauma-informed engagements with the Eucharist attempt to deal in some way with the tensions between death and life, trauma and healing, giving and receiving, sharing and sustenance. These perspectives are reviewed below, including certain critiques that help situate the need for and contribution of this dissertation.

From a Catholic perspective, Marcus Pound is fundamentally interested in transubstantiation as an unfathomable mystery, arguing that "the Eucharist only works if God breaks (*trauma*) into time, *every* time, and is not simply celebrated as an act of remembrance."⁷⁰ And in a close reading of Luther, Dirk Lange rejects a view of the Cross as violent sacrifice, instead exploring the *Didache* as informative for a eucharistic ritual that does not repeat violence but rather something "inaccessible": the Christ event.⁷¹ The Christ event, he argues, is "traumatic" in that it resists meaning and language, returning as "a force that continually disrupts our usual forms of remembering and ritualizing."⁷² Similarly, O'Donnell wishes to centre celebration of the Eucharist on the Annunciation-Incarnation event rather than the Crucifixion

⁶⁹ Some of the key problems she identifies are the invalidation (or shaming) of human experience and the occlusion of testimony regarding trauma since the wounds remain. See Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 17–42, esp. 26, 29–30.

⁷⁰ Pound, *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, xiv, emphasis original. For another perspective on real presence and the materiality of the Eucharist with attention to trauma, see O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 127–66, esp. 128–36.

⁷¹ Lange, *Trauma Recalled*, esp. 10–11.

⁷² The transcendent yet experiential nature of the Eucharist is important. However, Lange (Lange, *Trauma Recalled*, 9–11, 16, 93–124, 177–78, here 9) concludes that the Christ event is traumatic because it is something Jesus suffers rather than controls. Cf. Lange, "Trauma Theory and Liturgy," 127–32. However, as Hess (*Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, 120) points out, Jesus did so knowingly and voluntarily, which is not the same as most of the traumas others suffer without consent.

and Resurrection.⁷³ One of her key points regarding the Eucharist is that it is an act of “non-identical repetition” of the Annunciation-Incarnation event with a crucial difference: rather than being present in Mary’s womb, Christ becomes present in the bodies of all who receive his body and blood.⁷⁴

However, these approaches (at times) evidence oversimplified understandings of trauma leveraged as heuristic devices and therefore do not do justice to the lived, embodied experiences of traumatized members of the Body of Christ or the cruciform gift of Christ himself. In fact, Susan Brison says misunderstandings of traumatic disruption are evidence of “the latent dualism that still informs society’s most prevalent attitude to trauma.”⁷⁵ And Hilary Scarsella constructively critiques certain conceptualizations and usages of trauma as rupture, observing that they often assume one begins in place of substantial safety and security.⁷⁶ Thus, the theological appropriations of trauma above (particularly Pound and Lange) may not be appropriate, accurate, or helpful for trauma-informed (or trauma-sensitive) theology or celebrations of the Eucharist.

At the same time, O’Donnell’s emphasis on God’s creative, generative life in regard to the Eucharist is a vital and helpful aspect of her theology.⁷⁷ In her more recent work, she argues

⁷³ See O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 14–16, 57, 167–69.

⁷⁴ See O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 19–21, 57. Similarly, Catherine Pickstock (*Repetition and Identity*, 177) emphasizes the significance of the Words of Consecration in the Roman Rite (in Latin). And James Heaney (*Beyond the Body*, 70) stresses that the Eucharist is a non-historical repetition.

⁷⁵ Brison, *Aftermath*, 44; cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 33–34. Not dissimilarly, Bryan Stone (“Trauma, Reality, and Eucharist,” 37–52, here 38) argues that the “commodification, sensationalization, and sentimentalization” of reality television discredit it as a healing witness to real trauma: it obscures and covers at least as much as it reveals.

⁷⁶ Scarsella, “Trauma and Theology,” 280–81.

⁷⁷ See O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 181–83. However, the Cross of Christ does not stand outside God’s creative, life-giving relationship with humanity; instead, the Cross is the most extreme and radical, naked and raw, wise and powerful, act of God’s creative transformation in his relationship with humanity.

that the Eucharist can contribute to trauma recovery while keeping in mind that it can present or reveal problems that need to be addressed.⁷⁸ She proposes “careful curation” that is sensitively selective with readings, language, and delivery.⁷⁹ Serene Jones begins her (earlier) book with the story of a traumatized woman fleeing a worship service after being triggered by the liturgy of the Eucharist. From there, Jones pursues the task of “finding the language to speak grace in a form that allows it to come toward humanity in ways as gentle as they are profound and powerful.”⁸⁰ Similarly, Christopher Southgate advocates for eucharistic practices and liturgies that focus on life, not death, in the wake of communal tragedy and trauma.⁸¹ The Eucharist, he maintains, is the Church’s outward expression of the threefold narrative of creation, Cross, and eschaton. At the same time, Cockayne et al. emphasize the importance of liturgies that provide safe space for free, honest lament.⁸² As a relief to the chaos of trauma and its aftermath, they recognize that well-crafted liturgy can be “an incredible balm” for trauma survivors “because it gives clear guidelines and expectations” in a communal, embodied, and multisensory environment.⁸³ Thus,

⁷⁸ See O’Donnell, “Eucharist and Trauma,” 182–93. She says the Eucharist reflects ruptures in body (Christ’s broken body and shed blood), time (remembrance and eschatological hope), and cognition (in its mystery and the spiritual dynamic of faith). And that the Eucharist can complement talk-therapy in providing a safe place, a coherent narrative, and communal reconnection (188–89). She emphasizes the importance of the community listening/witnessing to the reconstructive trauma narrative, remaining in Holy Saturday before moving to Easter Sunday. Thus, the Eucharist is the crux, the nexus of vertical witness (remembering Christ) and horizontal witness (seeing others). She also reminds us that the ongoing, repetitive nature of the ritual of the Eucharist is what it means to live in the aftermath of the trauma. Thus, O’Donnell seeks to walk between the extremes of too high and too low views of the Eucharist. The former places too much power in the ritual itself as an inevitable cure-all, while the latter cannot imagine any benefits for trauma survivors (192).

⁷⁹ O’Donnell, “Eucharist and Trauma,” 193.

⁸⁰ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, here xxii, 3–12.

⁸¹ For this and following, see Southgate, “‘In Spite of All This’,” esp. 116–20; cf. “Trauma and the Narrative Life of Congregations,” 122–33. For further attention to liturgical matters in regard to trauma, Grosch-Miller et al., “Enabling the Work of the People,” 149–66. For a list of liturgies specifically developed for trauma survivors and those suffering from PTSD, see Gould, “Healing the Wounded Heart,” 293–313.

⁸² See Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 194–203; cf. Warner, “Teach to Your Daughters a Dirge,” 167–81. For discussion of lament in relation to trauma and preaching, see Travis, *Unspeakable*, 106–20.

⁸³ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 200.

while the manner in which the Eucharist is theologically founded and framed is crucial, its practice remains a critical point of entry into and ongoing engagement with the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ for members of the Church. Therefore, theory and application must work hand-in-hand to (in)form appropriately trauma-aware participation in the Eucharist.

In her PhD dissertation, Sheila McCarthy establishes a deep connection between trauma recovery and eucharistic liturgy.⁸⁴ McCarthy argues that the embodied, communal narrative of eucharistic liturgy contributes to recovery and healing from trauma since it involves “integration, power, regaining and contextualizing memory, calm, trust, and relationship.”⁸⁵ Moreover, she argues that Jesus’ experience of trauma and triumph over shame through the Cross is an essential aspect of recovery from trauma and moral injury. The centrality of the Crucifixion—not hidden away but put on display—can help trauma survivors reframe and re-narrate their experiences such that the past is no longer in control.⁸⁶

Similarly, Preston Hill describes his own profound experience of the Eucharist as a key aspect of his recovery from trauma: “My brokenness was met by Christ’s broken body in the Eucharist and the larger Body of the corporate church.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, Cockayne et al. describe how the Eucharist helps foster recovery and healing “in embodied ways that speak deeper than words.”⁸⁸ The Eucharist is thus a “double witness” to losses and laments as well as God’s life

⁸⁴ For this and following see McCarthy, “Healing the Body of Christ.” McCarthy pays special attention to moral injury (esp. 1–22) and engages the recent theology of Jenifer Beste, Serene Jones, and Shelly Rambo (48–62) as well as Aquinas (64–139) and Augustine (141–81). Finally, she considers liturgical reform and social regeneration in conversation with Dorothy Day, Virgil Michel, and Ade Bethune (183–244).

⁸⁵ See McCarthy, “Healing the Body of Christ,” 6, here 246.

⁸⁶ E.g., McCarthy, “Healing the Body of Christ,” 245.

⁸⁷ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 146.

⁸⁸ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 145.

and love in healing and wholeness.⁸⁹ They provide the well-balanced view that “the Eucharist is not the sum total of what the Church can offer for trauma care. But the Eucharist provides a paradigm for entering the sacramental worldview of the Christian life because it points to a ritual that summarizes the Christian approach to the whole world.”⁹⁰ Given the trauma-informed debates regarding the Crucifixion discussed above, the paradigmatic nature of the Eucharist in a Christian sacramental worldview warrants further exploration with special attention to the nature and role of the Cross regarding trauma and recovery according to the gospel of Christ Jesus.

Other views of trauma-sensitive celebrations of the Eucharist, however, lean toward dislocations of the Cross, risking a disconnect of theory and practice. For example, Bryan Stone recommends expanded conceptions of redemption that regard the Eucharist as

enacting an ongoing participation in the brokenness of Christ’s body that does not merely perpetuate more broken bodies (or psyches) but that gestures toward a love that remains and heals by helping sufferers imagine a life ahead without suggesting they simply make a “clean break from the past.”⁹¹

And later he says, “At the table of the Lord, there can be no voyeurs, only active participants.”⁹²

While this is a redemptive approach that emphasizes participation, Stone specifically follows Lange in distancing the Eucharist from the Cross and instead focusing on the sharing of bread and wine. His suggestion is that “[r]emembering the Christ event, not through the violence of the cross but through the sharing of bread and wine, serves as a departure from traumatic re-enactment and brings new possibilities for healing and solidarity.”⁹³ Therefore, discerning

⁸⁹ See Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 145–46.

⁹⁰ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 148.

⁹¹ Stone, “Trauma, Reality, and Eucharist,” 53.

⁹² Stone, “Trauma, Reality, and Eucharist,” 55.

⁹³ Stone, “Trauma, Reality, and Eucharist,” 54.

pastoral application of appropriate theological emphasis in celebration of the Eucharist remains an important topic.

Conclusion and Thesis

One of the fundamental recognitions and emphases of well-developed trauma-informed theologies is that the human psyche is not disembodied, but intimately and inextricably connected to the physical body and the spirit. Theologically, it is the incarnate crucified and risen, ascended and returning body of Christ that continues to stand at the centre of Christian life and ministry. While neither the Person Jesus Christ himself nor the Church's life in him are reducible to physical bodies, human bodies are nonetheless integral to Christian faith. Deborah Creamer emphasizes the importance of human bodies for Christians:

Christianity's earliest and most persistent doctrines focus on embodiment. From the Incarnation (*the Word made flesh*) and Christology (*Christ was fully human*) to the Eucharist (*this is my body, this is my blood*), the resurrection of the body, and the church (*the body of Christ who is its head*), Christianity has been a religion of *the body*. We relate to God as corporeal bodies, and in our relations with other human bodies, we experience God. It is the recognition of these experiences of God in our bodies (our own and those of others), and the *critical* reflection on these experiences, that leads us into embodiment theology.⁹⁴

All of these considerations of embodiment theology are crucial. Additionally, the inseparability of the human body from the soul (the mind, will, and emotions) and the spirit must be recognized in a balanced manner for an effective wholistic approach (see Chapter 4).

Regarding the trauma and the Eucharist, while there may be times when participation in the Eucharist is not best approached in an explicitly crucicentric fashion, that does not mean that

⁹⁴ Creamer, "Toward a Theology That Includes the Human Experience of Disability," 63; quoted in O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 1.

the Cross is absent from such celebrations. Instead, the Cross is always present, at least implicitly and unconsciously, and theology should continue to wrestle with the task of bearing faithful witness to this particular aspect of Christ's life and ministry. Many times, this may be a retrospective, reflective practice, not something that is always liturgically or pastorally explicit. Yet it remains a *practical pastoral* theological task since both experience and reflection are essential to Christian theology, life, and ministry and since theologically-informed re-narration and/or integrative processing is a crucial aspect of trauma recovery in Christian community and life.

The aims, commitments, and insights of feminist, womanist, and mujerista trauma-informed theologies are vitally important and cannot be ignored or sidelined.⁹⁵ While remaining attentive to and engaged with these and other viewpoints, trauma-informed theology from other perspectives or positions stands to benefit the Church, academy, and world as well. One need not come at the expense of the other. As Warner et al. note, "a particular writer with a particular voice may be able to convey meaning to certain readers in a way that other writers are not."⁹⁶ Therefore, a harmonious chorus of many voices is the most appropriate way to bear witness to trauma and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

As a male theologian and member of the Church, I think it is also not only possible but imperative that a participatory trauma-informed theology of the Eucharist closely attend to the

⁹⁵ Accordingly, this dissertation also follows the practices of ethical citation outlined by Jonathan Bernier (*Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament*, xxxvi), which does not engage works authored by Nazis or those who have been credibly accused of, convicted of, or have confessed harassment, sexual assault/abuse, or exploitation.

⁹⁶ Warner et al., "Introduction," 6.

nature of suffering, trauma, and death according to the Cross of Christ.⁹⁷ Preaching Christ, and him crucified, remains at the core of Christian life and ministry, including the Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 2:2; 11:26), though perhaps not always in explicit ways. In other words, taking seriously the feminist trauma theology assertion that it is essential to “do theology from the place where it hurts,”⁹⁸ this dissertation considers not just modern human experiences of trauma (my own or those of others) but more fundamentally the Cross of Christ as the central, paradigmatic, and *communing* “place where it hurts,” yet also the only place that mercifully leads to healing and resurrection life. Hence, the Cross as the pivotal site of trauma is seen most clearly only from the perspective of resurrection life; therefore, the Crucifixion and Resurrection must not be separated. Still, if trauma is a pervasive human problem, how does the brutal, traumatic Crucifixion of Christ (and its relation to the Eucharist) contribute to the good news? This dissertation seeks to respond to this question from a trauma-informed perspective that rejects oppression, abuse, and (re)traumatization in the name of (the Cross of) Christ yet takes seriously the Cross as a paradigmatic and pivotal site of the Incarnation of Christ that is both salvific and costly yet not abusive for his followers.

At a basic experiential, practical, and personal level, a key premise of this dissertation is that if one experiences non-harmful suffering or the redemption of traumatic suffering *with/in Christ*, it is less likely that one will attempt to legitimize abuse and oppression, force them upon others, or unintentionally perpetuate them (see discussion in Chapter 8).⁹⁹ Since abuse continues

⁹⁷ Cockayne et al. recognize that in making the church trauma-safe, “we all need one another to do this work well.” Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, xiv. Scarsella (“Trauma and Theology,” 276) asserts a similar point regarding the importance of bearing witness (in a theological sense) to the traumas of others.

⁹⁸ O'Donnell, “Voices of the Marys,” 26.

⁹⁹ This is not to say that Christ inflicts harmful suffering on his followers, but rather that being human in a broken, traumatized cosmos involves suffering (cf. Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 83–84).

within churches, since certain theologies continue to oppress and silence particular voices, and since wounded people often end up wounding others, the call of Christ to follow him to the Cross and beyond remains imperative for the benefit of all members of the Body of Christ.¹⁰⁰ And since the Cross is the site of the breaking of Jesus' body and the shedding of his blood, it remains a pivotal and paradigmatic aspect of the communal celebration of the Eucharist.

Therefore, this dissertation argues that within the incarnate life and ministry of Christ, the Cross is the crucial site at which God in Christ integratively processes the trauma of sin and death, inviting humanity to the healing, wholeness, and reintegration of salvation in Jesus Christ. Through trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist as the invitatory invocation of his Cross, the Church communes with/in Christ and participates in his life and ministry, both receiving and sharing the saving life of Christ, which includes recovery from the past, sustenance in the present, and hope for the future.

Considering sin and trauma as the conditions that Christ's incarnate life, death, and Resurrection address, the celebration of the Eucharist in the Church today must appropriately integrate psychological understandings of trauma in order for congregants to participate properly in the cruciform life and ministry of Christ, which brings healing and hope to humanity. By understanding sin and salvation from a trauma-informed perspective, the ways the Church participates in the cruciform suffering and death, resurrection life, and eternal hope of Christ—

Following Christ in this context entails both joy and sorrow as we heal from wounds (which is not a painless process) and face opposition to the gospel of Christ.

¹⁰⁰ O'Donnell (*Broken Bodies*, 11, 59, 180, 200–1) maintains that Christianity is a religion of the body in which the ecclesial body of Christ is traumatized because its individual members are traumatized. However, given that Christ is definitive of the church—the church exists as a body (being) formed in the image of Christ—it should also be recognized that the body of Christ is risen. Thus, the hope of eschatological resurrection should also characterize the life of the body of Christ despite the trauma that endures at present.

particularly through the celebration of the Eucharist—become more clear. Accordingly, a trauma-informed cruciform paradigm (or gospel) of death and resurrection provides the participatory image for (or invitation to) the redemption of suffering, hope, and healing in communion with Christ through the power of the Spirit according to the will of the Father.

CHAPTER 3

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMATOLOGY: METHODOLOGY

“Christian liturgy holds within it an unclaimed memory and experience of trauma, and an unacknowledged instinct for trauma recovery.”

—Karen O’Donnell¹

“I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

—1 Cor 2:2

Constructive Practical Theology

The relational currents between theology and psychology have been turbulent at times. Given the considerable depths of each discipline, it is not surprising that one need not wade far into the discussion to feel pulled in several directions at once. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger maintains that “pastoral theology is intrinsically interdisciplinary,” particularly as it seeks to address “virtually every form of human suffering.”² And she specifically notes the fields of psychology

¹ O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 3.

² Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, xii. While many theologians have engaged the topic of human suffering, not all have done so with an understanding of the effects of trauma—nor could they. For example, Dorothee Sölle has addressed suffering in numerous works, but she did not have access to current scientific understandings of trauma. Instead, she draws on the three dimensions of suffering involved in affliction (*malheur*) identified by Simone Weil (*Waiting for God*, 117–36): physical, psychological, and social. Sölle (*Suffering*, 13–16) argues that these dimensions are unified such that suffering “threatens every dimension of life.” She uses Psalms of lament as examples and describes the Passion of Christ as a narrative of suffering that is “falsified whenever it is robbed of one of its dimensions.” While modern psychological traumatology corroborates some of the fundamental claims of Weil and Sölle, more nuanced understanding of the connections between mind and body (or psychological and physiological) as well as social situation has developed. Additionally, Sölle’s views on the Cross have certain theological problems. For instance, her claim that Jesus is “a man whose goal is shattered” does not align with Jesus’ own claim that his suffering and death is necessary and therefore purposeful, not accidental (see Mark 8:31). Sölle thereby misses the power of the Cross to address suffering and trauma beyond mere solidarity. The three dimensions of affliction above should also include the spiritual. For a trauma-informed engagement with Weil’s work, see Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 150–51

and psychotherapy as well as others.³ The interdisciplinary nature of pastoral theology is fundamentally based on the (ongoing) life and ministry of Christ, which the Church undertakes in participative union with the Son through the power of the Spirit according to the will of the Father.⁴

In general, scholars with specializations in the field of psychology or other (social) sciences have given more attention to methods and systems of integration.⁵ On the other hand, theologians who integrate psychological traumatology tend to provide traumatological overviews and then move to theological discussions that involve attention to trauma in some way, though not always with a well-defined methodology. Key practical theological trends involve narrative approaches that attend to human experience and the (re)formation of theological imagination.⁶ Earlier works tended to lean on historical or literary methods,⁷ but many more recent works have more in common with constructive theology, involving historical reflection, critical analysis and evaluation, and constructive propositions that address contemporary issues.⁸ I will follow the approach of practical constructive theology described by Karen O'Donnell, though with some theological recalibration and not from the same feminist position.

³ She also names biblical studies, economics, sociology, political science, ethics, literary studies, poetry and the arts, criminal justice, and peace studies. Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, xii. Similarly, Lizzette Larson-Miller (*Sacramentality Renewed*, x–xii, 11–12) notes that sacramental and liturgical theology (academically and pastorally) are interdisciplinary by nature. Amongst other fields and disciplines, she specifically names psychology. And in their review of sacramental theological literature, Duffy et al. (“Sacramental Theology,” 705) conclude that “Sacramental theology can no longer be done without an interdisciplinary approach.”

⁴ See Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*; Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*.

⁵ For seminal works see Stevenson et al., eds., *Psychology and Christianity Integration*.

⁶ For recent examples see Graham, “After the Fire,” 13–27; Grosch-Miller, “‘In Spite of All This’,” 28–44; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*.

⁷ E.g., Rambo, “Haunted (by the) Gospel,” 936–41.

⁸ See O'Donnell, “Voices of the Marys,” 30.

O'Donnell identifies four principles of constructive theology that apply to trauma-informed theology: "a recognition of change or development taking place; a mandate to draw on resources both within and beyond the Christian tradition; an identification of a multitude of theologies; and finally the construction of a theology that is in continuity with the goods deeply embedded in the tradition of Christian faith."⁹ O'Donnell also notes that "the principles of trauma and trauma recovery were well understood by the ancient liturgists," such that they provide an "unclaimed memory and experience of trauma [as well as] an unacknowledged instinct for trauma recovery."¹⁰ Therefore, this dissertation takes seriously ancient Christian theology as an appropriate and fruitful source for trauma-informed theology today.¹¹ Thus, my approach also aligns with the *resourcement* theology Hans Boersma aims to provide as a retrieval of Patristic and other historical theological resources. Much like my argument regarding the recapitulation of trauma on the Cross (see Chapter 4), Boersma links fundamental understandings of the Trinity, salvation, sin, and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.¹² Applied to my study, engaging in constructive resourcement theology means recognizing that modern understandings of trauma necessitate attention to the theory and practice of the Eucharist, since it remembers and re-narrates the trauma of the Crucifixion (among other things) and since it can be a trauma trigger for congregants. Understandings of human beings, sin

⁹ O'Donnell, "Voices of the Marys," 27.

¹⁰ O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 3.

¹¹ This also aligns with the contextual theological approach employed by Charles Kiser and Elaine Heath (Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 5, emphasis original; quoting Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 37), which recognizes that all theology is contextual, viewing "theological tradition as passed down through the centuries as *a series of local theologies*."

¹² He also emphasizes the church Fathers' discerning Platonist-Christian synthesis and traces problematic developments in church tradition, especially regarding the sacraments. See Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 11–51; "Patristic Interpretation and Real Presence," 3–15.

and salvation, atonement, sacrifice, and sacraments (which are all embedded in the celebration of the Eucharist) are examined from a trauma-informed perspective in order to provide constructive reconceptualizations that help describe and “imagine what life-giving faith can be in today’s world.”¹³ The resources of modern psychological traumatology provide key theoretical and practical approaches to addressing trauma within the life and ministry of the Church, especially the Eucharist.

By addressing the lived reality of traumatized members of the Body of Christ, the Church, this constructive trauma-informed method is also inherently practical. Thus, it follows the procedure of practical theology that critically engages with the “dissonance between theology and lived reality.”¹⁴ This procedure includes the descriptive task of asking what is happening, the interpretive task of asking why, and the pragmatic task of suggesting transformative responses.¹⁵

Rather than an imitative, technological, or psycho-therapeutic model of ministry, my approach to practical/pastoral theology is fundamentally Christological in both origin and orientation.¹⁶ Andrew Purves describes Christian ministry as “a participation in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, on earth, in heaven, and as the one who will come again.”¹⁷ And Stephen Seamands argues that the ministry of the Church “is the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world.”¹⁸ Thus, my practical/pastoral theology does not seek to describe what humans can accomplish by their own

¹³ Lakefield and Jones, eds., *Constructive Theology*, 1; cf. O’Donnell, “Voices of the Marys,” 28.

¹⁴ O’Donnell and Cross, eds., *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, 18.

¹⁵ See O’Donnell and Cross, eds., *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, 18.

¹⁶ For a sampling of various views, see Dykstra, ed., *Images of Pastoral Care*.

¹⁷ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xvi.

¹⁸ Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 9–10, 15, 20, emphasis original. Cf Andrew Root, *Christopraxis*; Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity; Participating in Christ*.

efforts or expertise, but rather through union with Christ and participation in his life and ministry by the power of the Spirit according to the will of the Father.

In my work, the description and interpretation of the Crucifixion from a trauma-informed perspective is one half of a hermeneutical spiral that also seeks to understand trauma according to the Crucifixion of Christ. As Irenaeus puts it, “our teaching is in harmony with the eucharist, and the eucharist confirms our teaching.”¹⁹ In other words, the dynamic is a hermeneutical spiral in which theoretical and practical discourses revolve around Christ at the centre, the “still point.”²⁰ The “double-witness” to the “laments and losses” of trauma and to “God’s ongoing presence and agency”²¹ leads to suggestions for transformative responses, particularly regarding the Church’s participation in the life and ministry of Christ.

Importantly, the practical constructive method I employ does not seek to break with tradition but rather to rediscover “ancient ways of being or doing”²² albeit with new language, insights, contexts, and practices. As a crucial way to maintain continuity with Christian tradition and apostolic witness, this dissertation will consistently engage Scripture, particularly New Testament literature that describes Christ’s life and ministry, death and Resurrection, and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. For example, as noted above, preaching Christ, and him crucified, and proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes are maintained as essential (though at

¹⁹ *Haer.* 4.18.5 (in Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 13).

²⁰ Cf. Knowles, “Scripture, History, Messiah,” 59–82; Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 80–86.

²¹ Quoted from the New Studies in Theology and Trauma series introduction in Travis, *Unspeakable*, viii; cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, x, 129–37.

²² O’Donnell, “Voices of the Marys,” 28.

times implicit) aspects of Christian life and ministry, including celebration of the Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 2:2, 11:26).

Thus, while engaging in dialogue between Christian theology and scientific psychological sources of knowledge and understanding, this multivalent approach first situates itself within a self-aware Christian worldview. Rather than traumatology telling us how to be saved, trauma studies help us understand and describe how *Christ* loves and saves, and consequently, help us understand how the Church may participate in the life and ministry of Christ. At the same time, rather than trauma being merely a retrospective lens for an ancient event and understanding, since Christ actively (re)defines the Roman cross and exposes sin, the Crucifixion of Christ ultimately “defines” trauma and *fulfills* the human need to integratively process trauma. In other words, modern psychological traumatology provides new language and conceptualizations for understanding and articulating the gospel of Christ, including the Cross, while the Person of Christ remains the definitive Word made flesh (cf. John 1:1), the one who enters into, integratively processes, and transforms suffering, trauma, and death.

Using trauma as a disruptive lens for theology—as some of the works of trauma-informed theology reviewed in the previous chapter have done—may be necessary at times, but it also risks limiting its perspective to human experience, which is prone to unintentionally project itself onto God. In other words, there need to be careful considerations for how to distinguish between *traumatized* views and *trauma-informed* views. A Christian worldview fundamentally informed by an encounter with Christ—which may involve revised memories of trauma (in mind and body)—is an appropriate and stable (though not static) theological foundation. Put differently, it is precisely the trauma of sin—the dissociations and disintegrations of the human body, mind, and spirit; the alterations in cognition, mood, and affect; the

dysregulation and hypervigilance of the nervous system; the ongoing pain; the isolating alienation from God, self, others, and creation—that prevents us from recognizing God with us and understanding the gospel of Christ. Without an encounter with the incarnate revelation of God with us in Christ, humans are not even capable of beginning to know and live in the depth of God’s love or the breadth of the good news of Christ.

The practical constructive methodology I will use is also domain-based (addressing different areas of thought, discourse, and life),²³ multidimensional (addressing multiple realms and levels of existence and the whole human being, including body, soul, and spirit),²⁴ and relational and personal (taking seriously embodied experiences and emotional/relational needs).²⁵ These aspects of the methodology result from the analysis and synthesis of key approaches to integrating theology and psychology. Importantly, Hunsinger observes that ministry cannot replace the work of psychotherapy or psychiatry but is an essential part of the healing process.²⁶ It is my conviction and claim that not only do these disciplines stand to mutually benefit from interdisciplinary dialogue, but that appropriate Christian integration of these fields of study and spheres of application is imperative to the fundamental aims of each and the participation of the

²³ See Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, esp. 15–17 for overview.

²⁴ Cf. Ingram, “Comtemporary Issues and Christian Models of Integration,” 3–14; Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 9–10.

²⁵ Cf. Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, esp. 67; Gillies, *Deep Impact*, 41–48; Johnson, *Attachment Theory in Practice*, esp. 6, 66, 181.

²⁶ Hunsinger, “Bearing the Unbearable,” 21; cf. Boerger, “Original Wound,” 315–19; Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 4.

Church in the ongoing redemptive and restorative work of Christ in the world today through the power of the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father.

The following sections further discuss interdisciplinary approaches and typologies, domains of integration, multidimensionality, and the personal and relational aspects of my methodology. I will analyze and synthesize these methodological categorizations, approaches, and applications, discussing specific examples. As trauma-informed theology is a recent and growing field, the following methodological synthesis is itself a constructive contribution to the field.

Interdisciplinary Typologies: Categorizing the Integration of Theology and Psychology

Long before the field of modern psychology existed, disciples of Christ (theologians and others) were grappling with what it means to live faithfully in the world and how to help fellow followers of Christ do so as well.²⁷ The modern scholarly discussion of the integration of theology and psychology began in the 1950s.²⁸ Since then, some scholars have attempted to categorize the various ways theology and psychology have been related to each other.²⁹ At a high level, Eric Johnson and Stanton Jones identify three overarching views on the “proper relationship of science and religion:” (1) perpetual conflict; (2) independence, wherein each asks fundamentally different questions according to incommensurable methods; and (3) “mutual

²⁷ See Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*; Sullender, *Ancient Sins . . . Modern Addictions*; Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 24–25; Johnson and Jones, eds., *Psychology and Christianity*, 11–20.

²⁸ Stevenson, “Nature of Integration,” 2–3; Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 22.

²⁹ For a brief introduction see Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 67–70. For a collection of seminal works with introductory commentary and suggestions for further study see Stevenson et al., eds., *Psychology and Christianity Integration*.

interaction and constructive influence” with the possibility of mutual advantage.³⁰ Similarly, Steven Sandage and Jeannine Brown provide a table outlining three significant assessments (reproduced in Table 1 below):

<i>Carter (1977) Typology</i>	<i>Barbour (1990) Typology</i>	<i>Entwistle (2010) Typology</i>	<i>Examples of Defined Views for Psychology & Christianity</i>
Against	Conflict	Enemies	Biblical Counseling
Of	n/a	Spies Colonialists	Psychology of Religion Christian Psychology
Parallels	Independence Dialogue	Neutral Parties	Levels of Explanation
Integrates	Integration	Allies	Integration

Table 1: Interdisciplinary Typologies³¹

Sandage and Brown find Carter’s four categories of relationships the most heuristically useful. *Against* approaches view “psychology and religion as epistemologically incompatible and competing disciplines” to such an extent that the other discipline may be superficial, irrelevant, or even dangerous.³² Next, *of* or *assimilation* approaches attempt to “‘solve’ interdisciplinary tensions through the use of hierarchy,” in which the dominant discipline reductively assimilates information from the other interpreted according to the framework of the first.³³ *Parallel*

³⁰ Johnson and Jones, eds., *Psychology and Christianity*, 23.

³¹ Reproduced from Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 25; cf. Carter, “Secular and Sacred Models,” esp. 199, 204; Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science*; Entwistle, *Integrative Approaches*. See also Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 70–80.

³² Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 26; cf. Freud, “Autobiographical Study,” 20:7–74; Skinner, *About Behaviorism*; Browning and Cooper, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*, 125–26; Akin and Pace, *Pastoral Theology*; Powlinson, “Biblical Counseling,” 245–73; Day, “Incarnational Christian Psychology and Psychotherapy,” 535–44.

³³ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 26–28, 31–35, here 26; cf. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*; Cooper-White, “W. R. D. Fairbairn,” 1–5; Linehan, *Cognitive-behavioral Treatment; DBT Skills*.

approaches view each discipline as discrete with no real overlap, allowing for mutual respect but not mutual influence.³⁴ Another version of the parallel approach is *correlation*, which seeks to align similar concepts from each discipline, yet gives little attention to the worldviews behind the concepts and may ignore more nuanced yet significant differences.³⁵ These parallel or correlative approaches come under criticism for dealing with interdisciplinary tensions through *minimization*, which makes superficial connections while glossing over meaningful differences.³⁶ Finally, *integration* approaches “assume that God is the author of all truth and so seek to bring together psychology and theology for formulating congruent and unified understandings of human behavior.”³⁷ These approaches aim for deeper, multifaceted integration between psychology and theology at the levels of both theory and application.³⁸

Domain-Based Approach: Analyzing and Synthesizing Systems of Integration

While the typological categorization above is helpful, the limitations of Carter’s typology (and others) are revealed by the inclusion of Andrew Purves’s pastoral theology in the *against* approach.³⁹ Although I can see why it may appear that Purves takes a stance against psychology, in this case (and others) it is helpful to draw on additional systems of integration in order to

³⁴ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 28–29, 38; cf. Tillich, *Shaking of the Foundations*; Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, esp. 69; Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*; *Analogical Imagination*, esp. 64; Graham et al., *Theological Reflection*, 128–53.

³⁵ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 28–29. For example, Graham et al. (*Theological Reflection*, Ch. 5, “‘Speaking of God in Public’: Correlation,” 128–53) begin by discussing the public theological engagements of Paul in Athens, Justin Martyr, Thomas Aquinas, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Karl Rahner.

³⁶ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 29; cf. Bennett, “Becoming Interculturally Competent,” 62–77.

³⁷ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 29; cf. Cooper-White, “‘I Do Not Do the Good I Want,’” 63–84; *Shared Wisdom*; Doehring, *Practice of Pastoral Care*.

³⁸ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 29.

³⁹ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 41.

clarify what aspect of theology or psychology is being opposed, assimilated, paralleled or correlated, or integrated. To that end, the domain-based schema provided by William Hathaway and Mark Yarhouse helps make sense of different models and approaches while not rigidly compartmentalizing them. Hathaway and Yarhouse identify the domains of worldview, theoretical, applied (including implicit and explicit applications), role, and personal integration (see Fig. 1).⁴⁰ But they also recognize that these domains are not necessarily exhaustive since other domains may be fruitfully explored in integration efforts.⁴¹

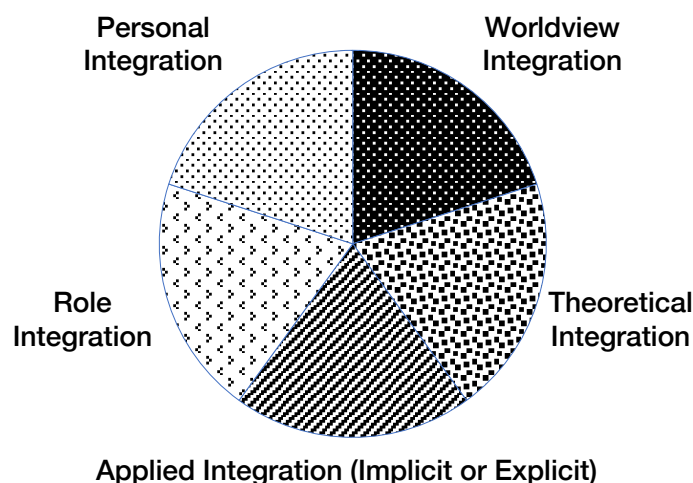


Figure 1: Domains of Integration⁴²

According to the domain-based approach of Hathaway and Yarhouse, worldview integration attempts to (re)situate psychology within a coherent Christian framework of intellectual thought (theology), which involves self-awareness and attention to one's perhaps unconscious assumptions.⁴³ Regarding the hierarchical ordering of the assimilationist approach

⁴⁰ See Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 15–17 for an overview.

⁴¹ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 149.

⁴² Adapted from Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 17.

⁴³ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 15–17, 41–66.

described above, I suggest that to a certain extent such an approach is appropriate and, indeed, necessary in the worldview domain: the experiential and intellectual grounding of a Trinitarian relational Christian worldview should be the foundational position from which *Christian* scientific and psychological inquiry is conducted, articulated, and assessed.⁴⁴ Next, a theory is constructed from what one sees when looking out from one's worldview.⁴⁵ Hence, theoretical integration aims to "construct, synthesize, or correlate Christian thought with psychological theory."⁴⁶ In the theoretical domain, concepts, insights, and perspectives may have a more mutually informative relationship between theology and psychology.⁴⁷ In order to avoid the pitfall of a minimalistic or reductive interaction described above, this dissertation began by surveying and describing expert psychological insights into trauma, its effects, its treatments, and so on. The domain of applied integration enacts theories and attempts to adapt or accommodate secular approaches for Christian use or to develop explicitly Christian approaches based on Christian thought and practice (or theology and tradition/life).⁴⁸ Role integration involves efforts to conduct oneself appropriately in professional settings (such as a psychologist in a clinical context or a pastor in a church community) with integrity to one's Christian faith and identity.⁴⁹ And personal integration refers to the ways that people grow and integrate as unique individuals

⁴⁴ In her brief chapter on the integration of psychology and theology, Gillies (*Deep Impact*, 73–77) provides good insight into the importance of beginning with a Christian worldview.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 67.

⁴⁶ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 15–17, 67–93, here 67, 89.

⁴⁷ See also the discussion of a hermeneutical-process approach to integration in Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 80–86.

⁴⁸ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 15–17, 95–122. In clinical settings, applied integration may be either explicit (openly and recognizably Christian) or implicit (guided by Christian beliefs/values without being labelled as such). Forgiveness is considered an explicit applied integration (16, 97–99, 104–5).

⁴⁹ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 16–17, 123–48.

in relationship to God; for Christians, this involves spiritual formation and discipleship.⁵⁰ While a useful framework, the approach of Hathaway and Yarhouse is aimed more towards the field and vocation of psychology—such as how to be a faithful Christian psychologist—and by extension other professions outside church contexts rather than pastoral work within churches. In contrast, my work is aimed primarily towards explicitly Christian ministry with implications for Christian life in general.

One further domain that may merit consideration is *communal* integration, not unlike the *social* or *relational* domain they suggest.⁵¹ Since a community is greater than the sum of its parts and not reducible to the various roles within it, integrating psychology and theology may require attention to *communal* dimensions, or in theological terms, the *ecclesial* domain (see Figure 2).⁵² I suggest the *communal/ecclesial* domain involves three categories of human relations: (1) extra-communal (the Church's situation within and witness to the world); (2) inter-communal (ecumenical relations among parts of the global Body of Christ, both presently and throughout tradition/history); and (3) intra-communal (relationships within particular local church communities). The extra-communal domain is touched on to some extent by Hathaway and Yarhouse with Niebuhr's typology of church-culture relations,⁵³ but the domain and role of the Church collective is not quite the same as either professional role integration or personal integration.

⁵⁰ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 16–17, 149–80.

⁵¹ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 149.

⁵² See, for example, Hess, *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, Ch. 4, "Ecclesial Relations and the Healing of the Self," 89–107, though she does not explicitly use a domain-based schema.

⁵³ Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 123–48.

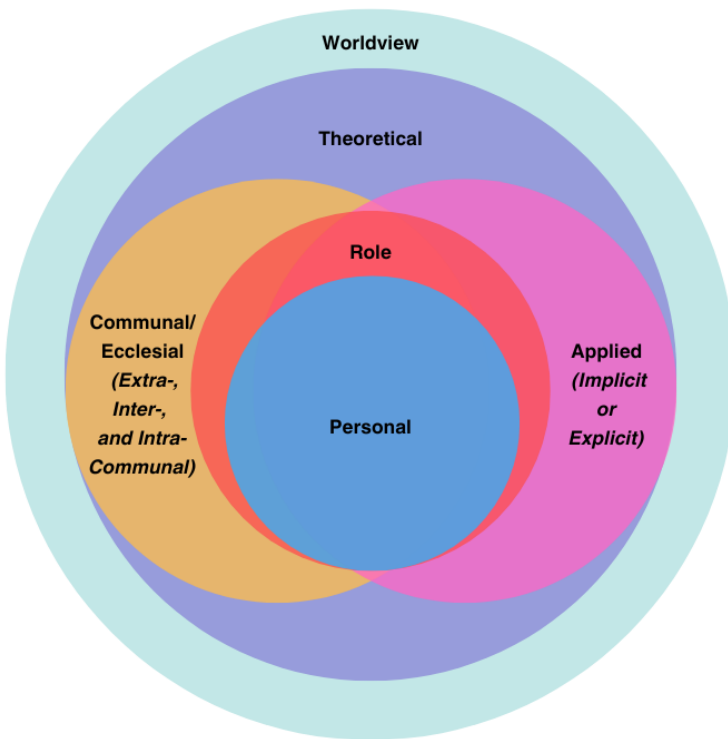


Figure 2: Modified Domains of Integration

The visualization of the modified domains of integration includes the communal/ecclesial domain and also resituates it and all other domains *within* the worldview domain rather than alongside it. This placement emphasizes the fundamental and encompassing nature of the worldview domain. The extent to which various psychological theories can or should influence theological theory is assessed according to a Christian worldview, which is founded and oriented in relation to the Person Jesus Christ, not merely intellectual ideas, beliefs, arguments, or understandings. Thus, this approach is fundamentally and inherently relational.

As a recent example of the communal/ecclesial domain—though they do not use the term or an explicitly domain-based schema—Warner et al. discuss the role of churches in the midst of

and as a result of high-profile tragedies in the United Kingdom.⁵⁴ Local churches were able to provide immediate responses and forms of relief, sometimes as simple as a safe space and a cup of coffee, that local governments were unable to offer. Subsequent services held at larger churches played vital roles in the communal, public processes of recovery. And since then, local authorities have begun to include local churches in the early stages of disaster response planning. Additionally, Kat Wiebe sociologically and theologically examines collective trauma, which is more than the sum of individual wounds.⁵⁵ These examples of integration in the extra-communal/ecclesial domain underscore the importance of the Church's involvement in and relationship with society at large, particularly regarding traumatic tragedies and recovery from them.

Returning to Purves, he critiques Christian theology or ministry that attempts to “organize itself around a psychological interpretation of human experience.”⁵⁶ His issue is not with psychology itself, but with approaches to Christian ministry and theology that displace the Person of Christ with other foundational frames of reference or worldviews for both meaning and ministry.⁵⁷ For example, salvation through self-actualization according to the worldview of a postmodern psychological rubric is anti-Christ from a Christian point of view; instead, rather than functional solutions centred on the individual self, it is the human need for Christ and the salvation that results from union with him to which pastoral care directs people.⁵⁸ Psychological

⁵⁴ For this and the following see Warner et al., eds., *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*, 2–3.

⁵⁵ Wiebe, “A Faith-Based Approach to Healing,” 70–71.

⁵⁶ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xiv.

⁵⁷ Likewise, Christian psychologist Mark McMinn (*Why Sin Matters*, 24–27, here 27) argues that psychology, theology, and spirituality are three vantage points that should be considered together yet which must be “informed by a Christian worldview.”

⁵⁸ Cf. Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 2. J. de Waal Dryden likewise critiques a form of authenticity that focuses on the individual's internal psychological integration such that obedience to God is only

insights may be helpful aspects of pastoral care and clinical psychotherapy may be a helpful method of healing, but the goal and role of the pastor is fundamentally spiritual and centred on Christ through the power of the Spirit according to the will of the Father.⁵⁹ In Christological terms, Purves argues that theology should arise from within the community of the baptized in service to the Church and that “only in the light of Christ, and thinking out from a center in him, can we come to know God rightly, coming to know the Father as Jesus the Son reveals him to us (see Mt 11:27). Knowledge of God can happen only according to the way that Christ himself provided for our understanding.”⁶⁰ While Purves here speaks specifically to the discipline of theology, the importance of a Christ-centred and -informed worldview extends to psychology and its integration as well—if a Christian perspective is desired.

Thus, Purves’s argument is largely a way of clarifying the *roles* various disciplines and practitioners play within a properly oriented Christian faith and *worldview* that appropriately directs ensuing *theoretical* discourse and its *application* in life and ministry, especially in and through the *Church*, with attention to *personal* spirituality. Informed by a domain-based approach, we need not merely (and superficially) classify his work as *against* psychology, but rather we can see that though he does not use these exact terms, Purves implicitly addresses the domains of *worldview*, *theory*, *application*, *ecclesial community*, *role*, and *personal integration*.

In relation to traumatology and drawing specifically on Purves, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger describes pastoral theology as “a theology of God’s care for the world in Jesus Christ,

necessary and appropriate in so far as it assists in the process of self-actualization. See Dryden, *Hermeneutic of Wisdom*, 76–77, 93, 225–26; cf. Boerger, “Paul’s Christomorphic Wisdom,” forthcoming.

⁵⁹ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xxxiii–xxxiv.

⁶⁰ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 17–23, here 21.

in which we are invited to participate.”⁶¹ Accordingly, Hunsinger argues that traumatic loss is irredeemable by human efforts apart from Christ. Thus, Purves’s pastoral theology and the work of some of those who have engaged it in regard to trauma are good examples of how Hathaway and Yarhouse’s integrative domains can help bring clarity to other assessments of and approaches to integration as well as discourse within each discipline.

Multidimensional Approach: Deepening Domains

We have also just touched on the explicitly *spiritual* dimension of pastoral theology and care. In this regard, John Ingram’s multi-perspectival, holistic framework helps provide a way of understanding the interconnected dimensions of life that theology and psychology attempt to address. He it a “theologosociobiophysical” model.⁶² Drawing on the previous models by Rychlak and Sperry,⁶³ he posits a bidirectional, interactive model that includes the dimensions of *theos* (theological/spiritual), *logos* (cognitive, linguistic, and semantic), *socius* (social), *bios* (biological/physiological), and *physikos* (physical laws/forces and environments), with the added directionality of the immanent and transcendent aspects of the *theos* dimension.⁶⁴ Importantly, this is a non-hierarchical model, meaning that any dimension(s) can affect any other dimension(s).⁶⁵ A multidimensional approach adds depth to the otherwise two-dimensional domain model described by Hathaway and Yarhouse since multiple dimensions may be involved in each domain.

⁶¹ Hunsinger, “Bearing the Unbearable,” 9.

⁶² Ingram, “Comtemporary Issues and Christian Models of Integration,” 9.

⁶³ See Rychalk, “Suggested Principle of Complementarity,” 933–42; Sperry, “Impact and Promise,” 878–85.

⁶⁴ Ingram, “Comtemporary Issues and Christian Models of Integration,” 9–10.

⁶⁵ Ingram, “Comtemporary Issues and Christian Models of Integration,” 9, 11.

However, in my view, Ingram's *logos* dimension fails to account for affective dimensions, such as experiences and feelings, particularly those stored in the mind in episodic and emotional rather than semantic memory.⁶⁶ I suggest that *psychikos* (relating to the *soul*) is a better term that can include cognitive, affective, and volitional elements. At the same time, I think it is important that any view of the human being be a thoroughly integrated view such that no part can viably be separated from any other part without catastrophic consequences.⁶⁷ Indeed, Irenaeus is adamant that "human beings, not merely parts of them, were made in the image of God. . . . It is the commingling and union of all these [flesh, soul, and spirit] which constitutes a complete human being."⁶⁸ Regarding Ingram's schema, it would be worth more clearly differentiating between the divine (Holy) Spirit or God (*theos*), the human spirit, and other spiritual beings or dimensions, such as angels and demons, powers and principalities (perhaps *pneumatikos* would be a better term; cf. Eph 6:12). While God is spirit (cf. John 4:24) and humans have a spiritual dimension of their being, humans and other spiritual beings are not transcendent (and immanent) like God. Additionally, it is essential in Christian theology that both the *theos* and *bios* dimensions of the immanence of God be maintained according to the Incarnation of Christ (*hypostatic* union).

The issues of human volition and responsibility in regard to sin will be discussed further below, but for now it is worth noting that Ingram's concluding observations regarding genetics or other *bios* factors—and I would include trauma here to some extent—do not render humans helpless or absolve responsibility; instead, responsibility is increased in terms of awareness of

⁶⁶ Cf. NICABM, "How Trauma Can Impact Four Types of Memory," n.p.

⁶⁷ Cf. Wright, "Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body," 455–73.

⁶⁸ *Haer.* 5.6.1 (*ICF* 160); cf. *Haer.* 5.9.1. See discussion in Chapter 4.

vulnerabilities and ways to deal with and heal them, as well as increasing others' responsibility to provide effective assistance in a compassionate rather than judgmental manner.⁶⁹ And I would want to emphasize that the latter includes informing and educating others and providing practical support, such as financial support for psychotherapy.

In my view, informed by Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality and personal experience, it is essential that Christians recognize that there is a spiritual realm within which our material world is situated.⁷⁰ The spiritual realm includes God, angels, and other spiritual beings that serve him. However, there are also demonic spiritual beings, powers and principalities (Eph 4:16), that oppose the will of God, including the notion of the adversary or Satan (in Hebrew: שָׂטָן; cf. Zech 3:1–2; 1 Chr 21:1). Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck relates his experiences with evil in the world, including demonic possession and exorcism.⁷¹ Referring to specific cases, Peck relates that 95 percent of what he observed was explicable according to psychiatric dynamics, but the remaining 5 percent was inexplicable, which he terms “subnatural.”⁷² This is not to say that anyone with a diagnosed psychopathology is possessed or plagued by demons.⁷³ But it should remind us that human beings are both physical and spiritual, and our overall health and well-being should be understood and addressed wholistically. The main characteristics of the demonic evil Peck encountered were narcissistic self-involvement and a purely destructive desire, which had

⁶⁹ Ingram, “Contemporary Issues and Christian Models of Integration,” 13; contra. Couwenhoven, “What Sin Is,” 563–87.

⁷⁰ The relationship of spiritual and physical will be discussed later in regard to sacramental theology in Chapter 6, affirming the pervasive presence of God and the mediation of his presence and life to humans through physical matter.

⁷¹ Peck, *People of the Lie*, 182–211.

⁷² Peck, *People of the Lie*, 195–96.

⁷³ Cf. Sall, “Demon Possession or Psychopathology,” 286–90.

nothing creative or constructive about it.⁷⁴ As Jesus says: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Despite the influence of modern Western science and technology, the spiritual needs of humanity have not disappeared in the last two thousand years. Pastor and psychotherapist Ann Gillies says, “It is the rejoining of spirit, soul and body that will bring ultimate healing and health to the emotions, will and mind.”⁷⁵ Therefore, it is imperative to the life of the Church and its mission in the world that pastors and church communities continue to participate in Christ’s ministry to the spiritual needs of human life. The Lord’s Supper or the Eucharist is a fundamental ritual that acknowledges the human need for ongoing sustenance in physical and spiritual dimensions that involve and impact the soul as well. As always, we depend on Christ to save and sustain our bodies, souls, and spirits.

Relational, Personal Approach: The Importance of People

From another perspective, attachment theory (originally formulated by John Bowlby) proposes that humans have a basic core need for safe, secure relational attachments; that is, relationships that meet emotional needs with loving nurture and care.⁷⁶ This idea has been proven through various experiments as well as findings from clinical application.⁷⁷ Psychologist Susan Johnson

⁷⁴ Peck, *People of the Lie*, 204.

⁷⁵ Gillies, *Deep Impact*, 65–72, here 71. Gillies (66–69, here 69) also describes the soul as the mind, will, and emotions and suggests the following description of human personhood: “we *are* spirit, we *have* a soul and we *live* in a body.” In contrast, Karen O’Donnell (“Eucharist and Trauma,” 190) takes an ontologically materialist approach: “Rather than claiming that persons *have* bodies, I claim that persons *are* bodies.” And she cites Pannenberg’s argument that body and soul alone are abstractions since the reality of being human is the unity of our being. See Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, 48. Based on Paul’s writings, Paula Gooder (*Body*, 123–24.) argues that “[b]odies are an integrated whole and cannot be separated into their component parts.”

⁷⁶ See Bowlby, “Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds,” 201–10; Bowlby et al., *Fifty Years of Attachment Theory*.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Johnson, *Attachment Theory in Practice*.

demonstrates that humans need safe, secure relationships (such as child-parent relationships or marriages) where the people involved are accessible, responsive, and engaged (A.R.E.) with one another.⁷⁸ In other words, (1) humans are social beings whose relational bonds are “the most intrinsic essential survival strategy”; (2) emotional awareness and regulation (especially of fear) are at the core of establishing and maintaining vital, resilient relational bonds; and (3) human development, or growth and flexible adaptation, is optimized in close connection with other trusted humans, which is neurologically evident.⁷⁹ This psychological framework helps emphasize the destruction of sin on relational terms, including the conditions and consequences of alienation from God, self, and others. This is perhaps most clearly evident where relational or interpersonal trauma is concerned. Safe, secure relational connection to God is a key theological implication of attachment theory that can help inform the life and ministry of the Church.⁸⁰

Similarly, Sandage and Brown propose a model of *relational integration*, in which “integration will prioritize relational connections of mutual recognition between differentiated integrators.”⁸¹ Their theoretical grounding rests on “differentiated relationality,” which is “the ontological foundation necessary for mutual recognition in optimal relational integration.”⁸² They refer to this as a “*relational ontology* in contrast to substance-dualist ontologies,”⁸³ which means that “relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities

⁷⁸ See Johnson, *Attachment Theory in Practice*, 6, 66, 181. She also provides an accessible description of the ten core tenets of attachment theory (6–10). Her emotionally focused therapy (EFT) model works to articulate and address these core emotional needs. See Johnson, *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy*; Johnson and Campbell, *Primer for Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy (EFIT)*.

⁷⁹ Johnson, *Attachment Theory in Practice*, 6.

⁸⁰ Cf. Gillies, *Deep Impact*, 41–48.

⁸¹ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 67.

⁸² Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 67.

⁸³ Sandage and Brown, *Relational Integration*, 68.

themselves.”⁸⁴ This concept is drawn from research that explores relationality in both Trinitarian theology and physical sciences.⁸⁵ Therefore, it is not surprising that the concept has ancient roots reaching down to the ways theologians have described the substance of God’s being as communing relationships or *perichoresis*—the intimate communion of the Trinity, the coinherence of divine Persons without commingling or coalescence.⁸⁶ As John Polkinghorne says, Trinitarian theology presents the “understanding of the triune God whose essential being is constituted by the perichoretic exchange of mutually interpenetrating love between the three divine Persons.”⁸⁷ Therefore, the core emotional needs of humans in relationships and the devastation of relational trauma are poignantly instructive for the task of integrating theology and psychology.

From a theological perspective, Purves agrees: “Theology does not seek to know about God in an abstract, speculative manner (how, in any case, could the living God be known in such a manner?), but seeks to know God more fully as the God who in and as Jesus Christ has joined us to himself and made us the community of the baptized, the community bound to Jesus Christ.”⁸⁸ This is “theology that dares to think God, relationally and experientially, as it were, rather than think about God, as at some kind of distance, remotely and neutrally.”⁸⁹ In other words, theology should be conducted as if God were in the room with us because that is the case.

⁸⁴ Wildman, “Introduction to Relational Ontology,” 55.

⁸⁵ See Polkinghorne, ed., *The Trinity and an Entangled World*, 107–99 for theological discussions.

⁸⁶ Cf. Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 142–45; the Greek term *perichoresis* was first used in reference to the Trinity by “pseudo-Cyril” in the sixth century. For a helpful compilation of some essentials of Trinitarian theology with explicit attention to the implications for Christian ministry, see Purves, “Trinitarian Basis,” 222–39.

⁸⁷ Polkinghorne, ed., *The Trinity and an Entangled World*, ix.

⁸⁸ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18.

⁸⁹ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18; cf. Blackaby et al., *Experiencing God*.

Shelly Rambo notes the critique that in some ways theologians have stopped speaking about God, though she pushes for recognition of modes of theology that do not register in certain spheres of authority—that is, theological perspectives and discussions outside of the traditional contexts and modes of the academy.⁹⁰ More fundamentally than forms and modes of theology, I think it is important to prayerfully consider if we (theologians or otherwise) are speaking *with* God.⁹¹ Rephrasing Purves, theology is not merely how we think and talk *about* God; our thoughts and words should also be fundamentally informed by our relationship *with* God, primarily how he relates to and loves us in and through Christ.⁹² Where trauma is concerned, encountering Christ at the Cross is a crucial aspect of both theological theory, pastoral ministry, and communal church life: the brokenness of humanity must meet the broken body of Christ in order for healing, wholeness, and resurrection life to begin. Abstract theories and concepts alone do not well address the real needs of damaged psyches and wounded hearts.⁹³ Rather, the incarnate Person of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit are the primary ministers of healing, growth, and revelation in the Church and, indeed, the entire created cosmos.

The methodology for a relational approach should involve the recognition that human researchers and theorists cannot observe anything from a state of detached objectivity.⁹⁴ Instead, self-awareness of one's assumptions and orienting perspective should be acknowledged, and the necessity and validity of other perspectives should be recognized as well. For this reason, much

⁹⁰ See Rambo, "Theopoetics of Trauma," esp. 223–24, here 235.

⁹¹ This view is informed by my own Pentecostal-charismatic and contemplative spirituality.

⁹² For further discussion of relational methodology regarding the Cross, see Boerger, "Participating in the Ministry of the Cross," 21–25.

⁹³ Cf. Burns, *Christian Understandings of Evil*, 202; Swinton, *Raging with Compassion*, 76.

⁹⁴ Cf. Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity," 3–25; Stiver, "Theological Method," 170–85.

of the time I will favour speaking in the first-person as a way to indicate the personal contextual nature of my perspectives. This approach is meant to help provide a clear personal argument that does not invalidate the perspectives of others even if it is different at times. Additionally, a relational approach should, unsurprisingly, involve real relationships between both theological and psychological researchers and practitioners as well as wider church communities. In these ways, a relational approach is also (at least implicitly) a profoundly personal approach: a unique perspective informed by one's experiences and relationships to God, self, others, and creation.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Therefore, in light of the literature regarding theological and psychological integration—including the recognition that humans are intrinsically physical and spiritual beings as well as the reality of both good and evil (though not equal) spiritual forces in the cosmos—it becomes more clear that integrating theology and psychology, especially traumatology, requires spiritual discernment and scientific insight, both of which should be founded on and developed in the light of Christ. N. T. Wright observes that “Paul urges the proper, life-giving re-integration of the human being, in terms of the ‘new human,’ the *kainos anthrōpos*” (cf. Eph 4:22–24).⁹⁶ It is a fundamental assertion of my dissertation (based on Christian worldview) that the trauma of sin involves the disintegration of the human person—the disintegration of the body, soul (mind, will, and emotions), and spirit. When these aspects of humanity are disconnected, disordered,

⁹⁵ For theological views emphasizing experience and narrative methodologies, see Graham, “After the Fire,” 13–27; Grosch-Miller, “In Spite of All This,” 28–44; Grosch-Miller et al., “Enabling the Work of the People,” 149–66.

⁹⁶ Wright, “Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body,” 469.

dysregulated, or damaged, the effects can be profoundly devastating.⁹⁷ Salvation in Christ involves integratively processing the trauma and restoring, reconnecting, and reintegrating the human body, soul, and spirit in and through Christ by the power of the Spirit according to the will of the Father, as my argument will bear out.

While psychological methods can be part of a holistic effort of healing and integration, a *Christian* approach takes place in and according to Christ, whether implicitly or explicitly. As David Entwistle says, “*integration* is . . . something we do as we create ways of thinking about, combining, and applying psychological and theological truths. . . . If Christ lays claim to all of one’s life . . . then integration becomes not just feasible, but imperative.”⁹⁸ The claim of Christ on one’s life in the process of reintegration in terms of the new human leads naturally to a discussion of salvation in Christ, which could also be described as wholeness in and union with Christ. Identifying or diagnosing the problem should lead to discussions of solutions that fit within the Christian vision of the salvation of eternal life in Christ.

Thus, it is imperative to the task of both theology (in academic and ecclesial contexts) and, if it is situated in a Christian worldview, psychology (in academic and clinical contexts) to work towards the healing reintegration of the whole human being in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father. As noted earlier, ministry cannot replace the work of psychotherapy or psychiatry, but it is an essential part of the healing process.⁹⁹ Therefore, I aim to take an integrative approach that is domain-based, multidimensional,

⁹⁷ Cf. Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness*, 5–6.

⁹⁸ Entwistle, *Integrative Approaches*, 19 emphasis original emphasis; also quoted in Boerger, “Original Wound,” 308.

⁹⁹ Hunsinger, “Bearing the Unbearable,” 21; cf. Boerger, “Original Wound,” 315–19; Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 4.

relational, and personal (as a self-aware witness of Christ). This methodology need not be applied in a rigid or formulaic manner since various topics will naturally (and obviously) emphasize certain things, such as a particular domain, the interplay of dimensions, or the significance of relational matters or personal experiences. This multivalent approach situates itself within a self-aware Christian worldview and engages in mutually informative dialogue between Christian theology and psychological sources of knowledge and understanding.¹⁰⁰

To reiterate the fundamental Christologically-grounded worldview articulated above, using trauma as an uncalibrated disruptive lens for theology risks limiting its perspective to human experience, which is prone to unintentionally project itself onto God.¹⁰¹ In other words, there needs to be careful consideration of how to distinguish between *traumatized views* and *trauma-informed views*. Since trauma causes disorders that affect the perception of reality,¹⁰² a traumatized view is one that should be compassionately acknowledged and addressed so that a more accurate, functional perception of reality (including one's life in Christ) can be recovered. A Christian worldview fundamentally informed by communion with/in Christ and life in communities of faith—which contribute to recovery and healing from trauma—is an appropriate and stable theological foundation from which to construct trauma-informed theology. Rather

¹⁰⁰ This dialogue within the theoretical domain is much like other mutually informative aspects of Christian faith and life. For example, Purves (*Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 12) says, “doctrine and practice in the life of the church interpret one another.” And he goes on to describe the reciprocal interpretive dynamic of Scripture and human experience. Similarly, Hans Boersma (*Heavenly Participation*, 61–63, here 61) discusses the problematic separation of “the authority of Scripture and that of the church.” Whereas earlier theologians viewed the Spirit’s revelation in Scripture as intrinsically linked to the Spirit’s continued guidance of and revelation within the Church.

¹⁰¹ As a brief example of psychological projection in theology, a person whose father was rageful, violent, and abusive but whose brother was caring and protective might easily project their experiences in their family relationships onto God. Consequently, they might believe God the Father is wrathful and violent while Jesus, the Son, is compassionate, absorbing the Father’s wrath and making them safe.

¹⁰² For example, feeling unsafe when there is, in fact, no danger present. See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 173–201, esp. 177–78.

than psychological traumatology telling us how to be saved (whether saving ourselves or others), trauma studies help us understand and describe how *Christ* loves and saves, and consequently, help us understand how the Church may participate in the life and ministry of Christ. At the same time, since Christ actively (re)defines the Cross and exposes sin, the Crucifixion of Christ ultimately “defines” trauma and *fulfills* the human need to integratively process trauma and other wounds. Psychological traumatology is not merely a retrospective lens or heuristic device for an ancient event and understanding, but rather a source of new insight and language with which the Church can faithfully bear witness to the life, love, and salvation of Christ, the Word who became flesh and dwells among us (cf. John 1:14).

CHAPTER 4
THE RECAPITULATION OF TRAUMA:
THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND HUMANITY, SIN, AND SALVATION

“I still need Christ on the cross to get me off my own.”
—Bono¹

“Then he [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”
—Mark 8:31

Jesus makes it clear to his disciples that his suffering, rejection, death, and Resurrection are necessary aspects of his incarnate life and ministry.² His stern rebuke of Peter’s protest—“Get behind me, Satan!” (Mark 8:33)—should give us serious pause with the understandable impulse to reject the Cross or render it a regrettable yet divinely salvaged event.³ From a human perspective—traumatized or otherwise—the Cross does not make sense. But Jesus tells his disciples to instead set their minds on “divine things” (Mark 8:33); that is, to consider the Cross

¹ Bono, Beacon Theatre, New York, NY, May 4, 2023.

² Cf. Luke 9:22. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*Cost of Discipleship*, 95–104) quotes Mark 8:31–38 at the beginning of his chapter titled, “Discipleship and the Cross.” He argues that the Cross was necessary for Christ and that, consequently, taking up one’s cross with Christ is necessary for discipleship yet remains a choice. Citing this passage of Bonhoeffer, Moltmann (*Crucified God*, 56–57, here 56) distinguishes between Christ’s Cross and our cross. The key difference he identifies is that Christ suffered alone while “those who follow him suffer and die in fellowship with him.” The key differences in Christ’s Crucifixion that Cynthia Hess (*Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, 119–20) identifies are that Jesus suffered voluntarily in an informed manner. Cf. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 164.

³ While I affirm that the Crucifixion was necessary, I do not agree with all the reasons that are sometimes given for why this is so. This chapter sets out a trauma-informed description, which is not really a new idea, but rather a new way of articulating an ancient understanding.

from a divinely inspired perspective.⁴ Still, the disciples do not really understand Jesus' death until after his Resurrection, Ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.⁵ Likewise, our modern understanding of the Cross should not isolate the Crucifixion from the rest of Jesus' life, ministry, and Resurrection—or his promise to return, for that matter. Within this wide scale scope, this chapter seeks to address the necessity of the Cross: the Crucifixion of Christ is the recapitulation of trauma—the integrative processing—that leads to salvation. Christ willingly suffers traumatic death on the Cross to make a way for humanity to recover from the trauma of sin and death and be united with him in eternal resurrection life.

The proposal that Christ redemptively defines, fulfills, and recapitulates—that is, fully integrates and processes—trauma through the Crucifixion is instructive for the celebration of the Eucharist. Since the Eucharist involves the *breaking* of bread and *pouring out* of wine for the purpose of sharing and sustenance, the trauma of the Crucifixion remains not only symbolically and ritually embedded in the Eucharist, but essential to its participatory communal nature as it unites us with Christ and one another.⁶ This recognition does not mean that trauma is a requirement for community; rather, it recognizes the trauma that is already present and situates Christ with us *on the Cross* as a central and essential aspect of God's presence with humanity in the trauma people have experienced and continue to live with and recover from.

⁴ Serene Jones (*Trauma and Grace*, xvi) reminds us that the Cross makes sense only in light of the Resurrection.

⁵ For post-Pentecost apostolic descriptions of the necessity of Christ's suffering, rejection, death, and Resurrection, see Acts 2—4.

⁶ Chapter 6 will discuss symbols and sacraments.

In order to understand how the broken body and shed blood of Christ—the eucharistic “medicine of immortality”⁷—are active in God’s healing love and communion, a clear understanding (or diagnosis) of the traumatic wound, the terminal disease, and the enslaving condition of sin is helpful.⁸ While various conceptions of “original sin” have dominated Western hamartiologies and soteriologies since Augustine coined the term,⁹ it is worth considering what earlier theologians, such as Irenaeus of Lyons, had to say about sin and salvation. These two topics are closely related, for the understanding of the problem (sin, death, and trauma) impacts the understanding of the solution (salvation in Christ) and vice versa; however, in keeping with Patristic theological methodology and hermeneutics, it is crucial that both are understood according to the revelation of God in the Person and work of Christ.¹⁰ As John Behr says, “Christ provides the diagnosis of our condition and simultaneously provides the remedy.”¹¹ Accordingly, the understanding of sin is related to the understanding of how and why Christ approaches

⁷ Ign. *Eph.* 20 (*ANF* 1:58). However, Ignatius does not mean that the “medicine” of Christ renders recipients utterly passive, which would be problematic (cf. van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 37–38). While we do completely rely on the grace of God to save us, a key aspect of salvation in Christ is the restoration of human agency as we abide in Christ. J. de Waal Dryden (*Hermeneutic of Wisdom*, esp. xx–xxii, 27, 33, 62, 66–68, 93, 165–173, 181, 190, 216–217, 219–221, 239–241) says that right actions, devotions, and reasons together comprise wisdom in the course of spiritual formation. Cf. Boerger, “Paul’s Christomorphic Wisdom,” forthcoming. With striking similarity, Marie-Louis Chauvet (*Symbol and Sacrament*, 73) states: “The most sophisticated subversion of our theological categories [i.e., theological theory and reason] would still be idolatry if this were not part of a conversion of our desire and ethical practice.”

⁸ Portions of this chapter are drawn from Boerger, “Original Wound,” 307–21.

⁹ Cf. Bonner, *Augustine*, esp. 312–93; Couwenhoven, “What Sin Is,” 181–98; Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 132–56; Smith, “Reformulating the Doctrine of Original Sin,” 12–15.

¹⁰ Thus, this chapter engages theology and psychological traumatology in mutually-informative discourse in the theoretical domain while remaining grounded in Christian worldview. Cf. Behr, *Mystery of Christ*, esp. 15–43; Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 10; Moringiello, *Rhetoric of Faith*, 164–69.

¹¹ Behr, *Mystery of Christ*, 92. Likewise, Mark Heim (*Saved from Sacrifice*, xii) says that in speaking of the Cross, “we always run the risk of taking the diagnosis for a prescription. Sacrifice is the disease we have. Christ’s death is the test result we can’t ignore, and at the same time an inoculation that sets loose a healing resistance. The cure is not more of the same.” While Heim’s pharmaceutical language has its limits (see discussion of treatment methods in Chapter 3), the language of trauma and recovery helps provide an even more nuanced and applicable framework that maintains the same essential point: the solution to the trauma of sin is not more trauma to humanity.

humanity (the Incarnation) and how humanity approaches the Father in Christ (adoption).

Ultimately, a Christian understanding of sin and salvation is about human relations with God, the self, and others (both in the Church and the world), which are inherently practical matters, not merely theoretical abstractions.

Some notions of “original sin” are much like the psychological internalization that occurs in children when they are in a dysfunctional or abusive environment: children intuitively recognize that there are serious problems but blame themselves first and foremost, tragically internalizing an unmerited yet deep sense of shame.¹² Thus, while “original sin” in many of its conceptions—specifically, the claim that *human nature* is fundamentally malignant or evil (even in unborn or newborn infants)—is a ready explanation for many of the problems in the world, perhaps it is not the most accurate understanding of human nature amidst the traumatic conditions and consequences of sin.¹³ Moreover, amongst other problematic applications, notions of evil in regard to human nature—and especially the human body—have contributed and continue to contribute to violence against children in the form of corporal punishment.¹⁴ Even worse, such child-abuse is often conducted in the name of God, based on flawed theological conceptions of both human and divine nature.¹⁵

¹² For a helpless child, it is far less frightening to view oneself as the problem than one’s caregiver or parent. Internalization is essentially a survival coping mechanism. For substantial discussion of the effects of trauma on children, including shame, see van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 107–77, esp. 140, 176; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 103–7; Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness*, 30–32; McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 142–52, 280–83, 293–300. For recent discussion of violence and trauma in families in Canada, see Alaggia and Vine, eds., *Cruel but not Unusual*.

¹³ Angela Smith’s recent dissertation, “Reformulating the Doctrine of Original Sin,” works to helpfully recalibrate the concept by drawing on psychological traumatology and attachment theory.

¹⁴ See McGillivray and Durrant, “‘Correcting what is evil in the child,’” 405–29.

¹⁵ See, for example, Grosch-Miller, “Sexual Scandals in Religious Settings,” 239–55; Panchuk, “Shattered Spiritual Self,” 515; quoted in Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 51. Regarding trauma-induced notions of divine (self-)sacrificial appeasement and/or divine purpose, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 106.

Therefore, whereas shame-inducing notions of sin that describe humans—particularly the embodied aspects of human existence, especially sexuality—as fundamentally bad are not a helpful starting point for theological discussion, preaching, evangelism, or life in general (though perhaps all too common), recognizing *human need* is both helpful and necessary.¹⁶ For this reason, I suggest that *original wound* is, in many ways, a more helpful term that refers to a profound rupturing of the cosmos and wounding of humanity, including the disintegration of body, soul, and spirit.¹⁷ In this regard, psychological traumatology helps describe the disintegrating effects of sin in an accurate, compassionate, and dignifying manner, while clearly identifying the human need for Christ in the restorative process of salvation. As Irenaeus says, “It is impossible for anyone to heal the sick if [they have] no knowledge of the disease afflicting the patient.”¹⁸ Therefore, from a trauma-informed engagement with Irenaeus’s recapitulatory theology of sin and salvation, this chapter argues that the Cross of Christ is a crucial site of the recapitulation of trauma that leads to salvation: the reintegration of the whole human being (body, soul, and spirit) in Christ by the Spirit according to the will of the Father. Simply put, humans are able to fully recover from trauma in and through Jesus Christ.¹⁹

This chapter begins by situating Irenaeus’s theology in contrast to the heresies he opposes, particularly Gnosticism. This section outlines how Irenaeus refutes heresies that posit a deficiency within God and his creations. Instead, he describes God as the perfect Creator of good creatures, made in his image and intended to grow into his likeness. This reveals that the

¹⁶ Cf. Taylor, *Speaking of Sin*, 4.

¹⁷ Cf. Boerger, “Original Wound,” 307–21.

¹⁸ *Haer.* 4.pref.2 (*ICF* 85). But note that Christ is the great healer in whose ministry humans may participate; for example, *Haer.* 3.5.2; *Epid.* 67–69.

¹⁹ Psychotherapy can be viewed as a participatory mode of Christoform recovery, which is not the erasure of trauma as if it never happened (see Chapter 8).

fundamental human need for God is not a defect in humanity but a proper condition of the relationship of creatures to their Creator. Sin, however, does impose devastatingly adverse conditions upon humanity, creating new needs that require special attention. In the second section, the conditions and consequences of sin—described by Irenaeus as slavery, sickness, and wounds—are related to the insights of psychological traumatology, which aid in understanding the profound, disintegrating damage that sin causes to human beings (as well as what is needed for recovery). From this perspective, trauma can be described as death incarnate (death lodged in living flesh), alienating humans from the self, others, God, and creation. The final section engages Irenaeus's view of the means of salvation as recapitulation in Christ, situating the Cross as the crucial site at which Christ recapitulates, overcomes, and transforms trauma unto resurrection life.

Irenaeus for the Faith against Heresy

The Whole Human Being: Made in the Image of God according to His Likeness

Tracing his theological lineage to the Apostle John via Polycarp and considered the greatest theologian of the second century, Irenaeus of Lyons provides excellent examples of early Christian theology dealing with sin and salvation.²⁰ While his major surviving works *Against Heresies (A Refutation and Subversion of What Is Falsely Called Knowledge)*²¹ and *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*²² are not works of systematic theology, they are

²⁰ Cf. Bingham, "Irenaeus," 137–39; *APT* 85. For a discussion of Patristic and Orthodox views of the Cross, sin, and salvation (including and beyond those of Irenaeus), see Payton, *Victory of the Cross*.

²¹ See *ANF* 1:315–567; *ICF* 27–194.

²² See Behr, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 39–101; MacKenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration*, 1–28 (original text translation Robinson, ed., *Irenaeus*, 69–151); Smith, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 47–109.

nonetheless cogent and cohesive presentations of early Christian faith.²³ It remains important to contextualize these works (especially the former) as arguments against heresy, particularly the Gnosticisms of the time.²⁴

According to Irenaeus, one of the faulty fundamental assertions of Gnosticism was that only the truly spiritual is pure and good, while the physical/material is deficient and defective.²⁵ Gnostics also divided humanity into three categorically different types of people: (1) the *material*, who are the lowest form and doomed to corruption; (2) the *animal*, who do not have full knowledge but can live poorly or well to some extent; and (3) the *spiritual*, who have access to secret knowledge and will thereby become perfect.²⁶ Irenaeus emphatically rejects such categories of humans, instead asserting a single God-given human nature:

If some had been created bad by nature and others good, the latter would not deserve praise for being good, for that would be the way they were made. But . . . *all humanity has the same nature, able both to retain and do what is good, as well as the power to cast it from them and not do it.*²⁷

Keeping the context of this theological assertion in mind, it should be noted that Irenaeus does not mean that humans have the power to free themselves from sin (as Pelagius would later claim),²⁸ but rather that humans all share the same nature as creatures made in God's image.²⁹

²³ Cf. Behr, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 7–8; Balthasar, *Scandal of the Incarnation*, 10–11; *ICF* 13–17.

²⁴ See *Epid.* 1; Smith, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 19–22, 43–44; Balthasar, *Scandal of the Incarnation*, 1–11; *ICF* 4–13; Marjanen, “‘Gnosticism’,” esp. 204–5.

²⁵ E.g., *Haer.* 1.16.3; 2.1.1; 2.19.9; 4.33.3.

²⁶ *Haer.* 1.6.1–1.7.5.

²⁷ *Haer.* 4.37.2 (*ICF* 146) emphasis added. Also compare the Gnostic categories to Irenaeus's identification of three groups (not categories) of people that believers should not allow to influence them (based on Ps 1:1): (1) the ungodly, who do not know God; (2) sinners, who know God, but disdain his commandments; and (3) the pestilential, who pervert themselves and others through twisted, poisonous teaching (*Epid.* 2; cf. Behr, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 18).

²⁸ Cf. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 132–56.

²⁹ Bingham identifies doctrines of unity in Irenaeus regarding God (the Father), the Son and Savior, the Spirit, human nature, and salvation. Bingham, “Irenaeus,” 149–50.

Moreover, Irenaeus's logic also applies to the current condition of humanity: if humans were sinful by nature, then they could not be considered culpable for their sinful actions. Instead, sin is profoundly *unnatural* to human nature, which is one reason why it is so devastating.

Christopher Hall notes that later theological concerns, “such as the effect of sin upon the will’s ability to choose the good, do not occupy Irenaeus’s attention.”³⁰ However, Irenaeus is not doing modern systematic theology, so he should not be expected to explicitly lay out every detail in precise linear order.³¹ Indeed, as Hall later insists, “Irenaeus’s thoughts on the goodness of creation and the freedom of the will must be read against the background of his battle with Gnostic teaching that denied the goodness of matter and found freedom only in an escape from the natural created world.”³² In fact, a few chapters earlier, Irenaeus speaks about giving an account of not only deeds (as a slave would do) but also words and thoughts, “as those who have truly received the power of liberty.”³³ Thus, Irenaeus recognizes that while it is inherent to the God-given *nature* of humanity to be free and powerful, due to the bondage of sin (described further below), the *power of liberty* must be restored to humanity in Christ through the Spirit according to the will of the Father so that humans are once more able to truly live according to their nature.³⁴

The Gnostic denial of physical embodied goodness has detrimental effects on Christian life, worship, and theology since the incarnate life, death, and Resurrection of Christ comprise the core of the gospel and Christian identity. As Irenaeus says: “According to the heretics, only

³⁰ Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 129.

³¹ Cf. Payton, “Irenaeus,” 150.

³² Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 132. Cf. Moringiello, *Rhetoric of Faith*, ix–xviii.

³³ *Haer.* 4.16.5 (ICF 106).

³⁴ Cf. Bushur, *Irenaeus*, 32–44.

the soul will be saved, since the body is by nature subject to corruption.”³⁵ Such claims were deemed irretrievable departures from essential Christian doctrinal claims, including God as Creator and the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ. As Matthew Steenberg observes: “To abstract the Son, or the divinity of the Son, from the Person of Jesus Christ . . . is to disfigure the language of Christianity’s earliest testimony.”³⁶ And modern trauma-informed theologians agree as well. For example, Jennifer Baldwins says, “The church must work towards resurrecting the honor and wisdom of the physical body if it seeks to be a resource for vital, healthful lives and communities.”³⁷ In his ancient context, Irenaeus addresses these challenges head on, defending the goodness of both God as Creator and his creation, especially humans made in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:26).³⁸

In contrast to Gnostic views, Irenaeus argues that humans are tripartite beings, such that the body, soul, and spirit together form a complete, whole human being made in God’s image. In his words, “human beings, not merely parts of them, were made in the image of God. . . . It is the commingling and union of all these [flesh, soul, and spirit] which constitutes a complete human being.”³⁹ In making this point, he also cites 1 Thess 5:23, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit [πνεῦμα] and soul [ψυχή] and body [σῶμα] be kept

³⁵ *Haer.* 1.24.5 (*ICF* 37).

³⁶ Steenberg, *God and Man*, 3; Payton, “Irenaeus,” 154.

³⁷ Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 8.

³⁸ Behr (*Irenaeus*, here 207) argues that rather than facing aggressive exclusion from the church, the heretics of the time intentionally separated themselves. In response, Christian faith was clarified and refined in the course of the “symphony of theology.”

³⁹ *Haer.* 5.6.1 (*ICF* 160); cf. *Haer.* 5.9.1; Balthasar, *Scandal of the Incarnation*, 94–99; Hitchcock, *Irenaeus*, 283–97. Elsewhere (e.g., *Haer.* 5.20.1) Irenaeus mentions only the body/flesh and the soul (perhaps as a shorthand of sorts), but the passage above is the most clear articulation of his biblical tripartite theological anthropology. Nonetheless, the soul and the spirit are closely related, for “the soul . . . has received the spirit of the Father” (*Haer.* 5.6.1 [*ICF* 159–60]; cf. *Haer.* 2.34.4), and the soul is situated between the spirit and body (*Haer.* 5.9.1).

complete and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Importantly, as creations of God, human beings are formed in the image of God as it is revealed in the incarnate Christ, not the other way around. “God is glorified in his handiwork,” says Irenaeus, “he fits it so that it conforms to and is modeled after his own Son.”⁴⁰ John Behr observes the connection between image, form, and matter in Irenaeus’s theology as Irenaeus “is emphatic that the image of God in [humanity] is described quite concretely in the flesh . . . As God himself is immaterial, and therefore formless, the archetype of the image of God in [humanity] must be the incarnate Son of God.”⁴¹ Thus, as always, Christ stands at the center of Irenaeus’s theology as the light by which all else must be viewed and understood (cf. John 8:12).

At the same time, although made in the *image* of God, Irenaeus believes Adam and Eve were immature (or “imperfect”) and needed to grow into the *likeness* of God.⁴² Irenaeus argues that God’s creative skill is not defective even though humans have always needed to grow into perfection/maturity.⁴³ The reason for this divine design is inherently relational: “God made human beings free from the beginning, possessing their own power, even as they do their own souls, to obey the commands of God voluntarily, and not by divine compulsion. For there is no coercion with God, but he always bears goodwill towards humankind.”⁴⁴ Again, Irenaeus is not saying humans have the power to save themselves, but rather defending the original goodness of humanity (created in God’s image) and God as Creator. While the *image* of God in human nature

⁴⁰ *Haer.* 5.6.1 (ICF 159); cf. *Epid.* 11.

⁴¹ Behr, *Anthropology*, 89; Payton, “Irenaeus,” 155; Steenberg, *God and Man*, 37.

⁴² For example, *Haer.* 4.22.1; 4.37.7; *Epid.* 12–14; cf. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration*, 116–17. Irenaeus’s distinction between the “image of God” and the “likeness to God” would later become standard. See Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 89; cf. Payton, “Irenaeus,” 155–56; *Victory of the Cross*, 44.

⁴³ For example, *Haer.* 4.38.1–3; 4.39.3.

⁴⁴ *Haer.* 4.37.1 (ICF 145).

has not been categorically altered by sin (though it may be gravely constrained or obscured), growing into the *likeness* of God requires divine assistance, as it has since the beginning, though now with the significant problem of sin.⁴⁵

Irenaeus's Descriptions of Sin: Unjust Slavery, Sickness, and Wounds

Throughout *Against Heresies* and *The Demonstration*, sin, for Irenaeus, is a *condition* of slavery, sickness, and wounding that is *unnatural* to humanity's created nature in its original goodness.⁴⁶ Moreover, the destructive bondage of sin is not a condition that humans deserve, but rather a profound injustice that God alone can rectify:

The son of man shows Satan to be a fugitive from and a transgressor of the law, an apostate from God. Then the Word bound him securely as a fugitive from himself and spoiled his goods [Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27]—namely, those whom he held in bondage, whom he unjustly used for his own purposes. *Justly is he led captive who had led humanity unjustly into bondage, while humankind, which had been led captive in times past, was rescued from the grasp of its possessor. This comes through the tender mercy of God the Father, who had compassion on his own handiwork and granted it salvation, restoring it by means of the Word—that is, by Christ—so that human beings might learn by actual proof that they receive incorruptibility not by their own efforts, but by the free gift of God.*⁴⁷

Notice also the relational emphasis Irenaeus places on the compassionate mercy of God the Father in rescuing humanity from the bondage of sin and leading them into the freedom of life as a free gift. “God is not subject to influence from anyone,” says Irenaeus, “and to have mercy is expressly proper to God, who alone is able to save by His mercy.”⁴⁸ Thus, much like the way

⁴⁵ See *Haer.* 3.18.1; *Epid.* 95–97. As Payton (*Victory of the Cross*, 61–63, here 62) summarizes, “sin does not have the power to turn God’s creation into something else.”

⁴⁶ Cf. Balthasar, *Scandal of the Incarnation*, 67–72. Note that Irenaeus’s conception of sin is based on his interpretation of Scripture understood in and through Christ.

⁴⁷ *Haer.* 5.21.3 (*ICF* 175) emphasis added; cf. *Haer.* 4.40.3.

⁴⁸ *Epid.* 60 (Behr, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 80).

God does not coerce human obedience, God himself freely chooses to save humanity not because he is bound to do so but because God loves the world, “not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9; cf. John 3:16).

According to the scriptural narrative that Irenaeus follows, humans first sinned when Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent into attempting to obtain the likeness of God (which is the proper destiny of humanity) *apart from God* (which is a defining characteristic of sin).⁴⁹ Regarding Irenaeus’s views, Denis Minns says sin involves “the desire to take one’s development into one’s own hands.”⁵⁰ According to Gen 3:4–5: “The serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil.’”⁵¹ Hence, at the core of the problem, Irenaeus describes sin as “adopt[ing] an attitude of self-conceited arrogance against God.”⁵² However, following the biblical narrative, Irenaeus makes it clear that the serpent/Satan began the problem with his own rebellion and subsequent deceptions.⁵³ He insists that God’s fundamental stance towards humanity is not altered: “God took compassion on humankind who—no doubt carelessly, but still wickedly—disobeyed him. . . . instead of being angry with humankind, God turned his anger in another direction, settling it instead on the serpent.”⁵⁴ Thus, for Irenaeus, sin does not occur in a vacuum leading to a depraved human nature, but rather in the midst of deceit and, subsequently, the unjust bondage that follows.

⁴⁹ Cf. Minns, *Irenaeus*, 53; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 299, 311–12; Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 94–95.

⁵⁰ Minns, *Irenaeus*, 77; cf. Vogel, “Haste of Sin,” 443.

⁵¹ Emphasis added; cf. *Haer.* 5.23.1.

⁵² *Epid.* 15 (Behr, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 49).

⁵³ E.g., *Haer.* 3.23.1; 4.pref.4; *Epid.* 16; cf. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration*, 120, 127–29.

⁵⁴ *Haer.* 4.40.3 (*ICF* 152); cf. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration*, 123–27.

The passage above is by no means the only one in which Irenaeus describes the problems of sin. In another description of sin as slavery and bondage he says, “through our first parents we were all brought into bondage, becoming subject to death.”⁵⁵ Rather than describing sin as an alteration in the nature of humanity or as inherited guilt, Irenaeus recognizes that humans inherit the *condition of bondage* to sin and death, just as the children of enslaved people were fated to be enslaved through no choice or fault of their own.⁵⁶ This understanding shifts the focus away from culpable guilt (especially in a juridical sense) as the primary point of address towards human need in a relational perspective. At the same time, Irenaeus maintains that humans must accept the invitation to participate in the inheritance of God given to them in Christ.⁵⁷

Irenaeus also describes sin as a sickness or disease:

It was necessary that humankind should in the first instance be created; and having been created, should grow; and having grown, should be strengthened; and being strengthened, should abound; and abounding, should *recover from the disease of sin*; and having recovered, should be glorified; and being glorified, should see [their] Lord.⁵⁸

This description situates recovery from sin within the natural growth of humans into the glorious likeness of God. However, the sickness itself (sin) is profoundly *unnatural* and impossible to recover from apart from God.⁵⁹ Much like the way the (sometimes terminal) disease of cancer wreaks destructive havoc in people’s lives yet does not make them something other than human, so too sin is deeply destructive to human bodies, souls, and spirits.

⁵⁵ *Haer.* 4.22.1 (*ICF* 121); cf. *Haer.* 3.18.7; 3.23.1–2; 4.2.4; 4.8.2; 4.9.1; 4.13.2; 4.13.4; 4.16.5; 4.17.3 (quoting Isa 58:6–9); 4.22.1; 4.27.2; 5.8.2; 5.9.4; 5.14.2; 5.19.1; 5.21.3; 5.24.3; 5.32.1 (quoting Rom 8:19–21); 5.36.3; *Epid.* 25; 31; 37; 38; 46; 83 (cf. Ps 67:18–19; Eph 4:8).

⁵⁶ Cf. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration*, 126; Payton, “Irenaeus,” 160–61. While slavery is deplorably *dehumanizing* in that it treats people as less than human, it does not actually change their nature.

⁵⁷ *Haer.* 4.41.3.

⁵⁸ *Haer.* 4.38.3 (*ICF* 150) emphasis added; cf. *Haer.* 1.16.3; 3.5.2; 4.pref.2; 4.33.11 (quoting Isa 53:4); 5.12.6; *Epid.* 53; 67; 71.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter 17* (*APT* 297).

Additionally, Irenaeus describes sin as a wound: “the only way to be saved from the wound of the serpent was by believing in him [Christ].”⁶⁰ As always, the only true way to eternal life is Christ, who *is* the Way, the Truth, and the Life by whom humanity comes to the Father (cf. John 14:6). Note that Irenaeus’s key descriptions of sin are all external impositions that consequently adversely affect the conditions and functioning of life but do not change the essential nature of humanity. In modern terms, the insights of psychological traumatology provide a good way to understand the effects of sin on humans and what is required for recovery and reintegration—that is, salvation.

Trauma and Sin

Insights from Psychological Traumatology

As discussed earlier, the ancient meaning of the Greek word τραῦμα as a wound, hurt, or damage remains at the core of modern conceptions. Trauma is not merely stressful but overwhelming; at the same time, it is situated on a continuum, ranging from everyday hassles to unimaginable horrors.⁶¹ Trauma involves paradoxical elements, including that of the experience itself and its persistence, which is in part due to its initial failure to integrate into consciousness.⁶² In other words, trauma remains, but is difficult if not impossible to integratively process in the human body, soul, and spirit. Bessel van der Kolk says trauma is “unbearable and intolerable”;⁶³ it is “an

⁶⁰ *Haer.* 4.2.7 (*ICF* 87); cf. *Haer.* 3.23.1; 3.25.7; 4.2.7; 5.34.2; *Epid.* 68–69 (cf. Isa 52:13–53:6); 71.

⁶¹ See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33–35; Resick, *Stress and Trauma*; McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 235.

⁶² See Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 3–12, 151–57; Warner et al., eds., *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*, 1.

⁶³ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 1.

inescapably stressful event that overwhelms people's coping mechanisms."⁶⁴ Similarly, theologian Shelly Rambo says, "trauma is an unknowing, unclaimed, unassimilable, unsayable experience."⁶⁵ Or, as Hilary Ison describes it, trauma is "that which overwhelms our capacity to cope with our experience and which breaks connections—to ourselves, to others, to resources, to our frames of reference."⁶⁶ In other words, trauma is an event (or events) that was so overwhelming it was never fully processed and remains in both mind and body: trauma is a paradoxically unbearable yet unshakeable burden and/or gap.⁶⁷

Modern sciences, such as neurobiology, have led to crucial insights into the effects of trauma on the human mind and body. Traumatic experiences can lead to disorders, such as PTSD, which cause immediate, unconscious, and automatic physiological and neurobiological responses to particular stimuli/situations associated with the traumatic experience(s).⁶⁸ Essentially, the brain's chemical/hormonal alarm system does not regulate and remains in survival mode (fight, flight, or freeze). It is helpful to once again recall van der Kolk's accessible explanations:

trauma produces actual physiological changes, including recalibration of the brain's alarm system, an increase in stress hormone activity, and alterations in the system that filters relevant information from irrelevant. We now know that trauma compromises the brain area that communicates the physical, embodied feeling of being alive. . . .⁶⁹

Cortisol (a stress hormone) puts an end to the stress response by sending an all-safe signal. . . . In PTSD, the body's stress hormones do, in fact, not return to baseline after the threat has passed. . . . Ideally our stress hormone system should provide a lightning-

⁶⁴ van der Kolk et al., eds., *Traumatic Stress*, 279.

⁶⁵ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 4.

⁶⁶ Ison, "Embodied and Systemic Approach," 47; cf. Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 28–29.

⁶⁷ In other words, in some ways it is as if the trauma is still happening. See Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 3–12, 151–57; van der Kolk, "Body Keeps the Score," 214–41; van der Kolk and van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past," 158–82; Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*.

⁶⁸ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 56–57.

⁶⁹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 2–3.

fast response to threat, but then quickly return us to equilibrium. In PTSD patients, however, the stress hormone system fails at this balancing act. Fight/flight/freeze signals continue after the danger is over, and . . . do not return to normal. Instead, the continued secretion of stress hormones is expressed as agitation and panic, and, in the long term, wreaks havoc with their health.⁷⁰

Therefore, it is essential to recognize that traumatized people, especially those with PTSD, are quite literally wounded and broken in tragically profound ways. Moreover, trauma triggers basically take the prefrontal cortex (PFC) offline, which is responsible for rational executive functioning and is the part of the brain that makes choice possible.⁷¹ Theologies that recognize the importance of human embodiment (as Irenaeus does) should take these insights into account. Trauma is a profound dysregulation, disconnection, and disintegration of the human being in body, soul, and spirit.⁷² Taking seriously the detrimental effects on the “physical, embodied feeling of being alive,” it is not an overstatement to say trauma is *death incarnate*.⁷³

Sin: Integrating Theology and Psychology

Noting that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23), trauma, death, and sin are inherently bound up together. To accurately identify the traumatic aspects of sin, the various meanings of the word should be identified. According to Mark McMinn, the word *sin* can refer to several distinct but related aspects of human life: (1) a state or condition; (2) the consequences of sin (one’s own or

⁷⁰ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 30.

⁷¹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 51–64.

⁷² Herman (*Trauma and Recovery*, 34) says traumatic symptoms are evidence of a “fragmentation, whereby trauma tears apart a complex system of self-protection that normally functions in an integrated fashion.”

⁷³ In fact, describing the aftermath of experiencing assault and attempted murder, Susan Brison (*Aftermath*, 44) calls some of the profound effects “the incarnation of a cognitive and emotional paralysis resulting from shattered assumptions about my safety in the world.” Herman (*Trauma and Recovery*, 49–50) describes the link between trauma and feelings of deadness and the desire for death/suicide. She also quotes Freud regarding the effects of trauma as signs of a “daemonic force at work.”

others' actions and in one's self or in the world/cosmos); and (3) specific actions (which should be placed on a continuum of volition).⁷⁴ Colossians 1:21 connects the state of alienation to sinful ways of thinking/attitudes and behavior: "you were alienated from God and enemies in your minds [hostile in attitude] in your evil behaviour."⁷⁵ And as Shelly Rambo notes, "PTSD has become more than a diagnostic label for individual suffering, it has become a way of naming the conditions of life more broadly."⁷⁶ To be clear, not all psychopathology arises as a direct consequence of an individual's own willful sin (although choices to sin inevitably become enmeshed in the problems); but sin does wound, damage, and break everyone in one way or another.⁷⁷

Therefore, it is also important not to categorically pathologize human efforts to survive the inhumane extremes of trauma. Natalie Collins argues that while responses to trauma are typically seen as dysfunctions that entail a lack of ability, the human capacity to survive the unthinkable is instead evidence of remarkable capability.⁷⁸ "For me," says Collins, "trauma responses (which are often used to evidence the brokenness of traumatized people) are

⁷⁴ McMinn (*Why Sin Matters*, 36–44, here 37 and 43, emphasis original) uses the categorical terms *sinfulness*, *sins*, and the *consequences* of sin. While I am drawing on McMinn's framework, I am also significantly recalibrating it psychologically and theologically. McMinn argues that sinfulness is "our natural disposition, a malignant condition." And he describes all actions of sin as willful. I fundamentally disagree that sin is natural in any way for humans, though it does have profound, inescapable effects. And I suggest sinful actions (or actions stemming from sin) should be considered on a continuum of volition. It is somewhat surprising then that the example McMinn uses to illustrate his framework involves an adult "struggling through the agony of past sexual abuse . . . profoundly aware that things are not right in this broken world (*sinfulness*)." McMinn does not seem to be blaming this survivor, and he recognizes their attempts to deal with the pain are not healthy yet are part of "the *consequences* of the perpetrator's sin." Therefore, McMinn's schema proves useful, and his own example helps support my recalibrations. Cf. McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 103–4, 385.

⁷⁵ The Greek word διάνοια (*minds/attitude* above) may refer to ways of thinking—including rationale, attitude, intentions, or purposes (the spirit of action)—as well as the capacity to reason, the thoughts themselves, and their expression (cf. LSJ). In this case, it is appropriate to keep a multivalent meaning in mind.

⁷⁶ Rambo, "Introduction," 9.

⁷⁷ Charles Kiser and Elaine Heath (*Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 46–60, here 58) say unresolved "primordial trauma" is at the core of various ideological narratives of supremacy.

⁷⁸ Collins, "Broken or Superpowered," 195–221; cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 29–32.

‘superpowers’: strengths that helped me to survive and protect my children.”⁷⁹ Underlying Collins’s argument is the recognition that human survival responses to trauma need to be *contextualized* rather than categorically *pathologized*.⁸⁰ “By using trauma as a lens for theological study,” she says, “there is a risk that the purpose of trauma responses is separated from what has been done to someone, leaving the response to be perceived as pathological rather than logical.”⁸¹ In other words, surviving trauma is not pathological but rather the logic of *pathos*: efforts to survive make sense in the context of traumatic suffering and life-threatening danger. From a Christian perspective, Collins argues that human survival responses to trauma can be seen as “manifestations of grace in the darkest of places.”⁸² This view of grace in the abyss of trauma can help set a redemptive trajectory for the process of recovery right from the start.

While affirming the fundamental presence of God with us in all circumstances, including the deepest valleys of the shadow of death, it remains theologically necessary to recognize that we cannot pull ourselves out of these depths. While survival should be contextualized and grace recognized, it is precisely the contextualization of trauma and survival that necessitates further redemptive adaptations at the appropriate time: continuing to live in survival mode when one is safe is not healthy and will not contribute to recovery.⁸³ However, identifying the need for

⁷⁹ Collins, “Broken or Superpowered,” 195. In a paradoxical relationship, it is precisely Christ’s self-emptying that brings the power of God’s grace into human life. As Jürgen Moltmann (*Crucified God*, 46) puts it, the faith of the poor and oppressed “derives its vitality not from Christ healing as a superhuman, divine miracle-worker, but on the contrary from the fact that he brings help through his wounds and through what from the human point of view is his impotent suffering.”

⁸⁰ Collins, “Broken or Superpowered,” esp. 198–201.

⁸¹ Collins, “Broken or Superpowered,” 201.

⁸² Collins, “Broken or Superpowered,” 199.

⁸³ The fundamental importance of first establishing safety cannot be overstated.

growth beyond trauma survival responses must come in the most compassionate and understanding timing, tone, and mode possible: imposed or coerced recovery should not be added to the violations of trauma.

In seminars and other situations, I have found the following illustrative example helpful in describing the importance of contextualizing both trauma survival and trauma recovery. Imagine: if you were hiking alone in the wilderness and suffered a broken leg because of either accident (such as a rockslide) or attack (by a predator such as a mountain lion or bear), you would need to take extreme measures to survive. In these circumstances, it would be completely reasonable—not to mention courageous—to find a reasonably straight branch, rip up your shirt, and create a makeshift splint and crutch in order to regain enough mobility to find help. If you managed to make your way to a town, dragging yourself out of the bush, and met another person, how do you think they would respond? Would they look at you with disgust or sudden compassion? Would they run away and leave you alone or would they stay with you and contact others for assistance? Would they criticize your (lack of) wardrobe and shoddy splint technique or would they offer to immediately rush to cover you and help you to the hospital for proper medical treatment? Would they make fun of the way you are limping or would they express sympathy and support? Would they demand that you follow them and keep up the pace or would they offer to support you with their own body and proceed only if and as you were able? Of course, we would be shocked and outraged if anyone responded with any of the first alternatives above. Yet far, far too often, this is exactly what trauma survivors encounter in the Church (and society at large too). Against all odds, upon limping into a church, trauma survivors find themselves ignored, overlooked, ostracized, disbelieved, criticized, blamed, shamed, and

spiritually abused or terrorized.⁸⁴ Such treatment is absolutely inappropriate and would be readily condemned if the underlying issue, the traumatic wound, were as obvious as a compound fracture.

But psychological trauma, as much as it is embedded in the brain and body, is not usually obvious to the untrained eye. While many survival responses to trauma may be uncomfortably apparent to others—such as addictive coping strategies, dysregulations in affect and mood, and cognitive dysfunctions—these are but the desperate, tenacious (though often subconscious) efforts of a human being trying to survive unbearable trauma, often experienced as a child. And just like the make-shift splint, these trauma responses are not the things that need to be addressed first. However, neither can the splint be ignored nor treated as normal and healthy apart from its service to survival. Likewise, when properly contextualized, the extreme measures taken to survive trauma should also be recognized as prohibitive to recovery in the long-term if, and *only if* safety, has been established. Therefore, compassionate attention to the underlying causes of or the factors contributing to “sinful” behaviours is not a matter of secondary ancillary importance but rather a primary priority in the Church’s responses to the traumatic wounds of sin. Since wounds always precede efforts to survive, recovery begins with compassionate identification and treatment of the traumatic condition, the wound itself, in the context of safety.

While Irenaeus himself does not systematically explicate the effects of sin, the descriptions he does provide and their implications are worth considering in light of the discussion above. Accordingly, the disintegration of humanity due to the conditions and

⁸⁴ For example, telling trauma survivors that their unwanted behaviours, the ways they have coped in order to survive, put them in danger of eternal conscious torment in hell is a form of abusive spiritual terrorization. Cf. Collins, “Broken or Superpowered,” 205–14.

consequences of sin can be described as the dehumanizing alienation from God, self, and others as well as the rest of creation. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, puts it directly: “Sin is nothing else than alienation from God, who is the true and only life.”⁸⁵ Modern theologians agree. Sin, says Catherine LaCugna, is the “absence of praise and the annihilation of communion.”⁸⁶ Similarly James Voiss calls sin “the human experience of alienation from God, neighbor, and creation itself.”⁸⁷ Sin is also alienation from one’s self, a fragmentation of the wholeness of the body, soul, and spirit which, as Irenaeus says, comprise a complete human being. Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann puts it poignantly: Christ “revealed the abyss of [humanity’s] alienation from God and the inexhaustible sadness of this alienation.”⁸⁸ Therefore, as the fundamental trauma to humanity, sin is a condition of disintegration, isolation, and alienation on a number of levels, including the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of human life.

Importantly, as Irenaeus points out, the bondage of sin is a condition unjustly forced upon humanity, not something inherent to human nature.⁸⁹ Therefore, each person is affected by sin (as a condition and consequence) before committing it (as an action). Significantly, many times the broken behaviors (or sins) resulting from trauma and PTSD are “not the result of moral failings or signs of lack of will power or bad character—they are caused by actual changes in the brain.”⁹⁰ During times of stressful overwhelm, the nervous system shuts down the prefrontal cortex—the region of the brain most responsible for rational thought and associated action. This

⁸⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 2.13 (APT 277).

⁸⁶ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 383.

⁸⁷ Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*, 324.

⁸⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 67.

⁸⁹ On the traumatic effects of captivity, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 74–95. For a theological discussion of Herman’s insights, see Boerger, “Original Wound,” 311–14.

⁹⁰ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 3; Shapiro, *Getting Past Your Past*, 214–46.

is not to say that humans bear no responsibility for sin.⁹¹ Instead, this understanding can help shift the locus of responsibility and culpability for sin from isolated, hyper-individualized notions to more relationally-integrated communal approaches that recognize it is imperative to help others recognize and meet their needs for recovery and healing.⁹²

As a brief review, trauma recovery involves three key stages: (1) establishing safety (one's relationship to/situation in the world); (2) reconstructing the trauma story or processing/integrating the traumatic experience(s) (one's relationship to oneself); and (3) restoring connection between survivors and their community (one's relationship to others).⁹³ From a Christian theological perspective, one's relationship to God is involved in all stages of recovery. Additionally, there are three fundamental avenues of treatment: (1) talking through (processing and integrating) memories in safe connections with others ("top down"); (2) taking medication and/or using technological interventions ("round about");⁹⁴ and (3) having bodily experiences that contradict traumatic experiences and their aftermath ("bottom up").⁹⁵ The key difference between processing trauma and re-traumatization is the ability to experience some aspects of dysregulation while simultaneously being able to describe it, which involves the activation of the prefrontal lobes of the brain (the logical, rational part of the brain).⁹⁶ And based on attachment theory, Cockayne et al. identify four dimensions of safety that churches should

⁹¹ For discussion of Irenaeus's views on responsibility and the fall, see MacKenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration*, 123–29. In summary, God is constant/unchanging, Satan is first and foremost to blame, and Adam and Eve demonstrate exemplary repentance.

⁹² Cf. Beste, *God and the Victim*, 107–28.

⁹³ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 3, 155, 266–76. Cf. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 52–63; O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 175–79.

⁹⁴ Note that there is no pharmaceutical or technological cure for trauma/PTSD, only treatments that help alleviate certain symptoms. See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 33–38; McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 256.

⁹⁵ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 3.

⁹⁶ See Pat Ogden in Buczynski et al., "Dysregulation and Hypoarousal," 23.

address: bodily safety, being safely loved, having safe boundaries, and big picture safety.⁹⁷ Thus, while professional treatment remains crucial, safe, loving relationships and community are integral to trauma recovery;⁹⁸ the fundamental relationship upon which all others ultimately depend is one's relationship to God in Christ.

To summarize the main points of the argument thus far, against Gnostic heresies Irenaeus asserts that humanity is made in the image of God yet needs to grow into the likeness of God in Christ. Sin is an unjust condition of slavery, sickness, and wounding that has devastating consequences on all human beings, including alienation from God, others, and the self in the disintegration of the body, soul, and spirit. Psychological traumatology helps describe the effects of sin on humanity as well as providing insight into both the need for salvation in Christ and the way in which Christ brings freedom, healing, and wholeness to humanity. The final section will discuss salvation in Christ, situating the Cross as the crucial site at which Christ recapitulates, overcomes, and transforms trauma unto resurrection life.

Recapitulating Trauma: Sin and Salvation According to Christ

Based on Irenaeus's descriptions of sin as slavery, sickness, and wounds alongside modern understandings of trauma, salvation can be described as freedom, healing, and wholeness—a restorative reintegration of the entire human being (body, soul, and spirit). While sin and trauma isolate, Christ reconnects human beings to their selves, one another, and God. Therefore, salvation is very literally God with us (Emmanuel): the fully God, fully human Jesus Christ (cf.

⁹⁷ See Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 33–54, esp. 34, 155–56.

⁹⁸ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 212.

Matt 1:21–25). For Irenaeus, the key description of salvation in Christ is *recapitulation*,⁹⁹ meaning that Christ takes up the original purpose of humanity, completes/fulfills it faithfully, and thereby defeats sin and death, freeing and restoring humanity (and the rest of creation).¹⁰⁰ In Irenaeus's words: "God recapitulated in himself the ancient formation of [humanity], so that he might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and give life again to humankind."¹⁰¹ As Ephesians 1:9–10 says, "With all wisdom and insight he [God] has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, *to gather up all things in him*, things in heaven and things on earth."¹⁰² Irenaeus's view of the summation of all things in Christ is both specific and expansive, encompassing all human history and initiating a new creation.¹⁰³ "The Lord, recapitulating this day [the day of the fall] in himself, underwent his sufferings on the day preceding the Sabbath. . . . He thus granted humankind a second creation through his passion, which is the creation out of death."¹⁰⁴ The creation out of death accomplished by Christ stands at the heart of recovery from sin and trauma, and the Cross is the crux of this salvific recreation. However, God the Father does not hammer the nails of

⁹⁹ Recapitulation was just one facet of the early church's view of salvation. Payton (*Victory of the Cross*, 90–124, here 92) identifies four major overlapping emphases: "the incarnation, Christ as the last Adam, death on the cross, and the resurrection," each with their own subset of themes and topics, including recapitulation (100–2).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *ICF* 18–19; Payton, "Irenaeus," 162–63. For further discussion of recapitulation, including literary/rhetorical analysis and its relationship to Scripture, see Smith, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 30–31; Balthasar, *Scandal of the Incarnation*, 53; Behr, *Irenaeus*, 90–93, 101, 136–44, 162–72, 180–85; Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 41–44; Bushur, *Irenaeus*, 51–74; Grant, *Irenaeus*, 50–53; Hitchcock, *Irenaeus*, 298–307; Holsinger-Friesen, *Irenaeus and Genesis*, 1–41; Moringiello, *Rhetoric of Faith*, esp. 16–17, 42–49, 72, 94–106, 121–25, 146–48, 164–80; Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 95–140.

¹⁰¹ *Haer.* 3.18.7 (*ICF* 74); cf. *Haer.* 3.21.10; 3.22.1; 3.23.1; 5.14.1–2; 5.18.3; 5.19.1; 5.21.1–2; Balthasar, *Scandal of the Incarnation*, 53–94.

¹⁰² The Greek verb ἀνακεφαλαιόω means to gather up, bring together, unify, or sum up. In Latin, it can be translated as *recapitulare*. In a literary, rhetorical sense, it means to summarize from the top, heading-by-heading. According to Irenaeus, it emphasizes Christ as the head (Greek: κεφαλή; Latin: *caput*) or authority under which all else is rightly aligned. Cf. Col 1:18; Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 42–43.

¹⁰³ *Epid.* 17–30; cf. Behr, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 19–20; *Mystery of Christ*, 77–86; Moringiello, *Rhetoric of Faith*, 168.

¹⁰⁴ *Haer.* 5.23.2 (*ICF* 177).

Crucifixion into the hands and feet of Jesus the Son.¹⁰⁵ Instead, God draws the nails of Crucifixion—indeed, all trauma and death, all sin and suffering—into himself through Christ on the Cross.¹⁰⁶ This is the dynamic of recapitulation that the Scriptures and Irenaeus speak of: in Christ, God sums up, takes authority over, and gathers up into himself all things. Crucially, the gathering of all things into Christ does not happen on their terms, but on God’s.

As noted earlier, both sin and salvation must be understood according to Christ. So rather than trauma being merely a retrospective lens for an ancient event and understanding, since Christ actively (re)defines the Cross and exposes sin, the Crucifixion of Christ ultimately “defines” trauma. Put differently using scriptural terminology, Christ *reveals* the trauma of sin and *fulfills* the human need to integrate and process trauma, accomplishing it completely on the Cross, making possible the way of resurrection life.¹⁰⁷ For some trauma survivors, remembering the Crucifixion of Christ may be a transformative aspect of the re-narration of their own trauma. As Herman notes, reconstruction of the trauma story “transforms the traumatic memory, so it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story.”¹⁰⁸ A reconstructed trauma story may reveal the presence of Christ in the midst of trauma and suffering, thereby transforming it from an

¹⁰⁵ Here, I disagree with Boersma’s argument (*Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 49) that in the present age, “God’s hospitality requires violence, just as his love necessitates wrath. . . . Divine violence . . . is a way in which God strives toward an eschatological situation of pure hospitality.” However, his definition of violence is overly broad as it includes seemingly any sort of demand that might hinder individual freedom. He uses the example of the government requiring a teenager to attend school (44). The real issue with Boersma’s argument (and Derrida’s as well) is that notions of individualism are embedded within them as fundamental premises. In Boersma’s case, this is all the more incongruous given his rigorous insistence elsewhere (*Heavenly Participation*) that the created universe is strictly dependent upon God Almighty. However, I do agree that justice, love, hospitality, and so forth necessitate appropriate limits and boundaries. The ultimate eschatological limit of injustice in the cosmos is the Return of Christ. See Chapter 8 for further discussion.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Moltmann, *Crucified God*.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Epid.* 71–76, 79; Behr, *Irenaeus*, 134–35; Behr, *Mystery of Christ*, 21–44. For a broad consideration of the Cross in Irenaeus’s writing, see Wanke, *Das Kreuz Christi*.

¹⁰⁸ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 175.

experience of isolation to an experience of profound union with Christ.¹⁰⁹ For other trauma survivors, recalling the details of their traumatic experience(s) is unhelpful or damaging if not impossible.¹¹⁰ Instead, they need to integratively process their experiences indirectly, including deep associated emotions like fear and shame and their perceptions of and responses to threats (i.e., recalibrating the “alarm system” of the mind and body).¹¹¹ Therefore, while it remains important to celebrate the Eucharist in trauma-sensitive ways, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ—particularly as remembered in the Eucharist—also provide a way for participants to integratively process their own trauma without revisiting it directly.¹¹² All human traumas are drawn into Christ on the Cross, even unto death; yet Christ—in the fullness of his divinity and humanity—does not become disintegrated or corrupted, but rather makes a way for us to enter into resurrection life in and through him.¹¹³

For Irenaeus, as for Paul (cf. Eph 1:10; Col 1:17), all things are truly summed up in Christ. Crucially, it is not the Roman cross of Caesar that has the defining word regarding trauma, but rather Christ’s form of the Cross that is transformatively determinative:

¹⁰⁹ Ally Moder (“The Changing Self,” 239–42, here 239) describes Inner Healing Prayer (IHP) as a way to revisit “painful memories where Jesus facilitates transformation of wounds and trauma.”

¹¹⁰ See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 183–84, 196; Buczynski et al., “Limbic System,” 8, 23–24; Buczynski et al., “Traumatic Memory,” 3–23.

¹¹¹ See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 2–3, 221–24; cf. Buczynski et al., “Capstone,” 23.

¹¹² Recall the discussion of “non-identical repetition” in Chapter 2. See Chapter 7 for further discussion in relation to the Eucharist.

¹¹³ Recall that Irenaeus views the attempt to obtain the likeness of God *apart from God* as a defining characteristic of sin. Similarly and highlighting the paradoxical nature of cruciform victory and restoration in Christ, Jürgen Moltmann (*Crucified God*, 71) argues that participatory (methectic) knowledge of the Cross “destroys that god, miserable in his pride, which we would like to be, and restores us to our abandoned and despised humanity. The knowledge of the cross brings a conflict of interest between God who has become man and man who wishes to become God. It destroys the destruction of man. It alienates alienated man. And in this way it restores the humanity of dehumanized man.”

And since He is the Word of God Almighty, who invisibly pervades the whole creation, and encompasses (συνέχω) its length, breadth, height, and depth¹¹⁴—for by the Word of God everything is administered—so too was *the Son of God crucified in these fourfold dimensions, having been imprinted in the form of the cross in everything; for it was necessary for Him, becoming visible, to make manifest His form of the cross in everything*, that He who illumines the “heights”, that is, the things in heaven, and holds the “deeps”, which is beneath the earth, and stretches the “length” from the East to the West, and who navigates the “breadth” of the northern and southern regions, inviting the dispersed from all sides to the knowledge of the Father.¹¹⁵

Thus, as the Word of God made flesh (cf. John 1:14), it is Christ’s form of the Cross that has the definitive word in the (re)creation of humanity (in the *image* of God) and the invitation to come to the Father (in maturing into the *likeness* of God).

Moreover, Irenaeus’s all-encompassing multidimensional view of the Cross cannot be limited to only its literal historical dimension.¹¹⁶ Such a view would be simplistically reductive.¹¹⁷ As Herman cautions: “The severity of traumatic events cannot be measured on any

¹¹⁴ Cf. Eph 3:18–19: “I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

¹¹⁵ The apparatus annotations have been removed from this quote for more fluid reading. See *Epid.* 34 (Behr, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 62) emphasis added; cf. Smith, ed., *Apostolic Preaching*, 69–70; *Haer.* 5.17.4; 5.18.2–3; Behr, *Irenaeus*, 134–35; MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration*, 11, 161–63; Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 5.3 (APT 278).

¹¹⁶ While Irenaeus (*Haer.* 2.22.4 [ICF 47–48]) does argue that Christ “sanctified every stage of human development by participating in it himself,” the key point he is making is not a limitation (as if Christ could not save an 80-year-old person because he did not live that long), but rather (in the course of exposing Gnostic heresies in Book 2) that Christ “did not appear as one thing while being something else.” The fundamental point is that Christ was truly, fully human (at all stages of his life) and saves us as such.

¹¹⁷ Baldwin (Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 131–38, here 132 and 134) objects to atonement theologies that valorize trauma and death, arguing that the “traumatizing death of Jesus is not in any way salvific or redemptive in and of itself.” She says the benefit, if any, is not salvation but rather “the expansion of God’s capacity for full understanding of the wounding and burden of trauma.” She goes on to say that “[t]he ‘work’ of Jesus the incarnate Christ is to increase divine awareness of the subjective experience of life in a world that includes harm, disruption, and wounding.” However, ancient theologians (Irenaeus included) are adamant that God has no needs or lack, including the ability to understand human suffering. For a wide range of examples, see APT 55, 71, 90, 100, 169, 262–63, 366–67, 371, 374, 380, 446, 454. It is humans who need the Cross, not God. Answering the question, “Why the Cross, of all deaths?” Athanasius (*On the Incarnation*, §25 [NPNF² 4:49–50, here 49]) maintains, “No other way than this was good for us. . . . For it was not the Word himself who needed [it]; but we were those who needed it.” Cf. Behr, *Incarnation*, 102–5. The next chapter will discuss the subjective dimension of the Cross in further detail.

single dimension; simplistic efforts to quantify trauma ultimately lead to meaningless comparisons of horror.”¹¹⁸ Herman speaks from a scientific psychological point of view, but the observation is theologically germane as well. For instance, Simone Weil specifically connects Ephesians 3:17–19 to the Cross, situating it as the true centre of the universe, beyond space and time, for it is the point at which God is to be found: it is “quite a different dimension, this nail has pierced cleanly through all creation, through the thickness of the screen separating the soul from God. . . . This point of intersection is the point of intersection of the arms of the Cross.”¹¹⁹ The multidimensional nature of the Cross also applies to the notion of recapitulation in Christ not merely as a punctiliar event, but as an ongoing reality. “‘Recapitulation,’” says T. F. Torrance, “means that redemptive activity of God in Jesus Christ was not just a transcendent act that touched our existence in space and time at one point, but an activity that passed into our existence and is at work within it.”¹²⁰ The Crucifixion of Christ, says Shelly Rambo, is “not only the suffering of one body but also of a body that takes in histories of suffering and bears the marks of these histories. . . . Jesus takes on the sins of the world His body is marked.”¹²¹ In Irenaeus’s own words:

Our Lord Jesus Christ underwent a genuine passion, not just the appearance of one. Even so, he was in no danger of being destroyed; instead, by his own power he established fallen humanity and called it anew to incorruption. . . . *The Lord suffered so that he might bring those who have wandered from the Father back to knowledge and communion with him.* . . . Having suffered, the Lord granted us salvation, bestowing on us the knowledge of the Father. . . . By his passion our Lord also destroyed death, dispersed error, put an

¹¹⁸ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33–34.

¹¹⁹ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 135–36. Alexander Schmemmann (*For the Life of the World*, 35) says the Eucharist is a journey or procession into the dimension of the Kingdom of God: “our *entrance* into the presence of Christ is an entrance into a fourth dimension which allows us to see the ultimate reality of life.”

¹²⁰ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 138.

¹²¹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 150.

end to corruption, and destroyed ignorance, while he manifested life, revealed truth, and granted the gift of incorruption.¹²²

Thus, rather than being destroyed by the trauma of sin, crucifixion, and death, Christ experiences these horrors to the full (*beyond* the literal historical events themselves) yet is able to integratively process them and rise again in resurrection life without disintegration or corruption.

The nature of Christ as fully human and fully divine (*hypostatic* union) as well as the insoluble Trinitarian relations of the Father and Son in the Spirit (*perichoresis*) are the basis of how Christ integrates and processes human trauma.¹²³ For Irenaeus, the full reality of Christ's humanity is crucial in God's activity of saving us from corruption and death: "He himself [Christ] therefore had flesh and blood, so that he could recapitulate in himself, not something else, but the original handiwork of the Father, seeking out what had perished."¹²⁴ And he links recapitulation/salvation to reconciliation, quoting Col 1:22: "You have been reconciled in his [Christ's] body of flesh through death." Thus, both the complete humanity and divinity of Christ and the thoroughly relational nature of salvation in Christ are brought to the fore and linked in Irenaeus's soteriology of recapitulation. From a modern psychological perspective, while trauma disintegrates, isolates, and alienates—physiologically, perceptually, relationally/socially, and so on—Christ meets humanity in this devastation, takes us and it into himself, and makes a way for us to process it, not alone but with/in his abiding presence. The abiding incarnational presence of God with Us, Emmanuel, is fundamental to our salvation.¹²⁵ And the eternal Trinitarian relations

¹²² *Haer.* 2.20.3 (ICF 47) emphasis added; cf. Bushur, *Irenaeus*, 94–95.

¹²³ Indeed, Trinitarian theology is essential to Christian

¹²⁴ *Haer.* 5.14.2 (ICF 166). The next chapter will consider reconciliation in relation to the Cross at length.

¹²⁵ Attachment theory and interpersonal neurobiology highlight the fundamental biological need humans have for safe, secure emotional bonds. See Gillies, *Deep Impact*, 41–48; Johnson, *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors*; *Attachment Theory in Practice*.

are essential to both the nature of Christ and his saving activity. Through the Cross, we are met by, drawn into, and united with Christ and his own relationship with the Father, enabling the integrative processing of trauma not alone but in and through Christ.¹²⁶

Jesus was not abandoned by the Father or cut off from the human race in an ontologically real sense on the cross.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, in his humanity, Jesus felt forsaken and cut off at one point (Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46), thereby recapitulating the perception and real traumatic experience of alienation, abandonment, and isolation experienced by humans due to trauma and sin. The crucial difference is that Jesus—human and divine—is able to integrate and process these feelings/sensations, emotionally regulate, remain present and aware, and maintain his connection to the Father as well as his loved ones present at the Cross (e.g., Luke 23:28, 34, 42, 46; John 19:25–28). The cry of dereliction gives voice to traumatic experience (Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46), while the last words Luke records are an expression of utmost trust in the Father beyond even death (Luke 23:46). The polyphonic witness of the Gospels’ views of the Crucifixion testify to its multidimensional character that involves both the experience and integrative processing of trauma.

Of course, while it can be argued that Jesus is not traumatized nor a trauma survivor because he dies,¹²⁸ the Cross is not limited by the strictures of time any more than it is to other observable, measurable dimensions that human senses and sciences can perceive and identify. Jesus does not survive, live in the aftermath of trauma (with a condition like PTSD) and/or recover from trauma the way others do. He dies—relatively quickly at that (cf. Mark 15:44; John

¹²⁶ Recall that processing and recovering from trauma cannot occur in isolation but must take place in the context of safe, loving relations. Cf. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 133.

¹²⁷ Cf. Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 88–92.

¹²⁸ See O’Donnell, “Trauma Theology,” 12.

19:33).¹²⁹ If it is accurate to say (as stated earlier) that trauma is death incarnate, death lodged in living flesh, then the Crucifixion is surely the transcendent moment when Christ takes on all sin, death, and trauma into his own living flesh—not just unto his death, but also beyond, for the multidimensional nature of the Cross stretches beyond the temporal realm. The Crucifixion is not limited to the literal, historical dimensions nor the temporal realm. Therefore, while Jesus does not literally experience trauma in the exact ways that most others do (notably, all woman), these and all traumatic experiences are nonetheless gathered into and summed up in Christ on the Cross such that he undergoes a “genuine passion,” as Irenaeus says, in the fullest sense.¹³⁰ All sin, trauma, and death is *recapitulated*.

The need for the recapitulation of trauma in Christ resides with humanity, not God. Christ is not traumatized for God’s sake, but for ours. “The Body of Christ is a traumatized Body,” asserts O’Donnell.¹³¹ Because of the unity of the ecclesial Body, she says, when one member is traumatized the entire Body experiences trauma. And she links the unity of the traumatized ecclesial body to both the literal/historical and mystical/sacramental bodies of Christ, drawing on Cyril of Alexandria.¹³² The unity of the ecclesial Body is achieved with/in Christ. Therefore, because the entire ecclesial Body (through its members) is traumatized, so too are the

¹²⁹ Yet note that the descent to the dead, to hell, has been embedded within Christian faith (e.g., the Apostles Creed) and liturgical celebration (Holy Saturday) since antiquity. The space between Crucifixion death and Resurrection life should not be ignored in trauma theology nor ministerial practice. Perhaps the day of descent can be viewed as a profound mystical dimension beyond time and space in which Christ endures a mystical posttraumatic condition as his body lies entombed prior to Resurrection. Such tentative speculation may already be saying too much, so suffice it say that surely the mystery of Holy Saturday is an important aspect of trauma-informed theology.

¹³⁰ *Haer.* 2.20.3. For further discussion of the trauma of Christ’s crucifixion, including sexual abuse, see Tombs, *Crucifixion of Jesus*. On the paradoxical glory of Christ in Crucifixion as “the shape of salvation,” see Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 124–25, here 124.

¹³¹ O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 59.

¹³² O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 59–78.

literal/historical and mystical/sacramental bodies of Christ traumatized in their union with humanity.¹³³ That is, by drawing humanity into union with himself, particularly in/through the Cross, Christ himself is profoundly and truly traumatized as an aspect of the recapitulation of human life and death.

The most explicit expression of trauma on the Cross is the cry of dereliction. Compare the words of the Psalmist, quoted by Christ on the Cross (arguably metaleptically),¹³⁴ to van der Kolk's description of the essence of trauma. "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me!? / . . . I am a worm, and not human" (Psalm 22:1, 6; cf. Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46).¹³⁵ "[T]he essence of trauma," says van der Kolk, "is feeling godforsaken, cut off from the human race."¹³⁶ The two expressions, though separated by thousands of years, are uncanny in their similarity, providing strong textual evidence of the traumatization of Christ on the Cross. As Serene Jones says, these words of Christ are his outward expression of trauma: "He is speaking the trauma."¹³⁷ Moreover, it is not insignificant that these precise words uttered by Christ are a quotation of the ancient Psalmist, indicating the profound solidarity of Christ's traumatic suffering with others. Jesus does not merely experience his own individual trauma, but draws in, gathers, sums up, gives voice to, and recapitulates all other traumas on the Cross.

However, because of the wisdom and power of God, union with Christ in trauma is never the end result, just as Incarnation does not end with Crucifixion but proceeds surely to

¹³³ See discussion of various bodies of Christ in the "Sacrifice, Sacrament, and Trauma" section of Ch. 6.

¹³⁴ Suzanne Henderson ("Mark," @1861) notes both a sense of abandonment and hopeful anticipation regarding the quotation of Psalm 22 in Mark 15:34.

¹³⁵ Simone Weil's (*Waiting for God*, 120; quoted in Beste, *God and the Victim*, 11) vividly describes the afflicted person as "a being struggling like a half-crushed worm."

¹³⁶ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 337.

¹³⁷ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xvi.

Resurrection and beyond. Though they do not speak specifically of trauma from a modern standpoint, from the recapitulatory and incarnational perspectives of Irenaeus and Cyril, it is theologically imperative to recognize the presence of trauma, the reality of death, and the devastation of sin in the B/body of Christ (ecclesial, literal, and mystical) *as well as* the inevitable (albeit eschatological) wholeness, life, and resurrection righteousness that ultimately provide abiding, abundant life to the B/body of Christ.

The Cross would be incomplete, inconsequential, and utterly incomprehensible without the Resurrection:¹³⁸ the death of Christ cannot be separated from his inexorable life. While Crucifixion and Resurrection are distinct moments, they are not truly divisible, so theological discussion of one must always have the other in view in some way.¹³⁹ Resurrection life only exists on the other side of death. Where Christ is concerned—uniquely so—death cannot corrupt nor maintain its hold, so there is no proper theological discussion of the death of Christ that does not also lead to Resurrection at some point.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, the benefits of salvation are worked out through both Cross and Resurrection—and indeed, the entirety of the Incarnation—not artificially abstracted or disconnected moments.¹⁴¹ A theologically balanced view must hold all aspects of the Incarnation in some form of unity but not uniformity. While death and trauma are

¹³⁸ Cf. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xvi.

¹³⁹ However, in application through pastoral care and liturgical/sacramental celebration, it remains imperative not to move too quickly from death to resurrection. That is, while theory must always keep the two in view, practice is appropriately more focused and often has the here and now in view rather than the big picture.

¹⁴⁰ At the same time, we must not rush too quickly from death to Resurrection, as many trauma-informed theologians have pointed out. E.g., Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 79–80; Travis, *Unspeakable*, 45–54; O'Donnell, "Eucharist and Trauma," 192; Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 121.

¹⁴¹ Cf. O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 18. Later (192) she says, "When we view the Eucharist as a Christ-focused sacrament we forget the wholeness of the Triune God. Understanding the Eucharist as an event focused solely on the Pasch of Christ atomizes the life and person of Jesus Christ."

most clearly connected to the Cross and while life and wholeness are most clearly connected to the Resurrection, to insist on entirely discrete operations would be theologically problematic.¹⁴²

Since antiquity, theologians have asserted that the victory of life comes through death, as Irenaeus claims in the passage quoted above (*Haer.* 2.20.3) and elsewhere. James Payton identifies four interrelated themes in ancient soteriology: “the incarnation, Christ as the last Adam, death on the cross, and the resurrection, each of which opens up its own vistas on salvation.”¹⁴³ Despite these emphases, he maintains that “it is almost an artificial exercise to distinguish them, since patristic and liturgical treatments overlap them constantly.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, while this chapter has emphasized the recapitulation of trauma in relation to the Cross, it would be an artificial abstraction to sever the Cross from the Resurrection or any other aspect of the incarnational life and ministry of Christ.

Much like the multidimensional scope of soteriological recapitulation I advocate based on Irenaeus’s theology, Karen O’Donnell situates the Cross, “the site of Jesus’ traumatic passion and death,” and the Resurrection, “the site of the triumph of the body,” within the overarching scope of the Incarnation as a “holistic moment” that draws together all other aspects of his life and ministry.¹⁴⁵ Serene Jones also locates the “dimension of grace that conforms without violating,” that “embraces without threatening” at the Cross, where “[t]he traumatic violence he [Christ] undergoes does not annihilate the form of his loving.”¹⁴⁶ And as Behr says: “The assumption of the flesh by the Word is less a reduction of the Word to the level of the flesh than

¹⁴² Crucifixion, Resurrection, and the space between (Holy Saturday) will be discussed in relation to triumphalism in Chapter 5.

¹⁴³ Payton, *Victory of the Cross*, 92; regarding recapitulation see 100–2.

¹⁴⁴ Payton, *Victory of the Cross*, 92.

¹⁴⁵ O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 15, 18.

¹⁴⁶ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 124.

it is the raising of the flesh to the level of the Word. . . . the revelation of God, his revelation, his truth, and his light, is not subsumed or caught within the horizon of this world.”¹⁴⁷ The death and Resurrection of Christ are the means of hope for humans caught in the bondage of sin, death, and trauma.¹⁴⁸ The recapitulatory Crucifixion of Christ stretches beyond human experience, comprehension, and explanation even as it brings humanity into union with Christ.

While the basis of recapitulation is the nature of Christ (*hypostatic* union) and Trinitarian relations (*perichoresis*), the precise neuro-biological and psychological mechanics of *how* Christ integrates and processes trauma through the Cross and Resurrection remains a profound mystery. Just as Jesus experiences bodily trauma to the point of death and lies in a tomb yet remains uncorrupted and rises again, he also experiences psychological trauma yet without being destructively disintegrated. Apart from acknowledging the wisdom and power of God, it is (scientifically and theologically) impossible and inexplicable how Jesus can die, lay in a grave uncorrupted, and rise marked yet alive and well. Likewise, Jesus experiences trauma, cries out in a traumatic moment of feeling alone and godforsaken, and then commits his spirit into the Father’s hands. Jesus experiences and integratively processes trauma yet dies quickly without having an observable or longstanding traumatic disorder. It is inconceivable and paradoxical. And yet it is the good news of Crucifixion and Resurrection: improbable, impossible, scandalous, yet real.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Behr, *Irenaeus*, 209; cf. Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 155–57.

¹⁴⁸ This description of the Crucifixion as redemptively salvific is not the same as views that claim the death of Christ satisfies a need within God, such as satisfaction via suffering, blood, and death in a retributive paradigm. Many trauma-informed theologians object to such views of the Cross. For example, see Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 129–33; cf. Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 154–55; Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 6–8.

¹⁴⁹ The “evidence” of Christ’s victory over sin and death is the Resurrection; likewise, the integrative wholeness of Christ after his Resurrection is proof of the transformatively salvific nature of the Cross. Moreover, it is the presence of Christ with his followers after his Resurrection that proves pivotal in their own recovery.

The *how* of the Cross is at the heart of the unfathomable mystery that we celebrate in the *mystērion* of the Eucharist. As with the mechanics of the Eucharist (metaphysical or otherwise), *how* it works is a less important and appropriate theological question than *with whom* we commune.¹⁵⁰ As a work of practical theology, this dissertation is more concerned with how the church may participate in Christ's integrative processing of trauma through celebration of the Eucharist (see Chapter 7). We behold the beautiful mystery of Christ. We immerse ourselves within, partake of, and imbibe this most profound mystery in the ongoing simplicity of Eucharistic food and drink, which is paradigmatic for all life with/in Christ. Both death and life are embedded in the Eucharist through breaking and sharing, outpouring and (comm)unity, provision and sustenance. The Cross and Resurrection—and the silence in between—are essential to the Eucharist as the giving and receiving of life in Christ—not neat and tidy and wrapped up with a bow, but naked, raw, and utterly human yet full of divine grace.¹⁵¹

As a mystery (in the ancient sacramental theological sense), resurrection—one of the key claims and hopes of Christian faith—is not reducible to scientific description or technological repetition. And recovery from trauma, from the deathly devastation lodged in mind and body, is not reducible to the insights of psychological traumatology—notwithstanding their insightful, accurate, and helpful contributions. The source and means of recovery and resurrection is Christ and Christ alone. That does not mean humans do not have genuine insight into recovery from trauma, but at best humans describe and *participate* in the healing ministry of Christ.¹⁵² While

Encounters with the risen Christ lead to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, both of which are crucial to the their redemptive perspective on the Cross and their empowerment for proclaiming and embodying the gospel.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 57.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xxv, 10, 97.

¹⁵² Accordingly, if all healing is truly the activity of Christ, then it is possible that some people participate in Christ's ministry without explicitly or consciously knowing that they do so. The Scriptures speak of unknowing

modern sciences have many insights into the workings of the human body and mind, they are not equipped to plumb the depths of the human spirit. While the positive effects of spirituality may be observable and measurable in some ways, the spiritual realm is not scientifically quantifiable. Therefore, it must be recognized that human traumatization has a spiritual dimension—most notably the alienation of human-divine relations—and, hence, both the integrative processing of trauma and the salvific restoration of life in Christ has a spiritual dimension that is essential to the reintegration of the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit.

While the mystery of the Cross of Christ remains unfathomable, it may nonetheless be given faithful witness. Accordingly, the Cross of Christ is not a Procrustean bed that either increases or invalidates all other suffering. Neither is the Cross merely a Frankensteinian aggregate of the sum total of all human suffering. Rather, the Cross of Christ is the site at which humanity's great need most directly, openly, and intimately meets God's great love and power and wisdom. All suffering and trauma is drawn into and transformed by Christ on the Cross so that humanity is not alone, not hopeless, and not damned by meaningless torment in the bondage of sin and death. Christ's cruciform recapitulation of trauma is, in a word, salvation.

From this perspective, salvation according to the new creation in Christ is not dissimilar to original creation since salvation in Christ necessarily involves the process of maturing in new

ministry as well: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (see Matt 25:31–40, 40 quoted). Moreover, it is simply impossible for us to be constantly fully aware of God's activity in the cosmos and our participation in it (cf. Root, *Christopraxis*). Just as our human minds and bodies have all sorts of unconscious and automatic functions (like our heartbeats), so too do we often participate in God's operations without conscious awareness. Regarding the pervasive nature of God, Rowan Williams ("Foreword," xiii) says: "Sacramentality . . . is the very specific conviction that the world is full of the life of a God whose nature is known in Christ and the Spirit." Larson-Miller (*Sacramentality Renewed*, 82–83) adds that all Christian life and ministry is centred on the presence of God, who is present and active whether or not we are aware of him: "Discerning that [God's] presence is the work of faith, sharing that presence is the work of discipleship, inviting others into that presence is the work of evangelism. And *whether recognized or not*, the real and eternal presence 'is,' and sacramental theology is a way to see God in all things through the modes of God's presence."

life in Christ. That is, eternal salvation in Christ encompasses the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future. In fact, Irenaeus points to the “future reintegration and union of the three [body, soul, and spirit] . . . that they would share one and the same salvation.”¹⁵³ Ultimately, this salvation is resurrection life in Christ, for which Irenaeus says the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, prepares us.¹⁵⁴ Thus, any discussion of sin and trauma from a Christian point of view should inevitably lead to hope in Christ, which involves not escape to a disembodied heavenly paradise, but rather bodily participation in the Eucharist as part of the ongoing process of the restorative reintegration of complete human beings in safe, loving relationships with the self, others, and God. Only in Christ can horrific trauma be transformed into joyful, hopeful testimony that speaks beyond the grave.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the Cross of Christ stands as the crucial site of the recapitulation of trauma that leads to salvation: the reintegration of the whole human being (body, soul, and spirit) in Christ by the Spirit according to the will of the Father.

Conclusion

In keeping with Patristic modes of theology—which did not separate theology from spirituality or reflection from worship—this view of the Cross of Christ as the salvific recapitulation of trauma has direct implications for worship within the Church, including the core sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.¹⁵⁶ What sorts of worship and fellowship might be inspired by this

¹⁵³ *Haer.* 5.6.1 (*ICF* 160); cf. *Haer.* 5.9.1; Hitchcock, *Irenaeus*, 307–11. Osborn (*Irenaeus*, 140) notes that for Irenaeus recapitulation and consummation are tied together.

¹⁵⁴ See *Haer.* 5.2.3.

¹⁵⁵ Chapter 8 will discuss the transformation of trauma to testimony at length.

¹⁵⁶ Proper names of sacraments are capitalized throughout. Cf. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration*, 59; Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 10. Regarding Baptism, see *Haer.* 1.9.4; 1.21.1; 1.26.1; 3.9.3; 3.14.3; 4.23.2; *Epid.* 3; 7; 41–42. Regarding the Eucharist, see *Haer.* 3.11.5; 4.18.4–6; 5.2.2–3; cf. Behr, *Mystery of Christ*, 105–7.

view of Christ's recapitulation of trauma? And how might church communities bear witness to Christ and worship together in ways that are both faithful and trauma-sensitive? These and other theological, liturgical/sacramental, ecclesiological, and missiological questions are increasingly being taken up by scholars working within trauma-informed frameworks.¹⁵⁷

In terms of application, shifting the locus of responsibility for sin in a more communal direction means that church communities should be attuned to the real needs that exist and arise, particularly where abuse, violence, and trauma are concerned.¹⁵⁸ Participating in the ministry of Christ in meeting the needs of those harmed by trauma, the survivors, should be a key aspect of pastoral and communal care. The recapitulation of trauma by Christ on and through the Cross is central to the celebration of the Eucharist since there is no shared meal, no communion with/in Christ, without the breaking of Christ's body and the sharing of his blood. As a simple yet profound bodily ritual that involves some of the most basic and necessary aspects of human life—eating and drinking—the Eucharist provides a way for trauma survivors to experience the life of Christ in their bodies, souls, and spirits. Rather than a one-time (triumphalistic) solution, the ongoing nature of the Eucharist contributes to the process of recovery in which the Cross is a crucial aspect.¹⁵⁹ So while the Cross of Christ largely remains a mystery, it still stands at the center of faithful Christian witness to the good news of salvation in Christ, who meets the deepest human needs by meeting humans in their needs,¹⁶⁰ including the traumatic conditions and consequences of sin and death.

¹⁵⁷ See Chapters 2 and 7.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Boerger, "Original Wound," 309–18.

¹⁵⁹ Sacramentally, if baptism is the *gateway*, the Eucharist is the *pathway* (cf. John 10:1–10; 14:6)

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Boerger, "Participating in the Ministry of the Cross," esp. 39.

In order to further ground faithful, trauma-informed celebrations of the Eucharist, the next chapter will continue to discuss how God meets human needs and meets humans in their needs through the Cross, considering objective, subjective, and cosmic dimensions of the Cross as well as the participation of the Church in the ministry of the Cross.

CHAPTER 5
ATONEMENT AS RECONCILIATION:
PARTICIPATING IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CROSS

“When the crucified Jesus is called the ‘image of the invisible God’,
the meaning is that *this* is God, and God is like *this*.”
—Jürgen Moltmann¹

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
—Jesus, John 14:6 (my translation)

The previous chapter discussed a crucial subjective dimension of atonement, describing the Crucifixion of Christ as the recapitulation of trauma that enables humanity to integratively process trauma in body, soul, and spirit, leading to the salvation of reintegrated wholeness in Christ. This chapter discusses three dimensions of the Cross together—subjective, objective, and cosmic dimensions—in relation to atonement that are essential to its relationship to and experiential outworking within the Eucharist.² When understood as non-violently, non-coercively contributing to the reconciliation of humanity to the Father—not the Father to humanity (see 2 Cor 5:18–20)—the Cross, as a means of communion with/in Christ rather than the legitimization of abuse and trauma, can stand as a central and pivotal aspect of both atonement theology and the Eucharist.³

¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 205, emphasis original; cf. Col 1:15.

² An earlier version of this chapter was published as Boerger, “Participating in the Ministry of the Cross,” 20–40.

³ This is not to be confused with pressuring trauma survivors to forgive and/or reconcile with perpetrators, which is inappropriate (cf. Herman, “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 578; *Truth and Repair*, 120–27). See Chapter 8.

The fundamental argument of this chapter and the next (indeed, underlying the entire thesis) is that Christ *is* communion. In other words, divine-human relations proceed in Christ as gracious communion rather than transaction, (metaphysical) cause and effect, or any other mode.⁴ The claim that we commune with God in Christ involves the meaning and manner of atonement (reconciliation) and the (re)definition of (eucharistic) sacrifice according to Christ (self-giving love enacted in trust).⁵ The basis of Christ's communion with humanity is the communing relations (*perichoresis*) of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Divine communion is categorically different from transactional relationships. As the Way, the Truth, and the Life through whom we come to the Father, Jesus himself is the basis of human relations with God (cf. John 14:6). In other words, the Son is the exact representation of the Father, the imprint of his being (cf. Heb 1:3), and it is in union with him that we boldly approach the Father (cf. Heb 4:16).

To describe how Christ is communion, this chapter discusses atonement as reconciliation in Christ with balanced attention to objective, subjective, and cosmic dimensions of atonement. The next chapter describes the sacrifice of Christ at the Cross as the outworking of divine self-giving love, not the appeasement of the wrath of the Father by the blood of the Son. Consequently, sacramental participation in the Eucharist is situated in relation to Christ's ministry of reconciliation (atonement) and the sacrifice of Christ (self-giving love). Accordingly, the Cross of Christ provides the participatory paradigm for communion with God. Atonement, sacrifice, and sacrament(s) are all aspects of the same dynamic, relational, fundamental reality:

⁴ Cf. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 22, 44–45.

⁵ Sacrifice is a topic of the next chapter.

communion with God in Christ. And the Cross is a crucial, pivotal site at which God reveals and makes possible human communion with God, the self, and others.

If a fundamental effect of the trauma of sin is the condition of being alienated from God, self, others, and creation, then atonement theology should explain how God addresses these traumatic relational ruptures. And since the traumatic Crucifixion of Christ is graphically remembered, celebrated, and, in certain ways, shared by participants in the Eucharist, theological attention to the nature of atonement is necessary for a trauma-informed understanding of the Eucharist. Put differently, since perspectives on atonement, including notions of divine and human needs, are wrapped up in the celebration of the Eucharist (even if implicitly), a trauma-informed theology of the Eucharist must provide a theologically coherent view of atonement in which the community of faith may participate. And since by celebrating the Eucharist (or Lord's Supper) we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26), attention to the Crucifixion of Christ remains theologically imperative in both theory and practice.⁶ Accordingly, this chapter addresses the domains of trauma-informed theological theory and practical application, while also touching on aspects of the communal/ecclesial and personal domains, attending to multiple dimensions of divine-human relations. In order to underpin a faithful, trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist, this chapter aims to clarify the ministry of Christ on the Cross with an integrated view of the objective, subjective, and classic/cosmic dimensions

⁶ While overly Christocentric and crucicentric approaches have tended to characterize evangelical atonement theologies, attention to Christ and the Cross is still imperative. See Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 1–2, 19, 56, 200; cf. Pinnock, "Salvation by Resurrection," 1. For an Anglican trauma-informed view of the Eucharist that situates the Annunciation-Incarnation event as central rather than the Crucifixion, see O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*. My view is that we can affirm the significance and importance of the Annunciation-Incarnation event without dislocating the centrality of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. In some ways, the Annunciation-Incarnation event can be paired with Ascension and Pentecost as the crucial bookends of the gospel, while the Crucifixion and Resurrection remain central and climactic, pivotal and paradigmatic.

of this ministry so that the Church can approach participation in Christ's life and ministry in more theologically appropriate ways—that is, more safely, securely, and faithfully.

Therefore, this chapter seeks to view the Cross of Christ from a Trinitarian theological perspective that sees the ministry of the Cross as the actions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in united harmony rather than a conflict and resolution of relations within the Trinity. Additionally, the Cross meets human needs, rather than satisfying or meeting supposed divine needs. Moreover, the ministry of the Cross also involves God's invitation to humanity not only to be reconciled to him, but to participate in the life and ministry of Christ in (comm)union with him. Since the Church consists of the ambassadors of Christ who share in his ministry of reconciliation of the world to God (not God to the world; cf. 2 Cor 5:11–21; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20), then the ministry of the Cross (atonement as reconciliation) should coherently fit within this broader salvation activity and theology, rather than being the exception (as in penal substitutionary views). Therefore, rather than presenting a novel atonement theory, this chapter innovatively integrates and synthesizes various dimensions of atonement in a multi-dimensional, relational view, especially regarding the ministry of the Cross. This view helps inform the life and ministry of the Church in the midst of present hardship and trauma, yet in light of Christ's victorious life.

More specifically, this chapter argues that in union with Christ through the power of Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father, the Church participates in the priestly confession of sin (the way of objective atonement), the embodied apostolic and prophetic expression of divine love (the truth of subjective atonement), and the royal redemptive victory over sin and death (the life of classic/cosmic atonement) for the sake of the world and to the glory of God. Moreover, these dimensions contribute to the key aspects of trauma recovery: safety, integrative processing

and/or (re)narration, reconnection, and the restoration of justice.⁷ Therefore, this view of atonement is more likely to be helpful for those who have been traumatized and should in no way be taken to validate abuse, trauma, and oppression as God-ordained human experiences. Faithful celebration of the Eucharist is emblematic of the ways the Church participates in Christ's ministry of reconciliation, including the ministry of the Cross, and can contribute to trauma recovery in the Church (though not for all people in the same ways).

This chapter begins by defining atonement relationally (rather than forensically or transactionally) and considering an appropriate approach for constructing and considering a coherent and practical theology of atonement. The need for a relational orientation according to a coherent Trinitarian theology is highlighted in this section. Next the objective, subjective, and classic/cosmic dimensions of atonement are considered respectively in relation to the high priestly, apostolic and prophetic, and royal aspects of Christ's ministry as well as Jesus' self-identification as the Way, the Truth, and the Life in relation to the Father (cf. John 14:6). After establishing the need for the life and ministry of the Church to participate in the life and ministry of Christ, each correlation above is discussed in terms of Christ's ministry of reconciliation, including the ministry of the Cross, and the Church's life and ministry in union with Christ. In each section, these observations are then related to the aspects of trauma recovery noted above. The chapter concludes with some brief comments regarding the notion of a substitutionary dimension of Christ's life and ministry as well as comments on the celebration of the Eucharist.

⁷ See Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 3, 155–213, 266–69, esp. 155, 175, 196; *Truth and Repair*, 1–4.

Integrating Atonement: Reconciliation in Christ

Rather than an appeasement of a vengeful God or a satisfaction of needs within God, Christian atonement is relational reparation and reconciliation.⁸ James Beilby and Paul Eddy note the English word *atonement* “refers to a reconciled state of ‘at-one-ness’ between parties that were formerly alienated in some manner.”⁹ Or, as Colin Gunton says, atonement is “the reconciliation between God and the world which is the heart of Christian teaching.”¹⁰ Likewise, Steven Studebaker says, “atonement is the fundamental work of redemption,” and the fundamental meaning of atonement is *reconciliation*.¹¹ In other words, redemption is ultimately aimed at reconciliation, which is the telos of the overarching scope of atonement.¹²

As Chapter 4 argued, the Crucifixion of Christ is the way God—in his love, wisdom, and power—chooses to recapitulate and overcome human trauma and death so that humans can integratively process trauma in and through Christ and enter into eternal life in him. At the same time, Shelly Rambo observes that many theologians have called attention to ways that the Cross has been misappropriated in the sanctification and glorification of violence and suffering.¹³ Nonetheless, while maintaining the poignancy and necessity of these critiques, Rambo contends

⁸ More relational views of atonement with God are not a modern or even a uniquely Christian notion. See, for example, the Qumran community (or *Yahad*) view of humility and the work of God’s Spirit in atonement in 1QS III, 4–9 (Wise et al., *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 129); cf. 1QH^a IV, 11–12; XII, 37; XIX, 5–7, 10–11. This view is not unlike the Christian theology of *theosis*. Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 190–92, 215–17.

⁹ Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Nature of the Atonement*, 9; cf. Paul, *Atonement and the Sacraments*, 20.

¹⁰ Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement*, 2.

¹¹ Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, ix, 8. Cf. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 3–4; Stump, *Atonement*, 7.

¹² This perspective recognizes that full reconciliation is a process that includes confession/apology, forgiveness, commitment and change, rebuilding trust, and so on. See, for example, the contrast between the revenge cycle and the path of forgiveness in Tutu and Tutu, *Book of Forgiving*, 45–63, esp. 49.

¹³ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 6. See further discussion in Chapter 8.

that the Cross should not be entirely rejected or erased.¹⁴ But the Cross does require careful, thoughtful engagement. “While the wounds of crucifixion stand as one of the central symbols of Christian faith,” says Shelly Rambo, “the articulations of the meanings of those wounds have often perpetuated rather than alleviated suffering.”¹⁵ For these reasons and more, I believe that (re-)orienting and (re)defining our understanding of the Cross *according to Christ* is crucial, particularly within trauma-informed theology. Therefore, whatever ways members of the Body of Christ may participate in Christ’s ministry of the Cross must not be used to legitimize oppression, abuse, violence, and trauma but rather should contribute to healing and wholeness, as did the life and ministry of Christ.

Moreover, as Rambo and other trauma-informed theologians have cautioned, moving too quickly from death to resurrection is theologically problematic—a redemptive gloss that elides the time of waiting, of unknowing, of silence.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous chapter, Cross and Resurrection are not properly separable. Without death, Resurrection is impossible. Without Resurrection, the Cross is not good news. However, in addition to Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, the in-between space of Holy Saturday is historically and liturgically essential to the goodness of the gospel, especially for trauma survivors, for its silence bears witness to the speechlessness of trauma and death, the unsayable and unfathomable gaps that remain in their aftermath.¹⁷ The silence of Sacred Saturday is the space that both marks

¹⁴ She approaches redemption from the middle, from a non-linear perspective that recognizes both the ongoingness of trauma and the love of God in the midst of suffering. See Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 154–60.

¹⁵ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 145.

¹⁶ E.g., Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 79–80; Travis, *Unspeakable*, 45–54; O’Donnell, “Eucharist and Trauma,” 192; Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 121.

¹⁷ Rambo (*Spirit and Trauma*, 79–80, here 80) emphasizes the role of the Spirit as elusive divine presence in the not victorious but “weary love of Holy Saturday.” Cf. O’Donnell, “Eucharist and Trauma,” 192. For a homiletical view of witness, see Travis, *Unspeakable*, 55–76.

Crucifixion and Resurrection as distinct *and* makes the bridge that inextricably connects the two. Like Passover, the marking, waiting, and making of Holy Saturday comprise the necessary passage to not our own faith, hope, love, and understanding, but to God's.¹⁸ Without this space and time of profound silence in both the practice of communal worship and the discipline of theological discussion, the witness is compromised, the goodness cheapened, and the efficacy undermined.¹⁹

Therefore, while the following discussion of the Cross (here and throughout) focuses on its *benefits* in order to helpfully, sensitively, and faithfully maintain its crucial place within the celebration of the Eucharist, it should be noted that many of these benefits are experienced as ongoing processes—messy processes, sometimes—that should be situated in eschatological scope (see Chapter 8). For example, while the cosmic dimension of the Cross directly relates to the defeat of sin and death and invites us into the Kingdom of God as coheirs with Christ (“The Life: Cosmic Atonement and Christ Our King as Victorious Redemption” below), it must be kept in mind that we do not yet live in the full, consummate reality of this victorious promise, despite the fact that Christ himself is risen, ascended, and returning. Such victory is a present reality in the Person of Christ, but our present experience may remain a glimpse as through a glass, darkly (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). We remain in between, though now with the surety of resurrection life on the horizon, however near or distant that may be.

¹⁸ See Wright, *Christians at the Cross*, 66–67; Bowe, “Last Supper,” 255–56.

¹⁹ In a formal work such as this, composed of words as it is, the silence must be read between the lines in the prayer, meditation, contemplation, and other spiritual disciplines that have surrounded the research and writing process.

Serene Jones says the Crucifixion only makes sense in light of the Resurrection.²⁰

Therefore, notwithstanding the need to maintain the space between (in both academic theology or communal worship and pastoral care), failing to ever make the move to resurrection, or at least to make a hopeful gesture in that direction, would be just as theologically inappropriate as glossing over the time and space in between.²¹ In liturgical terms, while we may kneel at the altar to receive body and blood, we do not remain in that moment of silent descent indefinitely (despite the necessity of the waiting); rather, upon receiving the life of Christ in our own bodies, we too rise and return—to worship, to life, to the world. While all our problems have not been instantly, magically solved, we have nonetheless truly and really partaken of the mystery of Christ. While we may move on from the altar, we do so with the promise of return. While we may wait to receive the sustenance of Christ when and how the Lord sees fit, we do so with real hope that we will return to the altar and once again encounter Life.

Therefore, the notes of victory and triumph that resonate within this chapter (and elsewhere) are not intended to invade the silence of waiting nor gloss over the groans of suffering. These high, hopeful notes have traveled far and echo from eternity. I have artificially isolated them to some extent in the theological task of focusing this chapter on the benefits of the Cross and Resurrection in ways that do not perpetuate or legitimize traumatic suffering, but I do not wish them to come at the expense of honest, compassionate attention to the wounds that presently remain in the Body of Christ. Both must be witnessed. “We cannot talk about

²⁰ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xvi. As noted earlier, Jesus’ death is not properly understood until after his Resurrection, Ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Therefore, encounters with the risen Christ and the infilling of the Holy Spirit are the proper basis of Christian proclamation, regardless of the content of the message in question, including silence, trauma, and lament.

²¹ Jones (*Trauma and Grace*, 94–97) provides a reading of the (original) end of Mark’s Gospel as a silent gesture (discussed further in Chapter 8).

resurrection,” says Sarah Travis, “unless we also talk about wounds. . . . We tell two stories at the same time: one of a resurrection in the face of trauma, and one that testifies to the ongoingness of death even in the face of resurrection.”²² Just as there is a fine line between glorifying and appropriately bearing witness to the harm of trauma, there is a fine line between triumphalism on the one hand and living hope in the midst of suffering on the other. Most often the line between the two is drawn at the stated horizon of fulfillment: triumphalism in the present age or the hope of consummation in the age to come.²³

Therefore, trauma-informed theology must locate itself in the middle; that is, within the tension of the reality Christ’s resurrection and the Church’s ongoing experience of and witness to trauma. In the middle, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit comes to the fore. Rambo says it is the “Spirit of the Middle” who produces “the fruit of love forged through death.”²⁴ While this chapter and other moments in this work focus more so on the fruit of love (the benefits) of the Cross and Resurrection, they are intended as a dual witness in order to consider how best to celebrate the Eucharist in a trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive manner that neither glorifies

²² Travis, *Unspeakable*, 46, 54.

²³ Douglas John Hall (*Cross in our Context*, 17) defines *triumphalism* as “the tendency in all strongly held worldviews, whether religious or secular, to present themselves as full and complete accounts of reality, leaving little if any room for debate or difference of opinion and expecting their adherents unflinching belief and loyalty.” Sarah Travis (*Unspeakable*, 45) adds that interpretations of the Cross are triumphalist when they present it as “a final and complete account of reality.” Recall also Torrance’s (*Divine Meaning*, 138) description of recapitulation as an ongoing process/activity: “Recapitulation means that redemptive activity of God in Jesus Christ was not just a transcendent act that touched our existence in space and time at one point, but an activity that passed into our existence and is at work within it.” For this reason, it is vital to situate the Cross within the wider scope of the Incarnation while simultaneously approaching it as an unfathomable mystery still at work in the cosmos. Chapter 8 will further discuss how trauma is not erased but is transformed into testimony in the very form of the risen body of Christ. Chapter 8 will also situate the restoration of justice in the cosmos in eschatological scope rather than reducing it to a forensic backwards-oriented view of the Cross and salvation.

²⁴ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 79. See also the discussion of the Spirit in Romans 8. Here, Paul says we cry out to the Father with the spirit of adoption such cries are “that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16). He goes on to link the “sufferings of this present time” (8:18) to the intercessory work of “the Spirit who helps us in our weakness” and “intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (8:26) with our own patient hope as we “groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (8:23).

harmful suffering nor triumphalistically ignores and erases trauma. For instance, the section of this chapter describing the incarnate expression of love and forgiveness on the Cross seeks to recognize not only God's love for us, but his presence with us in the midst of suffering, trauma, and death.²⁵ Nevertheless, divine solidarity unto death is not ultimately good news unless it eventually makes way for resurrection life while passing through the season of silence and waiting.

While the historical body of Christ is resurrected, the ecclesial Body is not *yet* living in the full reality of bodily resurrection. Thus, the body of Christ provides hope and courage to the Body and sustains us while we await the fulfillment of this concrete, corporeal hope, yet with grief, mourning, and lament along the way.²⁶ The lived lament of the ecclesial Body is sustained by the life of the body of Christ. Both theological theory and pastoral practice must bear faithful witness to the risen Christ (for none other can save) and also to the experience(s) of the remaining Body of Christ (which is physically present).²⁷ The sacramental union of the body and the Body of Christ takes place in the Eucharist. The trauma in the Body that remains is met by the broken body of Christ in the eucharistic fracturing and sharing, and the resurrected wholeness of the risen body of Christ is made manifest by the participative gathering of the ecclesial Body. The body is broken and the Body is made whole in gathering. The Body remains in the ongoing process of recovery and the body is risen and returning. While the Body keeps the score, the

²⁵ Regarding the unconquerable embodied expression of God's love on the Cross in the midst of trauma, see Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xvi–xvii.

²⁶ Considering Psalms 10, 22, and 119, Serene Jones (*Trauma and Grace*, 63) says that “hope returns not because evil is explained or immediate justice is invoked, but because through the activity of thanksgiving, the goodness of God is publicly attested to and reaffirmed.” The core practice for such hope-inspiring thanksgiving in the life of the Church is the celebration of the Eucharist.

²⁷ Here the Johannine attention to remaining as abiding in Christ is vital. See esp. John 15:1–17.

body promises death, pain, and mourning will one day be no more. As Paul says, the mystery made known to us “is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

In order to properly represent the good news of Christ (especially in trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist), integrating the various dimensions of atonement theology is one of the key tasks in articulating and implementing the ministry of the Cross of Christ. As Paul Fiddes notes: “no theory of atonement can be entirely subjective or objective, but there will be a shifting balance between the two elements in different understandings of atonement. . . . [T]he question to be asked [of a given view of atonement] is how well it integrates the two elements.”²⁸ I agree that a well-balanced integration is necessary, but as noted above, I think that more than just the objective and subjective dimensions of atonement should be balanced and integrated.

There have been many approaches to integration within theologies of atonement, which Joshua McNall situates on a continuum ranging between the extremes of reductionism and relativism.²⁹ In his view, reductionism produces a “defensive hierarchy [that] reduces the multifaced nature of the atonement by elevating a single model as somehow most important.”³⁰ On the other hand, relativism produces a “disconnected plurality” in which various views are all deemed important yet there is a failure to “relate . . . different models of atonement in *particular* ways.”³¹ McNall aims to reintegrate views of atonement in an ordered yet not rigid manner so that when they are viewed as parts of a whole, they faithfully and truly image Christ and inspire

²⁸ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 26. Gunton (*Actuality of Atonement*) argues that no one image, metaphor, or interpretation of the Cross encapsulates its fullness.

²⁹ See McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 19–21, 310.

³⁰ McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 20.

³¹ McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 20; emphasis original. He says Joel Green’s kaleidoscopic view of atonement (in Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Nature of the Atonement*, 157–85) helpfully moves away from polemical reductionism, but is too relativistic.

worship.³² Accordingly, he discusses and arranges four of the most prominent models in relation to one another such that the feet of Christ are represented by recapitulation, the heart by penal substitution, the head by Christus Victor, and the hands by moral influence.³³

As viewers of the Christoform mosaic of atonement (according to McNall's configuration or any other), we must also acknowledge that the position from which we view it will affect our perception.³⁴ That is, our perspective can skew the image even if the pieces are ordered correctly. At this point the metaphor breaks down to some degree since a mosaic is basically two-dimensional and the love of God revealed in Christ is infinitely multi-dimensional (cf. Eph 3:18). Yet a proper orientation or posture is still required to begin to see the manifest love of God in and through Christ, including his work on the Cross.³⁵ As Andrew Purves says: "Theology is an expression of our baptismal identity in and of our belonging to God."³⁶ And as such it must be relational (which includes both experience and thoughtful reflection), rather than an attempt to speak about God "at some kind of distance, remotely, neutrally."³⁷ Thus, a faithful theology of atonement must be based on and in one's relationship with God and should rightly keep the

³² McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 21–22, 25, 309–10. Similarly, Purves (*Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 13) says atonement is "surely a mystery to be adored and received rather than a theological problem to be picked apart, analyzed and solved."

³³ His rationale for selecting these models is not that they are the only viable ones, but simply because they are well-known, well-attested, and therefore presumably possible to integrate in some manner (cf. McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 19). More specific, sustained attention to the reasons for selecting particular models would be helpful in a monograph-length treatment.

³⁴ It is a mark of postmodern methodology to have "greater recognition of the situated nature of the theologian." Stiver, "Theological Method," 179.

³⁵ This is not to say that there cannot be a multiplicity of perspectives, for we each see in part and know in part (cf. 1 Cor 13:9–12).

³⁶ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18.

³⁷ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18.

relationship of the Father and Son in the Spirit as a central focal point. In this way we can begin to “know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:19; cf. 2 Cor 5:16).³⁸

The need for a relational perspective of atonement is determined by the relationship of the Father and the Son, for if we approach the Father in and through the Son (cf. John 14:6), then a non-relational orientation to the theology of atonement would be our own work rather than a faithful way to speak of the work of Christ in the Spirit. Purves argues that the result of “the relationship between Jesus Christ, who is the incarnate Son, and the Father . . . is the atonement, for in the incarnate Son the relation between God and humankind is savingly established.”³⁹

Rather than a forensic, legal, economic, or abstract undertaking, “the atonement is presented as a kinetic, relational and personal event entirely worked out through the relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son.”⁴⁰ Moreover, as Cockayne et al. argue, “the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit means that being safely loved by each Person of the Trinity is at the same time being loved by all of God.”⁴¹ Therefore, atonement can hardly be described as the satisfaction of the violent wrath of the Father at the expense of the life of the Son: this does not constitute being safely loved. It is the relationship of the Father and Son in the Spirit that, in my view, stands at the centre of atonement—the reconciliation of humanity to God—and therefore also the life and ministry of the Church. Since God is the Creator of all else, the relationally communing being of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit stands at the centre of all creation and permeates all else (cf. Col

³⁸ Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 21.

³⁹ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 9, 253–54.

⁴⁰ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 11. Similarly, Studebaker (*Spirit of Atonement*, 40, 50, 54) says that atonement is organic, relational, participatory, personal, transformational, and Trinitarian, not forensic or extrinsic.

⁴¹ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 57.

1:15–20).⁴² The multidimensional aspects and effects of the Trinitarian Father-Son in the Spirit relationship should be considered in both ordering and orienting a theologically coherent and practically participatory view of atonement.

As a “view” of atonement, one of the aims of this chapter is to regard the ministry of the Cross of Christ from a particular relational orientation: a Trinitarian theological perspective.⁴³ As Purves says, “the actual practice of God in human history” should inform “a Trinitarian practice through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁴ From a relational and trauma-informed perspective, the ways that the life and ministry of the Church participate in the life and ministry of Christ become more clear. Purves argues that ministry is “a participation in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, on earth, in heaven, and as the one who will come again.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Stephen Seamands argues that the ministry of the Church “is the ministry *of* Jesus Christ, the Son, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world.”⁴⁶ As a crucial aspect of the life and ministry of Christ, the ministry of reconciliation (atonement)—including the ministry of the Cross—is not an aspect of the active being of Christ from which the Church is excluded: “Christ’s being and action are one reality.”⁴⁷

The operational outworking of a given view of atonement is important because the work of Christ is never mere theory or abstraction.⁴⁸ The work of Christ is not just actions done to us

⁴² Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, , 55.

⁴³ Other less relational perspectives on atonement might include cultic/forensic, legal/juridical, or economic/transactional. Not all these views are theologically compatible.

⁴⁴ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xxi; cf. Purves, “Trinitarian Basis,” 222–39.

⁴⁵ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xvi.

⁴⁶ Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 9–10, 15, 20, emphasis original. In *Christopraxis*, Andrew Root also advocates a participatory view of life and ministry in Christ. See also Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity and Participating in Christ*.

⁴⁷ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 9.

⁴⁸ Cf. Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 18.

or for us, but actions in which we now participate in union with Christ. As Purves says, the life and ministry of the Church happens “in union with Christ, who is both God’s word of address to us and the fitting human response to God.”⁴⁹ In order to form a cohesively ordered image of Christ, each dimension of Christ’s ministry of the Cross must not only be integrated in some way on a theoretical level (the way we view it), it must also be operationally actualized in the life and ministry of Church in some way (the way we participate in it).⁵⁰ Rather than remaining disconnected from daily life in Christ, theological theory should inform the praxis of the Church.

Objective, Subjective, and Cosmic Dimensions of Atonement and the Ministry of Christ

McNall argues that it is important to recognize the particular *functions* of each interpretation of Christ’s work within “God’s masterpiece of redemption.”⁵¹ However, rather than isolating individual theories, Beilby and Eddy categorize various atonement images and theories from throughout Church history into three broad paradigms: objective, subjective, and classic/dramatic.⁵² Objective theories include satisfaction (Anselm), penal substitution (Calvin), and moral government (Grotius). Subjective theories include moral influence (Abelard) and moral example (Socinus). And classic theories include recapitulation (Irenaeus), ransom (Athanasius), and *Christus Victor* (Aulén). But rather than assigning particular models or theories certain roles (as McNall does), taking these paradigms as overarching categorical dimensions for ordering and orienting a balanced, integrated, coherent, and practical view of

⁴⁹ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xx.

⁵⁰ This claim is in line with the “practical turn” Stiver (“Theological Method,” 183) identifies in postmodern theology which “makes theology a practical and not simply a speculative, theoretical discipline.”

⁵¹ McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 311.

⁵² See Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Nature of the Atonement*, 11–21.

atonement is more helpful. Not all the *theories* in each categorical dimension are necessarily coherent on their own or compatible with others, but each *dimension* is vital to a properly balanced, theologically coherent, and practically applicable view of atonement. Beilby and Eddy also orient these paradigmatic categories according to particular focal points or trajectories. Objective theories are oriented primarily towards God the Father, often viewed as addressing a necessary demand of or need in God.⁵³ Subjective theories are aimed at humans and creation, emphasizing human needs and the changes inspired or effected in humanity by atonement.⁵⁴ Finally, classic or dramatic theories are mainly directed at Satan or sin, usually highlighting divine conflict against and victory over the powers of evil under which humanity was enslaved.⁵⁵

Although this third dimension has been called *classic* (because of its early forms of articulation in the recapitulation and ransom theories)⁵⁶ or *dramatic* (because of “the active and victorious intervention of God in rescuing and saving us”),⁵⁷ I suggest that *cosmic* may be a more fitting term since it carries spiritual connotations and is etymologically rooted in the Greek word κόσμος, which is sometimes used in the New Testament to refer to a realm of conflict in which we live amidst hardships yet over which Christ is victorious. For example, in John 16:33 Jesus tells his disciples (before his death), “I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world [τῷ κόσμῳ] you face persecution; but take courage, I have overcome the world [τὸν κόσμον]!”⁵⁸ Thus, the cosmic dimension of atonement describes not only Jesus’ victory over sin,

⁵³ Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Nature of the Atonement*, 14.

⁵⁴ Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Nature of the Atonement*, 18.

⁵⁵ Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Nature of the Atonement*, 12.

⁵⁶ Beilby and Eddy, eds., *Nature of the Atonement*, 12–13.

⁵⁷ Torrance, *Atonement*, 53.

⁵⁸ Here, *this* refers to the fact that the disciples will be scattered and leave Jesus alone, yet he is not alone because the Father is with him. In the Gospel of John, the world is the setting of the cosmic confrontation of the forces of light and darkness, good and evil. Cf. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 91; Reinhartz, “John,” 294.

but places it within the broader context of his life and ministry (including the renewal of all things), while recognizing the paradoxical presence of peace in the midst of persecution, suffering, and even death. These three dimensions of atonement theologies can also be described as the various trajectories of Jesus' relationship to the Father (objective), his ministry for humanity and creation (subjective), and his victory over against sin and Satan (cosmic), which are all carried out in and through the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 4:1).

Additionally, these three theological dimensions and ministerial trajectories can be aligned with three key facets of the ministry of Christ, also known as the *triplex munus* or threefold office of Christ: priest, prophet, and king.⁵⁹ According to T. F. Torrance, the priestly office of Christ corresponds to his passive obedience in the cultic-forensic aspects of redemption.⁶⁰ The prophetic office corresponds to the ontological or incarnational aspect of redemption in the assumption of humanity.⁶¹ And the kingly office corresponds to Jesus' active obedience in the dramatic aspects of redemption.⁶² Similarly, the offices or facets of Christ's ministry may be helpfully correlated to the foci/trajectories identified by Beilby and Eddy above. However, it is important to note that any such categories and their correlations should not be too rigidly compartmentalized as if Christ were constantly switching between different modes of operation or as if any one dimension could be carried out without the others. Instead, speaking of

⁵⁹ Cf. Torrance, *Atonement*, 58–59. Torrance also suggests some ways that Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholic theologies have emphasized various dimensions (55).

⁶⁰ Torrance, *Atonement*, 50–60.

⁶¹ Torrance, *Atonement*, 50–60.

⁶² Torrance (*Atonement*, 50–60) strictly matches these offices with particular Hebrew words (*kipper* to priest, *goel* to prophet, and *paddah* to king). However, in my view, these lexical pairings too rigidly constrain the semantic range of the Hebrew terms, even though they may have some heuristic value.

the trajectories and offices of Christ's ministry is a way of focusing on certain dimensions of a unified whole with the goal of integrated balance in view.

Altering Torrance's correlations to some extent, Christ's high priestly ministry on the Cross enacts the perfect human confession of sin to the Father, constituting a key objective dimension of atonement. As a key subjective dimension of atonement, Christ's apostolic and prophetic ministry comprises the incarnate expression of divine presence, love, and forgiveness, calling us to reconciliation, which is embodied in its most naked and raw form on the Cross. And as an aspect of the cosmic dimension of atonement, the royal messianic ministry of Christ ransoms and redeems humans from evil, sin, and death into freedom and life in Christ through his body and blood, broken and poured out on the Cross. These descriptions focus on Christ's ministry of the Cross, but these ministerial dimensions are not limited to the Cross. While the Cross holds a pivotal and paradigmatic place in the life and ministry of Christ, it must not be isolated or abstracted from the entirety of the Incarnation.

Therefore, none of these descriptions should be viewed as exhaustively full or definitive. For instance, Christ's high priestly ministry should not be limited to the confession of human sin on the Cross; other aspects of the life and ministry of Christ should be considered as well, such as the cleansing of the temple (cf. Matt 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–16). And noting the combination of the apostolic and prophetic offices above, none of these should be viewed as fully separable from the others: Christ (the Messiah) is king, apostle, prophet, high priest, teacher, and so forth. And he fulfills all these offices or ministries as fully God, fully human through the power of the Spirit (hypostatic union).⁶³ Each of these areas of

⁶³ Robert Jenson ("How Does Jesus Make a Difference?," 185) thinks many Western Christians have become "secret Nestorians" who think of Christ's two natures too discretely or separately so that the oneness of the

ministry and dimensions of atonement will be discussed further below, but for now *Table 2* sums up and compares my correlations alongside Torrance's:

Torrance's Reformed <i>Triplex Munus</i> View			Three-Dimensional, Relational View		
Office or ministry	Dimension of <i>Redemption</i>	Focal Point or Trajectory	Office or Ministry	Dimension of <i>Reconciliation</i>	Focal Point or Trajectory
Priest	<i>Cultic-forensic</i>	<i>Passive obedience</i>	High Priest	<i>Perfect human confession</i>	<i>Objective The Father</i>
Prophet	<i>Ontological or incarnational</i>	<i>Assumption of humanity</i>	Apostle/Prophet	<i>Incarnate expression</i>	<i>Subjective Humanity/Creation</i>
King	<i>Dramatic</i>	<i>Active obedience</i>	Royal Saviour	<i>Liberating redemption</i>	<i>Cosmic Sin/Satan</i>

Table 2: The Ministry of Christ

Much like the two-sided balance between objective and subjective theories that Fiddes calls for, Torrance's schema emphasizes two trajectories: humanward (in the prophetic, incarnational assumption of humanity) and Godward (in the priestly passive and kingly active obedience of Christ). The kingly active trajectory touches on the sinward trajectory or cosmic dimension that I have named, but it is primarily described in relation to the will of the Father. This is not necessarily inaccurate, but it may influence an imbalance, particularly regarding the agency of the Persons of the Trinity. Torrance's view is firmly rooted in Reformed tradition and accordingly sees both the passive and active obedience of Christ as imputed to us rather than inferred or infused.⁶⁴ However, I find the notion of Christ's passive obedience problematic since,

Person of Christ is lost. Regarding Athanasius and the ministry of the church, see Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 53–58.

⁶⁴ See Torrance, *Mediation of Christ*, 90; cf. Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 74. The problem here is that "[i]mputed righteousness does not change anything in believers in Christ" (Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 58). I view the righteousness of God as a gift of God, which humans receive and live out in the process of growing into the likeness of God *in* Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

as Studebaker says, Jesus’ “death on the cross was not a passive act.”⁶⁵ And Studebaker also brings much needed attention to the agency of the Spirit in creation, redemption, and Incarnation.⁶⁶ Note also that Torrance’s Reformed view describes each office as an aspect of *redemption*, while my three-dimensional, relational view considers dimensions of *reconciliation*, which is a more broad and explicitly relational concept that, in terms of our relationship with God, includes redemption.⁶⁷

Way(s) of the Cross

For followers of Christ, the necessity of participating in Christ’s ministry of the Cross is made explicit by Jesus himself in the synoptic Gospels: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23; cf. Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34). Note that, in Luke’s version, this is a daily, ongoing undertaking, and it begins before the Crucifixion itself. Thus, Jesus’ ministry of the Cross is not limited to his literal Crucifixion, but rather is part of the lifestyle of self-giving love that involves Crucifixion and Resurrection.⁶⁸ While death and resurrection are literal events in the life of Christ, they are also metaphorical in terms of Christ followers’ repeated, ongoing participative union with/in Christ. We endure “deaths” every day, and we enter into new life in Christ. While the Cross may signify suffering

⁶⁵ Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 69; cf. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 74.

⁶⁶ See Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 40.

⁶⁷ Torrance (*Atonement*, 97–200) provides attention to atonement as justification, reconciliation, and redemption in separate chapters. While I agree with his description of reconciliation as atonement in the “fullest personal sense” (137), as the “pure act of God’s love” (145), and as “the full outworking of the hypostatic union” (149), I disagree with the forensic, juridical, and transactional basis he posits for this reconciliation. Note also that Torrance ends his discussion of redemption with explicit attention to reconciliation (198–200). I argue that the relational nature of atonement as reconciliation is both the origin and telos (cf. Rev 1:8, 17–18; 21:6; 22:13; Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 8).

⁶⁸ Chapter 6 discusses a Christian Trinitarian understanding of sacrifice. Cf. O’Donnell 109–26.

in general at the point that Jesus gives this call in the Gospel narratives, it takes on particular, definitive Christological meaning after the historical events of the death and Resurrection of Christ, with implications for the Church as the Body of Christ.

At the same time, there is not a singular way to approach the Cross for it transcends all dimensions while also summing up all dimensions. We can identify two major ways of the Cross: (1) the way perpetrators approach the Cross may differ from (2) the way survivors approach the Cross. And many people will approach the Cross as both survivors and perpetrators (in that order).⁶⁹ Therefore, on the one hand, followers of Christ must choose to give up a self-centred way of life, instead submitting to Christ and finding true life in the self-giving love of the Trinity. This path has been so commonly invoked it is virtually the default meaning.

However, we must be very careful not to prescribe *this* cruciform path in all situations, especially those involving trauma. The way of the Cross regarding trauma, on the other hand, is not about dealing with selfishness or lack of regard for God and others. In these situations, people have already been brought to the point of death and beyond. Trauma survivors have been forced to the cross, often as children. They have already endured torturous death, “the annihilation of trauma,”⁷⁰ and remain marked with its indelible imprints. Therefore, for trauma survivors, the way of the Cross is not to remain in abusive/oppressive situations or to be re-traumatized, but rather, borrowing van der Kolk’s words, “to endure the dark nights of the soul that inevitably occur on the road to recovery.”⁷¹ Tragically, childhood traumas drastically raise

⁶⁹ Cockayne et al. (*Dawn of Sunday*, 16) warn that dividing humanity into rigid categories of perpetrators and victims or “good guys” and “bad guys” is simplistically reductive. They remind us that “horror makers are themselves survivors and victims.”

⁷⁰ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 137.

⁷¹ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 137, though he does not invoke a Christian worldview or cruciform framework.

the likelihood of suicide attempts, not to mention suicidal thoughts. “The more isolated and unprotected a person feels,” says van der Kolk, “the more death will feel like the only escape.”⁷²

These recognitions are not meant to legitimize perpetration of or submission to any sort of traumatic suffering or abuse nor to encourage suicidal escape. Rather, it is a way of recognizing the reality of what people have endured—including its profound wrongness—and a way of experiencing Christ in the midst of such pain and suffering, such loss and numbness, such sorrow and death. This way of the Cross is the merciful intervention of God with us, Emmanuel. It is not a mandate to suffer more, but a hopeful invitation to begin to enter into the newness of resurrection life in Christ. However, the path of recovery is not painless—in theological terms, it remains the way of the Cross. But not the Roman cross of pointless, ruthless, shameful torture and death. In cases of trauma, Caesar’s oppressive cross is already present. God does not bring such a cross to trauma survivors and demand more suffering. Instead, God in Christ comes to the cross of each person’s trauma and offers his life for their own, not as a way of erasing their identity, but as the only way of confronting the reality of trauma without being destroyed.⁷³ In confronting the trauma of evil’s cross, Christ transforms it into a site of profound intimacy where wounds meet wounds and where death is not erased yet is no longer the end. On the Cross, Christ literally opens himself to humanity so that we may enter into life in him. The Cross of Christ brings the profound solidarity of communion where there was isolation and in place of death it initiates and promises resurrection life. Therefore, the call of Christ to enter into the ministry of the Cross is an invitation to have suffering, trauma, and death transformed from meaningless

⁷² van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 148.

⁷³ Cf. van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 136.

oppression to Christ-centred fellowship, which always has the hope of joy and glory set before it (cf. Col 1:27; Heb 12:2).

These “two ways” of the Cross of Christ are both vital yet the distinction must be made so that trauma survivors and others are not wrongly urged to “die to self” when the true invitation of Christ to them is to encounter his transformative presence in the suffering and death they already endure in their daily lives. And while the road to recovery may still be long and arduous, it is not so lonely, no longer shameful, and not eternally damned to hellish torment. Instead, it is full of hopeful promise and leads inexorably to life—abundant, eternal, resurrection life with/in Christ.

As stated earlier, the ministry of Christ, including the ministry of the Cross, does not involve appeasing a vengeful God or satisfying an otherwise lacking need in God (for blood or anything else).⁷⁴ Instead, the ministry of the Cross is a costly part of the ministry of reconciliation. In 2 Cor 5:16–21, Paul explicitly describes Christ’s ministry of reconciliation in which we now participate:

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

⁷⁴ A full treatment of the notion of Christ (the Son) appeasing or satisfying God (the Father) is not within the scope of the chapter. For a view of Christ’s Crucifixion that addresses such penal views and does not involve satisfaction of a retributive notion of justice see Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, Ch. 4, “Crucifixion,” 56–76.

It is important to note that God (the Father) is not being reconciled *to us* through Christ (as a retributive notion of atonement would suggest); instead, Paul repeatedly stresses that we and the world have been reconciled *to God* through Christ (cf. Col 1:20). Put differently, reconciliation with God is necessary because of a problem in humans, not a deficit within God. Reconciliation with God happens through Christ because there is no other way for us to be freed from sin, begin to understand God's love, and be able to repent and approach God appropriately in order for relational reconciliation to happen, for communion to be restored. As Robert Jenson says, "humankind is in fact alienated from God and . . . the work of the incarnation . . . is to reconcile us to him. . . . [I]n Scripture it is never God who is reconciled to us; it is always God who reconciles us to himself."⁷⁵ Or, as Irenaeus puts it, "through communion with himself, the Lord has reconciled humankind to God the Father, reconciling us to himself by the body of his own flesh."⁷⁶ This properly oriented view of reconciliation places the ministry of the Cross within the ministry of the Incarnation according to the relationship of the Father and Son in the Spirit. That is, through Christ we come to relate to the Father according to the way the Son has always communed with the Father in the Spirit—not through punitive legal transactions or economized exchanges, but in the eternal communion of love and life.⁷⁷ As Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).⁷⁸ Therefore, each dimension and its ministerial correlation will be discussed as an aspect of Christ's self-

⁷⁵ Jenson, "How Does Jesus Make a Difference?," 203.

⁷⁶ *Haer.* 5.14.3 (*ICF* 166).

⁷⁷ McLeod Campbell (*Nature of the Atonement*, 145) insists that we stand before God not on legal terms, but on the filial terms of restored relationship.

⁷⁸ Purves (*Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 43–77, here 45) says that John 14:6 is "the singular basis not only for piety and faith, but also for life and ministry, for it is in union with Christ that we can walk the way, know the truth, and live the life of those who serve in the name of Christ. In this way we share in his ministry." However, like Fiddes, Purves speaks to the twofold ministry of Christ as apostolic priest.

identification—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—and his invitation to commune with the Father in him through the Spirit.

The Way: Objective Atonement and Christ Our High Priest as Perfect Confession

Christ is not the instrumental mechanism of the Father's forgiveness, as some objectively imbalanced or misoriented views claim.⁷⁹ Rather, as our high priest, Christ on the Cross is and embodies the perfect human confession of sin to the Father. As John McLeod Campbell says, the Son takes the form of the "perfect confession of our sins" to the Father.⁸⁰ This is an essential yet at times neglected aspect of the objective dimension of atonement directed toward the Father. Torrance similarly describes both Christ's high priesthood and apostleship as confession and witness:

In this particular passage [Heb 3:1–6] the work of Christ as Apostle and High Priest, both in the sense of "the Son over the House," is described in terms of confession, *homologia*, a word which occurs in three other passages (3:1; 4:14; 10:23). In each case it sets forth primarily the confession made by the High Priest as he enters within the veil. It is the confession of our sin before God and the confession of God's righteous judgement upon our sin. As Apostle Christ bears witness for God, that He is Holy. As High Priest He acknowledges that witness and says Amen to it. Again as Apostle of God He confesses the mercy and grace of God, His will to pardon and reconcile. As High Priest He intercedes for [humans], and confesses them before the face of God.⁸¹

The apostolic dimension will be addressed later, but for now Christ's high priestly confession of sin should be understood as undertaken on our behalf by Christ so that we can subsequently

⁷⁹ For example, see Schreiner, "Penal Substitution," 67–98; cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 57–58. Here I follow C. H. Dodd's interpretation of the ἱλασμός and ἱλάσκομαι word group in the NT (e.g., Heb 2:17; 1 John 4:17) as merciful purification, cleansing, or expiation rather than propitiation as Leon Morris argues. See Dodd, "hilaskesthai," 352–60; Morris, "Use of *hilaskesthai*," 227–33.

⁸⁰ McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 118.

⁸¹ Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, 12. However, as noted above, I disagree with Torrance regarding some aspects of Christ's high priesthood.

participate in his perfect confession to the Father. As Studebaker says, “Christ’s priestly service . . . is not retributive, but restorative.”⁸² Hebrews later says Jesus is “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2). Hence, a crucial aspect of the faith that Christ pioneers or leads us into is perfect confession and true repentance (which is also linked to the baptism of Christ).

While this aspect of Christ’s high priestly ministry is directed towards the Father, that does not mean that the Father—or the relationship of the Son and the Father—would be lacking something without such a confession. In terms of God’s eternal being, he does not need human confession any more than he needs human existence. However, our communing relationship with him, which he deeply desires, cannot rightly, properly, and fully be restored without an appropriate confession of sin: confession is a necessity of relational reconciliation. Pretending sin did not happen is not righteous or appropriate, so confession involves agreement with the Father’s righteous judgement on sin: it must be overcome and removed so that we may be restored to freedom and life. Thus, confessing sin with/in Christ and thereby entering into restored relationship with the Father takes sin seriously yet does not allow the relationship to be conditioned by it.

Significantly, God’s forgiveness is not predicated upon confession—either Christ’s or ours in Christ.⁸³ But it is, somewhat paradoxically, only through a proper understanding of our sin that we can more fully understand, experience, and live in the forgiveness of the Father.

⁸² Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 71. See also O’Donnell’s discussion (*Broken Bodies*, 80–108, here 108) of the priesthood, which explores Mary as priest in relation to trauma and the Eucharist. In her view, priesthood involves “mediation, access and service in the space prepared by God,” which Mary embodies, especially in her womb.

⁸³ Cf. McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 45.

When Jesus says, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34),⁸⁴ surely the Father’s knowledge or memory is not what Jesus is calling into question, as if God is unable to see something Jesus can or as if he needs reminding. Rather, the statement is a type of dramatic irony that *reveals to us* that we do not truly know what we are doing: we do not even recognize much less properly understand sin, even as it involves the traumatic torture and murder of the Son of God. As discussed earlier, the failure to recognize the Son of God is a result of the trauma of sin. Mercifully, the more fully we understand what we are being forgiven for (culpable sin), the more fully we appreciate God’s forgiveness and the more fully we are reconciled to him. Therefore, the end result of a proper confession of sin is the worship of God in communion with God.

In terms of our participation in the cruciform confession of sin, the proper effect is never shame nor is it perpetual guilt and remorse. Instead, we move through appropriate guilt and remorse through Christ, who absorbs sin and enables our repentance not only to a *state* of but also to an *experience* of restored connection to the Father.⁸⁵ As a “holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:4–5), we may also (along with the Father, in a sense) receive others’ confessions (cf. Jas 5:16). This is a serious responsibility to be carried out in sacred confidentiality as we trust in the Father’s forgiveness and healing. The other effect of confession is that when we more deeply understand the evil, alienating, traumatizing devastation of sin, we are more powerfully motivated by love not to cause more damage. Moreover, we will also take the alienating, traumatizing damage of sin in the lives of others and the world at large more seriously. By confessing sin in Christ, we

⁸⁴ Although this verse has a dubious textual origin (being absent from a variety of important early witnesses), Metzger (*Textual Commentary*, 154) believes that it was retained and later included because of its authentic origin as words of Christ.

⁸⁵ Cf. McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 118.

participate in his death which frees us from continuing to live in sin (cf. Rom 6:1–4).

Christ's confession of sin may eventually help engender more compassionate views of others, even those who have caused deep wounds. "In its multivocality," says Cynthia Hess, "the cross tells not just of an event of torture but also of Jesus' compassion for the victims (and the perpetrators) of suffering."⁸⁶ And Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger says that hope is "held out for the *perpetrators* of trauma as well as for its *victims*. . . . The cross of Jesus Christ is God's response not only to the terror of human trauma but also the anguish of human guilt, bringing succor and healing to the one, and judgement, forgiveness, and the 'godly grief' of repentance to the other (2 Cor 7:10)."⁸⁷ In pastoral application, forgiveness and compassion are most often long-term processes that may take a lifetime or longer, so trauma survivors should never be pressured to move to compassion too quickly. Safety is a fundamental priority.

Regarding trauma recovery, the way of Christ's perfect priestly confession aids most directly in (re)narrating the trauma, though it also contributes to safety and reconnection. From this theological perspective, the re-narration includes the understanding that we do (or did) not experience trauma and suffer alone. Christ is God with us, Emmanuel. The Cross thus stands as God's most explicit act of suffering and lamentation with humanity. As both the wounds we have received and the wounds we have contributed to are embodied confessionally by Christ on the Cross, we are also reminded that death is not the end. Confession in a penal and retributive context revolves around punishment, but confession in a reconciliatory and restorative context initiates new life, freedom, and connection.⁸⁸ The confession of sin in the Crucifixion of Christ is

⁸⁶ Hess, *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, 120.

⁸⁷ Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 14–15, emphasis original.

⁸⁸ Restorative justice in/through Christ is discussed in Chapter 8.

necessary for a truly and fully reconciled relationship with God, self, others, and creation, and the transformative hope of resurrection life in Christ is sure to follow (though often not immediately). In this way, the Cross is an aspect of God's creative transformation of suffering, trauma, alienation, and death into healing, wholeness, reconciliation, and life.⁸⁹ The Cross of Christ does not stand outside God's creative, life-giving relationship with humanity; instead, the Cross is the most scandalously loving act of God's creative transformation in his relationship with humanity. Thus, Christ's high priestly confession of sin is both liberating and restorative, while empowering and entrusting us with the ministry of reconciliation.

The Truth: Subjective Atonement and Christ Our Apostle and Prophet as Incarnate Expression
As the Word made flesh (cf. John 1:14), Jesus is the incarnate expression of divine presence, love, and forgiveness, inviting us to reconciliation. The apostolic and prophetic ministry of the incarnate Son is embodied in its most naked and raw form on the Cross. Michael Gorman puts it well: "Christ's death for us both *demonstrates* and *defines* divine love. This divine love is the love of the Father who sends in love, the Son who dies in love, and the Spirit who produces the fruit of love in those hearts he inhabits."⁹⁰ Once again, this incarnate message of love is the message of the Father's love to humanity, not the message of the Son's love for us which also changes the heart of the Father.⁹¹ As Seamands says, "Jesus was merely revealing what has

⁸⁹ Cf. O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 181–83.

⁹⁰ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 73, emphasis original; see also his discussion of avoiding patripassianism (8).

⁹¹ Purves paraphrases key problematic points in Calvin's writing thus: "for Christ's sake the Father has a change of heart, looking on us now with complete acceptance and love." Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 121; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.16; 3.2.24. In my view, positing a change of disposition within the Father but not the Son is not coherent Trinitarian theology.

always been.”⁹² Or in Gorman’s words: “the cross is the demonstration of God’s love and of the Son’s love, both of which become real by the action of their one Spirit.”⁹³ And as McLeod Campbell says, “the atonement must be the form of the manifestation of the forgiving love of God, not its cause.”⁹⁴ Therefore, the death of Christ is not instrumental in terms of conditioning the Father’s love for us or his stance towards us; rather, it is part of God’s incarnate expression of love that is instrumental in our understanding of God.

In keeping with the theme of the revelation of divine identity in apostolic and prophetic ministry, Christ’s death makes possible our understanding of God’s love, for we would not be able to properly understand the Father’s love without the Son’s death.⁹⁵ Referring to Matt 11:27, Purves says that “the ontological relation between the Father and Son in being and act [is] the sole ground of revelation and salvation.”⁹⁶ The Apostle John says, “We know love by this, that he [Jesus] laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16). And again, “God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). Divine self-revelation in the midst of sin takes its most extreme form on the Cross, and it addresses a human need: we cannot come to know God through our own devices. Instead, it is always the gracious act of divine self-revelation through which we come to rightly know God.⁹⁷ Put differently, in our traumatized state we would not be able to (begin to) comprehend the love

⁹² Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 60.

⁹³ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 74. Cf. John 5:19; 10:30; 17; Matt 11:27; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3.

⁹⁴ McLeod Campbell, *Nature of the Atonement*, 45.

⁹⁵ This view does not situate death or the Cross as the singular purpose of the Incarnation; rather, Jesus’ death by Crucifixion stands within the wider scope of God’s revelation of his presence with and love for humanity while recognizing its crucial importance for our own understanding of God’s love and our need to integratively process trauma. That is, the Crucifixion meets human needs, not supposed divine needs, whether for satisfaction, awareness, or anything else.

⁹⁶ Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 22.

⁹⁷ Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 34.

of God if God did not reveal himself to us in the midst of our suffering, confusion, and trauma. The Cross of Christ is a critical point of entry for our ability to experience and know the love of God.

It might be objected that such a brutal Crucifixion is not necessary for us to know God's love.⁹⁸ Yet this reasoning fails to account for the depth of our need and the severity of our brokenness and traumatization. Even among human relationships, it becomes clear to us who really loves us when we are suffering: we know those who suffer *with* us and *for* us truly love us the most. Therefore, God with us in suffering and death demonstrates that God's love is not removed and distant, but personal and intimate. Moreover, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ instill hope with the promise that death is not the end.

Similar to the confession of sin, there is a sort of paradoxical relationship between our brokenness and God's self-revelation of his character and love. Michael Knowles says that "divine revelation comes not because of [our] fidelity, but rather in light of its absence."⁹⁹ Accordingly, the "shocking good news" is that "unconstrainable divine mercy meets, but is not caused by, human need."¹⁰⁰ Thus, the message of divine love and grace embodied and proclaimed by Christ is the natural expression of the "exact imprint of God's very being" (Heb 1:3) that meets us in our profoundly broken need, but is not caused by our need since it is fundamentally God being God with us (cf. Matt 1:23). "Moreover," says Knowles, ". . . it is God's nature to be merciful and forgiving, and to demonstrate saving compassion to those who are oppressed and broken, human failure provides the necessary backdrop for such qualities to

⁹⁸ See Torrance's objections to a student's paper describing "the death of Christ simply as a demonstration of the love of God" (quoted in McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 187).

⁹⁹ Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.

¹⁰⁰ Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.

emerge.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, Bradley Jersak argues that God does not directly commit violence but consents to allowing it within the cosmos; while divine consent allows for violence, it also makes room for divine, self-emptying love, which subverts and overcomes violence.¹⁰² This is a truly redeeming characteristic of Christ’s apostolic and prophetic ministry: the revelation of divine mercy, forgiveness, and saving compassion is not in spite of our failures but because of them. This is not to say that God causes or ordains evil, suffering, and death in order to reveal himself as good, compassionate, and powerful, but that the nature of God is revealed even in the deepest wounds. Again, God’s mercy is not caused by human failure, but mercy is revealed most starkly in the midst of failure. Surely the murder of the Son of God is at the rock bottom of human failure; yet in this ignorant atrocity God’s love and mercy are revealed in their fullness through Christ on the Cross.

As with the high priesthood of Christ, the apostolic and prophetic ministry of Christ inspires worship. As Knowles says, “it is precisely God’s revelation of his gracious character that gives rise to worship.”¹⁰³ And in terms of our participation in the apostolic and prophetic ministry of Christ, it seems obvious that in accordance with apostolic and prophetic ministry, the evangelism, preaching, teaching, and pastoring of the Church are clear callings, all of which should reveal Christ and edify others with the love of God (cf. Eph 4:11–13). But before we participate in the expression of God’s love, we must first experience and know God’s love. Seamands calls “joyful intimacy” the “foundation of Trinitarian ministry.”¹⁰⁴ Essentially, this means that we must not only acknowledge the Son’s incarnate expression of the Father’s love,

¹⁰¹ Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.

¹⁰² Jersak, *Cave to the Cross*, 224–72, esp. 269.

¹⁰³ Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 46.

¹⁰⁴ Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 53–74.

we must experience and abide in it as Jesus did such that “the Father’s love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit [who] communicates the Father’s approval and delight.”¹⁰⁵ It should not be surprising that we must first be filled with the love of God before we are able to share it with others.

But what of the ministry of the *Cross*? One apparent aspect is that we must be willing to suffer and die with Christ in the midst of rejection and persecution. Suffering persecution for the sake of our allegiance to and union with Christ is not the same as legitimizing abuse and violence in the name of Christ. The most extreme outworking of this in the life and ministry of the Church is literal martyrdom, which is the most uncompromising participatory witness of the love of God in Christ through the Spirit in the context of a broken cosmos.¹⁰⁶ Most modern Western Christians will not face this extreme, but we all face death. Therefore, it is the lived expression of hope in resurrection life throughout all seasons and stages of life that gives voice to the Church’s perennial chorus of the apostolic and prophetic ministry of the Cross: ¹⁰⁷ “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”¹⁰⁸

In terms of trauma recovery, the task of envisioning and living out a new future not defined by trauma is imperative.¹⁰⁹ The death and Resurrection of Christ are essential to the good news that life after trauma, life after death, is not only possible but promised. While the fulfillment of the promise of recovery in Christ has an eschatological horizon, the process nonetheless begins in real ways in the present. Therefore, the incarnate expression of God’s love

¹⁰⁵ Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 64.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Travis, *Unspeakable*, 56–57.

¹⁰⁷ From a pastoral standpoint, it must be noted that hope in Christ does not exclude grief and mourning.

¹⁰⁸ This is called the “Memorial Acclamation” in some liturgical contexts. Cf. Episcopal Church, *Book of Common Prayer*, 363.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 196; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 19–22.

by Christ on the Cross contributes to processes of both integrative processing and/or (re)narration as well as reconnection with God, self, and others. Of critical importance is the fact that the ministry of the Cross reveals that God is with us no matter what. This embodied demonstration of the Word made flesh helps speak to trauma survivors in ways that language alone cannot do. Trauma ruptures the human capacities of cognition and language. The mystery of the Cross—even its incredibility—are crucial elements of God’s response to human trauma: God does not merely talk at us; God lives and dies with us and raises us to life in Christ. While we still struggle to find words to articulate the meaning of the Incarnation and the Cross, in and through his incarnate human death, Christ embodies good news for us, which is essential to trauma survivors. This fundamental message is reiterated through the embodied ritual of Eucharist.¹¹⁰ In a basic way, the message of the Cross is that God sees and knows us, cares for us, and walks through life and death with us to lead us to resurrection. While the details of Crucifixion—in both Gospel narrative and eucharistic liturgical form—are potentially triggering or re-traumatizing for certain people, the basic message above may be helpful and the communal ritual of the Eucharist may (in certain forms and for some people) comprise an embodied aspect of healing.¹¹¹ As trauma survivors *experience* Christ with them in their ongoing suffering and brokenness, the isolating, alienating effects of trauma may begin to lessen as the ever-present love of God is made known in body, soul, and spirit.

While embodied experiences that contradict the initial trauma are vital,¹¹² a spiritual experience of the presence of Christ in the midst of otherwise isolated and ongoing suffering

¹¹⁰ Cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 83.

¹¹¹ Cf. Rambo, “Introduction,” 6.

¹¹² van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 3, 265–78.

may be an initial point of entry to the recovery process. Put differently, since the paradoxical incomprehensibility and overwhelming nature of trauma isolates us from others and fragments the self, the foundational grounding presence of Christ in suffering and trauma may be an essential lifeline. Ally Moder says trauma survivors are provided with hope “to be restored as the *imago Dei* as they experience the healing presence of God’s love suffering with them in their experiences of trauma.”¹¹³ Therefore, experiencing the presence of Christ, especially in and through the Eucharist, and thereby knowing (not merely cognitively but personally) we are not alone can make all the difference.¹¹⁴ Experiencing Christ with us is a profound contradiction of trauma-induced isolation.

The Life: Cosmic Atonement and Christ Our King as Victorious Redemption

The royal messianic ministry of Christ ransoms and redeems humans from evil, sin, and death into freedom and life in Christ through his body and blood, broken and poured out on the Cross and resurrected from the grave. Keeping in mind the full incarnational scope of the Cross, the Apostle John says: “The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). And the hymn in Rev 5:9–10 links the death of Christ, the Lamb, with the priesthood and reign of the saints:

You [Christ] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God
saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;

¹¹³ See Moder, “The Changing Self,” 219–22, here 220.

¹¹⁴ As Michael Knowles (*Unfolding Mystery*, 21) says, knowing God is not merely a matter of factual comprehension (as in the French verb *savoir*), but rather a “personal knowledge, *connaissance*, an experiential kind of knowing that entails a relationship, a certain mutuality, and . . . spiritual intimacy.”

you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they will reign on earth.¹¹⁵

Thus, the pioneering high priestly and revelatory apostolic/prophetic ministries of Christ are intrinsically linked with and inseparable from his ministry of royal redemption and salvation.

It is especially important to accurately orient the cosmic focal point or trajectory of the royal dimension of Christ's ministry for a well-balanced integrated view of atonement. In John 18:36, when Pilate asks what Jesus has done, Jesus says, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish religious leaders. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." The origin and location of Christ's royal authority is crucial as is the implication that the fundamental battleground for freeing humans from sin and death is not the physical kingdoms of the world but rather the spiritual realm. The Church is likewise involved in the same cosmic struggle: "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12).¹¹⁶ Thus, the Church participates in Christ the king's cosmic victory not through bloodshed and violence, but through the shed blood of Christ which restores us to life, particularly in the Eucharist.

This cosmic spiritual orientation helps make proper sense of much of the seemingly transactional or economic language in reference to atonement—specifically, *ransom* and *redemption*. The cosmic dimension of atonement is described as primarily directed towards sin

¹¹⁵ Note that the death and blood ransom are not *from* God as if God were the one holding humanity hostage or captive. Instead, people are ransomed *by* and *for* God *from* sin and death so that they may be a kingdom of reigning priests.

¹¹⁶ Here, in keeping with a Pentecostal-charismatic perspective, I assume the reality of evil spiritual beings, such as demons and/or Satan, as well as spiritual beings who serve God, such as angels.

or Satan, not the Father as if he were holding humans hostage. So any way that Jesus' death "pays" for our freedom is not a transaction between the Father and Son, but rather a way of dealing with death itself. Note that this is not really a deal *with* death, but a way of *dealing with* death. Cosmic theories are often charged with imagining a dualistic conflict between God and the devil, which God eventually wins but at extreme lengths through the death of Christ.¹¹⁷

While we may understandably balk at the extremity of Christ's death, I suggest the severity of the event is not due to the nearly insurmountable magnitude of the power of demonic forces, but rather the depth of human suffering, trauma, and brokenness and the revelation of God's love in such a context (as discussed in the previous section).¹¹⁸ And as Paul says, to those who are being saved, the Cross of Christ is the wisdom and power of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:18, 24). Thus, the victory of Christ, the Prince of Peace (cf. Isa 9:6), in death as an expression of love for us is both more *powerful* and *relationally integrated* than a violent annihilation of evil.¹¹⁹

Another objection to some cosmic theories is that if God "tricks" the devil, then God is pictured as intentionally deceitful in some way.¹²⁰ However, this objection gives too much credit to the cosmic forces of evil. As John says: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend or overcome it" (John 1:5).¹²¹ Thus, God does not devise a scheme to deceive the cosmic powers of darkness; instead, God is God and simply cannot be either comprehended

¹¹⁷ See, for example, McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 16, 195–210.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 68.

¹¹⁹ For a description of "divine Aikido" or "the way of peace" in "nonresistant combat," see Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, 2:767. Cf. Athanasius, *Incarnation of the Word*, §25; *NPNF*² 4:49; Behr, *Incarnation*, 102–5.

¹²⁰ See McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 17, 195–210.

¹²¹ The Greek verb καταλαμβάνω may refer to either *overcoming* or *comprehending*. Given the poetic context, a multivalent translation/interpretation is most fitting. Cf. LSJ.

or overcome by evil.¹²² This is also dignifying to humans since, as beings made in the image of God, we have the capacity to recognize God through the grace of God. Although demons might seem to recognize the identity of Christ in the Gospel narratives (e.g., Mark 1:21–28),¹²³ in the ancient context the attempts to name Jesus are actually confrontations since to know and use someone's name was thought to give one power over them.¹²⁴ There are multiple levels of dramatic irony here;¹²⁵ and in each case, Jesus silences the demons, thereby demonstrating his power as well as their incomprehension and comparative impotence.

Regardless of one's view on the spiritual reality of demonic forces, Satan, and so forth, the reality of evil, sin, suffering, and death in the world cannot be ignored. The royal ministry of Christ on the Cross as "King of the Jews" (Luke 23:38) is God's most direct and personal attention to this matter. However, Kathryn Tanner argues that *Christus Victor* is not a model of atonement because it fails to address the "mechanism of the atonement," that is, *how* Christ defeats sin and evil.¹²⁶ As I have argued, the defeat of sin and evil is important, but it is only one aspect of a balanced view of atonement, which is better understood as the reconciliation of humans to God. Salvation comes through Christ's presence with humanity in suffering and death which leads to resurrection life. Thus, the Crucifixion is not fundamentally a mechanism of the defeat of sin and death so much as it is part of the divine assumption of humanity. Or put differently, the incarnate expression of God's love revealed by Christ on the Cross is salvific to our broken, traumatized bodies, souls, and spirits. Thus, the alienation of sin and death is

¹²² Cf. Torrance, *Incarnation*, 244.

¹²³ Cf. McNall, *Mosaic of Atonement*, 17.

¹²⁴ See Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 74.

¹²⁵ Cf. Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 40.

¹²⁶ Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 253.

“defeated” by the expression and restoration of communing relationships with God, self, others, and creation.

Once again, the relational aspect is vital and the need is properly located in humanity not God. Answering the question, “Why the Cross, of all deaths?” Athanasius says that “no other way than this was good for us.”¹²⁷ And as Hebrews says, “since the children share in blood and flesh, he [Christ] also in like manner shared in these same things, in order that through death he could destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and could set free these who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all their lives” (Heb 2:14–15). Thus, the destruction of death through the death of Christ is inextricably linked to not only our freedom from fear and death, but also to God’s presence with us as he shares in these sufferings. It is not the power of evil that makes it so, but the nature of God with us. As Henri Nouwen says, “cure without care is as dehumanizing as a gift given with a cold heart.”¹²⁸ In providing us with the cure for trauma, sin, and death—his own body and blood—Christ also demonstrates the profound love and care of God.¹²⁹ Nouwen also says, “Cure without care makes us into rulers, controllers, [and] manipulators.”¹³⁰ In contrast, by participating in the royal salvation of the ministry of the Cross, we are not merely victors over sin in Christ, we are “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37), which includes trusting God and reaching out with God’s love to one another in the midst of suffering and death.

¹²⁷ Athanasius, *Incarnation of the Word*, §25 (NPNF² 4:49–50).

¹²⁸ Nouwen, *Out of Solitude*, 32.

¹²⁹ Again, this is not to say that Christ offers us a magical, instantaneous cure for trauma through the Eucharist or otherwise. Rather, it situates healing and wholeness as eschatological promises in Christ that have their consummation at the Return of Christ in the age to come.

¹³⁰ Nouwen, *Out of Solitude*, 36.

The ministry of the Cross must also be placed in the wider context of the Incarnation of Christ and the eternal being of God. Jesus delivered people from demons, healed bodies, and even raised one from the dead throughout the course of his ministry before the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Therefore, the Cross and Resurrection—which are distinct yet not properly divisible—are rightly viewed as pivotal historical and spiritual events, but not as mechanisms for change within God. Hence, the Cross and Resurrection do not give God power over sin and death; rather, through the Cross and Resurrection, God invites us into victory over sin and death in union with Christ. Moreover, there is an eschatological horizon of hope that can be seen from the vantage point of the Cross, for at Christ's Return not only will death be defeated, it will be no more, and all that was stolen, killed, and destroyed will be restored in abundant life (cf. John 10:10). Thus, the restoration of life—which is God's way of exacting "retribution" on death itself—is the outworking of God's justice in the cosmos, making all things new.¹³¹

Accordingly, the way Jesus ransoms or redeems us from captivity to sin is much like the way the Israelites are redeemed from slavery in Egypt.¹³² Rather than the Pharaoh being paid off by God, the people of God leave Egypt with the wealth of the nation heaped upon them (cf. Exod 12:33–36). Thus, the "transaction" of redemption or ransom is decidedly one-sided rather than dualistic: not only can death not hold the life of Christ, but our lives are snatched away from the grave as well.¹³³ It is important to keep in mind that the way God ransoms and redeems, loves

¹³¹ Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 67. The presence of Christ with us in suffering and death as well as the hope of eschatological resurrection life respond to the concern that evil still persists.

¹³² Cf. Jersak, *More Christlike God*, 244–48.

¹³³ This does not mean that we circumvent death entirely, but that the grave is not our terminal end. Through the Cross, we have resurrection life in Christ.

and gives, and so forth, is categorically different than the world's ways (cf. Isa 55:8–9; John 14:27).

The Church participates in the cosmic and royal dimensions of the ministry of the Cross as royal ambassadors of reconciliation in the world (cf. 2 Cor 5:20) and as coheirs with Christ in the kingdom of God (cf. Rom 8:17). And although this may involve a war-like struggle at present in that we continue to sin and suffer dehumanizing hardships, trauma, and death, we do not war against flesh and blood (cf. Eph 6:12). However, in Christ we may help to save, heal, and reconcile flesh and blood humans, as Jesus did in his incarnate life and ministry. This is not a triumphalistic or prosperity gospel yet it does recognize the power of God in the midst of present suffering while emphasizing the need to trust that God is, in fact, the supreme, uncontestable creator and ruler of the universe.¹³⁴ Therefore, once again, trust in and worship of God, who provides hope, is an essential response to the royal cosmic dimension of the ministry of the Cross.

Regarding trauma recovery, the Cross is a paradigmatic example of empowering cure with care. Importantly, the “cure” of the Cross—the “medicine” of Christ’s body and blood¹³⁵—does not render us merely passive recipients. As noted earlier, van der Kolk cautions that “psychiatric medications have a serious downside, as they may deflect attention from dealing with the underlying issues. . . . Being a patient rather than a participant in one’s healing process separates suffering people from their community and alienates them from an inner sense of self.”¹³⁶ While maintaining that we do not save ourselves—salvation is in Christ alone—we can

¹³⁴ See Courey, *What has Wittenberg to Do with Azusa?*, 256.

¹³⁵ Ign. *Eph.* 20 (*ANF* 1:58).

¹³⁶ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 37–38.

simultaneously recognize that Christ invites us into union with him to participate in his life and ministry. Thus, the state of union with Christ and the actions of participating in the life and ministry of Christ provide the salvifically caring and empowering cure we need. Rather than merely passively receiving the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, we also actively participate in sharing his body and blood.¹³⁷ Without Christ, this is impossible. With/in Christ, we are empowered to do otherwise impossible and incomprehensible things, forgiveness included. As always, rushing the healing and recovery process will not do. Nonetheless, a hopeful vision for what is possible in and through Christ is essential to Christian life and ministry, especially for those recovering from trauma.

While the world continues to suffer and die, Christ's transformative defeat of sin and death on the cross mark our deliverance from evil and the guarantee of safety. The death and Resurrection of Christ are also pivotal in God's restoration of justice and life in the cosmos, which we participate in at present while anticipating future eschatological fulfillment at the Return of Christ. Therefore, while the world remains a difficult and dangerous place in many ways, the Church should be a haven of peace. And the hope of the gospel, the hope of bodily resurrection and the recreation of the heavens and the earth, is anchored in the Resurrection of Christ.

Nonetheless, it is often difficult to see how the continuation of trauma and evil in the present does not negate claims of safety in Christ; therefore, it is vital to remember that the presence of evil does not threaten the presence of God. Perhaps the poetic words of the Psalmist best encapsulate the manner in which the Communion table is a safe space in a traumatic world

¹³⁷ Chapters 7 and 8 will discuss how we do this in regard to the Eucharist.

(Ps 23:4–6):

Even though I walk through valley of the shadow of death,
 I fear no evil;
 for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff—
 they comfort me.
 You prepare a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
 you anoint my head with oil;
 my cup overflows.
 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
 all the days of my life,
 and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
 my whole life long.

Thus, the deliverance from evil for which we continually pray (cf. Matt 6:5–15; Luke 11:1–13) has its fulfillment in the presence of Christ. And the fact that Christ defeats sin and death through his own death rather than by physically violent means is essential for the witness of the Church in the world. Rather than contributing to the perpetuation of suffering, trauma, and death, the Church should invite people into a place of freedom and safety, while recognizing that our ultimate hope is eschatological resurrection in Christ. For this reason, the forward-looking dimensions of the Eucharist are crucial to trauma recovery and Christian hope as well.¹³⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has integrated and synthesized the objective, subjective, and cosmic dimensions of atonement while relationally orienting them according to a coherent Trinitarian theology that emphasizes the creative love of God, who chooses to meet human needs and, more fundamentally, meet humans in their needs. It has been a methodological assertion in this chapter

¹³⁸ Chapter 8 discusses restorative justice in relation to the eschatological scope of the Eucharist and trauma recovery in Christ.

that in order to speak faithfully about God, we must first know God, we must encounter him relationally. And more than speaking faithfully about God, it is the task of the Church to introduce the world to God, to participate in offering a relational encounter with God.¹³⁹

Nowhere is this more important than for those who have survived trauma and continue to live with its aftereffects. The multi-dimensional and relational view of the atonement in this chapter helps describe how Christ ministers to these needs through the Cross, thereby providing the participatory paradigm for the life and ministry of the Church, including the celebration of the Eucharist.

Once again, John 14:6 is helpful in summing up this view: Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” In his high priestly confession, Jesus is the way for us to approach the Father, rather than remaining alienated, distant, and afraid in sin. In his apostolic and prophetic incarnate expression of divine love, Jesus is the truth of the revelation of the Father and his love so that we may no longer be deceived, confused, and ignorant in sin. And in the royal salvific redemption of Christ, we abide in the freedom of eternal life in submission to God, rather than being subject to sin’s slavery, suffering, and death. The way, truth, and life of Christ are not in conflict with one another, but rather constitute a succinct summary of his inseparably united identity and action in the world.

The way, the truth, and the life of Christ as described in relation to atonement/reconciliation also help inform appropriate participatory understandings of the Eucharist and contribute to key elements of trauma recovery, including safety and empowerment,

¹³⁹ H. R. Mackintosh (*Christian Apprehension of God*, 56) observes that most people do not believe in Christ because of an “irrefutable argument,” but because of an “irresistible impression,” usually on the conscience. Cf. Purves, *Exploring Christology and Atonement*, 245.

integrative processing and/or (re)narration and lamentation, and reconnection with God, self, and others. As a participatory view of atonement as relational reconciliation, it is an empowering perspective for survivors of trauma who are now actively engaged in the (long) road of recovery.

While this argument has emphasized participation in the life and ministry of Christ, it is worth noting that Christ's death is substitutionary in a certain sense: he voluntarily takes on the sin of the world as fully God, fully human in a pioneering manner. But the outcome of this sort of substitution is participation. As Studebaker says, Jesus' life was "substitutionary for the sake of participation."¹⁴⁰ As the previous chapter established from a trauma-informed perspective, a key aspect of the Cross is the integrative processing Christ enacts and enables in the recapitulation of trauma: Christ does what we cannot do for ourselves and in so doing makes a way for us to do so in him. Unlike all other humans who have no choice in whether or not they exist and enter into a broken sinful world, the Incarnation of Christ is a free act of God's will for our sake.¹⁴¹ In other words, both Christ's life and death are substitutionary for the sake of invitation and participation. We do not become Jesus, but we do become one with him (cf. John 14:20; 1 Cor 6:17). We do not participate in Christ's life and ministry as if we were Jesus himself, but we do participate in Christ's ministry in union with him through the Spirit.¹⁴² Hence, the mystery of divine-human relations remains an important dimension to keep in mind. Nonetheless, in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father, the Church participates in the confession of sin, the embodied expression of divine love, and the

¹⁴⁰ Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, 69–72, here 72.

¹⁴¹ With nuanced trauma-informed attention to the Cross, Cynthia Hess (*Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace*, 113–25, esp. 119–20) notes that Jesus' suffering on the Cross is voluntary (which does not require his followers to voluntarily endure abuse) and is linked to the promise of transformation and eternal life.

¹⁴² Cf. Studebaker, *Spirit of Atonement*, esp. 17–39.

redemptive victory over sin and death for the sake of the world and to the glory of God.

Together, these participatory dimensions of the Cross contribute to the recovery from trauma as we are united with Christ and restored to wholeness in body, soul, and spirit.

CHAPTER 6

SACRIFICE AND SACRAMENT: PARTICIPATING IN THE COMMUNION OF CHRIST

“For many the sacraments are means of manipulating God
rather than a coming together of creature and creator.”
—Raymond Bailey¹

“In the Eucharist, we are constantly remembering the traumatic event of Christ’s body broken
for us, and indeed of his full life offered as a sacrifice for us.”
—Joshua Cockayne, Scott Harrower, and Preston Hill²

The previous chapters discussed the Crucifixion as the recapitulation of trauma in Christ and atonement as relational reconciliation in Christ, both of which are accomplished in a multi-dimensional manner. Through the death of Christ, God enables humanity to integratively process and/or re-narrate trauma while also demonstrating the depth of his love. Moreover, Jesus himself is the perfect human confession of sin, the incarnate expression of divine love, and the redemptive victor over sin, death, and trauma, all of which enables us to be reconciled to God (not God to us). In Christ, the Church is invited to participate in these various aspects of his life and ministry, including through the celebration of the Eucharist, contributing to the healing reintegration of the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit.

This chapter addresses the topics of sacrifice and sacrament, both of which have been debated aspects of the Eucharist.³ Fundamental assumptions regarding the nature of divine-

¹ Bailey, *Merton on Mysticism*, 91; cf. Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 2, 27.

² Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 145, emphasis original.

³ An earlier version of this chapter will be published in the Secularism and the Pursuit of Transcendence conference proceedings, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, April 27, 2023. For a historical review from antiquity to modernity see Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*. For an overview of recent

human relations are involved in the understanding of sacrifice. Therefore, theological discussion and practical application of communion with God in Christ (in the Eucharist and elsewhere) also necessitates attention to our understanding of sacrifice as demonstrated and defined by Christ. This chapter argues that sacrifice, according to Christ, is self-giving love: the giving of Christ's body and blood is a divine action that transcends transaction through the superabundant self-giving love of the Trinity. As such, the body and blood of Christ are the salvific incarnational, sacramental substance of God's mutually-giving, eternally-communing being of love. In short, the Person and work of Christ are communion, not currency or commodity. Rather than humans transactionally satisfying supposed divine needs (as ancient worldviews supposed sacrifices satiated the gods); and rather than humans being self-sufficient (as postmodern secular worldviews claim); instead, God graciously saves and sustains humans with the body and blood of Christ. Since the sacraments are irreducible mysteries yet operationally efficacious and therefore not irreconcilably obscure, the presence of God in the Eucharist is at once transcendent and immanent.⁴ The radical invitation of the gospel is to communion with God in Christ, which stands at the heart of the Eucharist. Therefore, this chapter also argues that the sacrament of the Eucharist participates in the saving and sustaining reality of Christ, such that the Church communes with God by partaking of and sharing the body and blood of Christ in both receptive and active modes.

This chapter begins by describing the integrated nature of spirituality in the ancient Greco-Roman world, which helps highlight key differences and similarities with Christianity.

sacramental scholarship that argues in favour of unity in diversity of sacramental perspectives and practices, see Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality Renewed*. Cf. Morrill, ed., *Sacramental Theology*; Küng, ed., *Sacraments*.

⁴ Cf. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 2.

Next, the transactional nature of divine-human relations in Greco-Roman meals and sacrifices is described. This is followed by an overview of ancient Jewish meals and sacrifices that emphasizes God's role in the life of his people, while drawing out key theological points that are relevant to the Eucharist. Demonstrating certain continuities with and distinctions from ancient Jewish practice and theology, early Christian meals and worship evidence a categorically different understanding of divine-human relations as revealed in Christ. The giving of the body and blood of Christ provide the fundamental basis for non-transactional communion with God and one another in and through Christ. The second major section discusses sacrifice and sacramental worship today, drawing especially on the insights of Orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann. The final section brings together the discussion of sacrifice, sacrament, and trauma with attention to how sacramental participation in the cruciform suffering and death of Christ contributes to trauma recovery as an aspect of the Church's union with Christ.

Sacred and Secular? "Religion," Sacrifice, and Supper in Antiquity

Unlike the postmodern Western world, religion in the ancient world, including the first century, was an integrated aspect of life that was not segregated or relegated to discrete domains.⁵ Religion, including the realities of the spiritual realm, was intertwined with the political, economic, social, domestic, natural, and other aspects of both everyday life and special occasions. As Larry Hurtado says, "from the lowest to the highest spheres of society, all aspects

⁵ The following is drawn largely from the Hurtado's historical work in Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, esp. 7–38; *Destroyer of the gods*, esp. 1–76; cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, esp. 151–305 on the pagan setting and 373–537 on the Jewish setting of early Christianity; Finegan, *Myth and Mystery*; MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*; Grant, *Gods and the One God*.

of life were presumed to have connections with divinities of various kinds.”⁶ Religion was polytheistic and pervasive: any and all gods were readily worshipped in a non-exclusive manner. It was “a world full of gods,” as Keith Hopkins puts it.⁷ Thus, there were not rigid sacred and secular divides as postmoderns typically suppose. Of course, sceptics existed, but all indications are that the overwhelming majority of people considered religious spirituality an integral part of life and shared many common assumptions of the nature of divine-human relations.⁸ Thus, in the ancient Greco-Roman world, religion was categorically different from the modern notion of religion as a voluntary, personal (even entirely private), and separate aspect of one’s life, not to mention society at large.

Greco-Roman Meals and Sacrifices: Feeding (with) the gods

Much like today, in the ancient world it was common to assume “there is no such thing as a free meal.” Following the paradigm set by Dennis Smith and Matthias Klinghardt, Soham Al-Suadi and Peter-Ben Smit reassert that “throughout the Mediterranean world, a coherent meal culture can be found, with meals that were structured in a similar way to a large extent and, even more importantly, that were discussed and evaluated according to a common frame of reference.”⁹ The

⁶ Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, 47.

⁷ Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods*; cf. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, 44–49.

⁸ See Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 9; cf. Saffrey, “The Piety and Prayers of Ordinary Men and Women in Late Antiquity,” 195–213. During the growth of the early church, certain pagan elites also began to question the traditional logic of sacrifice, particularly in regard to (at least some of) the gods’ need for sacrifices from humans. See Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 21–51.

⁹ Al-Suadi and Smit, eds., *Early Christian Meals*, 2; cf. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*; Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft*. Al-Suadi and Smit situate these works by Smith and Klinghardt as the initiation of a paradigm shift in the scholarly approach to ancient meals from assuming various distinct traditions and focussing on ritual form and theological interpretation to a broader scope, as described above. At the same time, Daly (*Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 6) observes recent paradigmatic changes in traditional history-of-religions approaches and notes that a new scholarly consensus has not yet emerged.

prevailing notion was that you could not eat without the gods' help, and if you properly honoured them you might be able to even eat with them. Unlike the modern scientific approach, the production and consumption of food and drink were spiritually integrated aspects of life—basic and essential aspects. In order to be successful, agricultural activity required the favour of the gods, which could involve efforts to placate, appease, or even distract them.¹⁰ Sacrificial offerings were “a fundamental way to express human interaction, homage, and relationship with the divine.”¹¹ In many ancient cultures, divine-human relations can be broadly characterized as transactional relationships.¹² And if the transactions were successful (crops harvested, battles won, etc.), then it was also appropriate to offer further thanksgiving, blessing, and acknowledgement to the gods.¹³

In regard to meals and sacrifices, Andrew McGowan observes that “the ancient Greco-Roman banquet includes and defies modern categories of secular and sacred, familial and public, celebratory and solemn.”¹⁴ Whether or not a festive meal was involved, ancient sacrifices also generally had a positive, even celebratory, mood and meaning.¹⁵ As with earlier Ancient Near East (ANE) cultures, Greco-Roman sacrifices, especially those involving blood, functioned as (1) a food gift or bribe (either to obtain the gods' favour or give thanks for it); (2) a spiritual

¹⁰ Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, 39–40.

¹¹ Tracey, “Sacrifice,” 392.

¹² Noting the ethnic nature of ancient religion, Paula Fredriksen (“How Jewish Is God?,” 209–10, emphasis original) notes that “*gods and their humans form family groups*.” These were strictly hierarchical, patriarchal families where the lesser/younger and slaves were bound to the will and service of the older and greater who were “easily angered by human failures.” However, early Christians viewed God as a caring, merciful Father. See Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 122.

¹³ Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 9, 26–28.

¹⁴ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 20; cf. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*.

¹⁵ See Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 23–24; cf. Yerkes, *Sacrifice*.

cleansing agent or expiatory substance; and (3) a ritual payment or propitiatory appeasement.¹⁶ At the most basic level, “sacrificial meat [was] ‘the food of the deity.’”¹⁷ Thus, sacrifices were, in some sense, seen as food for the gods and, if not needed, then at least required, desired, or enjoyed in some way by them.¹⁸ Once again, this can be described as a transactional relationship between deities and humans in which both relied on the other, though the balance of power tilted steeply in favour of the gods. A key reason for this is that one of the central and long-standing values of Greco-Roman society was transactional reciprocity. As David Aune explains, “the idea [was] that every gift or service rendered placed a moral obligation (i.e., an informal contract) on the recipient.”¹⁹ This same obligatory reciprocity was understood to regulate divine-human relations such that sacrifices could earn or store up the grace and gratitude of the gods. Sometimes, the gods could even become indebted to their worshippers!²⁰ While early Christian understandings of divine-human relations were categorically different, ancient Jewish relations with God demonstrate points of theological continuity and divergence.

¹⁶ Cf. Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 12–13. Katherine McClymond (*Beyond Sacred Violence*, 29) argues that sacrifice was a polythetic event involving a dynamic matrix of different types of actions: selection, association, identification, killing, heating, apportionment, and consumption. Cf. Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 11–13, 53.

¹⁷ Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 12; cf. Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT),” 5:878; Yerkes, *Sacrifice*, 157–58.

¹⁸ Cf. Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 24; Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 23, 29.

¹⁹ See Aune, “Prayer in the Greco-Roman World,” 25–30, here 25; cf. Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 60.

²⁰ For example, in the *Iliad* (1.39–42), the priest calls in favours owed by Apollo; see Aune, “Prayer in the Greco-Roman World,” 26–27.

Ancient Jewish Meals and Sacrifices: Blessing and Deliverance

In the Jewish worldview, God is always recognized as both creator and provider, and therefore all meals are occasions to thank God and pronounce blessings.²¹ In fact, *eucharistia* was a Greek term used first by Jews to describe thanksgiving before and after meals prior to being applied to the formal Christian ritual of the Eucharist.²² Like praying, eating was considered a holy action.²³ Sacrificial meals were shared by worshippers in the Jerusalem Temple and helped provide for the priests.²⁴ These feasts were “ritual realizations of their religious solidarity and of God’s merciful provisions and promises.”²⁵ Importantly, the Passover lamb never functioned as an appeasing sacrifice for sin but as a “communion-sacrifice” of deliverance and provision.²⁶ As such, it was an identity marker and subsequently a living memorial of thanksgiving: the blood on the doors of homes indicated that those inside or living there belonged to the people of God.²⁷ The effect was not the appeasement of God by blood, but freedom from enslavement (see Exod 12:1–28; Deut 16:1–8). At the same time, Torah reflects the understanding that “life [*nephesh*] is in the blood” (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11).²⁸ Hence, sacrificial blood was often understood to function in a cleansing/expiatory and/or appeasing/propitiatory manner, as in other ANE cultures.²⁹

²¹ See Jones and Kessler, “Eucharist,” 147.

²² See Jones and Kessler, “Eucharist,” 147.

²³ See Jones and Kessler, “Eucharist,” 148.

²⁴ For this and the following, see Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 27–36.

²⁵ Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 35.

²⁶ Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, 7–8, 23–24.

²⁷ Cf. Pilkington, “Passover,” 334. On the other hand, the scapegoat and its rituals were aimed at dealing with sin, but this was an expulsion ritual not a controlled Temple sacrifice (cf. Lev 16). See Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 31–38. However, I disagree with Finlan’s claim that for the ancient Israelites the scapegoat ritual was a “magical transfer” (34). The magical and the spiritual are in some ways similar and may overlap but are fundamentally different.

²⁸ See Shaw, “Blood,” 62–63.

²⁹ Cf. Finlan, *Problems with Atonement*, 11–20.

In addition to animal or blood sacrifices, bread was a part of daily Temple sacrifices, including the 12 loaves of “showbread” or the “bread of the presence.”³⁰ In fact, most sacrificial offerings in antiquity were vegetal rather than animal.³¹ Christine Pilkington explains that “[t]he notion of bread symbolising someone’s body, of wine symbolising someone’s blood, and of both being consumed is totally alien to Judaism.”³² Instead, in the Hebrew Bible, there are two theological types of bread: the bread of blessing (which is the result of work in partnership with God) and the bread of deliverance (of which God is the sole provider).³³ The former is produced through normal agricultural labour, yet still relies on God (instead of other nature and fertility gods) to provide favourable growing conditions. Examples of the latter include manna in the wilderness (Exod 16:1–36; cf. Num 11:1–9) and when ravens are sent by God to bring bread and meat to Elijah (1 Kgs 17:2–16). In the ancient world, bread was symbolic of all food and provision, and in the Jewish theological understanding God, as Creator, is always involved in human life and provision.

The question, then, is how humans participate in or partner with the activity of God and receive both the blessings and deliverance of God. The Passover celebration and sacrifice (as described above) is very much in line with the theology of the bread of deliverance. Fundamental aspects of this theological framework are maintained (or *fulfilled*) in early Christian understandings of the body and blood of Christ not as the currency of divine sustenance or

³⁰ See Langer, “Bread,” 64.

³¹ See Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 6.

³² Pilkington, “Passover,” 333.

³³ See Reed, “Bread,” 1:777–80.

appeasement but as the incarnational fulfillment of God's sovereign redeeming and saving act of gracious deliverance.³⁴

Early Christian Meals: The Body and Blood of Christ

For early Christians, the body and blood of Christ were not the currency by which divine favour was gained; instead, Christ himself was understood as the divine *gift of communion* with humanity. From the first to the third century, eucharistic sacrifice was understood primarily as prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, and was increasingly linked to martyrdom and intercession on behalf of the deceased.³⁵ As N. T. Wright says, "The early Christians used the language of sacrifice in connection with such things as holiness, evangelism, and the eucharist."³⁶ The gift of communion with God in Christ was received and shared in community meals, referred to by Paul as the "Lord's Supper" (1 Cor 11:20). Common meals were the major and central component of early Christian worship, often taking place in believers' homes.³⁷ Andrew McGowan notes that meals "were not merely one sacramental part of a community or worship life but the central act around or within which others—reading and preaching, prayer and prophecy—were arranged."³⁸ And the staple elements of the Eucharist—bread and wine—were not the specialized, ritualized forms many Christians encounter today, but rather the most basic, common, and accessible forms

³⁴ Cf. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, 91.

³⁵ See Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, 50–59; cf. 129–32. On martyrs, see Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 124–25.

³⁶ Wright, *John for Everyone*, 184.

³⁷ For this and the following see Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 25–28, 41–46; cf. Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, 1–24.

³⁸ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 19–20.

of food in the ancient Mediterranean world.³⁹ As McGowan says, “Their character as the ordinary foodstuffs, universally accessible and necessary, underlay their importance in a meal ritual that was associated with spiritual benefits of the most extraordinary kind.”⁴⁰ Moreover, bread was symbolic of all sustenance and provision. Hence, “Give us each day our daily bread” (Luke 11:3; cf. Matt 6:11) was (and is) not merely a prayer for bread and bread alone, but for provision for all of life’s daily needs, food being one of the most basic and important.⁴¹

Within a Christian worldview, it is essential that the benefits (physical, psychological, and spiritual) of the Eucharist be assigned to humans, not God. That is, God (the Father) does not need the body and blood of Christ (the Son); rather, humans rely on God for salvation and life in and through Christ. The Bread of Life discourse in John 6:22–71 emphasizes both the necessity of Christ for life and the radical nature of this assertion. Jesus says:

I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh [vv. 48–51]. . . . Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever [vv. 53–58].

³⁹ See McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 22–23; Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 22–24; cf. Detienne and Vernant, *Cuisine of Sacrifice*.

⁴⁰ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, here 23, 41. Cf. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 144–46, 313–14, 570, 617.

⁴¹ Schmemann (*For the Life of the World*, 57, emphasis original) says, “the great Eucharistic Prayer is now summed up in the Lord’s prayer,” such that “Life comes again to us as *Gift*, a free divine gift.” N. T. Wright (“Lord’s Prayer as a Paradigm,” 136) also links the Lord’s Prayer to the Last Supper and the Eucharist. The prayer for bread, he says, is a posture of alignment with the Kingdom of God and the life and ministry of Christ.

This discourse stands in both continuity and discontinuity with Jewish tradition in certain ways. As noted above, the connection of bread and wine/drink to body and blood that are consumed is foreign to Judaism. So it is not surprising that “[w]hen many of his [Jesus’] disciples heard it, they said, ‘This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?’” (John 6:60), and that consequently many stopped following him (John 6:66). McGowan points out that this passage is primarily about faith for spiritual provision.⁴² Thus, when this passage is considered together with the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper (Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:15–20) and Paul’s instructions in 1 Cor 10–11,⁴³ a combination of themes may be observed, such as the Passover motifs of identification and deliverance (ransom/redemption), wilderness provision, and the renewal of covenant fidelity, all associated with the Person and work of Christ. The thematic combinations are complex, so it would be “misleading to see the Eucharist as a sort of Christianized seder.”⁴⁴ Nonetheless, for early Christians the common worship-meal of the Eucharist—in non-reductive similarity to Passover⁴⁵—celebrated divine deliverance, ongoing provision/sustenance, and identification with Christ and other believers.

With its descriptions of receiving and sharing in body and blood of Christ in a communal way, McGowan says that 1 Cor 10:16–21 is “the earliest known theology of what it actually

⁴² See McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 45.

⁴³ There are two traditions of the Last Supper evident in the New Testament: Mark and Matthew on one hand, and Luke and Paul on the other. The former is closer to the Jewish *berakah*, but the latter preserves the oldest tradition in words over the cup blessing: “this cup is the [new] covenant in my blood.” All of them emphasize the fact that body and blood are “given for you” with salvific effect. See McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 27–30; cf. Ratzinger, “Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?,” 70–75.

⁴⁴ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 25; cf. Marcus, “Passover and Last Supper Revisited,” 303–24. The Easter (or Paschal) Vigil is probably the closest Christian correlation to or continuity of Jewish Passover. See Bowe, “Last Supper,” 255–56. For a review of the types of Jewish meals that have been considered in relation to the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, see Kodell, *Eucharist*, 38–52.

⁴⁵ On Passover and Pentecost in the early church, see Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 68–73.

means to participate in the Christian meal.”⁴⁶ Here, Paul also addresses pagan sacrifice as theologically problematic, one of the key reasons being that worship and allegiance should be devoted to God alone.⁴⁷ Thus, the Corinthian meal is not an example of Christian transactional sacrifice, but rather addresses the exclusive Lordship and provision of Christ as divinely initiated communion between Christ and the Church in contrast to pagan sacrificial practices.⁴⁸ Similarly, while meals were conventional means of celebrating common commitments and values, the Christian practice of remembering and worshipping a crucified (and risen) person was remarkable, countercultural, and even scandalously objectionable.⁴⁹

Some pagan writers accused Christians of being atheists because they refused to worship other gods, which was considered a denial of their existence.⁵⁰ Moreover, the Incarnation—the notion of a god/God becoming human (not merely appearing as human)—was objectionable, and even more unacceptable was the conviction that Christ gives his body in death and Resurrection for the sake of humanity.⁵¹ So while the Gospel stories of the birth and death of the Son of God and the concept of an intermediary divine power were intelligible to pagans, the notion of Incarnation proper and the claims of the Resurrection of the body were at least strange if not repellent.⁵²

⁴⁶ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 32.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, 60–61. Daly (*Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 75, 114) notes that initially no one would have thought of Jesus’ Crucifixion as a sacrifice. Cf. Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 6–9.

⁴⁸ Cf. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 33.

⁴⁹ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 22; cf. Taussig, *In the Beginning Was the Meal*, 115–43.

⁵⁰ For this and the following, see Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, 20–36, 183–84; cf. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 27.

⁵¹ This is a key theological reason why the Ascension is important: Christ does not “shed” his human body. As John McDade (“Incarnation,” 206) puts it, the Incarnation of Christ is not a temporary assumption, apparition, phantom, or “Zeus-like metamorphosis into creaturely form, but a union of the divine and the human.”

⁵² See Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 48; cf. Nock, *Conversion*.

Christians were also accused incest and orgies, probably because of their holy kiss of greeting, often specifically linked with the Eucharist.⁵³ And similarly, accusations of unseemly human sacrifice and cannibalism were made, likely because of belief in the Incarnation, death, and Resurrection of Christ and the link between the (eucharistic) meal and Christ's body and blood.⁵⁴ Thus, for people of all sorts, ranging from pagan elites to some of the Jewish disciples of Christ in John 6, the teachings and actions of Christ and, consequently, the beliefs and practices of early Christianity were, in particular ways, radically different from what they were accustomed to or, for some, willing to accept. The paradigm shift in divine-human relations from controlled transaction to transcendent communion was and remains radically scandalous.

The contrast of meal-centric early Christian worship with modern forms of worship is also significant.⁵⁵ As the centuries progressed, simple tables as sites of communal sharing and worship become increasingly elaborate, especially with the construction of churches. Most church architecture situates the table (now altar) in a high, central location—the focus of all attention yet off limits to all but the appointed priest and attendants. Thus, the locus of worship shifts from normal domestic spaces to special institutional spaces, which contain further segregations.⁵⁶ From the leadership of the apostles and other community leaders (elders, deacons, and others) along with the collective priesthood of all believers develops an institutional

⁵³ While a kiss of greeting was common in antiquity, the Christian inclusivity with the practice was not. See Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 42–43.

⁵⁴ Celsus in particular ridiculed such notions. Tacitus and Suetonius characterized Christian beliefs as superstition (*superstitio*), meaning “beliefs and rituals deemed excessive, repellant, or even monstrous.” See Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, 21, 31.

⁵⁵ For this and the following see Hurtado, *Origins of Christian Worship*, esp. 39–62, 83–86; *Destroyer of the gods*; Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, esp. 25–59.

⁵⁶ In Judaism, the opposite trend can be observed: after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Temple altar is replaced by the home table. See Langer, “Bread,” 64; Tracey, “Altar,” 12; “Sacrifice,” 392.

priesthood (bishops, presbyters/priests, and so on) to serve the communion elements with designated blessings, readings, prayers, and so forth. And while the content of the eucharistic elements remains the basic forms of bread and wine, the portions are now tokens, the composition often unusual if not unique (e.g., communion wafers), and the access highly regulated. In the second century, celebrations of the Eucharist seem to have still been a full meal, at least in some places. For instance, Justin Martyr describes staple foods, dining arrangements, and provision for those absent.⁵⁷ While spiritual sustenance was involved, the material needs of both present and absent community members were also met with the sacramental food.⁵⁸ The third century would find Christians gathering not only in private homes, but also in larger spaces capable of accommodating more people.⁵⁹ And by the fourth century, logistical necessity coupled with theological developments had produced a meal that Christians today would more readily recognize as a form of sacramental and liturgical Eucharist.

The description of these developments is not meant to narrate an idealized history of the early Church that imagines the “fall” of Christian worship from living communion to dead ritual, from empowering participation to controlled sacrament, or from open table to closed altar; nonetheless it remains important to recognize that the official theology of many church denominations today does not treat regular meals as forms of sacred eating or appropriate occasions to worship and partake of Christ’s body and blood.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 48; “Eucharist and Sacrifice,” 200–2.

⁵⁸ Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship*, 20–21; cf. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 48.

⁵⁹ For this and following, see McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 48–52, 59–62.

⁶⁰ Cf. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 63.

Sacrifice and Sacrament: Participating in the Communion of Self-Giving Love

Christian Sacrifice: A Trinitarian View of Communion in Christ

While a trajectory of increasing formalization and institutionalization can be clearly traced, the history of the Church demonstrates a dismaying degree of disunity regarding the celebration of Eucharist and notions of eucharistic sacrifice.⁶¹ Still, the centrality and significance of the Eucharist remain widely agreed upon. That fact that debates remain is itself evidence that the topic is meaningful and the stakes are high. Therefore, understanding eucharistic sacrifice according to the Person and work of Christ remains vital in the life and ministry of the Church. This section will first discuss a Christian notion of sacrifice as fulfilled and defined by Christ. Next, sacramental participation in the life of Christ will be explored, drawing significantly on Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann.

Drawing heavily on Girardian concepts of mimetic rivalry and scapegoat violence (though with key caveats), Mark Heim argues that God does not commit sacrificial violence to save us, but rather God saves us from our obsession with and need for sacrificial violence.⁶² In his words, “Jesus didn’t volunteer to get into God’s justice machine. God volunteered to get into ours. God used our own sin to save us.”⁶³ Within the scope of Jesus’ entire life and ministry Heim seeks to identify the distinctive saving significance of the Cross. Thus, rather than rejecting the language of sacrifice, Heim argues it is maintained in Scripture (and tradition) as a progressive revelation of what God saves us from. At the centre of this revelation stands the

⁶¹ For a thorough overview, see Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*.

⁶² Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 9–14.

⁶³ Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, xi.

Cross of Christ, simultaneously exposing cosmic evil and human brokenness *and* demonstrating and revealing God's nonviolent love and power.

Heim makes his case in three parts. First, he works to uncover the assumptions of sacrificial scapegoat logic/practice, the exposition of violence embedded in sacrifice, and the giving of voice to the victim(s) evident in the OT and in contrast to other cultures/systems.⁶⁴ In other words, violence and retribution are unveiled as the "operative element in sacrifice," and the victims' voices are heard.⁶⁵ Second, he examines the paradox of the Gospels that "Christ's death saves the world and it ought not to happen."⁶⁶ God is not the author or perpetrator of redemptive violence, but rather consents to be the victim yet rises vindicated and victorious.⁶⁷ Third, he considers the early Church, especially the shared meal in remembrance of Christ's death not as sacrificial scapegoating, but as identification with the crucified one.⁶⁸ In this and other ways, practices of sacrificial scapegoating were transformed into practices of communal communion, sharing in the body and blood of Christ not as a copycat ritual but as the new basis for peace, harmony, and well-being. Heim cautions that all three parts/dimensions must be considered together for a proper holistic view: "myth revealed, sacrifice reversed, [and] a new basis of

⁶⁴ See Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 35–104.

⁶⁵ Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 17.

⁶⁶ See Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 105–215, 17 here.

⁶⁷ Applying George Grant's and Simone Weil's theodicy of the Cross and cosmology of consent, Bradley Jersak (*Cave to the Cross*) describes a biblical theological hermeneutic that views divine wrath as divine consent. In this model, God does not directly commit violence but consents to allowing it within the cosmos (224–72). While divine consent allows for violence, it also makes room for divine, self-emptying love, which subverts and overcomes violence (esp. 269). Thus, the Cross is not the place where the Son propitiates or appeases the wrath of the Father, but rather the place where God reveals his non-violent love, including the destructive consequences of sin and violence that are especially devastating to the innocent (266–70). Jersak goes on to describe "shalomic justice" (or *kenarchy*; cf. Mitchell and Arram, eds., *Discovering Kenarchy*) as the power of God's love that makes all things right and new (269–72). In and through Christ, humanity is invited to participate in the power of God's love in the cosmos (269–331).

⁶⁸ See Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 217–329.

reconciliation.”⁶⁹ Without these parts clearly in focus and properly related, “we too readily confuse God’s becoming a victim of our violence to overcome it with God prescribing violence to save us.”⁷⁰ In other words, abstracting the solution from the context of the problem leads to speculation rather than revelation regarding the Cross.

However, rather than entirely rejecting the concept and language of sacrifice, I argue that Christ redemptively fulfills and redefines it.⁷¹ The way God gives is categorically different, transcending a transactional interaction. As Jesus says, “I do not give to you as the world gives” (John 14:27). Rather than humans feeding God, God creates, saves, and sustains human life in and through Christ (cf. John 1:3; Col 1:16). Jesus, the Son of David and “King of the Jews” (Mark 15:26; Matt 27:37; Luke 23:38), is the promised Messiah who frees God’s people (indeed, all people) from bondage; however, rather than a military hero who overthrows the kingdoms of the world with violence, Christ fulfills the Old Testament (OT) promise of the Messiah in an unexpected and categorically different way: he overcomes the cosmic forces of sin and death through his own death on a Roman cross, followed by his Resurrection.⁷² Similarly, Jesus is the fulfillment of a perfect sacrifice to God, but not in the “obvious” way we might suppose from a literalistic reading of the OT.⁷³ Again, there is a paradigm shift at the Cross as God reveals that

⁶⁹ Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 18.

⁷⁰ Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 18.

⁷¹ The same is true of the notion of *justice*, which God in Christ demonstrates is not retributive, but restorative. Chapter 8 will discuss restorative justice in Christ.

⁷² Justin Martyr sees the sacrificial cult as a concession to the people, much the same as God’s concession to appoint a king (1 Sam 8). See McGowan, “Eucharist and Sacrifice,” 200; cf. Ullucci, *Christian Rejection*, 101–4; Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*, 77–78.

⁷³ Jesus is both victorious Messiah and sacrificial lamb in ways that nobody expected and in ways that redefined both victory/salvation and sacrifice. To suggest that Jesus was sacrifice but not saviour according to conventional understandings requires significant justification since it is far more logical and consistent to view the revelation of Christ on the Cross as the complete overhaul and inversion of both these and other conceptual categories, relational dynamics, and embodied understandings. After all, the Crucifixion of Christ may seem like a

he does not need blood and flesh; rather, God in Christ takes on flesh and blood and in a radical act of self-giving love (Incarnation), and gives his body and blood to us as the source of life we need (Crucifixion/Resurrection and Last Supper/Eucharist). Jesus' blood "speaks a better word" than Abel's not merely in magnitude, but in an altogether different manner (Heb 12:24). This is not a new reading of the Scriptures, but rather reflective of ancient interpretations and understandings. As James Payton notes: "Gregory the Theologian speaks for many other Eastern church fathers when he urges that God neither needs nor demands the sacrifice: 'To whom was the blood offered that was shed for us? . . . To the Father? . . . It was not by him that we were oppressed. . . . On what principle could the blood of his only begotten son delight the Father?'"⁷⁴ Christ's self-sacrifice is not for God's sake, it is for ours: God meets our needs rather than demanding that humans satisfy him.

At the same time, while God has never needed sacrifices, the true fundamental dynamic of sacrifice as a concrete act of trust (especially for the well-being of others) is maintained and fulfilled in and through Christ. Sacrifice is self-giving love, and the basis of such love is trust in God. All other sacrifices have failed as complete and proper acts of trust in God and God alone. God does not need a human blood sacrifice, but Jesus fulfills the true essence of sacrifice as self-giving love and as an act of trust in God.⁷⁵ Accomplishing this, he invites us to participate in both receiving and giving his own love (cf. Heb 10:1–18). Again, participation is essential: Jesus

foolish stumbling-block, when in truth "Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:24–25).

⁷⁴ Payton, *Victory of the Cross*, 116; quoting *Or. Bas.* 45:22 (*NPNF*² 7:431).

⁷⁵ It is not God the Father but the religious leaders, the crowds, and the representatives of the Roman Empire in cooperation with the powers and principalities of evil that demand and carry out the Crucifixion of Christ, crying out, "Crucify him!" (Mark 15:13; Matt 27:21; Luke 23:21; John 19:6) and attempting to wash their hands of responsibility (cf. Matt 27:24). To imagine the Father's voice in the chorus of bloodlust for any reason is deeply unorthodox.

does not invite us to participate in his satisfaction of the Father, but rather his trust in the Father—a profound trust that reaches down into the depths of suffering and trauma and stretches out beyond the grave. Christ himself is the bread of deliverance who invites us to share in the bread of blessing: we are saved unto participatory communion with God. Christ himself is the means of eternal life and communion with God and the mode of the life of the Church, his Body. As discussed above, this paradigm shift in the understanding of divine-human relations is evident in early Christian meals and worship as well as New Testament texts.

Edward Kilmartin succinctly articulates a Trinitarian view of sacrifice as defined by Christ and described in the New Testament:

sacrifice is not, in the first place, an activity of human beings directed to God and, in the second place, something that reaches its goal in the response of divine acceptance and bestowal of divine blessing on the cultic community [as pagan worldviews supposed]. Rather, sacrifice in the New Testament understanding—and thus in its Christian understanding—is, in the first place, the self-offering of the Father in the gift of his Son, and in the second place the unique response of the Son in his humanity to the Father, and in the third place, the self-offering of believers [through the power of the Holy Spirit] in union with Christ by which they share in his covenant relation with the Father.⁷⁶

Inspired by Kilmartin's work and based on his historical research, Robert Daly proposes a similar Trinitarian understanding of Christian sacrifice:

Christian sacrifice is not some object that we manipulate, nor is it something that we do or give up. It is first and foremost, a mutually self-giving event that takes place between persons. It is, in fact, the most profoundly personal and interpersonal event that we can conceive or imagine. It begins, in a kind of first "moment," not with us but with the self-offering of God the Father in the self-gift-sending of the Son. It continues, in a second "moment," in the self-offering "response" of the Son, in his humanity and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the Father and for us. And it continues further in a third "moment". . . when we, in and by means of human actions that are empowered by the same Spirit that

⁷⁶ Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 381–82; quoted in O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 184, with the addition regarding the Holy Spirit in square brackets. The addition contrasting pagan worldviews is mine.

was in Jesus, begin to enter into that perfect, en-Spirited, mutually self-giving, mutually self-communicating personal inter-relationship that is the life of the Blessed Trinity.⁷⁷

The emphasis on (inter)personal self-giving is an important corrective to transactional economized understandings of both human relationships and divine-human relations. Thus, a Trinitarian approach to divine-human relations, including sacraments, is essential to a *Christian* perspective.⁷⁸

While entering into the gift of communion with Christ does necessitate responding to the call of Christ (cf. Matt 6:14–15), responding to his call is not a transactional exchange. Rather, Godly fruit in the lives of believers is a natural consequence of receiving and abiding in the life of Christ. In Christ, the relationship between receiving and giving the love of God is not transactional; instead, receiving and giving are two parts of a communing whole that cannot be dissected or torn apart. Thus, the Greco-Roman tenet of obligatory transactional reciprocity is transcended by the relations of the Trinity, into which God invites us in Christ. Therefore, the body and blood of Christ are rightly described as the incarnational substance of God's mutually-giving, eternally communing being of love. Christ is communion not currency or commodity.

⁷⁷ Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*, 5 here, 103, 228–29. He also says that “this trinitarian idea of sacrifice was, if not explicitly, then at least virtually and implicitly, present in the ancient Christian world.” Daly, *Sacrifice in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, 57–58 here, 110–14.

⁷⁸ Problems with a non-Trinitarian, individualistic premise become evident in the work of Jacques Derrida (esp. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*). He argues that hospitality, giving, and forgiving are all inherently transactional as they generate obligations and debt (whether perceived or real). Pure giving requires unawareness on the part of both giver and receiver and is, therefore, a paradoxical impossibility. However, from a Trinitarian perspective, the eternally communing being of God is the source of all plenitude and providence, including the sacrifice of self-giving love. Humans, made in God's image and invited into intimate communion with God, can participate in God's self-giving love. The free gift of true (Trinitarian) sacrifice is non-transactional sacramental access to divine presence in/through the Eucharist (that is, in Christ), the participatory sharing of Christ's body and blood. In other words, rather than “pure giving” being founded on the premise of the ideals of individualism or Platonic idealism, true (for)giving/sacrifice is founded on the premise of the communing being of God, the mutual and superabundant love of the Trinity. Much like my argument regarding sacrifice and sacraments, James Voiss (*Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*, 14–27, 113–18, 385–89, here 389) concludes that Christian forgiveness is “transformative participation in the life and work of Christ.”

Sacramental Participation: Revelation, Fulfillment, and Union in Christ

Orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann specifically speaks to sacrifice and sacramental worship in a modern secular age,⁷⁹ defining *secularism* as “a negation of worship.”⁸⁰ He does not mean that there is no form of idolatry present,⁸¹ but rather that secularism is the opposite of a sacramental way of life since it is fundamentally self-referential, self-centred, self-serving, and self-sufficient—simply put, secularism is *selfish*. In his words, “the real cause of secularism [is] the affirmation of the world’s autonomy, of its self-sufficiency.”⁸² The Church, he challenges, has not been immune to the problems of secularism and is, in fact, complicit in its development. When theologies dichotomize the “sacred” and the “profane,” the natural and supernatural, the pure and the impure, they “relapse into that religion which assures, by means of orderly transactions with the ‘sacred.’”⁸³ That is, appeasing sacrifices, magical incantations, or other means within human control.⁸⁴ Indeed, Schmemmann argues that clericalism (when claimed as *the* sacred vocation) is the “natural father” of secularism, since clergy were originally not

⁷⁹ Schmemmann addresses an American context from approximately 1960 to 1980, and his insight remains applicable today. For an Anglican participatory view of sacramental theology addressing an evangelical context, see Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*. For various Catholic perspectives, see Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*; Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*; Nutt, *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*; Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*. For Pentecostal perspectives, see Green, “Sacraments”; *Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper*; Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments*.

⁸⁰ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 139–59, here 140, emphasis original; first published in *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 16.1 (1972) 3–16. Cf. Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 129–35.

⁸¹ In contrast to a proper sacramental understanding, Boersma (*Heavenly Participation*, 31) argues that modernity has idolized created order.

⁸² Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 153; cf. 90–91.

⁸³ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 155; cf. 20–27. For sustained attention to the “desacramentalizing of the universe in modernity” or the rise of secularism and contributing factors, see Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 52–83, here 11, 53; Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie*.

⁸⁴ Cf. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 157.

separated from but included in the people (*laos*) of God, the laity.⁸⁵ In the secularized schema, “religion became an organized transaction with the supernatural, and the priest was set apart as the ‘transactor’.”⁸⁶ Therefore, a narrow theological view of sacrifice as a satiation of God or “as a legal transaction,” says Schmemmann, “needs radical rethinking, starting with the very nature of sacrifice.”⁸⁷ Thus, the gospel of Christ continues to confront the human tendency to attempt to manipulate God.

Much like ancient notions of transactional divine-human relations, secularism in both the world and the Church subsists on transactional dealings that engender certainty rather than faith and which are enacted as a means of control rather than trust. The postmodern twist is that hyper-individuality in a self-referential key is the anthem of the era.⁸⁸ As Andrew Purves observes: “We have invented being an individual without having to relate to one another.”⁸⁹ The inevitable discord and conflict that arises from self-defined self-sufficiency makes coherent discourse, much less communion, an impossibility. Indeed, James Sire calls the postmodern privileging of the self “a formula for anarchy.”⁹⁰

Despite the incoherence of hyper-individualized self-referential postmodern logic, Schmemmann’s recognition that humanity “is already looking for a path beyond secularism, is again thirsty and hungry for ‘something else,’” remains applicable.⁹¹ The interest in spirituality

⁸⁵ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 112. He argues that the true role of the priestly vocation is to “reveal to each vocation its priestly essence . . . to reveal the Church as the royal priesthood” (113). Accordingly, the liturgy (*leitourgia*)—the work of the people—is not the sole purview of the priest, but the whole community, which is “a whole greater than the sum of its parts” (33–34). Cf. Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 11–26, esp. 14–18.

⁸⁶ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 112. Chapter 7 describes ways the entire congregation should be actively involved in the celebration of the Eucharist.

⁸⁷ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 129.

⁸⁸ Cf. Sire, *Universe Next Door*, esp. 168–71, 203–7.

⁸⁹ Purves, “Trinitarian Basis,” 238.

⁹⁰ Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 207.

⁹¹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 158.

of all forms at present demonstrates this hunger, though it remains secular in the sense that it is not worship but self-service on one's own terms: the commodification of God and/or the spiritual realm in general.⁹² Consumerized spirituality is directly opposed to the way of sacrificial love embodied by Christ and shared in the Eucharist.⁹³ The only antidote to secularism and its transactional consumerism says Schmemmann, is the unique *gift* that Christians can give: "access to the true *mystērion* of Christ . . . Sacrament and Epiphany."⁹⁴ In and through Christ alone can humans truly and properly be fully human and worship God.

Since antiquity, Christian theologians, such as Irenaeus of Lyons, have asserted that God has no needs, whether sacrificial or otherwise: "Sacrifices do not sanctify anyone, for God does not need sacrifice."⁹⁵ Instead, humans have needs that can only be met by and in God: "While God needs nothing, humans need fellowship [or communion] with God, and this is the glory of a human being."⁹⁶ Hence, sacrifice, as revealed by Christ, is about communing love. As Schmemmann puts it, sacrifice is "first a revelation of life itself; it is life's spiritual content."⁹⁷ Put differently, "sacrifice is . . . the very essence of life," because it is an outworking of love.⁹⁸ Therefore, sacrifice—in its proper Christological eucharistic form—is necessary not for God's sake but because "it is the only way of reaching the fullness that is possible for [humanity]."⁹⁹ That is, the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is an act of divine self-*giving*, not self-

⁹² Cf. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 18–20; Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 156–202, esp. 168–70.

⁹³ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 130.

⁹⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 158; cf. 57–60.

⁹⁵ *Haer.* 4.18.3 (*APT* 100); cf. Matt 9:13; 12:7; Hos 6:6.

⁹⁶ *Haer.* 4.11.1 (*APT* 100).

⁹⁷ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 129. The essential aspects of sacrifice he identifies are "thanksgiving, communion, giving up, sharing, [and] transformation" (131).

⁹⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 45.

⁹⁹ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 130.

satisfaction.¹⁰⁰ As always, it is the communing love and abundant grace of God that makes it possible for humans to become fully alive: it is transformational.¹⁰¹ As Schmemmann says, “giving is life: it is a giving-and-receiving, and therefore this whole movement is central and reciprocal.”¹⁰² Once again, the nature of God is categorically different: divine reciprocity is not transactional but communing. In other words, by entering into communion with God in Christ, we begin to *participate* in the love of God by also giving what we receive—not as a condition or demand, but as the natural outworking of communion with/in Christ (cf. 1 John 4:7–21). Schmemmann also describes eucharistic sacrifice as the integration of the Church into life in Christ, the content of which is thanksgiving.¹⁰³ In other words, true sacrifice has to do with being made *holy*, which is the same as being made *whole* in Christ.¹⁰⁴ Thus, sacrificial eucharistic worship is the antithesis of transactional reciprocity and consumption; instead, it is the fullness of communion: the *gift* of the life of Christ and the *giving* of life in Christ.

Therefore, as result of communion with Christ, worship, like creation, is itself a gift—a redemptive gift in Christ. As Schmemmann says, “worship is the essential act which both ‘posits’ [a person’s] humanity and fulfills it.”¹⁰⁵ Once again, the need is human, not divine: humanity in its fullness needs to worship God, but God does not need such praise, meet and right as it may be.¹⁰⁶ Not only is worship an inherently relational act (not magical or transactional) in respect to

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 57.

¹⁰¹ As Irenaeus puts it: “The glory of God is living humanity, and the life of humanity is the vision of God” (*Haer.* 4.20.7). Importantly, the vision of God is not observation at a distance, but the content of intimate communion: “the means of life is found in fellowship with God. But fellowship with God is to know God and enjoy his goodness” (*Haer.* 4.20.5 [*JCF* 115–16]). Cf. Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 129, 131.

¹⁰² Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 130, emphasis original.

¹⁰³ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 83, 129–35.

¹⁰⁴ See Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 140; cf. 143.

¹⁰⁶ On this point Schmemmann’s language could be more precise in a certain places. For example, he says, “what He [God] needs in return, what will ‘feed’ Him, is love” (*Liturgy and Tradition*, 134). However, rather than

God, but also in relation to the world and one another: when Christ stands at the centre, all other relations properly align in him.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, the term *sacramental* means that the *physical* world, the *matter* of life, is “an epiphany of God, a means of his revelation, presence, and power. . . . [It] means that for the world to be a means of worship and a means of grace is not accidental, but the revelation of its meaning, the restoration of its essence, the fulfillment of its destiny.”¹⁰⁸ As always, such a claim must be Christologically oriented and grounded. Through sacramental fulfillment in Christ, “matter becomes again a means of communion with and knowledge of God.”¹⁰⁹ Hence, as Schmemmann says, “Christ is the fulfillment of worship as adoration and prayer, thanksgiving and sacrifice, communion and knowledge He is the true and full Sacrament because he is the fulfillment of the world’s essential ‘sacramentality.’”¹¹⁰ Moreover, since “the basis of all Christian worship is the incarnation, its true content is always the cross and the resurrection.”¹¹¹ As “every aspect of life [is] gathered into the Eucharist,” it is the “restoration of love as the very life of the world.”¹¹² Therefore, the sacrifice of Christ’s body and blood received and shared in the Eucharist must be understood as the gift of divine self-giving

reiterating transactional relations, Schmemmann is appropriating traditional sacrificial language while recognizing that God invites humanity into communion with him and that God delights in humanity as we participate in the life of Christ, which naturally manifests as self-giving love. More helpfully, see Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 49.

¹⁰⁷ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 141.

¹⁰⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 142, 144; cf. *Eucharist*, 37–40; *Of Water and the Spirit*, 49. Specifically invoking Schmemmann, Boersma (*Heavenly Participation*, 9) says: “The purpose of all matter is to lead us into God’s heavenly presence, to bring about communion with God, participation in the divine life.” The need for a more robust and central sacramental perspective in evangelicalism is underscored by sociologist Andrew Greeley (*Catholic Imagination*, here 1). He observes that Catholics tend to emphasise the presence and nearness of God in the created world, while Protestants emphasise God’s absence and distance. In other words, “Catholics tend to accentuate the immanence of God, Protestants the transcendence of God.” While this view could be taken in a polarizing direction, my argument aims to maintain an appropriate balance between divine transcendence and immanence, maintaining both mystery and revelation in the Eucharist.

¹⁰⁹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 156.

¹¹⁰ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 145; cf. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 406.

¹¹¹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 145.

¹¹² Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 107, 46 (respectively).

love rather than a transaction, a revelation rather than a negotiation, an invitation to participation not a coercion or possession.

In this way, and only in this way, can the sacramental worship of the Church speak meaningfully and powerfully to the world.¹¹³ In addition to the testimony of the Church in the world, when the world witnesses the Church worshipping in spirit and in truth, Christ is made known. By recognizing the giving of Christ's body and blood as a divine action that transcends transaction, the Church is positioned to offer the world the antidote to the disconnection of secularism and the isolation of trauma: "access to the true *mystērion* of Christ."¹¹⁴ While entering into the mysteries of Christ does not answer all questions, it provides a foundational point of orientation and may point in new directions.¹¹⁵ It is not the self that stands as the unfathomable centre of the universe, but Christ. Through the sacraments—particularly the core sacrament of the Eucharist¹¹⁶—God meets human needs and meets humans in their needs. As Augustine puts it, "my real need was for You, my God, who are the food of the soul."¹¹⁷ As we enter into communion with God in Christ, we both receive and give the love of Christ, not coercively but freely. Therefore, because the sacraments are irreducible mysteries yet operationally efficacious and not irreconcilably obscure, the presence of God in the Eucharist is at once transcendent and immanent. As such, the body and blood of Christ are the salvific incarnational substance of

¹¹³ Cf. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 158–59.

¹¹⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 158.

¹¹⁵ Boersma (*Heavenly Participation*, 17) maintains that the skepticism due to "uncritical acceptance of postmodernity among younger evangelicals" should be remedied by "an embrace of sacramental mystery."

¹¹⁶ Specifically regarding the Eucharist, see Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 21–25, 31–58; *Eucharist; Liturgy and Tradition*, 69–88, 129–35.

¹¹⁷ *Conf.*, 3:1 (APT 374).

God's mutually-giving, eternally-communing being of love. Christ is communion, not currency or commodity. And the sacrifice of Christ is self-giving love.

Sacrifice, Sacrament, and Trauma

Earlier I stated that sacramental participation in the cruciform suffering and death of Christ unites us with Christ so that we may also participate in his Resurrection life (both present and eschatological). This assertion is an extension of a participatory paradigm of the sacraments—as opposed to semantic, causal, or representational conceptions.¹¹⁸ This participatory view of the sacraments is aligned with participatory views of Christian life and ministry—as opposed to imitative models. Moreover, participatory understandings of sacraments and ministry align with the participatory aspects of atonement (as reconciliation) as previously described. God in Christ invites and enables humanity to be reconciled to him and participate in his ministry of reconciliation, including healing, self-giving love, and the sacraments.¹¹⁹

Sacramental participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ—especially in and through the Eucharist—is not the same thing as re-traumatization nor is it a legitimization of

¹¹⁸ Schmemmann (*For the Life of the World*, 167–68, emphasis original; cf. *Eucharist*, 37–40) differentiates between different types of relationships between the sign in the symbol (A) and that which it signifies (B, i.e., reality): it is not semantic (A *means* B), nor causal (A *causes* B), nor representative (A *represents* B). Instead, the relationship is “an *epiphany*” (A *is* B). As an epiphany, “the whole of A expresses, communicates, reveals, manifests the ‘reality’ of B (although not necessarily the whole of it) without, however, losing its own ontological reality, without being dissolved in another ‘res.’” Cf. Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 21–26.

¹¹⁹ Hans Boersma (*Seeing God*, 10–14, 388–89, here 388 and 13–14, emphasis original) notes Irenaeus’s criticism of the Gnostic reduction of “salvation to (self-) knowledge.” By deepening our spiritual vision, the sacraments prepare and shape us for the eventual fulfilment of the beatific vision, the fullness of our humanity in Christ. In Boersma’s words: “A truly sacramental understanding of the beatific vision, therefore, points us to the recognition of the real presence of Christ already in this life, in anticipation of the beatific vision of God in the hereafter.” Thus, the sacraments—especially the Eucharist—affirm in us the image of God and form in us the likeness of God (as discussed in Chapter 4).

traumatization.¹²⁰ The Eucharist does not repeat the trauma of either the Crucifixion or the Incarnation-Annunciation event.¹²¹ While we may remember trauma as a historical aspect of these events, it is not the trauma itself that is repeated in and through the Eucharist; rather, in the Eucharist we may participate in Christ's integrative processing of trauma—the central, pivotal point for this being the Cross. In other words, the Cross is the paradigmatic redefinition of sacrifice as self-giving love. Instead of re-traumatization or legitimization of traumatization, sacramental participation in the Eucharist is the acknowledgement (rather than erasure) of trauma (as a wrongdoing) *and* the recognition of the presence of Christ, God with us, *in* the conditions/contexts of trauma, sin, and death.¹²² While this may be a retrospective task to some extent (we felt alone and isolated in the past, but we realize we were not utterly alone), the emphasis remains on the present: Christ is with us, and in him we can (eventually) integratively process trauma, whether in this age or the age to come. Whether or not explicit recollection of traumatic experiences is involved, the emphasis is on the abiding presence of Christ.¹²³ Thus, by sacramental participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ in the Eucharist I do not mean that being (re)traumatized by the Cross is necessary for salvation or that God saves us by means of redemptive violence (meted out by the Father upon the Son). Rather, sacramental participation

¹²⁰ Contrary to Marcus Pound, *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 21–22; “Eucharist and Trauma,” 193. Again, the key distinction between re-traumatization and processing trauma is the ability to experience some of the dysregulation in a non-overwhelming manner while also being able to describe it coherently. See Buczynski et al., “Dysregulation and Hypoarousal,” 23.

¹²¹ Karen O'Donnell (*Broken Bodies*, 80–126, 181–83, here 109, 90) discusses priesthood and sacrifice in relation to the Eucharist, arguing that each celebration of the Eucharist repeats “the traumatic ruptures of Annunciation-Incarnation event,” not the Crucifixion, “the violence of the sacrificial Cross.” She seeks to “release the Eucharist from its focus on the death of Christ as the key paradigm for sacrifice” (117). Instead she refocuses attention on Mary as the model of both priesthood and eucharistic sacrifice (esp. 120–22).

¹²² Countering Calvin's erasure of the marks of Crucifixion on Jesus' body after Resurrection, Shelly Rambo (*Resurrecting Wounds*, 17–42) argues it is crucial not to attempt to merely erase wounds and trauma. Chapters 7 and 9 discuss this further.

¹²³ Cf. Moder, “The Changing Self,” 208–26.

encompasses the ways that God in and through Christ enters into our own suffering and transforms it unto resurrection life, inviting us to participate in communion with/in Christ.¹²⁴ It is neither the erasure nor the perpetuation nor the validation of violence, suffering, and trauma, but rather the redemption of all sin and evil in Christ.¹²⁵ In other words, God does not cause traumatic suffering but God enters into it with us and makes a way for us to move through it, to overcome death not by erasing or evading it entirely but in resurrection life. The sacrament of the Eucharist is the ongoing participatory paradigm of God with us in which Christ is truly present.

Just as we become one with Christ without becoming Christ, so too do the sacraments meaningfully and truly participate in the realities to which they point as summed up in Christ without becoming the whole of such reality and without the dissolution of their own being.¹²⁶ Thus, recapitulation and integrative processing of trauma by Christ on the Cross is a crucial aspect of trauma recovery in which the Eucharist truly and meaningfully participates. The reality of communion in the cosmos is Christ as the invitational extension of Trinitarian communion to humanity. Thus, Christ's body is comprised of the Body of Christ, the Church.¹²⁷ As

¹²⁴ This does not replace clinical contexts but rather recognizes Christ's presence in such contexts, whether explicit or implicit.

¹²⁵ I use the word *redemption* in a non-transactional sense (as in Chapter 5). By redemption, I refer to the power and wisdom of God to work all things for good in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 8:28)—not to directly *cause* all things but to *transform* even the most heinous crimes against humanity into profound moments of unity between God and humanity in and through the Cross of Christ.

¹²⁶ For example, baptismal water participates in the cleansing of and rebirth in Christ; eucharistic elements participate in the life-giving body and blood of Christ; marriages participate in the union of Christ and the Church; ordained ministers participate in the priestly ministry of Christ to God and others; anointing oil participates in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of Christ; and so on. Schmemmann repeatedly relates the sacraments back to the Eucharist. For example: "The 'fulfillment' of marriage by two Christians was their partaking together of the Eucharist. As every aspect of life was gathered into the Eucharist, so matrimony received its seal by inclusion into this central act of the community" (*For the Life of the World*, 107). Cf. Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 21–26.

¹²⁷ Henri de Lubac (*Corpus Mysticum*) identifies and explores the relations of three bodies of Christ: the historical body (born of Virgin Mary), the eucharistic body (which we partake of sacramentally), and the ecclesial body (the church). He argues for a "communion ecclesiology" in which the Eucharist makes the church. Boersma (*Heavenly Participation*, 112–19, here 114) sums up Lubac's point that the "*sacramental* purpose of the eucharistic body is to create the ecclesial body."

Schmemmann says, the Church is “the sacrament of Christ’s presence and action.”¹²⁸ The Church is the sacrament of Christ in so far as we commune with Christ and one another.

Once again, this description of sacrifice and sacramental participation (especially regarding the Cross) is not a rationale for the legitimization of abuse. Jesus only went to the Cross once. There were many other times that he avoided death and violence throughout his life and ministry (e.g., Luke 4:28–30). Situating the Cross as a central, pivotal paradigm does not mean we unquestioningly and unconditionally suffer or die in Jesus’ name. As discussed earlier, it may include persecution and martyrdom, death to self(ishness), and the challenges of recovery. These are all very different situations yet require discernment and insight from the Spirit to distinguish. But in all cases, according to Christ, the Cross is the paradigmatic means of the *transformation* of suffering, whatever form it may be. “For a ‘sacrament,’” says Schmemmann, “implies necessarily the idea of transformation, refers to the ultimate event of Christ’s death and resurrection, and is always a sacrament of the Kingdom. . . . [T]he whole life of the Church can be termed sacramental.”¹²⁹ Rather than merely erasing suffering, trauma, and death, God redemptively transforms it. In Schmemmann’s words, “in Christ suffering is not ‘removed’; it is transformed into victory. The defeat *itself* becomes victory, a way, an entrance into the Kingdom, and this is the only true *healing*.”¹³⁰ As noted earlier, for traumatized persons, the cruciform emphasis of the gospel and the Eucharist is not a call to endure more suffering (sanctioned by God), but rather the good news that Christ is, was, and will be ever present, bringing hope and

¹²⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 28–29. He later (179) reiterates: “in the ‘*mystērion*’ of God’s presence and action . . . the Church always becomes that which she is: the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”

¹²⁹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 99.

¹³⁰ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 124, emphasis original.

healing.¹³¹ “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8: 38–39).

Conclusion

This chapter has continued the exploration of the argument that Christ *is* communion, focusing on understandings of sacrifice and sacrament with special attention to the Eucharist from a trauma-informed perspective. Beginning with ancient understandings of the integrated nature of the spiritual and material realms, Greco-Roman and Jewish meals and sacrifices were described, drawing out both significant contrasts to and key continuities with early Christian meals and worship (the Lord’s Supper). Rather than humans satisfying supposed divine needs, God meets human needs and meets humans in their needs (cure with care). This chapter then explored a Christian understanding of sacrifice according to Christ as self-giving love as an act of trust in God such that sacraments, especially the Eucharist, participate in the reality of Christ, his real presence, as communion with God, self, and others in Christ. This sacramental participative union with Christ in the Eucharist is a crucial aspect of trauma recovery as the reintegration of the whole human being in Christ—body, soul, and spirit. Additionally, sharing in the communion of Christ also involves participating in his sacrifice of self-giving love as an expression of trust in the Father.¹³² Creating a safe space for traumatized congregants to commune with Christ, in the Eucharist and otherwise, is a practical aspect of (sacramental)

¹³¹ Chapter 8 will discuss the eschatological fulfillment of Christ’s presence with us (cf. Matt 28:20).

¹³² Again, this does not mean that God demands suffering for salvation. It is a recognition of the costly challenge of following Christ in a broken cosmos.

participation in the life and ministry of Christ.

The last three chapters have worked together to describe the Crucifixion, atonement, sacrifice, and sacrament in ways that can help contribute to healing and wholeness in Christ rather than legitimize and perpetuate suffering, violence, abuse, and trauma. In other words, the dissertation has thus far situated the Cross of Christ in a central and paradigmatic relation to the Eucharist and, indeed, all of Christian life, faith, and ministry. The next chapter will discuss trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist in practical terms as the ongoing outworking of God's sustaining, redemptive action in the world, including the recapitulation of trauma (integrative processing and/or re-narration), relational reconciliation, self-giving love and trust, and participation in the communion of Christ. Much like the Incarnation, life, death, and Resurrection of Christ, the Eucharist is not a ritual that is ultimately within human control. It is Christ who offers and gives of himself, providing spiritual nourishment and eternal life. In union with Christ, we may share and participate in the self-offering communion of Christ in some way, but we do so in response to the agency and action of Christ's saving work. This is truly good news that is worthy of thanksgiving.

CHAPTER 7
TRAUMA AND THE TABLE:
CELEBRATING THE EUCHARIST IN BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

“The sacraments accordingly teach us that *the truest things in our faith occur in no other way than through the concreteness of the ‘body.’*”

—Louis-Marie Chauvet¹

“[T]he reality of what it means to be human [is that we are] creatures of imagination, both broken and graced.”

—Serene Jones²

“[W]orship is the true expression of being human in Christ.”

—Andrew Purves³

The previous chapters have described both human need and God’s gracious gift in a trauma-informed manner with special attention to the Cross of Christ as a central and pivotal point. Human beings are made in the image of God—body, soul, and spirit—yet sin profoundly disintegrates humanity on a number of levels and dimensions. God in Christ becomes human and recapitulates all of human life in himself, including sin, trauma, and death. Yet instead of being corrupted and destroyed, Jesus integratively processes trauma through the Crucifixion and rises in Resurrection life, inviting us to participate in his own life in union with him. Participating in Jesus’ life and ministry involves participating in various dimensions of atonement (understood as reconciliation), sacrifice (understood as self-giving love and, as appropriate, experienced in both receptive and active ways), and sacraments (understood as epiphanies, particularly of the

¹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 140–41, emphasis original.

² Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 22.

³ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 175.

presence of God with us). All of these aspects of the Crucifixion and Resurrection—which are not properly divisible yet nor reducible to a single uniform moment—contribute to communion with/in Christ in spirit, soul, and body.

“Christianity has been a religion *of the body*,” says Deborah Creamer.⁴ Yet in some ways, the Church has been and remains an unsafe or unwelcoming place for many bodies, including those who have been traumatized in various ways. As a graphic remembrance of Christ’s Crucifixion, the Eucharist (and other aspects of church services and cultures) can be traumatic or a trauma trigger for some people, as Serene Jones and others have pointed out.⁵ How then can the Lord’s Table be a truly welcoming and safe place for people who seek safe refuge, community, and (eventually) healing? Other trauma-informed theologians, such as Shelly Rambo and Sarah Travis, caution that *ignoring* or *erasing* wounds (whether traumatic or otherwise) is fatal to the life of the Church in Christ.⁶ Therefore, the bodies of traumatized believers should not be further marginalized by being treated as of secondary, ancillary importance. The celebration of the Eucharist should unite the Body of Christ, not further divide or (re-)traumatize it (cf. 1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:17–34).

Rather than entrenching a dichotomy between spirit and body or mind and matter, this chapter explores a wholistic, integrative approach to creating safe space for people to commune in body, soul, and spirit with God and one another in church contexts. Seeking to establish trauma-sensitive ways to communally celebrate the Eucharist neither ignores the experiences and

⁴ Creamer, “Toward a Theology That Includes the Human Experience of Disability,” 63, emphasis original; quoted in O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 1.

⁵ See Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 3–12; cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 5–6, 135–36. O’Donnell (“Eucharist and Trauma,” 186–88) further notes that some forms of the Eucharist are inherently traumatic, such as those that exclude women.

⁶ See Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 24; *Resurrecting Wounds*, 17–42; Travis, *Unspeakable*, 9, 49–54, 66–71.

needs of traumatized community members nor erases the Crucifixion and Resurrection from communal worship and life. Instead, it envisions a communal worship praxis that is both trauma-sensitive and Christ-centred, involving the entire congregation in active participation. While the goal is not to erase traumatic wounds, neither is it to centre worship and theology around these wounds (or others). While seeming to be sensitive to traumatic wounds, a *trauma-centric* approach can become a way of merely coping with wounds or further dissociating from trauma rather than contributing to recovery in a *Christocentric* and *Christoform* manner.

This chapter proposes that through accessible, responsive, and engaged communal participation, the Eucharist can be celebrated in a trauma-informed, trauma-sensitive manner that remains faithfully *Christ-centred*.⁷ This chapter argues that participation in the Eucharist attends to both cruciform brokenness and resurrection wholeness in Christ without erasing or silencing the witness of the post-Crucifixion marks that remain in the risen body of Christ (cf. John 21:24–28).⁸ Sensitivity and flexibility must be exercised since, for many people, recovering from trauma is a life-long journey.⁹ But rather than walking alone, traumatized persons should be able to find a home in the Church that encourages, equips, and empowers them to continue their courageous journey in Christ. Partaking of the Lord's Supper should be an integral, sustaining, and safe aspect of walking in the way of Christ.

Jesus Christ remains the centre of Christian worship and life, redemptively fulfilling the human need to integratively process trauma and offering us his own body and blood as a way to

⁷ As noted earlier, these terms are inherently related and emphasize theory and practice respectively: being properly trauma-informed should result in greater trauma-sensitivity, while being properly trauma-sensitive requires one to be trauma-informed to some extent.

⁸ The final chapter will specifically discuss the importance of the witness of the cruciform marks on the risen body of Christ.

⁹ Cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 8.

commune with him in both death and resurrection. In Christian discipleship, death is not avoided or bypassed; but neither is death the terminal, destructive end. Similarly, trauma—death incarnate, lodged in body, soul, and spirit—is not ignored. Rather than compounding the dissociation, the fracturing of the self, that trauma causes through spiritual bypassing, following Christ involves the process of recovery and the reintegration of the self in Christ and the Body of Christ, the Church. Recovery is not a demand or a requirement, but an invitation and a promise. And while Christian hope is grounded in the Resurrection of Christ, it is not a triumphalistic erasure of death and trauma. Christ’s risen body retains the marks of Crucifixion, now transfigured as sites of witness and invitation. The final chapter will further discuss the transformation of trauma to testimony as an aspect of Christian hope. This chapter focuses on the present age and the role of the Eucharist in sustaining the Body of Christ in the life-long journey of fellowship, community, and communion with/in Christ.

This chapter will first discuss the Eucharist as a participatory paradigm for trauma recovery in Christ that has implications beyond official liturgical celebration in church contexts. Next, trauma-informed, trauma-sensitive celebration of the Eucharist is described in practical terms with attention to how the Eucharist can engage the whole body and thereby contribute to the healing reintegration of the body, soul, and spirit in Christ. The description aligns with the key stages of trauma recovery—establishing safety, integratively processing and/or re-narrating trauma, and reconnecting in community—as well as attachment theory. When the Eucharist (or other aspects of church services) is overwhelming for traumatized persons, the need for accessible, responsive, and engaged church community is described, such that the whole congregation is involved in ministering the body and blood of Christ, the life-giving presence of Christ, to one another in attuned and compassionate ways.

The Eucharist as Participatory Paradigm: Trauma Recovery in Christ

Partaking of the Lord's body and blood in the Eucharist can be a powerful embodied experience that contradicts traumatic experiences on a number of levels and dimensions. The isolation of trauma is viscerally counteracted with the presence of Christ not merely memorialized, but truly and really present in the *mystērion*, the sacrament of the Eucharist. *How* Christ is present is not the most important or appropriate question. Rather it is *who* is present—Jesus Christ—and the nature of his presence as self-giving, communing love that matters. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us, the Eucharist is not so much about *what* happens or *how* it occurs as it is about *who* communes with us: Jesus Christ. In his words: “‘*Who* is present in the sacrament?’, is the only question to ask.”¹⁰ Thus, the Eucharist is not an abstract, representational ritual, but an embodied, spiritual, personal, and communal encounter that profoundly contradicts traumatic experiences.

Through sacramental participation in the broken body and blood of Christ, we also receive and share the wholeness of his risen body. The sacraments are tangible encounters of revelation, restoration, and fulfillment in and through Christ.¹¹ As Schmemmann says, sacraments are inseparable from faith, for “faith certainly is contact and a thirst for contact, embodiment and a thirst for embodiment: it is the manifestation, the presence, the operation of one reality within

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 57, emphasis original. At the same time, we could take a relational, personal approach to the question of *how* Christ is present by naming another Person of the Trinity: Christ is present in the sacrament (as in the Incarnation) through the *Holy Spirit*. And the reason *why* Christ is present is the will of the *Father*. Thus, the Trinitarian answer to the question of *who* is fundamental to all aspects of the Eucharist. Cf. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, esp. 7, 35; *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 168–78.

¹¹ Cf. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 144.

the other.”¹² This does not mean the sacraments are magical medicine that we may administer at whim to instantaneously erase all discomfort, pain, and disease. Rather, the sacraments are part of God’s long-term treatment plan (though not a contingency plan) that brings comfort, instills hope, and promises the consummate fulfillment of wholeness in union with Christ.¹³ The sacraments are not merely a response to sin, trauma, and death; rather, in them the proper relations of humanity and God are lived out, yet now in a redemptive mode.¹⁴ In other words, humanity has always needed to grow into the likeness of God, which is not an independent, individual journey.¹⁵

The Eucharist stands as the central and enduring paradigm and practice of communion with God, self, and others with/in Christ. At the same time, the explicit Christocentric ministry of the Church in ecclesial contexts is often complemented in other contexts, such as clinical psychotherapy.¹⁶ As Cockayne et al. observe, “We must remember that the Eucharist is not the sum total of what the Church can offer for trauma care. But the Eucharist provides a paradigm for entering the sacramental worldview of the Christian life because it points to a ritual that summarizes the Christian approach to the whole world.”¹⁷ Moreover, the eucharistic experience

¹² Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 39.

¹³ Hans Boersma (*Seeing God*) argues that while sacraments are the present means of grace through which we commune with God, the vision of God is the final end or telos of human beings (17–22), which remains, as Gregory of Nyssa puts it, eternal or perpetual progress (ἐπέκτασις) within the being of God (12, 76–95). In other words, sacraments prepare and shape believers for the eventual fulfilment of the beatific vision by deepening their spiritual vision: “*A truly sacramental understanding of the beatific vision, therefore, points us to the recognition of the real presence of Christ already in this life, in anticipation of the beatific vision of God in the hereafter*” (13–14, emphasis original). Put differently, the beatific vision is “*the sacramental end that, in some ways, is already present in our lives*” (14, emphasis original).

¹⁴ See Schmemmann’s critique (*Eucharist*, 32) of the scholastic understanding of sacraments as unnecessary in the context of “original innocence.”

¹⁵ Recall the discussion of the creation and maturation of humanity in both the image and likeness of God in Chapter 4.

¹⁶ Cf. Boerger, “Original Wound,” 315–19.

¹⁷ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 148. Schmemmann (*Eucharist*, 36) says “the ‘sacrament of sacraments’ [is] the most holy eucharist.” Cf. *Liturgy and Tradition*, 80, 126–27.

of God's love and presence is not limited to official church rituals and services: "while the Eucharist is a unique sacrament that mediates God's love in the Church for the traumatized, God's love can be manifest in eucharistic ways in the Church beyond the confines of Sunday morning. . . . [I]n the Eucharist we are not given an exclusive medicine but a balm that is inclusive of all the events of our daily life."¹⁸ Therefore, while this chapter focuses on the Eucharist specifically, it has implications for other aspects of Christian life and ministry. At the heart of Christian life and ministry is union with Christ,¹⁹ for in no other way, through no other person, do we find communion rather than alienation with God, self, and others (cf. John 14:6). Christ *is* communion.

The recapitulation of trauma by Christ on and through the Cross is central to the celebration of the Eucharist since there is no shared meal without the breaking of Christ's body and the sharing of his blood. As Paul says in 1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:23–26:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. . . .

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.²⁰

As a simple yet profound bodily ritual that involves some of the most basic and necessary aspects of human life—eating and drinking—the Eucharist provides a way for survivors of

¹⁸ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 148–49. As examples, they list walking, loving relationships, meal times, comforting beverages like hot tea, relationships with pets and animals, aromatherapeutic candles, volunteering, and fun with friends.

¹⁹ Cf. Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 78–104, 151–232.

²⁰ Cf. Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor 11:23–26; John 6:22–59.

trauma to experience life in their bodies, which is a crucial aspect of trauma recovery. While it is a celebration in the mode of resurrection life,²¹ the Eucharist also involves aspects of the Cross, even if they are implicit. Cries of desolation and tears of lament belong to the Eucharist as much as shouts of joy and the warmth of heartfelt thanksgiving.²² If the celebration of the Eucharist has been disconnected from these aspects of embodied human life, then it has been disconnected from Christ himself, who lived and fulfilled all of them.

Trauma-Informed, Trauma-Sensitive Celebration of the Eucharist

“Christian communities have much to commend themselves to traumatized people,” says Natalie Collins.²³ Churches can provide “key elements of trauma therapy: places of testimony and being witnessed to, safe touch, belonging, meaningful relationships, and the facility to re-story life with the continuing presence of Jesus’ love, rhythm and song, meditation and more.”²⁴ Appropriate trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive celebration of the Eucharist also involves the key stages of trauma recovery: re-establishing safety (on a number of levels), integratively processing and/or re-narrating traumatic experiences (which includes remembrance and mourning in certain ways), and reconnection with ordinary life in community.²⁵ The importance of establishing local churches as truly safe places cannot be overstated and remains a fundamental priority today.

²¹ In other words, the death of Christ is only good news in light of his Resurrection, Ascension, and promise to return, followed by Pentecost. Cf. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xvi; Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 273–76.

²² Cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 194–203.

²³ Collins, “Broken or Superpowered,” 212.

²⁴ Collins, “Broken or Superpowered,” 212.

²⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 3, 155, 266–76; cf. O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 175–79. Serene Jones (*Trauma and Grace*, 52–63) explores Herman’s stages of recovery in relation to Calvin’s commentary on the Psalms as stages of psalmic healing prayer, moving from psalms of deliverance, to psalms of lament, to psalms of thanksgiving.

While some people, pastors, and churches are unsafe,²⁶ others are trustworthy and are doing the work of creating trauma-safe environments. Safety is essential for healing and recovery. If it is to contribute to wholeness and healing, celebration of the Eucharist must take place within the wider context of safe church community and worship.

As noted earlier, in their proposal for the creation of trauma-safe churches, Cockayne et al. apply Trinitarian theology according to four key principles with suggestions for accompanying practices: (1) “do no harm”; (2) “listen to survivors tell their stories of trauma”; (3) “take action to empower restoration”; and (4) “engage and bless the bodies of their members.”²⁷ They highlight the importance of embodied safety in community, placing primary importance on God’s role in recovery and healing from trauma, which is subsequently manifested in the Church.²⁸ And based on attachment theory, Cockayne et al. identify four dimensions of safety that churches should address: bodily safety, being safely loved, having safe boundaries, and big picture safety. The first emphasizes one’s own body and nervous system, the second and third focus on relationships (in receptive and active ways, respectively), and the fourth refers to a basic sense of trust in God that the universe is not fated merely for destruction and loss.²⁹ Additionally, Bessel van der Kolk names three fundamental avenues of treatment: (1) talking through (processing and integrating) memories in safe connections with others; (2) taking medication and/or using technological interventions; and (3) having bodily experiences that contradict traumatic experiences and their aftermath.³⁰ All of these aspects of recovery and safety

²⁶ E.g., Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 51, 130; cf. Panchuk, “Shattered Spiritual Self,” 505–53.

²⁷ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 153–203, 155 quoted.

²⁸ E.g., Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 57.

²⁹ See Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 33–54, esp. 34, 155–56.

³⁰ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 3.

can be encountered within the Eucharist. While the body and blood of Christ encountered in the Eucharist have been referred to as “medicine” in various ways, it does not directly correlate with modern pharmaceutical medications as outlined by van der Kolk since there is no pharmaceutical or technological cure for trauma or PTSD, only treatments that help alleviate certain symptoms.³¹ Rather, as “medicine” the Eucharist is a sacramental means of participating in the reality of the saving and sustaining presence of Christ himself.³² Nonetheless, like the ongoing nature of trauma recovery, the sacramental “medicine of immortality”³³ is not an instantaneous cure-all, but rather an aspect of the journey of recovery and discipleship in Christ.

When the giving of Christ’s life on the Cross is understood according to the descriptions of recapitulation (integrative processing), atonement (reconciliation), and sacrifice (self-giving love and trust) in the previous chapters, it can stand as a central and pivotal aspect of the Eucharist that contributes to recovery, healing, and reintegrated wholeness in Christ rather than either legitimizing or perpetuating abuse and trauma. As Kathleen Norris says, “There’s a fine line between idealizing or idolizing pain, and confronting it with hope.”³⁴ Viewing the Cross in a proper Christological perspective and not disconnecting it from the Resurrection positions it as a sign and a means of hope. Cockayne et al. work from Karen O’Donnell’s connection between the

³¹ See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 33–38; McRay et al., *Modern Psychopathologies*, 256.

³² Andrew McGowan (*Ancient Christian Worship*, 45–46) points out that in the ancient Greco-Roman world, “Food and medicine, drugs and magic, were not radically different things; the body and soul were both affected by diet.” Therefore, the Eucharist should be viewed as essential nourishment for the body, soul, and spirit that contributes to healing and recovery in and through Christ.

³³ Ign. *Eph.* 20 (*ANF* 1:58).

³⁴ Norris, *The Cloister Walk*, 112; quoted in Warner, “Teach to Your Daughters a Dirge,” 177.

Eucharist and the central somatic memory of Christian faith³⁵ to provide a nuanced perspective that attends to Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension:

There are . . . important connections between trauma and Eucharist that can emphasize the trauma at the heart of the Christian gospel. In the Eucharist we are constantly remembering the traumatic event of Christ's body broken *for us*, and indeed of his full life offered as a sacrifice for us. We can rightly say that "bodies and memories come together in the celebration of the Eucharist . . . [T]he Eucharist becomes the ideal place to search for the somatic memory at the heart of the Christian faith."³⁶ As we have seen, surviving trauma leaves behind terrifying memories and intolerable sensations in the bodies of survivors. Recovery therefore involves soothing these terrors in embodied ways that speak deeper than words. It is significant in this respect that the church has central spiritual practices that can profoundly minister to trauma survivors. We can think of this ministry in terms of the double witness [of trauma and of God's works of healing]. For some the Eucharist provides a witness to the laments and losses of trauma. In the Eucharist, the crucified Christ ministers to our memories of terror when he meets our brokenness with his own broken body. In a cathartic embrace of Christ and survivor, practices like the Eucharist offer a safe space where all church members can see their pain "mirrored" and transformed in Christ and in one another.³⁷ For others the Eucharist provides a witness to God's Trinitarian works of healing by offering a symbol of God's life and love as this is reassured by the corporate witness to it. In this sense, the risen and ascended Christ ministers his resurrection wholeness and healing to his church as one who has been through trauma himself but now rests perfectly in the love of God.³⁸ As a double witness to both the losses and healing of trauma, the Eucharist offers a safe space in trauma-sensitive churches for survivor care. If we wish to recognize and affirm the place of trauma in our community, we might look no further than this bodily memory of Christ's self-sacrificial trauma.³⁹

Thus, Crucifixion as well as Resurrection and Ascension are good news to traumatized persons in different yet inseparable ways. And the Eucharist bears witness to both as an embodied

³⁵ O'Donnell (*Broken Bodies*, 18–19, 181–83, here 18), however, names the Annunciation-Incarnation event as the traumatic event at the heart of Christian faith and worship, viewing the Incarnation in a holistic sense: "Incarnation stretches beyond one moment in time and instead encompasses the whole of Christ's life from the moment of conception, his birth, his childhood, his adulthood, his ministry, his death, and his resurrection. In the Incarnation is a holistic moment that draws all of these aspects together."

³⁶ See O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*.

³⁷ On mirroring between Christ and survivors, see Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 75–83.

³⁸ On the importance of Christ's Ascension for atonement, see Moffit, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*.

³⁹ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 145–46, footnotes in quoted material original. See also O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 179–80; "Eucharist and Trauma," 182–93.

experiential encounter with God.⁴⁰ The *mystērion* is a *martyr*. The sacrament bears witness. The Eucharist testifies in body and blood, spirit and soul. More than merely a representative *symbol*, however, the Eucharist is a real encounter with God's transformative presence in the form of Christ's body and blood through the power of the Spirit.⁴¹

Eucharist in Body, Soul, and Spirit

Based on the Incarnation of Christ, Cockayne et al. also discuss the importance of multisensory experiences—including touch, smell, and speech—in church contexts that provide and reinforce bodily safety in Christ: “In the incarnation, God came among humanity as a genuine member of the human race in order to share in our experience so that our connection with God might be restored.”⁴² The primary medium of Jesus' touch, they say, is the Eucharist: “In bread and wine, Jesus intimately offers us a close connection of touch with himself. . . . In the Eucharist we touch Jesus and he touches us in a mediated manner. For survivors of trauma, the sacramental touch between Jesus and ourselves is a special connection because Jesus meets our broken bodies with his own broken body.”⁴³ They also note that the other members of the congregation, as the Body of Christ, may offer safe touch, mediating Jesus' touch from human to human.⁴⁴ Additionally, Preston Hill shares his personal experience of receiving prayer ministry that included gentle,

⁴⁰ Cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 145–46.

⁴¹ Schmemmann (*For the Life of the World*, 164–65, here 165) notes that the modern use of the word *symbol* as metaphorical or representative does not match ancient sacramental perspectives of a *symbol* (σύμβολον, συμβάλλω, etc.): “‘Symbolical’ here is . . . not opposed to ‘real,’ but embodies it as its very expression and mode of manifestation.”

⁴² See Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 82–88, here 82.

⁴³ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 83.

⁴⁴ They also note that laying on of hands and anointing with oil (another sacrament) are other traditional ways of encountering Christ's healing presence through touch (83–84).

consensual touch: it was a risk (kneeling in front of the priest) in a safe context that was “a remarkable balm to my PTSD.”⁴⁵ Nothing that is perceived as risky to trauma survivors—such as being touched or kneeling at an altar and receiving things into one’s mouth—should be forced or required.⁴⁶ However, as Hill’s experience testifies, when consent is given in a safe environment, these can be powerful embodied experiences that counteract trauma in the body, soul, and spirit. For while the Eucharist involves physical bodies, sensations, and substances, it is not limited to these aspects of the human being; indeed, the soul—including the mind, will, and emotions—and the spirit are profoundly nourished as well. It is precisely the reintegration of these aspects of human being that trauma recovery in Christ accomplishes.

In addition to touch, the Eucharist involves other bodily senses: sight, sound, smell, and taste. Some of these aspects of embodied experience are highlighted more than others in various forms of the Eucharist. For example, holding up a full loaf of bread, tearing it into pieces, and handing them out for consumption is a more full-bodied experience than the use of wafers.⁴⁷ The loaf is a visual sign of the perfection and wholeness of Christ, which we enter into through his brokenness and participate in by sharing the gift of his life and love with one another.⁴⁸ This point is worth highlighting: through Christ’s cruciform brokenness, we enter into his resurrection wholeness. While our own selves are not yet entirely whole, we continually subsist on the

⁴⁵ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 84.

⁴⁶ Cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 147. Later, they suggest a policy of “always ask before touching” (202).

⁴⁷ Jennifer Baldwin (*Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 57–59, here 58) laments the dearth of full-body sensory involvement in many church contexts, including celebrations of the Eucharist in which “too many communities trade robust flavors of the bread for the convenience of nearly tasteless wafers.”

⁴⁸ Considering 1 Cor 10:16–17 Chauvet (*Symbol and Sacrament*, 406, emphasis original) says, “the great *sacramentum* of Christ’s presence is not the bread as such in its unbroken state. Or rather, it is indeed the bread, but *in its very essence*, bread-as-food, bread-as-meal, bread-for-sharing. *It is in the breaking of the bread that its ultimate reality is manifested*, its true essence revealed.”

wholeness of Christ. Our need is God, and his gift is grace. As we share bread and wine with one another, we participate in giving the gift of life in Christ just as we have received it. While the Eucharist is a real participatory encounter with the life of Christ, it is also paradigmatic of how we receive and share his life and love in the rest of our lives.

Additionally, tearing the bread is a striking visual and aural action. Here, the distinction between Christ's body and our own bodies is important. While our own bodily integrity remains intact, the eucharistic fraction of Christ's body—or any other aspect of the service—may provide an opportunity to experience some aspects of dysregulation while remaining grounded in the present, thereby helping participants to process trauma to some extent.⁴⁹ (At the same time, the Eucharist should complement rather than replace or be equated with processing trauma in clinical psychotherapy.)⁵⁰ The experience of eating a piece of real, fragrant, flavourful, nourishing bread is significant since ancient Christian eucharistic worship was centred around full meals in homes. In addition to being truly spiritually nourished, the real physical nourishment of a meal (simple as it may be) is a more full-embodied experience than the token, bite-size morsels offered in most official eucharistic rituals, notwithstanding their significance. Rather than viewing the Eucharist as merely representational, spiritual nourishment, Chauvet argues that our faith and our bodies are inherently and intimately connected:

faith, taking us in our complete humanness, cannot be lived outside the body, outside the group, outside tradition. . . . The fact that there are sacraments leads us to say that *corporeality is the very mediation where faith takes on flesh* and makes real the truth that

⁴⁹ Recall Pat Ogden's (in Buczynski et al., "Dysregulation and Hypoarousal," 23) explanation that the key difference between processing and reliving/re-enacting trauma (re-traumatization) is the ability to experience some aspects of dysregulation while simultaneously being able to describe it, which involves the activation of the prefrontal lobes of the brain (the logical, rational part of the brain).

⁵⁰ Cf. O'Donnell, "Eucharist and Trauma," 188. For discussion of the roles of particular care givers, including pastors and psychotherapists, see Boerger, "Original Wound," 315–19; cf. Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 21; Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 4.

inhabits it. . . . Thus, it tells us that faith requires a *consent to the body*, to history, to the world which makes it a fully human reality.⁵¹

I am not arguing that all celebrations of the Eucharist must use full loaves of bread or full meals of food. Rather, as a central ritual of Christian life and faith, I suggest that celebration of the Eucharist can be both more diverse and more physically engaging than it has become over the centuries in many institutional church contexts. While this may be of the most benefit to those recovering from trauma, it would surely benefit the rest of the Body of Christ as well.

Speech is also a crucial aspect of the Eucharist in terms of both hearing and speaking. Coherent language organized around a central and enduring narrative—the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ—can be a point of stability and security for traumatized persons to begin to find safety and process and/or re-narrate their traumatic past. For one thing, the orderly repetition of familiar words can be a deeply comforting aspect of eucharistic liturgies for trauma survivors whose lives feel chaotic and disordered. For example, Preston Hill says that the emphasis on the Lord’s Supper in his church community contributed greatly to his own trauma recovery, including the stability of a sense of continuity and consistency:

I knew what to expect each week. . . . It was a sensory experience that viscerally invited my whole body, traumatized as it was, to the broken body of Christ. And around me were people who loved me enough to enter my brokenness with me. My brokenness was met by Christ’s broken body in the Eucharist and the larger body of the corporate church. And through it all, I was the one who chose when to get up and approach the table. It was the perfect mix of restored agency, embodiment, and accompaniment to meet me in my trauma with a healing witness.

As we can see, the Eucharist can be a powerful healing ritual in trauma-safe churches because in it the traumatized Christ offers himself to his people in an intimate way as his body meets the body.⁵²

⁵¹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 376, emphasis original.

⁵² Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, here 146, cf. 200.

Moreover, while the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist involves ordered speech and response on the parts of the celebrant and congregation, we may also hear Christ himself in and through the liturgies and Scriptures. Kierkegaard reminds us that it is not merely the words themselves but one who speaks them that is spiritually nourishing:

It must be his [Christ's] voice you hear when he says, 'come here all you who labor and are heavy laden.' Therefore it is his voice that invites you. And it must be his voice you hear when he says, 'this is my body.' For at the altar there is no speaking about him; there he himself is personally present, it is he who speaks—if not, then you are not at the altar. In a physical sense one can just point to the altar and say, 'there it is'; but spiritually understood it is still really only there if you hear his voice there.⁵³

Thus, body, soul, and spirit are brought into integrated alignment once again in union with Christ through the words of Christ himself in and through the Eucharist. It is the true presence of Christ, his “personal presence” as Kierkegaard says, that is essential to the Eucharist. Without Christ, all we have are buildings and bread, altars and wine, words and memories. But with/in Christ, we have the Word made flesh, dwelling among and within us (cf. John 1:14). Christ is the only one worthy of thanksgiving and praise (cf. Rev 5:1–14), and therefore the one whose presence is required for the Eucharist to be fulfilled.

The theological and practical importance of Christ's solidarity with us in suffering, trauma, and death on the Cross has been emphasized throughout the previous chapters. Celebrating the Eucharist is a paradigmatic practical application of remembering and (in certain ways) participating in his Crucifixion and Resurrection in embodied, spiritual ways. The Eucharist is the central and enduring way that the Church has participated in the integrative processing of the trauma of sin and death.⁵⁴ Serene Jones says that trauma recovery “requires

⁵³ Kierkegaard, *Discourses at the Communion*, 24; quoted in Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 88.

⁵⁴ It is not necessary to have the scientific insight of modern psychological traumatology in order for the Eucharist to practically function in this manner.

telling a story in which the survivor's tale of violence done is not forgotten or unrealistically glorified but is, rather, integrated into patterns of speech and forms of knowledge that are broader, more complex, and experientially more comprehensive than the disrupted discourse of trauma."⁵⁵ As a consistent, structured re-narration of and sacramental participation in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, the Eucharist invites participants to find ourselves in both Christ's story and his very life as well as, more fundamentally, to discover that Christ has found us. In telling and re-telling, breaking and sharing, we find ourselves found, fed, and fulfilled in Christ. In the Eucharist, we join a chorus of thanksgiving and praise that integrates us into something much larger than ourselves alone: the Body of Christ, the Church. At the same time, the corporate/ecclesial Body of Christ does not abstract the bodies of individual persons, subsuming them into an amorphous spiritual entity. Rather, the wholeness of each person in Christ is complemented by the wholeness of the Body of Christ in a Christ-centred spiral. The scope of the Body of Christ is broader, deeper, and greater in speech, knowledge, and experience than our own individual selves can comprehend yet which we contribute to and benefit from nonetheless (cf. 1 Cor 13:8–13). Thus, in Christ through participation in the Eucharist we may transcend trauma in and through the life of Christ as members of the Body of Christ.

Once again, it is important to situate trauma recovery and celebration of the Eucharist as ongoing processes.⁵⁶ While we may recover from trauma and be able to re-engage with normal life, the trauma is not erased even if it is not explicitly remembered. Similarly, we never grow out of the need for Christ's body and blood as sources of salvific sustenance. In addition to the

⁵⁵ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 62.

⁵⁶ Cf. O'Donnell, "Eucharist and Trauma," 192. See also Chapter 8.

thanksgiving inherent to the Eucharist, lament and mourning should also be included in these ongoing processes.⁵⁷ While most liturgical celebration of the Eucharist moves steadily towards uplifting communal thankfulness and communion, not all participants may arrive at a joyful resolution by the end of the service. Being sent back out into the world may feel more like exile than empowerment.

However, it is precisely when resolution and restoration seem lacking that the ongoing nature of the Eucharist gains new significance beyond the constant need for the provision of life in Christ. By concluding the Eucharist, we know that we will return, again and again and again. Pointing out that not all Psalms progress linearly from lament to praise (or in other trajectories), Megan Warner advocates fostering a hopeful sense of movement and progress that does not avoid pain yet is not stuck in it either.⁵⁸ Based on Psalm 23, Kraus et al. provide a model of processing trauma (and other wounds) through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, which Warner suggests is helpful for traumatized people. It involves three movements:

Letting go (releasing what was and seeking sanctuary in the presence of God)
Letting be (being present to God and to one another in the midst of distress)
Letting begin (beginning to walk and to work in the valley of the shadow)⁵⁹

In this slow journey, trauma is not undone, erased, or ignored, but processed in safe, caring community.

For this reason, and particularly in the aftermath of tragedy, the Eucharist should not necessarily always be celebrated in an overly tidy or rigid manner; rather, at times longer

⁵⁷ On the importance of lament and mourning in church contexts in relation to trauma-recovery, see Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 58–60; Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, esp. 194–201; Southgate, “‘In Spite of All This’,” 116–21; Warner, “Teach to Your Daughters a Dirge,” 167–81.

⁵⁸ Warner, “Teach to Your Daughters a Dirge,” 176–78.

⁵⁹ Kraus et al., “Post-Traumatic Ministry,” 23; quoted in Warner, “Teach to Your Daughters a Dirge,” 177.

liturgies may be enacted that include space and time for anger, silence, and lament, all of which is a profound embodied expression of trust in God (a key aspect of Christ's sacrifice).⁶⁰ This is not to say services should be intentionally disordered or disruptive, but to recognize that "[t]rauma safe churches are not threatened by engaging in the messiness of a real healing process."⁶¹ As Esau McCaulley says, "Traumatized communities must be able to tell God the truth about what they feel. We must trust that God can handle those emotions. God can listen to our cries . . . It gives us permission to remember and feel."⁶² He speaks from and to an African American Christian context, but the need for honest expression of feelings to God is universal on both communal and personal terms. And Christ's cry of desolation on the Cross (see Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46; cf. Ps 22:1) is a primary point of entry into union with Christ in feelings of loss, abandonment, and lament. If the Cross is maintained as central and pivotal in the Eucharist, then so too are participants' own cries taken up in and by Christ as the Body of Christ communes with/in him. As the Psalmist says, "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, / and saves the crushed in spirit" (Ps 34:18). The nearness of the Lord in heartbreak, suffering, and trauma is a sacred place of inimitable intimacy. And it is a vital aspect of the Eucharist as we encounter and commune with the broken body and shed blood of our Saviour.

Accessible, Responsive, and Engaged Communities

So far, discussion has focused on ways the Eucharist (in various forms) can be of benefit to trauma survivors, even when it presents challenging situations that are perceived as risky or even

⁶⁰ Cf. Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 195–96; Southgate, "In Spite of All This," 116–21.

⁶¹ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 186.

⁶² McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 126; quoted in Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 196.

cause tolerable dysregulation. However, we must also recognize that for some people, these forms of celebration simply will not work: rather than posing situations of tolerable discomfort that lead to recovery and healing through integrative processing, traditional forms of liturgical Eucharist may be re-traumatizing or triggers for overwhelming dysregulated survival responses (fight, flight, freeze/dissociate). Given the complexity of trauma, it is all too easy for well-meaning pastors and community to accidentally re-traumatize others.⁶³ As a survivor of sexual abuse, Elaine Heath describes her experience receiving the Eucharist:

Some of us survivors, especially if we experienced ritual abuse, may never be able to participate in the Eucharist. . . . If this is the case for us, be patient with our struggle. Some of us cannot allow male pastors or priests to put the communion bread into our open mouths because . . . the body memories are too strong. We may or may not be able to tell you just why we cannot do this. If that is our reality, be kind. Put the wafer or bread into our hands. Let us control what we put into our mouths. Respect our boundaries. Many of us, given the right teaching and companionship, could find significant healing of sexual wounds and shame through the Eucharist. For that to happen, we need pastors, teachers, counselors, and friends who understand the real meaning of the Eucharist. By participating in the sacred meal, we Christians declare our oneness with one another and with the God who made us.⁶⁴

Thus, for some people, listening to talk of broken bodies and shed blood will be intolerable and agonizing. For others, kneeling in a vulnerable posture and having objects put into one's hands or mouth will be unthinkable. Even being in a group of people and being directed to file into systematic lines could be unbearable. For such people, the Church must still find ways to minister safety, care, comfort, and healing in and through Christ, including his body and blood.⁶⁵

Serene Jones shares the story of Leah, a woman with a traumatic past who was triggered by the invocation of Jesus' blood and broken body.⁶⁶ Dysregulated and dissociated, Leah

⁶³ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 157.

⁶⁴ Heath, *We Were the Least of These*, 145; quoted in Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 157.

⁶⁵ The following chapter will discuss non-explicit, non-traditional ways to celebrate the Eucharist.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 3–12.

retreated to the bathroom where Jones, following her and finding the doorway still open, checked to see if she was alright. With Jones's assistance, Leah ran warm water over her hands and began to relax and regulate her nervous system. Leah left soon after, but as her mentor, Jones was able to maintain contact with her and learn more about her outside of church services. Leah later describes her experience, including the fact that she could not differentiate between herself and Christ:

It happens to me sometimes. . . . [I]t's as if a button gets pushed inside of me. In an instant, I'm terrified; I feel like I'm going to die or get hurt very badly. My body tells me to run away, but instead, I just freeze. Last week it was the part about Jesus' blood and body. There was a flash inside my head, and I couldn't tell the difference between Jesus and me, and then I saw blood everywhere, and broken body parts, and I got so afraid I just disappeared.⁶⁷

Typical of trauma survivors, Leah feels isolated and personally responsible: "I appreciate you [Jones] listening, but . . . I know it's my problem, and I'm working on it."⁶⁸ Fortunately, Jones was able to quickly counteract Leah's sense of isolation and shame, saying, "No . . . It's not just your problem. It's our problem—my problem, the church's problem, God's problem. You don't need to be alone, and I hope we can work on it together. That's what faith communities do."⁶⁹

Jones later had a vision of what church worship environments are like for traumatized people like Leah.⁷⁰ She saw the sanctuary, "but Leah's cold, ice-white tiled bathroom had expanded to hold a whole congregation of shivering souls."⁷¹ With the bathroom-sanctuary as the context of worship, "[a]t times, the words spoken, sung, or prayed struck violently against the

⁶⁷ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 7.

⁶⁸ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 7.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 7.

⁷⁰ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 9.

⁷¹ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 9.

fragile, traumatized people that gathered there, deepening the terror.”⁷² These harmful words and actions were the Church’s issues, abuse, and violence. She goes on, “At other times, however, our faith-born words and ritual motions seemed truly grace-filled as they circled around and through this frozen, terrified lot—powerful, merciful, and transforming.”⁷³ While the Church continues to have work to do in creating truly safe places for people to encounter and worship God, the Eucharist remains an enduring grace-filled act of communion with/in Christ and with one another.

In order to respond to the needs of traumatized participants like Leah, the Church needs to encourage active and engaged participation from all members in all aspects of the service.⁷⁴ Not just priests and ministers, not just elders, ushers, and greeters, but all members of the congregation must be attuned to one another throughout the service. I do not mean that we must always be glancing around at everyone else and trying to keep tabs on everything that is happening. Rather, in realistic ways, we need to work to grow church communities where we know one another and are known, where we are aware of and responsive to one another.

Clinical Psychologist Susan Johnson’s Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) model is an excellent starting point for the development of emotionally-attuned church communities. EFT is based on attachment theory and aims to encourage emotional responsiveness in relationships beyond clinical contexts.⁷⁵ The three main components of cultivating meaningful emotional

⁷² Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 10.

⁷³ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 10.

⁷⁴ Speaking from an Anglican perspective, O’Donnell (“Eucharist and Trauma,” 191) argues that carefully curated celebration of the Eucharist “draws the participants into both horizontal unity with one another and vertical unity with God.” She also says *Holy Communion* is the best term to refer to this kind of unity.

⁷⁵ Johnson has numerous works, including *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors*; “Facing the Dragon Together,” 493–512; *Created for Connection*; *Attachment Theory in Practice*; *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy*; *Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy*.

connection are (1) accessibility (“Can I reach you?”); (2) responsiveness (“Can I rely on you to respond to me emotionally”); and (3) engagement (“Do I know you will value me and stay close?”).⁷⁶ The “A.R.E.” approach addresses the fundamental questions, “Are you there for me, are you with me?”⁷⁷ Thus, rather than erasing or ignoring all suffering and pain, the better theologically- and psychologically-based relational orientation is to offer empathetic, loving presence, just as God does. Combining these elements of emotionally connected relationships with knowledge of the key features of PTSD and trauma responses can equip congregants to be attuned to the needs of others. As discussed in Chapter 1, the key symptoms of a traumatic disorder are the intrusive/dissociative, avoidant, negative cognition or affect, and arousal/vigilance symptoms. These symptoms can manifest as irritability and anger, exaggerated startle responses, withdrawal and isolation (including “zoning out” or going “blank” in dissociative freeze states), sleep disruption, and jumbled or incoherent memory and/or communication.⁷⁸ By being accessible, responsive, and engaged, the communal/ecclesial Body of Christ can provide informed and attentive responses to the needs of traumatized members of the Body. While not every member of the Church will be able to respond in the same ways, even a handful of reasonably mature trauma-informed members can contribute greatly to the creation of trauma-sensitive and trauma-safe churches.

Jones’s story above demonstrates the importance of accessible, responsive, and engaged communal relationships in churches, all three of which she intuitively implemented with Leah.

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Created for Connection*, 60–61.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Created for Connection*, 61.

⁷⁸ The point is not that congregants or pastors be able to diagnose traumatic disorders or mental health conditions, which only appropriately trained professionals can do. Rather, knowing these symptoms provides a pragmatic working knowledge that can inform emotionally-attuned trauma-sensitivity.

While the scriptural liturgy itself proved overwhelming for Leah on that day, Jones was able to help mediate the presence of Christ to her other ways. It is not sacramentally insignificant that it was (partial) immersion/washing in water that helped Leah regulate her nervous system and feel comforted. But in her dysregulated, dissociated state, Leah would have had no access to water without Jones's help. She would not have had the benefit of empathetic human presence. She would not have had anyone to follow up with, to share her story with and find committed solidarity. She needed a human to help her, to be there for her.

While the Church must be attuned and responsive to traumatized members, the removal of all potential trauma triggers from the Church is neither possible nor in the best interests of survivors. Since virtually anything associated with any sort of traumatic experience can be a trigger for a given person, it is simply not realistic to remove all potential trauma triggers. For example, Bessel van der Kolk advises therapists not to “inflict” their goodness and kindness on their patients.⁷⁹ By this he means that we cannot always assume to know what will help and what will harm. We cannot assume that simply being nice and kind to a person will make them feel safe. As van der Kolk cautions, “You actually may be a major trigger for somebody if the person who molested [them] was smiling at [them] before [they] got molested. Or if [their] drunken father was sweet to [them] just before he exploded.” Thus, even what is considered a friendly facial expression or kind treatment in many cultures could be the last thing a traumatized person would want to see and experience upon arrival at a church. However, just because this is a

⁷⁹ In van der Kolk's words (in Buczynski et al., “Neurobiology of Attachment,” 3, emphasis original), the idea that “*I can make a person feel safe*—is really a misunderstanding. . . . Your brain [after interpersonal trauma] is set to be very suspicious to people who are nice to you or are friendly to you. The issue is more about *helping* people to feel safe in their own bodies and to tolerate the presence of another person rather than, *let me inflict my goodness on you*.”

possibility does not mean that we should stop smiling at one another as a friendly form of acknowledgement and greeting in church or elsewhere. No expert on trauma suggests that we rearrange society to avoid any and all potential trauma triggers. Instead, the focus should be on (A) addressing root systemic and social causes and contributing factors and (B) providing safe contexts (e.g., clinical psychotherapy and churches), modes of treatment, and trustworthy relationships for survivors to begin to recover.⁸⁰ Therefore, it is both theologically inappropriate and practically impossible to centre Christian worship and life around trauma in and of itself, around our wounds and their painful sensitivities.

Of course, as Jones's vision above depicts, this does not mean we should be callous and cruel, forcing people to do things a certain way as if the wounds did not exist. Neither ignoring traumatic wounds nor rearranging life and worship around them will do if we wish to help people begin to recover and heal. Recall the discussion of the contextuality of trauma responses and trauma recovery in Chapter 4: while efforts to survive (coping mechanisms, etc.) make sense in traumatic situations, once a functional level of safety has been established and in order for recovery to begin, these same survival strategies need to be discarded or revised as the root cause, the wound itself, is appropriately addressed. The church is not the same as a controlled clinical context, nor should it be. Both clinic and church have their place and role to play in the recovery from trauma.⁸¹ While a clinical context can be more individually client-focused, the Church is by nature communal, which is a crucial aspect of trauma recovery that the psychotherapeutic clinic cannot offer.

⁸⁰ See van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 145–70.

⁸¹ Recall the discussion of domains and roles in the methodology in Chapter 3. Cf. Hathaway and Yarhouse, *Integration of Psychology and Christianity*; Boerger, "Original Wound," 315–19.

At the same time, private pastoral care or small group settings in homes can be more individually responsive. For example, it may be appropriate for a priest visiting a traumatized parishioner to administer the Eucharist without explicitly mentioning the broken body and shed blood of Christ, especially if these are known trauma triggers. If the elements are shared and partaken of, the cruciform aspects of the Eucharist are implicitly present. The explicit words can be freed to focus on receiving new life, healing, and wholeness in Christ.

With available, responsive, and engaged congregants, communal celebration of the Eucharist is an essential aspect of life in Christ, including trauma recovery. Through sacramental participation in both Christ's cruciform brokenness and resurrection wholeness, we may find the fractured, shattered, and broken pieces of ourselves drawn into and united with Christ. Regardless of when healing and recovery are accomplished, the path is no longer lonely and isolated as we commune with/in Christ.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the Eucharist as a participatory paradigm for trauma recovery in Christ with implications beyond Sunday mornings or other official church services. Without ignoring or erasing trauma nor centring celebration of the Eucharist around our wounds, trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive celebration of the Eucharist is a full-body experience that, as a sacramental encounter with Christ, aids in the reintegration of the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit.

The intrinsic connection between Baptism and Eucharist—water and blood, washing and supper, death and life—should also be noted. Baptism and Eucharist can be viewed respectively as the initial cleansing and subsequent, ongoing treatment of wounds. The two go hand-in-hand

and have always marked the ritual life of the Church.⁸² However, regarding trauma, the Eucharist is the most immediate focal point because of its ongoing, repetitive nature. The Eucharist, in other words, embodies the long road of recovery, the journey of healing.⁸³

As an ongoing celebration, the Eucharist is never neatly and completely resolved, but rather contributes to the processes of both healing and maturation in Christ, which involve both joy and mourning, thanksgiving and lament. Even anger and silence find a place at the Lord's Table. Finally, this chapter discussed how to respond to those who may experience various aspects of church services, especially the Eucharist, as overwhelming trauma triggers. With basic working knowledge of trauma and by being accessible, responsive, and engaged, church communities can be appropriately emotionally-attuned to one another and provide loving presence and care as needed.

At the same time, the Eucharist is not a step-by-step process that guarantees a given outcome. It is a *mystery*—not a riddle to be solved, but a profound reality beyond human capacity to fully understand or even experience yet which remains operationally efficacious and beneficial. Indeed, the Eucharist—the body and blood of Christ for which the community gives thanks—remains essential to the life of the Church. While the Eucharist remains a mystery, it is nonetheless a real encounter with Christ. With a posture of trust, we open ourselves to receiving the gift that is greater than we can ask or imagine. As Paul prays for the church in Ephesus (Eph 3:18–21):

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

⁸² Cf. Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*.

⁸³ Cf. Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 163.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

In addition to being a mystery at present, the Eucharist also has an eschatological trajectory as it anticipates the consummation of resurrection life in Christ at the wedding feast of the Lamb.

The following and final chapter will situate all celebration of the Eucharist in eschatological scope as a source of hope, especially for trauma survivors. While trauma recovery may remain a life-long journey, Christian hope remains anchored in Christ as the source of eternal, resurrection life.

CHAPTER 8
FROM TRAUMA TO TESTIMONY: THE HOPE OF RESURRECTION, JUSTICE, AND THE
EUCHARIST IN ESCHATOLOGICAL SCOPE

“Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you.
For the Lord is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.”
—Isaiah 30:18¹

“[T]he risen Lord, who takes flesh in and through the Spirit, still bears the marks of the wounds
of his death. . . . Sacraments are the bearers of the joy of the ‘already’ and the distress of the ‘not
yet.’”
—Louis-Marie Chauvet²

“Resurrection wounds provide a curious constellation for conceiving life that is marked by
wounds but recreated through them.”
—Shelly Rambo³

The opening chapters of this dissertation established a participatory cruciform paradigm, contributing to trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist that neither legitimizes nor perpetuates traumatic suffering and abuse. On Christological grounds, the last chapter described the paradigmatic nature of the Eucharist as well as ways to celebrate the Eucharist as available, responsive, and engaged church communities in participation with the life and ministry of Christ through the power of the Spirit according to will of the Father. Importantly, Christian worship and communion is not centred on wounds themselves (traumatic or otherwise), but on Christ. At the same time, human wounds are gathered into, summed up, and recapitulated and integratively

¹ Notice that divine grace, mercy, and justice are not opposed to nor in conflict with one another, but go hand-in-hand with one another for our blessing and benefit in due time.

² Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 555.

³ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 42.

processed in Christ's body, and it is primarily through the wounds of Christ that we enter into his resurrection life.

Celebration of the Eucharist both participates in (at present) and anticipates the (future) fulfillment of resurrection life in Christ. Therefore, on the basis that in and through Christ all wounds are not erased but transformed, this chapter argues that justice in Christ is the full restoration of life in resurrection form. Put differently, this chapter argues that (first) the risen body of Christ is the prophetic testimony of the transformation of trauma in the present age, and that (second) Christian hope is oriented towards the eschatological fulfillment of God's restorative justice.⁴ All sin, trauma, and death is taken by Christ, into his very body, and transformed into inimitable moments of intimacy as God meets with us, rescues us, and restores us in Christ. In the eschatological scope of Christ's life and ministry, God takes trauma and transforms it into testimony. The transformation of trauma in Christ is not the erasure of trauma nor its legitimization much less glorification; rather the testimony of trauma recovery in Christ involves the glorification of Christ and our participation in his resurrection life as an aspect of the Church's (comm)union with/in Christ. It is impossible without God, yet it is a crucial aspect of the good news of Jesus Christ, who was crucified, buried, descended to the dead, rose on the third day, ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and who will come again to judge the living and the dead.⁵

This chapter begins with Shelly Rambo's theology of remaining, building on it through a series of further reflections on the risen body of Christ in relation to the Christian vision of

⁴ Referring to 1 Cor 13:12–13, Michael Knowles (*Unfolding Mystery*, here 236, cf. 161) says, "Faith is the will to trust in a divine reality as yet experienced only in part; hope is the anticipation of a fuller experience yet to come. . . . [A]nd love . . . is the one human quality that most fully reflects and participates in the divine character."

⁵ See the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) and the Apostles Creed.

trauma recovery. The relationship between Christ and the Cross is further clarified, situating the Person of Christ as fundamental. With observations relating to the Eucharist throughout, the post-Resurrection encounters in the Gospels are further explored, discussing the need for community, how different parts of ourselves experience resurrection, and the revelation of the resurrected Christ as the fulfillment of the Sinai theophany in Exodus. The next major section builds on Herman's description of justice for trauma survivors (which includes the key elements of truth and repair), articulating a Christian vision of restorative justice in eschatological scope. With attention to the Eucharist, the role of safe church communities in witnessing survivors' stories and working towards healing restoration is highlighted. Thus, in and through Christ, the Church participates in the transformation of trauma to testimony.

The Testimony of Christ in the World: Remaining in the Middle of the End

In *Spirit and Trauma*, Shelly Rambo says the theological task of bearing witness to the inexpressible—the ongoing suffering of trauma—is essential if we are to avoid a “redemptive gloss” that superficially covers rather than heals the suffering of deep wounds.⁶ By reinterpreting the concept of “remaining” in the Gospel of John, she proposes a theology of the Spirit that accounts for absence and unknowing to testify beyond human limitations and in the midst of suffering. The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in both accounting for absence and unknowing (mystery/*mystērion*) and testifying beyond human limitations in “groans too deep for words”

⁶ See Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, here 24; cf. “Introduction,” 3.

(Rom 8:26). Rambo discusses critiques of redemption via the Cross, but argues that outright rejection of the Cross elides or covers the realities of what remains, especially trauma.⁷

In *Resurrecting Wounds*, Rambo begins by challenging Calvin's erasure of Jesus' post-Resurrection wounds after Thomas encounters him in the Gospel of John, a reading that effectively disembodies both healing and wounds in the present age.⁸ Returning to Thomas's encounter with Jesus throughout the book, Rambo explores trauma in terms of gender, race, and war, considering again how Christianity has often sought to cover deep wounds rather than appropriately uncover and expose, live with, and (eventually) heal them.⁹ Triumphalist theologies are especially challenged by Rambo's conclusions. Thus, Rambo's work may be viewed as a trauma-informed cruciform theology in the honest and hopeful key of redemption.

Speaking of Thomas's post-Resurrection encounter with Christ, Rambo says the posttraumatic environment of the Upper Room is

a place where wounds are touched, and where shame, grief, and anger are released. It is a place of tenderness and courage. The resurrection scene directly speaks to the affective formation of a community struggling with death and loss. . . . This community meets at the junctures of histories and discerns points of crossing, embodying new configurations of life."¹⁰

Prior to this, a new configuration occurred in another Upper Room encounter: the communion of the Lord's Supper. As discussed in the previous chapters, the anamnestic scope of the Eucharist is not restricted to a single private meal, particularly in light of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the public ministry and worship that follow.

⁷ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 152–55.

⁸ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 17–42.

⁹ Here, *uncovering* emphasizes compassionate attention to survivors' wounds, while *exposing* highlights the communal recognition of the wrong as wrong.

¹⁰ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 153.

Christ is the source of the life of the Church, and his body and blood are mediated to us by the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of the Eucharist. While the Cross is the primary point of entry into the life of Christ, the ongoing, progressive nature of the Eucharist takes place in the light of resurrection life in Christ.¹¹ Rambo cautions that we cannot dislocate or relegate resurrection life to a disembodied or ethereal space and time: “when we conceive of resurrection as otherworldly, we miss opportunities to talk about resurrection in this world.”¹² At the same time, Sarah Travis cautions that we cannot always move too quickly or easily from Crucifixion to Resurrection, for when trauma is involved, “trouble and grace intermingle.”¹³ And as Schmemmann says, “our *entrance* into the presence of Christ is an entrance into a fourth dimension which allows us to see the reality of life. It is not an escape from the world, rather it is the arrival at a vantage point from which we can see more deeply into the reality of the world.”¹⁴ Rambo also situates Christ’s Resurrection within an eschatological scope, asking, “Might eschatology be the most fitting doctrine in the aftermath of trauma?”¹⁵ She goes on to say that the “visionary discourse about the transformation of the world . . . invites us to think about what forms of life can arise from death.”¹⁶ Since Christian life is fundamentally rooted and grounded in Christ, the proper place to begin a discussion of the forms of life that arise from death is with Christ himself—specifically, the form of eternal, resurrection life embodied by Christ.¹⁷

¹¹ Cf. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 273–76.

¹² Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 7; cf. Beach, *Church in Exile*, 181–82.

¹³ Travis (*Unspeakable*, esp. 49–54, 66–76, here 49) explores this in terms of preaching, but as described earlier (esp. Chapter 7), this also applies to the Eucharist: brokenness and wholeness, Crucifixion and Resurrection, trauma and testimony, and everything in between are paradigmatically summed up in the Eucharist.

¹⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 35. Cf. *Haer.* 5.2.3; Behr, *Mystery of Christ*, 105–7.

¹⁵ Rambo, “Introduction,” 8.

¹⁶ Rambo, “Introduction,” 8.

¹⁷ Orthodox theologian John Behr (*Mystery of Christ*, here 18, 27, 86 respectively) argues that “it is only in light of the Passion that we can even speak of ‘Incarnation.’” That is, Incarnation is an interpretation and confession made in light of the Passion. Behr begins by engaging the Gospels, noting that the disciples do not really know the

The following sections reflect on the resurrection life of Christ in a mode fitting to trauma-informed theology.¹⁸ Rather than proceeding as a linear propositional argument, these contemplative reflections visit and revisit various themes and images in the process of fleshing out the Christian testimony of hope, the gospel of Christ, in the world today.

Christ and the Cross: Life and Death according to Christ

In order to establish the witness of Christ's resurrection life in the present world, the relationship between Christ and the Cross should be properly ordered, much like the relationship between eucharistic elements and Christ's body and blood discussed in the previous chapter. And much like the understanding of sacrifice described earlier, Christ is the one according to whom the Cross must be understood.¹⁹

Speaking of the "afterlife of the cross," Rambo takes note of how the misuses of the Cross have been radically challenged:

Theologians [in the twentieth century] called attention to how the symbol of the Christian cross functions to sanction violence and glorify suffering, raising the question of whether the cross was a symbol of redemption or whether it was a symbol that needed to be redeemed. No longer can the Christian cross be read apart from the genocide of Jewish peoples, Jürgen Moltmann notes. No longer can the crucifixion be read apart from the crucifixion of black lynching in the United States, James Cone declares. No longer can the crucifixion be read apart from the surrogacy of black women in history, writes Delores Williams. No longer could the salvation of women come about by way of a male savior, argues Rosemary Radford Ruether. Instead of the [dominant Western]

Lord until after his death and Resurrection: "the disciples came to recognize the Lord as the one whose Passion is spoken of by the scriptures and encountered him in the breaking of bread." Thus, Scripture and the meal are central and essential to the Apostolic witness and growing Christian community. In Behr's view, creation and salvation are not separate, distinct actions of God, but "the continual process of God's activity in his handiwork." This includes the recognition that humans have always needed Christ.

¹⁸ Cf. Rambo, "Theopoetics of Trauma," 223–39; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 38; Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 74.

¹⁹ Recall also the discussion of Christ's redefinition of the Cross in Chapter 4.

understanding of Christ's suffering and death, each theologian contested a dominant narrative of wounds as the means by which redemption is enacted.²⁰

While recognizing these challenges, Rambo maintains that "in turning away from interpreting the cross redemptively, there is a danger in not theologizing suffering at all, in avoiding any moves to narrate human suffering by way of the Christian story."²¹ Therefore, situating the Cross as a site of hope that neither erases and ignores nor legitimizes and perpetuates trauma remains crucial for faithful Christian witness of the hope-filled gospel of Christ in the world.²²

In cruciform theology, there are key questions around which discussion swirls (though often implicitly): to what extent is Christ cruciform and to what extent is the Cross Christoform?²³ In other words, does the Cross define and reveal Christ or does Christ (re)define the Cross and, in so doing, reveal God? The central question these others circle has to do with what or who is most fundamental: is it the object/place of the Cross or the Person of Christ? The answer must be the latter: the Person of Christ is the fundamental basis of God's self-revelation, despite the fact that a Crossless Christ is no Christ at all and would be, in fact, anti-Christ. As much as the Cross is the site and manner through which God chooses to reveal himself most strikingly and most openly, it remains the Person of Christ who is essential and fundamental to

²⁰ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 6.

²¹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 6; cited works: Moltmann, *Crucified God*; Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*; Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*; Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*.

²² Cf. Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 97–103.

²³ For example, engaging Martin Luther's, Jürgen Moltmann's, and Richard Bauckham's use of the term *crucified God*, Michael Gorman (*Cruciformity*, 18) cautions that "the language of a crucified God may imply that there is no distinction between the Father and the Son." This view would be considered the heresy of *patripassianism* (the suffering of the Father *on* the Cross) in the early church. Instead, Gorman favours the term *cruciform*: "speaking of the cruciform rather than the crucified God attempts to preserve . . . legitimate emphasis on divine identity" without conflating the Father and the Son. Cf. Bauckham, *God Crucified*; McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*; *Mystery of the Cross*; Moltmann, *Crucified God*.

the revelation of God.²⁴ Thus, suffering and shame, sin and death—the hallmarks of the Roman cross—are *exposed and revealed as such* by Christ on and through the Cross, but they are not definitive of God in Christ. For beyond merely exposing evil, Christ takes sin and death upon himself, overcomes them, and transforms the Cross from the dead end of horror and shame into the way of resurrection life. The transformation of the Cross is more powerful and more redemptive than erasure. But it is Christ himself who subverts and transforms the Roman cross and its participation in the powers of evil in the cosmos. The crucial Christological fulcrum is that, pivotal as it may be, the Cross itself possesses no redemptive quality or power apart from Jesus Christ.²⁵

Therefore, the Cross is defined by Christ, and God is revealed by Christ on the Cross, but Christ is not reducible to the Cross. The object without the Person is an idol—impotent in and of itself yet twisted and wielded by human hands in participation with evil to cause great violence and suffering. The Cross may be paradigmatic and pivotal, but only insofar as it is anchored to Christ. Christ is not nailed to the Cross so much as the Cross is bound to Christ. While Christ bears the marks of Crucifixion in his risen body, the Cross is definitively marked by the body of Christ.²⁶ All that is left of the cross as an instrument of torture, shame, and death has been

²⁴ Scot McKnight (*Pastor Paul*, 4) employs the term *Christoformity*, by which he means that we are formed by Christ's life, his death, and his Resurrection and Ascension (*bio*-formity, *cruci*-formity, and *anastasi*-formity), not merely as things we believe in but as something we embody. At the same time, Gorman (*Participating in Christ*, 53–76) finds *cruciform* rather than *resurrectiform* the most appropriate term for our *present* (albeit paradoxical) participation in the life of Christ with the understanding that our union with Christ is not yet complete or consummate. But he also recognizes that our life in Christ is *resurrectional* or *resurrection-suffused*, meaning *resurrection-enabled* and *life-giving*. I maintain that Crucifixion and Resurrection are distinct yet inseparable parts of the Incarnation as a whole.

²⁵ Travis (*Unspeakable*, 66) describes witness as a hinge in the middle space between death and life. Extending this image, the Crucifixion and Resurrection are the hinge plates that rotate on the linchpin of Christ himself.

²⁶ As discussed earlier, God the Father does not hammer the nails of Crucifixion into the hands and feet of Jesus the Son. Instead, God draws the nails of Crucifixion—indeed, all trauma and death, all sin and suffering—into

overcome: death is not the end. The holes in Christ's risen body *mark* the end of death without erasing it as if it never happened. Speaking of the mingling of joy and lament, Sarah Travis encourages us in the hope "that the grief of the world is broken open in God's hands, that radical transformation is possible."²⁷ This hope is based on Christ, in and through whom the trauma of Crucifixion has been transformed into the testimony of Resurrection.

The Cross—(re)defined by Christ—stands as a paradigm for Christian life and ministry; Christ himself—and him crucified—stands as the Person in whom all things consist (cf. Col 1:17). Thus, Christ *is* life and communion who invites us into the life of his communing being with the Father by way of the Cross. The Cross thus stands as a doorway, while Christ himself is the Way. As a transformed point of transition, the Cross recognizes, exposes, and subverts sin, death, and the violent powers and principalities. What was meant to bring only suffering, dehumanization, and death is now a site of intimacy with Christ and a path to resurrection life.²⁸

Speaking of the *cruciform Christ* and the *Christoform Cross* is nothing other than the testimony of resurrection life. Resurrection life is the testimony of Christ, which is the spirit of prophecy (cf. Rev 19:10). Bearing in mind the importance of embodiment to human being, theological theory, and life and ministry in Christ, the prophetic testimony arising from the Christoform Cross is a historical fact of the past, a present reality (seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenlies), and a future promise of bodily resurrection.

himself through Christ on the Cross. This is the dynamic of recapitulation that the Scriptures and Irenaeus speak of: In Christ, God sums up, takes authority over, and draws all things into himself (see Chapter 4).

²⁷ Travis, *Unspeakable*, 120.

²⁸ Recall the two ways of the c/Cross (esp. regarding survivors and perpetrators) discussed in Chapter 5.

Images of the Cross and the Risen Christ

Mark Heim discusses three sides of the Cross, represented in three of the most common images of the Cross that have been emphasized differently in various Christian communities (often one to the exclusion of others): “the crucifix of the suffering Jesus, the image of Christ in glory on the cross, and the simple sign of the empty cross.”²⁹ Heim relates the crucifix to the “visible victim,” the exposure of evil and violence. Christ on the Cross in glory is the vindication of the victim. And he says the “empty cross stands for a life without sacrifice.”³⁰ However, as discussed in Chapter 6, I think Christ redefines sacrifice as self-giving love enacted in trust.

Similarly, Serene Jones reflects at length on the story of the Cross, “the central trauma of Christianity,” through three “crucified imaginings”: the alluring Cross, the mirrored Cross, and the unending Cross.³¹ The mirrored Cross is similar to the crucifix as it is God’s incarnate presence with us in suffering, death, and trauma, which “reflects our story of suffering back to us.”³² The alluring cross is like Christ on the Cross in glory as it describes the paradoxical nature of the Cross: “at the very moment the scene [of Crucifixion] is most unbearably horrendous, it is also most redemptive. At its worst, it is its best. . . . The cross makes sense in ways that do not make sense. . . . We both know it and don’t know it.”³³ Finally, the unending Cross can be aligned with the empty Cross as its silence enacts a profound gesture: “God’s gospel cannot ever be finished.”³⁴ Thus, the Cross, in its multidimensional form, stands as a polyphonic testimony to

²⁹ Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 326–29, here 328.

³⁰ Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 328.

³¹ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 69–97, here 69.

³² Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 75–83, here 82.

³³ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 71–73, here 72–73.

³⁴ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 85–97, here 97.

the gospel of Christ, which includes the witness of suffering and trauma, the hope of glory, and the pregnant silence of embrace.

These images together—mirrored crucifix, alluring Cross of glory, and empty, unending Cross—can also be related to the resurrected body of Christ in certain ways. The mirrored crucifix corresponds to the risen body of Christ, bearing the marks of Crucifixion (trauma to testimony). The alluring Cross of glory corresponds to the ascended Christ, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father (glory to glory; cf. 2 Cor 3:18). And the empty, unending Cross corresponds to the anticipation of Christ’s Return (*kenosis* to *theosis*).³⁵ Christ is the Coming One, and in the presence of his absence we wait. Together, these images of Christ (risen, ascended, and returning) and the Cross (mirror/crucifix, alluring/glorified, and unending/empty) take us beyond the dichotomies of life and death, flesh and spirit, and into the tension of the gospel of Christ: real and anticipated, true and promised, already and not yet. The Cross stands at the paradoxical abyss and apex of Christian life and hope: the summation of all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10; Col 1:17).

In and through Christ, the Cross stands stripped of trauma, torture, and death. The Cross stands as a witness, pointing to Christ. The Cross is now bare, but not barren, for it has been transfigured according to Christ. As Serene Jones puts it, “The shadow cast by the cross becomes a dark womb that holds [survivors’] brokenness and envelopes their pain.”³⁶ The spiral hermeneutical relationship between Christ and Scripture (which bears witness to him; cf. John 5:39) is like the relationship between Christ and the Cross: one is not rightly understood without

³⁵ As noted in Chapter 7, the process of *theosis* is eternally ongoing in its progression (ἐπέκτασις) within the being of God. See Hans Boersma, *Seeing God*, 12, 76–95.

³⁶ Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 97.

the other.³⁷ However, as always, Christ himself—not Scripture, not the Cross—is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is, was, and is to come.³⁸ Thus, all things are summed up in the historical, ascended, and eschatological Christ. And when Scripture and the Cross are viewed in the light of Christ, they point towards him as witnesses.

Crucifixion and Resurrection: Good News

The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ remain essential and pivotal aspects of the gospel of Christ. While not all the Gospels begin with or include the Annunciation-Incarnation event or the birth of Christ/Nativity,³⁹ all the Gospels inevitably progress to the death and Resurrection of Christ.⁴⁰ Briefly considering the emphasis and necessity of the Crucifixion and Resurrection in the minds of the Gospel writers is not meant to sideline in any way the significance of the Incarnation of Christ or reduce it to a mere utilitarian precursor of the Cross.⁴¹ The entire incarnate life, ministry, death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Return of Christ are salvific, and the Cross cannot be abstracted or isolated from them.⁴² However, to posit a Crossless Incarnation or a gospel message that does not hinge on the Crucifixion and Resurrection is impotent since the message of the Cross is the power of God to those who are being saved (cf. 1 Cor 1:18).⁴³

³⁷ As Behr (*John the Theologian*, esp. 128–30) says, the “‘inspired’ writing of Scripture cannot be separated from the ‘inspired’ reading, and both, together, turn upon the act of opening the Scriptures by the one of whom they speak, or, in reverse, *the one who speaks in them*. It is only when read ‘in this way’, as Irenaeus puts it, that what we are reading is in fact *Scripture*; if it is not read through the cross, we are only reading ‘myths’, as Irenaeus put it, even if historically true.” Cf. *Haer.* 4.26.1.

³⁸ See Rev 1:4, 8, 17–18; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5; 22:6–7.

³⁹ According to Mark, “The beginning of the good news [or gospel] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1) starts with the fulfilment of a prophecy, the appearance of John the Baptist, and the Baptism of Jesus of Nazareth.

⁴⁰ Regarding the Gospels’ focus on Jesus’ way of the Cross, see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 54, 74.

⁴¹ Cf. Payton, *Victory of the Cross*, 78.

⁴² Cf. O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 18–19.

⁴³ Cf. Scarsella, “Trauma and Theology,” 274–76; Peters, *Post-Traumatic Jesus*.

This is not to say that every proclamation of Christ needs to be specific regarding all details of the Crucifixion—after all, the Gospels themselves differ and are all, as John notes, significantly limited (cf. John 21:25). However, the pastoral application and public proclamation of the gospel of Christ are necessarily contextually limited and appropriately sensitive in ways that works of theology intended for mature believers (and/or other thoughtful readers) are not. In other words, we can both affirm the essential and central importance of the Cross and Resurrection within the gospel message of the incarnate Christ *and* the need to be sensitive and discerning with when, how, and by whom the message of the Cross is proclaimed. While the message of the Cross is always critically present in any Christian gospel message with the power to save, it may at times be present implicitly. To put it in terms of the canonical Gospels, the good news does not necessarily *begin* with the Cross, but it must always make its way there eventually, in one form or another. The good news begins with God with us. And as the Gospels all demonstrate, the good news cannot end with the death of Christ, for Resurrection must follow, even if it is perplexing to the point of fearful amazement (cf. Mark 16:8).⁴⁴

However, it is not an encounter of bodily Resurrection that terrifies the women in Mark's Gospel, but the empty tomb, the *absence* of the body of Christ.⁴⁵ A bodiless or disembodied

⁴⁴ Cf. Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 148.

⁴⁵ Serene Jones (Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 85–97, here 94) reflects at length on the “uncomfortable” ending or “unending” of Mark's Gospel. She explores various interpretations that highlight perseverance, hope and empowerment, gratitude and humble prayer (90–91). She adds her own interpretation that does not smooth out the “ruptured narrative,” identifying silence and gesture as the most appropriate responses to or expressions of the gospel for trauma survivors whose capacity for language may be affected by trauma (91–97, here 91). However, I disagree with Jones's suggestion that “what this text claims—that there is ‘resurrection’—is *traumatic*!” (96, emphasis original). While it may be hard or even shocking for our human minds and bodies—traumatized by sin in the cosmos and striving for survival in a broken world—to comprehend the Resurrection of Christ, the difficulties and paradoxes of the good news are not properly characterized as *traumatic* because they do not cause overwhelming *harm*. Being overwhelmed by good news is categorically different than traumatic overwhelm. On the other hand, a so-called “gospel” of bodiless Resurrection would be no good news at all and would be rightly described as *traumatic*.

Resurrection account is liable to have the same effect today: disorientation, confusion, terror. As with the first witnesses to the resurrected Christ, an embodied encounter with the risen Lord is essential for faith in the Church today. This is precisely why we gather at the Lord's Table to share in his body and blood as one body—not fractured, but whole. Applied to the Eucharist, communion without the body and blood of Christ is no communion at all. It is precisely an encounter with the body and blood of Christ—broken and poured out, yes, but also resurrected, united, and living in the presence of believers—that brings peace rather than terror.

The *absence* of death—a bodiless tomb—is just another emptiness if it is not accompanied by the *presence* of life, the body and blood of the risen Christ, Crucifixion marks and all. This Gospel revelation reflects the nature of trauma as a corresponding opposite: not only does trauma involve the presence of fear and suffering, it also comes at the cost of the enjoyment of life, the absence of wellbeing. Even the wounds, gaps, losses, and desolations of trauma are recapitulated or gathered up in Christ as he bears the marks of the nails in hands and feet and the spear hole in his side. It is these sites, these wounds, into which Christ invites us, like Thomas, to encounter the veracity and power of his risen body. As we enter into the breaking points, we are made whole and healed in Christ. As we break bread and drink the fruit of the vine, we share the most intimate feast.

Moreover, Christ's risen body is not merely a monument or a physical token of testimony; he is living, breathing, pulsing divine presence in human bodily form.⁴⁶ The victory of Life is compassionate and warm, living and breathing. Life does not forget or erase the void of death, but encompasses it completely, transforming it into an invitation to life: "Put your finger

⁴⁶ This is not to say that Christ merely appears to be human in form; rather, Christ is fully human and divine (*hypostasis*) both before and after the Resurrection.

here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”

(John 20:27). Jesus’ invitation to Thomas is not so much a condemnation of doubt as it is invitational empowerment to believe in the aftermath of trauma.

The *Type* of Testimony

The indelible marks of the cruciform wounds in the risen body of Christ are the incarnate manifestation of real absence: holes in the risen body of Christ.⁴⁷ It is into these holes, these real *absences*, that Christ invites Thomas (and all of us) to enter and experience his real *presence*. The absences confirm the presence of Christ, the veracity of his identity and resurrection life, and the wisdom and power of divine love. These holes are not wounds per se, but rather *marks* (τύπος) of wounds. That is, they are not perpetual sites of pain and suffering, but neither are they the complete erasure of all wounds and trauma. Instead, they are paradoxical sites of healing, wholeness, and faith. They are the embodied fulfillment of the *kenosis* of Christ—the profound depth of the incarnate self-emptying of our Saviour (cf. Phil 2: 5–11)—that invite us into the process of *theosis* in Christ.⁴⁸

The breaking of bread in the Eucharist likewise enacts kenotic absence and acts as tangible (edible!) witness and invitation to the human body, soul, and spirit.⁴⁹ As God cannot be seen or understood by humans in his entirety, so the bread cannot be consumed whole. It must be

⁴⁷ Cf. Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality Renewed*, 118–26.

⁴⁸ As Knowles (*Unfolding Mystery*, 215–17) describes it: “Theosis, which refers to divinization or participation in the divine nature . . . is the process of devotion, self-surrender, and moral exertion by which the faithful are drawn into and transformed by the life of Christ. . . . Jesus not only models but also makes possible for the church . . . the transformation of the human character according to the character of God.” This is the process of growing into the likeness of God that Irenaeus speaks of (see Chapter 4).

⁴⁹ Cf. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 406.

broken open and shared so that in and through these spaces—the marks of traumatic cruciform wounds—the Body of Christ might be made whole as we come to see, know, and experience the life of God in our own bodies, souls, and spirits. Thus, brokenness is not the end. The Word become flesh is broken, buried, and then raised uncorrupted yet marked and ascended with the promise to return. Christ is risen—hallelujah!—yet he bears the marks of Crucifixion in his hands, feet, and side.

Again, the marks of Crucifixion in Christ's *risen* body are not properly described as *wounds*—they are not called wounds nor do they bleed openly, causing pain and dysfunction.⁵⁰ Rather, than a wound/τραῦμα they are called a mark/τύπος—specifically “the mark of the nails” (τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων John 20:25). While Thomas's words have the literal meaning of the mark of a blow, τύπος may also refer to a *figure* or *image*, a *pattern* or *model*, or, most literally, a *type*.⁵¹ Given John's poetic style, a multivalent reading is appropriate.⁵² The marks in the risen body of Christ comprise not only a testimony of veracity and life, but also an invitation from Jesus himself: “Place your finger here and see my hands, and place your hand and put it into my side. And do not be unbelieving, but believing!” Indeed, it prompts the climactic confession of the Gospel: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). Along with Thomas, we are invited into the very sites of the wounds of Christ, no longer wounds but now the testimony, entry point, pattern, and type of resurrection life. In this encounter, our wounds and traumas are recapitulated in Christ and transformed from trauma to testimony.

⁵⁰ Cf. Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 102.

⁵¹ See LSJ.

⁵² Cf. Black, “‘The Words That You Gave to Me I Have Given to Them’,” 224; Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 8; Harris, *John*, 8; Norris, *Introduction to Revelation*, ix.

We should, however, remember that Thomas waited eight days between the Resurrection of Christ and his own upper room encounter (cf. John 20:26). This time period signals both the duration of the present age and the entrance into the age to come.⁵³ Like Mary (the first apostle of the Resurrection according to John) and the other 10 male disciples, we may encounter the risen Christ in the present and experience healing and recovery from trauma. But we may also, like Thomas, wait within the community of faith for a healing encounter with Christ in the eschaton. In this case, the role of community is of great importance. Those who wait should never wait alone. Those who suffer and continue to live with the aftermath of trauma and wounding should not do so alone. God forbid we chastise those who wait for a perceived lack of faith, for in the waiting is a profound faith.

Kenosis to Theosis: Sinai and the Son

In a sense, the enduring marks in the hands of Christ are the window to the face of God. The *kenotically* opened hands of Christ are the site of theophany and the way of *theosis*, the beatific vision.⁵⁴ As Moses' line of sight was covered by God's hand while passing by, so Moses was covered and yet also saw (cf. Exod 33–34). The seeming contradiction of the Scriptures is resolved in Christ; or rather, the truth of the Scriptures is revealed in and through Christ, the Truth. Through his incarnate, crucified, and risen body, Christ reveals that (the face of) God can

⁵³ For discussion of time and the Eucharist, see Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 59–80, 94, esp. 62–65, here 64, emphasis original. The day of Thomas's encounter is both the first and the eighth day, which signals the beginning of the new time of the Kingdom that is beyond the time of this world. In his words, it is "the transformation of time" such that "through that one day [the day of Resurrection] all days, all time were transformed into times of *remembrance and expectation*, remembrance of this ascension ('we have seen the true light'), and expectation of its *coming*." Thus, in the present age, the Church exists in a crucial tension.

⁵⁴ Cf. Boersma, *Seeing God*.

only be seen through God and in God: “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known” (John 1:18). It is through the hands of Christ the Son that we come to see God our Father. As Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The risen body of Christ bears witness to and proclaims this essential, embodied gospel as open invitation.

Therefore, the revelation and encounter of Christ in and through the marks of his wounds in John 20 may also be seen as a fulfilment of the Exodus theophanies, especially at Sinai. As Michael Knowles points out: “In short, says John, Jesus is the fulfillment of the divine name revealed to Moses on Sinai and celebrated throughout Jewish history.”⁵⁵ God tells Moses, “See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen” (Exod 33:21–23). Christ is the rock (cf. 1 Cor 10:4). And not just a rock, but the *cleft* rock into which we are placed, covered and hidden in Christ (cf. Col 3:3). The rock on which we stand, the cornerstone of our being and faith, is the cruciform yet risen body of Christ (cf. Ps 118:22–23; Isa 8:14; 28:16; Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 3:11; 1 Pet 2:4–8).

Thus, it is only in and through Christ that we come to and see the Father. The covering at Sinai is the hand of God, which is fulfilled and revealed on the Cross in, through, and from the body of Christ.⁵⁶ But more than just a covering, Christ is the way to the Father (cf. John 14:6),

⁵⁵ Knowles (*Unfolding Mystery*, 157–66, here 161, 163) links John’s prologue (1:1–18) to God’s self-revelation to Moses on both Sinai (Exod 24:16–17; 33:18–22) and in the tent of meeting (Exod 40:34–35), discussing the interrelationship of “divine initiative and human response” regarding faith in/of Christ, specifically referring to John 20:7 (along with other texts). Therefore, reading the climax of John’s Gospel (ch. 20) in tandem with the prologue in relation to the Exodus theophanies makes very good sense.

⁵⁶ The covering of the Passover lamb’s blood is also fulfilled in Christ, as discussed in Chapter 6.

the opening of Godself to humanity. Christ is the *uncovering*, the ἀποκάλυψις, the revelation of the Father.⁵⁷ The Passover Lamb, slain and risen, is the one who reveals the face and essential character of the Father. As Hebrews 1:3 says, the Son “is the radiance of his [the Father’s] glory and the representation of his essence, sustaining all things by the word of power.” Christ is the χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, the *character* of God’s essence. The word χαρακτήρ is difficult to translate as it means not only a representation, but an engraved or stamped work, a mark—the exact marked likeness.⁵⁸ The exact imprint of God’s being represented and revealed in Christ is shown to us *through the marks* in his own body. The covering of Christ contains a hole, an opening through which we may glimpse the Father. Christ is the embodied fulfilment of the hand of God over Moses, which enables him to see the Lord and speak to him face-to-face (see Exod 33:11; cf. Deut 5:4; 34:10; Num 12:8).⁵⁹ The hand that God places over Moses is the hand of Christ, the crucified and risen Christ who bears the marks that reveal God to us.

Invitation and Encounter: Seeing in Part(s)

While God has been revealed to us in Christ, and him crucified, there remains an eschatological character to the revelation. As Paul puts it, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12).⁶⁰ Again, the post-Resurrection encounters with Christ in John’s Gospel reflect the already and not nature of seeing God in and through Christ. We may truly say with

⁵⁷ Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 161–66, 215–16, 230–31, 239–41.

⁵⁸ See LSJ.

⁵⁹ The narrative chronology of encounters in Exodus does not contradict the point: as prefiguring types of encounter, they are all fulfilled and revealed in Christ. Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 173.

⁶⁰ Cf. Knowles, *Unfolding Mystery*, 236–40.

Mary, “I have seen the Lord!” (John 20:18). But we may also honestly say with Thomas, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe!” (John 20:25). If we are honest with ourselves, who among us does not need an encounter with the risen Lord to heal our own wounds and traumas, to banish fear and doubt, and to invite us into confession and belief? Recall that for the traumatized, belief is not simply a matter of the will, the choice to have faith and be healed. Instead, belief is a matter of need that can only be met by and in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Mary, the ten, and Thomas may also be viewed as parts of ourselves in our ongoing participation in the Eucharist.⁶¹ While some parts of ourselves have intimately and powerfully met Christ, others cry out for such an encounter and wait eagerly for the consummate fulfillment of meeting with Christ. Some parts of ourselves (and some people) may wait until the literal Return of Christ and our own resurrection for such a healing encounter. For this there is no explanation, but there is the imperative to stay with, accept, care for, and love those who need and wait for an encounter with the risen Lord.

As always, the suffering of Christ on the Cross must not be used as rationale for abuse and oppression. But neither is it the erasure of such things. Instead, Christ redemptively transforms all suffering, trauma, and death unto the testimony of resurrection life. Recovery from trauma is often painful, though not harmful. The way of the Cross is costly, yet not a transaction. Recovery may be a long, arduous road. Discipleship does not end and, if it truly follows Christ in a sinful, violent world, will involve some form of persecution. Recovery and discipleship are not

⁶¹ Here, the psychological framework of Internal Family Systems (IFS) is helpful. See Schwartz and Sweezy, *Internal Family Systems Therapy*; Schwartz, *No Bad Parts*.

easy, but they are *good*. They lead from ashes to beauty, mourning to joy, from death to new life, from trauma to testimony.

The processes of both normal growth and healing from wounds may involve discomfort and even certain sorts of what could be called suffering at times. For example, the challenging process of facing the trauma of the past and the dysregulation of the present may involve what we could call *non-harmful suffering*. Distinguishing between *redemptive suffering* and the *redemption of suffering* is crucial in reframing a more nuanced theological understanding and discerning pastoral application of redemption.⁶² Conceptions of *redemptive suffering* involving the notion that *God causes harmful* forms of suffering or affliction (i.e., trauma) in order to teach us a lesson or purify us in some way are not supported by the life and ministry of Christ, including the Crucifixion. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize and maintain hope in the *redemption of suffering*: God, in his infinite wisdom, power, and love, is able to take what seem like irredeemable circumstances and bring beauty out of the ashes. To be clear, God does not baptize abuse into a tool in his hands. God does not actively use violence and disaster for his good purposes. Instead, a Christian vision of hope is that God will do away with all evil as evil and restore all goodness in the cosmos. The redemption of (harmful) suffering does not mean it becomes an instrument of God's will, but rather that from the desolation of death God brings the abundance of life: it was one thing, now it is another.⁶³ Moreover, humanity is invited to participate in the redemption of suffering, as we take weapons of violence and destruction and

⁶² Recall the different ways of the Cross discussed in Chapter 5.

⁶³ J.R.R. Tolkien (*Silmarillion*, 3–12, “Ainulindalë”) provides the beautiful analogy of God (Eru/Ilúvatar) redeeming the Great Music of the song of creation from the discord introduced by Satan (Melkor). The evil is not simply erased, but is somehow overcome by the goodness and beauty of God's redemptive activity within what would otherwise be a broken, disintegrated, de-harmonized cosmos.

turn them into tools for producing life: “they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, / and their spears into pruning-hooks” (Isa 2:4).

Christ redefines the Cross as a site that leads not to terminal corruption, but unto restorative resurrection life. Through the wounds of Christ, we gain not a traumatized view of God, but a Christ-defined view of both God and trauma.⁶⁴ More than a theory, an embodied encounter with the crucified and risen Christ is the foundation of this theological vision and testimony. The Eucharist is the enduring, ongoing encounter with the body and blood of Christ, the fundamental source of our life. Receiving the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist is the key mode of reintegrating the body, soul, and spirit in Christ. The marks of the Cross on the risen body of Christ bear testimony to the transformation of suffering, trauma, and death unto resurrection life. Therefore, the Cross of Christ, in all its forms, is a sign of hope in Christ.

Resurrection and the Body: Witnessing Hope in the World

If the Incarnation is God with us, then the Crucifixion is God with us *all the way to the end*. And the Resurrection is God with us *beyond*—beyond life, beyond death, beyond our present state. How can God *be with* us beyond where we are today? This is at the heart of the mystery and miracle of the Resurrection and the content of the promise of Christ’s Return. God with us beyond life and death is the promise that we will be with God.

Likewise, Schmemmann links remembrance of Christ to eschatological anticipation:

It is only because the Church’s *leitourgia* [the liturgy or work of the people] is always cosmic, i.e., assumes into Christ all creation, and is always historical, i.e., assumes into Christ all time, that it can therefore also be eschatological, i.e., make us true participants of the Kingdom to come. . . . Worship is by definition and act a reality with cosmic,

⁶⁴ Recall that the methodology in Chapter 3 concluded with the distinction between *traumatized* and *trauma-informed* views of God.

historical, and eschatological dimensions, the expression of . . . an all-embracing “world-view.”⁶⁵

Therefore, the Church must also situate our concrete hope in the resurrection of bodies at the Return of Christ. Without this anchor point, our theology will drift to other seeming points of stability only to founder on the rocks of triumphalistic prosperity gospels; violence in the name of the Kingdom of God; salvation by technological, medical, scientific, or psychological means; or even the nihilistic certainty of cosmic absurdity. As Jennifer Baldwin says, “The church must work towards resurrecting the honor and wisdom of the physical body if it seeks to be a resource for vital, healthful lives and communities.”⁶⁶ However, it is not only the wisdom of our own bodies,⁶⁷ but the risen body of Christ that makes known the wisdom and power of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:17–2:16). Therefore, bodily resurrection life in Christ remains the essential, eschatological horizon of hope for Christian theology, life, and ministry. In the Eucharist, we participate in both the already and the not yet of Christ’s crucified and risen body. As the Body of Christ, we simultaneously bear witness to trauma and give testimony to resurrection life. While this testimony has an eschatological anchor point, it nonetheless has concrete implications for the present, including the restoration of justice in the cosmos.

Restorative Justice: Big Picture Safety in Christ

The (re)establishment of safety is fundamental to justice and trauma-recovery. As discussed in previous chapters, Cockayne et al. have described four dimensions of safety required for trauma-safe churches—bodily safety, being safely loved, having safe boundaries, and big picture

⁶⁵ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 146; cf. 159.

⁶⁶ Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 8.

⁶⁷ Cf. McBride, *Wisdom of Your Body*.

safety.⁶⁸ Since big picture safety has to do with a sense of basic trust that the universe is “not aimed only at destruction and loss,”⁶⁹ hope in the Return of Christ and the restorative recreation of all things, including the resurrection of our bodies, is crucial to this overarching sense of safety.⁷⁰ The promise of the eschatological restoration of justice in resurrection life is the concrete basis of big picture safety and hope in Christian life and ministry, especially for trauma survivors whose wounds may not simply heal with time. While time does not heal all wounds, all wounds will be healed in the age beyond time.

In addition to safety, re-narrating/processing, and reconnecting, psychiatrist Judith Herman suggests in her recent book *Truth and Repair* that the “fourth and final stage of recovery . . . is justice.”⁷¹ As with her previous research,⁷² she begins by listening to survivors. In the aftermath of trauma, abuse, and violence, punitive retribution or violent revenge are not what most survivors desire.⁷³ Rather, they want justice to be achieved through truth and repair.⁷⁴ Truth involves acknowledgement, which is the communally validated and supported moral vindication of survivors.⁷⁵ As an aspect of both truth and repair, many survivors desire a full, genuine

⁶⁸ See Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, esp. 33–54, 155–56.

⁶⁹ Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*, 34.

⁷⁰ Jennifer Baldwin (*Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 133–38, here 137) explores redemption and resurrection as healing paths. She rejects redemption as a theological category applicable to trauma survivors as she says it conflates the guilt of commission and the shame of experiencing trauma. That is, she applies redemption to culpable commission of sins and resurrection to “the body sinned against.” However, as explored in Chapter 5, redemption does not apply only to culpable guilt nor is it a transactional exchange; rather, theologically it refers to how God saves us from evil and restores us to life and well-being and therefore applies to both perpetrators and survivors, though in different ways.

⁷¹ See Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 3.

⁷² See Herman, “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 571–602.

⁷³ Herman (*Truth and Repair*, 109–10, here 47; “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 575–79, 589–91) notes that victims’ retributive anger, which she calls “blind rage or abandoned fury,” is directly related to their community’s response: it is “what people feel when they are alone and abandoned.” With communal support, however, anger and vengeful feelings are transformed into “a powerful source of energy for repair.”

⁷⁴ Herman’s previous research (“Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 585–99) similarly emphasized validation, apology, and accountability with the key goals of exposure (of perpetrators and wrongdoing) and safety.

⁷⁵ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 77–91, esp. 85.

apology from the perpetrator,⁷⁶ though these are rare and should not be leveraged as pressure for forgiveness and reconciliation.⁷⁷ Another key element of repair is accountability, which holds not only perpetrators, but bystanders, communities, and societies responsible for making amends that first and foremost contribute to healing survivors' wounds as well as creating safety through prevention.⁷⁸ Healing involves restitution in many forms that can help survivors be "made whole," such as financial compensation and communal action to address systemic problems, including in workplaces and court systems.⁷⁹ After immediate and ongoing support for survivors, healing also seeks rehabilitation as a better preventative measure than punishment, which is in line with core concepts of restorative justice.⁸⁰

Envisioning Restorative Justice

Herman reviews various models and applications of restorative justice, noting both challenging limits and promising possibilities.⁸¹ In helpful restorative justice models, the fundamental principle is healing and repairing harm such that survivors' voices are heard in a consensual

⁷⁶ In a full, genuine apology, the perpetrators (personally and with emotion) need to "admit their crimes and take full responsibility, with remorse and without excuses, to recognize the suffering they have caused, and to show that they are willing to do whatever needs to be done to make amends," which includes promise of change. Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 93–108, here 93. Cf. Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa*.

⁷⁷ Cf. Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 136; Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 95–97.

⁷⁸ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 109–41, 191–231.

⁷⁹ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 145–65, here 165.

⁸⁰ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 167–89.

⁸¹ See Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 113–32, 213–20; "Justice From the Victim's Perspective," 578–79, 97–99. See also Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*; Gavrielides, ed. *Handbook of Restorative Justice*; Karp and Armour, *Little Book of Restorative Justice for Colleges and Universities*; Zehr, *Changing Lenses*; *Transcending: Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Herman (*Truth and Repair*, 118) notes that Zehr's later work demonstrates a shift from being defendant-focused to providing greater attention to survivors.

(rather than adversarial) process aimed at restitution (rather than punishment).⁸² The core values are “nondomination, empowerment, and respectful listening.”⁸³ The key problem with some models of restorative justice she identifies is that they are defendant oriented, such that in practice “the interests of victims may be easily subordinated to an ideological agenda,” such as pressure for forgiveness of or reconciliation with perpetrators.⁸⁴ Therefore, restorative justice must prioritize the needs of survivors, beginning with community support and care, followed by dealing with the offender, which is not the responsibility of the survivor but the community and society.⁸⁵

In order to create the conditions necessary for true restorative justice, Herman argues that power systems must be radically altered—such as dismantling patriarchal dominance and misogynistic tyranny⁸⁶—for the establishment of safety and equality, especially on social levels.⁸⁷ Therefore, creating trauma-safe churches, such as described by Cockayne et al., and deepening communion with Christ as the basis of our relationships with God, self, and others remain priorities.⁸⁸ While power dynamics are a key problem in the world and the Church, the

⁸² Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 113. She also discusses Bronwyn Naylor’s proposal for “a hybrid model ‘with formal court powers but more flexible and collaborative processes,’” including a specialized sexual assault court (130–31; quoting Naylor, “Effective Justice,” 662–84).

⁸³ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 113–14.

⁸⁴ Herman, “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” here 578; *Truth and Repair*, 120–27. Grosch-Miller et al. (“Enabling the Work of the People,” esp. 165) point out that standard liturgies focus on behavioural sin—often by emphasizing repentance in the form of admission of wrongdoing—such that the experiences and needs of sinners (perpetrators) receive far more attention than those of the wounded. And O’Donnell (*Broken Bodies*, 144) notes that a “focus on sin and unworthiness [has] dominated the understanding of the Eucharist.”

⁸⁵ Cf. Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 131–32.

⁸⁶ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 55–73.

⁸⁷ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, esp. 25–73; “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 598. Similarly, from a trauma-informed theological perspective Jennifer Baldwin (*Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 112–18, here 115) discusses human power and agency, arguing that “sin is the abuse of relational power.”

⁸⁸ See Cockayne et al., *Dawn of Sunday*. Herman (*Truth and Repair*, 25–53, here 14) contrasts “two fundamentally different types of power relationship”: tyranny (based on dominance and subordination) and equality (based on mutuality and reciprocity).

fundamentally different nature of the mutual, self-giving love of the Trinity into which we are invited to participate in and through Christ should be the basis of all relationships within the Church and the basis of the Church's relations with the world (as discussed in Chapter 6). This is also why it is crucial that we understand sacrifice in and according to Christ as a non-coercive, free, informed, consensual posture and act of self-giving rather than a dominating demand of the Father met by the passive submission of the Son, which tacitly yet effectively grants divine precedence and validity to systems of patriarchy. In other words, the penal substitutionary theory of atonement and sacrifice is an inherently patriarchal paradigm.

While the challenges of implementing truly restorative justice remain real, the promises are not insubstantial. And in the big picture, eschatological scope of Christian faith, it is precisely the restoration of life and well-being, as embodied by Christ, that stands as the promise of divine justice in the universe. This is impossible on human terms as only God can bring life from death. But God has. And God will.

As I have worked to describe atonement as reconciliation with God, self, and others, it bears repeating that this is not a compulsory or coercive demand, and that it is worked out in an ongoing manner within an eschatological scope.⁸⁹ We may hope that people and relationships will one day be restored, but that day may be in the age to come and there should be no pressure on trauma survivors to reunite with their abusers.⁹⁰ At the same time, Herman also notes that the majority of survivors she interviewed in one study “did wish to free themselves from their

⁸⁹ As described in Chapters 4 and 5, reconciliation with God is the goal of God's gracious activity in healing and restoring us from the trauma and death of sin. In other words, God restores our ability to recognize his love which the trauma of sin hinders us from perceiving. This good news does not come as a coercive demand, but as a gracious invitation for our benefit.

⁹⁰ Cf. Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 117–18.

oppressive burden of anger and indignation.”⁹¹ In this process, grieving with the support of people in their communities was instrumental in recovery. Moreover, forgiveness was a desirable aspect of the unburdening process for all the survivors: “If forgiveness is understood [as] letting go of resentment and moving on with life, then all of the informants aspired to it.”⁹² Therefore, in the broad eschatological scope of the gospel, the aspects of atonement as reconciliation that I have described—especially confession, which involves the exposure of sin on the Cross⁹³—are very much in line with the desires of many trauma survivors.

In the Christian vision of hope and restorative justice I am describing, the Cross is not the satisfaction of a divine need or demand (such as retributive “justice” in the form of punishment by death or satisfaction by blood); rather, the Cross is the confession of sin, the revelation of divine love, and liberation from sin and death (as discussed in Chapter 5). Similarly, the Resurrection is not merely proof of Christ’s innocence, but the inauguration of God’s promise to make all things new, to restore justice, righteousness, and well-being to the cosmos. Based on the Resurrection of Christ, justice is fundamentally about life—specifically, abundant life in and according to Christ (cf. John 10:10). In the Genesis 3 Eden narrative, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is beside the point (literally and theologically). The point is Life. And Jesus Christ

⁹¹ Herman, “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 593.

⁹² Herman, “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” here 593; Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 47, 93–95, 105–10, 121. For substantial discussion of Christian forgiveness (in comparison to both philosophical and psychological understandings), see Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness*. For discussion of forgiveness from a trauma-informed theological perspective, see Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 42–69.

⁹³ Here, I differ with Herman’s earlier argument (“Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 597) on the nature of the exposure of perpetrators and/or wrongdoing. I do not view exposing wrong as wrong or evil as evil as a retributive action. In her more recent work, Herman (*Truth and Repair*, 131–32) still says exposure can be considered retributive; however, the main purposes of exposure are communal recognition of the truth, rebuke of offenders, and prevention. I would not characterize these goals as retributive. Theologically, as discussed earlier, it is through the Cross that sin and its effects are revealed most clearly to us. But this revelation is not the same as retribution. If there is a “retributive” (from Latin *retribuere*: *re-* “back” + *tribuere* “assign”) dimension to the Cross, it is the death of death, the defeat of the cosmic powers of sin, which will one day be fulfilled in resurrection life.

is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (cf. John 14:6). Jesus is life and leads us to life. Sin leads to death (cf. Rom 6:23). As Schmemmann says, “The sin of all sins—the truly ‘original sin’—is not a transgression of rules, but, first of all, the deviation of [humanity’s] love and [our] alienation from God.”⁹⁴ Therefore, among other sorts of hubris, grasping and eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil may represent human attempts at rigid codification of right and wrong as ways to become like God *without needing God* (as discussed in Chapter 4). It has always been a fundamental condition of human nature, of the relationship between creature and Creator, that we *need* God. We need God not just as the transcendent initiator of the universe, but also as the immanent and ongoing source and sustainer of life, which is celebrated in the Eucharist.

According to Jesus, love of God, self (in a healthy way), and neighbour are the centre and sum of all the law and the prophets (see Matt 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34; Luke 10:25–28; cf. Deut 6:4–5; Lev 19:17–18, 33–34). And he links proper application not to formulaic codes, but to seeking, finding, and restoring life: “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:4; cf. Matt 12:1–14; Luke 14:1–14).⁹⁵ The answer is unequivocally to do good, which is fundamentally about safeguarding and saving life. Therefore, from this Christologically founded viewpoint, justice is not so much about the inflexible imposition of the codification of right and wrong as it is about safeguarding, sustaining, and restoring life. The schema of right and wrong involves reward and punishment in a retributive, transactional

⁹⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 94–95; cf. *Eucharist*, 34.

⁹⁵ Yong-Eui Yang (*Jesus and the Sabbath*, 178) notes that according to Tannaitic literature, first-century rabbis allowed violations of the Sabbath on six occasions: circumcision, the Passover, saving Scriptures and food from fire, self-defensive war, saving life, and temple service.

paradigm. The way and truth of life involves grace and love in a restorative paradigm of communion with/in God in and through Christ (as discussed in Chapter 6).

The way God begins the restoration of justice in the cosmos is through the Cross of Christ. This has been linked to a notion of retributive justice (such as Anselm's satisfaction theory and still prominent in some contexts). However, once again, the Cross is the way God chooses to restore right relationship with humanity, to reconcile us to him in Christ, to heal the rift of our alienation from God, ourselves, and others. The Cross of Christ is the means by which God begins to restore life to us, and is, therefore, the true way of restorative justice.

However, rather than just erasing sin and trauma, as if they never happened, the Cross leads to the restoration of life not simply as it was before—before trauma, before abuse, before atrocities—but as eternal resurrection life in Christ. This is a categorically new kind of life. Somehow, through the Cross, the life that God offers us in Christ is beyond what we now have. It is recreative restoration on a new plane—higher, deeper, and more full. It is not escape to a disembodied higher spiritual emanation, but the realization of the Church's sacramental participation in the body of Christ. Precisely what the consummation of the Church and Christ will be is, as Paul puts it, "a great mystery" (Eph 5:32). But it is precisely at this point, the Church's participative union with/in the body of Christ in the Eucharist, that we enter into the life of Christ.

Participating in Christ's Restoration of Justice

Herman concludes *Truth and Repair*, by exploring “the idea of justice as healing for victims, perpetrators, and the larger society.”⁹⁶ Thus, in a big picture view, justice is a wholistic endeavour that leaves nobody out, even while it may appropriately prioritize the needs of survivors. Herman describes the need for justice on a number of levels and in various relational dynamics:

If trauma is truly a social problem, and indeed it is, then recovery cannot be simply a private, individual matter. The wounds of trauma are not merely those caused by the perpetrators of violence and exploitation; the actions or inactions of bystanders—all those who are complicit in or prefer not to know about the abuse or who blame the victims—often cause even deeper wounds. These wounds are part of the social ecology of violence, in which crimes against subordinated and marginalized people are rationalized, tolerated, or rendered invisible. If trauma originates in a fundamental injustice, then full healing must require repair through some measure of justice from the larger community.⁹⁷

This recognition and challenge expands the scope of trauma recovery beyond individuals and communities to include societal and systemic changes.⁹⁸ And while this work certainly begins in the present, the anticipatory hope embedded in the Eucharist also points us beyond, not only beyond the temporal but also beyond the social realm to the cosmic realm, including the spiritual. All things are involved in the Christian vision of trauma recovery and justice as restoration and healing in the age when “Death will be no more; / mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (Rev 21:4).

Chapter 4 argued that sin is a traumatic condition that affects all of humanity and the rest of creation as well.⁹⁹ Therefore, the need for justice as an aspect of trauma recovery in Christ

⁹⁶ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 145–231, here 23.

⁹⁷ Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 3.

⁹⁸ Cf. Kiser and Heath, *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 102.

⁹⁹ See also Boerger, “Original Wound,” 307–21.

must likewise be situated within the overarching scope of God's creative and redemptive activity. Likewise, in addition to remembering the past and remaining ongoing in the present, celebration of the Eucharist anticipates the future—specifically, we anticipate the consummate fulfillment of communion with/in Christ at the Return of Christ.¹⁰⁰ Regarding trauma recovery, Christian hope is grounded in the Resurrection of Christ's body, which stands as the concrete promise of the resurrection of our own bodies. Therefore, regardless of whether we are able to fully process traumatic wounds during our lifetime, regardless of whether others repent, apologize, and change, regardless of whether relationships are restored, and regardless of whether the systemic and social injustices of life at present are radically altered, our hope rests in Christ. Our hope is that come what may, God will make all things new and is, indeed, in the process of doing so already as we participate in the life and ministry of Christ (cf. Rev 21:1–5).

In line with Herman's trauma-informed model of restorative justice that puts the needs of survivors first, exposure of wrongdoing and ownership of responsibility for wrongdoing should involve not just recognition and naming of wrongdoing, but actionable commitments to address the issues resulting from the wrongdoing *and* the issues that may have contributed to the wrongdoing in the first place or have arisen since. Therefore, recognizing that traumatic wounds contribute to the wounding of others is not to absolve perpetrators of responsibility nor to prioritize their needs above those of survivors, but rather to redirect responses to wrongdoing in constructive avenues beyond punitive, retributive modes. As Francine Shapiro urges, "if we don't learn to understand and treat perpetrators successfully, we will continue to have

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 27–48; *For the Life of the World*, 62–65, 78–80, 97; Green, *Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper*, 324–25;

victims.”¹⁰¹ Punishing perpetrators does not substantially benefit survivors nor does it prevent problems in the future because it does nothing to address the underlying root issues.¹⁰² To be sure, apprehending and containing dangerous, predatory people may be necessary and is appropriate in order to establish safety.¹⁰³ However, from a wholistic perspective, the ideal approach would be to identify and heal the wounds of both survivors and perpetrators, though not in precisely the same ways and in appropriate priority.¹⁰⁴ One need not be at the expense of the other, nor need they be addressed in exactly the same way. It is to the benefit of everyone—survivors (first and foremost), families, church communities, and society at large—that *everyone’s* wounds be recognized and addressed appropriately. And if we wish to help prevent trauma, then identifying and healing wounds—especially perhaps latent traumatic wounds—needs to be a normal and ongoing aspect of the life and ministry of the Church.

As a simple practical example of restorative justice, if a church community member were to steal money from another community member, that action should be recognized and named as

¹⁰¹ Shapiro, *Getting Past Your Past*, 215–46, here 216. While it is important to recognize that victims/survivors are not particularly interested in the rehabilitation of their perpetrators (cf. Herman, “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 589), the wholistic perspective shared by Shapiro that I advocate here should not be imposed on survivors of trauma. In the aftermath of abuse, trauma, and death, it is unrealistic and uncaring to demand that those suffering consider the bigger picture beyond the immediacy of their own present state (including grief, anger, numbness, etc.). Therefore, while it is not surprising that victims and survivors are not particularly interested in the restorative rehabilitation of perpetrators, that does not mean that it is not in their best interests or within the wider social responsibility to do so. Simply put, addressing the rehabilitative recovery of perpetrators is the concern and responsibility of communities and society as a whole, not individual survivors. Thus, a domain-based approach to restorative justice is crucial.

¹⁰² Herman (“Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 575–79, 589–96, here 591; cf. *Truth and Repair*, 109–10) notes that survivors did not seek punishment or suffering of perpetrators. And where vengeful feelings were present, most informants “regarded these feelings as alien to their self-image and viewed them almost as an imposition from the perpetrator’s psychopathic inner world.” Recalling Irenaeus’s discussion of the Satanic deception leading to sin in Genesis 3, all retributive, vengeful, violent impulses could be viewed as the external imposition of evil on humanity.

¹⁰³ On incarceration and other forms of accountability geared towards establishing safety, see Herman, “Justice From the Victim’s Perspective,” 589–96; *Truth and Repair*, 127.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 17, 167–89.

wrong and injurious to others. An appropriate response would involve acknowledgement (including the victim naming the wrongdoing and its effect as well as communal recognition and support of the victim), apology (including the perpetrator admitting to the wrongdoing and recognizing its effects), and clear commitment from the perpetrator regarding what will change going forward, including the offer to make amends (which is considered part of a proper apology). However, boundaries will still need to be set—the perpetrator has not yet earned others' trust even though they may be forgiven (which is not forced). The needs and well-being of the violated party are of top priority and must be addressed first. Additionally, investigation into the conditions that allowed for the theft to occur should be undertaken, and any factors contributing to the theft should be addressed, including systemic power imbalances. For instance, it should be determined how the thief gained access to the victim and their resources, and steps should be taken to prevent that from happening in the future.

After that, an additional key piece of wholistic, communal restorative justice is to seek to identify why the wrongdoing was committed in the first place—that is, the further contributing factors related to the perpetrator. For instance, if the perpetrator had been hungry and in need of money for food, that is a real, valid need that the church community can help meet in both short-term and long-term sustainable ways. When the perpetrator's need (if any) has been addressed in appropriate, healthy ways, the reason for the theft has been addressed and the likelihood of another theft is further reduced. The entire community has now benefited from the restoration of justice that addressed both presenting and underlying issues for victim, perpetrator, and community on individual and communal levels. Moreover, the entire community has been drawn closer together and deepened their relational bonds through the process.

Of course, sexually abusing a child is not the same thing as stealing money: the former is far, far more damaging and difficult to recover from. Likewise, a murder is impossible to truly amend. When a life is irreparably damaged or lost, the only hope of real, substantial restoration rests in the eschatological promise of resurrection and the restorative recreation of the cosmos at Christ's Return. Additionally, sexual abuse is not so easily traceable to a valid need: in our culture, everybody needs money (to meet other more basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, etc.), but nobody ever needs to sexually abuse anybody.¹⁰⁵ However, that does not mean the perpetrator/predator of sexual abuse does not have real, valid needs (such as healing for their own traumatic wounds) that are contributing to their abusive behaviour—which is not to posit a simplistic cause and effect dynamic.¹⁰⁶ Again, nobody ever needs to abuse anybody else. Nevertheless, if the perpetrator has been a victim of abuse themselves as a child (or at any other time), then the shame and pain of trauma are deep wounds in their mind, body, and spirit.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the patterns of relating to others, the self-protective strategies, and the coping mechanisms they were forced to develop as a child are still operative.¹⁰⁸ Without identifying and dealing with these deep traumatic wounds, the abuse cycle may repeat itself again and again.

None of what I am describing is a justification or excuse for abuse or to be used as a rationale for marginalizing the needs of survivors, but it is an explanation that can help us deal

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Herman, "Justice From the Victim's Perspective," 572.

¹⁰⁶ Kiser and Heath (*Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, 57–59) discuss white supremacy in relation to traumatized European refugees and their need for healing, without exonerating their culpability. For discussion of addictions as attempts to meet valid underlying, fundamental human needs, see Sullender, *Ancient Sins*, esp. 87–88.

¹⁰⁷ But note that most survivors of childhood sexual abuse do not abuse their own children. See Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 60.

¹⁰⁸ Herman (*Truth and Repair*, 99) reports that many perpetrators (especially of sexual assault and abuse) are not sorry and seem to lack even the capacity for empathy and key executive reasoning, such as envisioning consequences. She later (218) recommends moral education as an aspect of prevention that develops the brain's frontal lobes, which are "the biological foundation for capacities like insight, judgement, understanding another person's perspective, and empathizing with another person's feelings."

with injustice it in a more wholistic and efficacious way than retribution.¹⁰⁹ While it is impossible to undo the wrongdoing and return to the ways things were before the trauma or abuse, the gospel of Christ proclaims that there is something hopeful on the horizon. As incredible as it may seem, the justice of the restoration of life and wellbeing in Christ promises to not merely alleviate pain and move on but to (re)make/restore creation in a new and more glorious form. The recovery from trauma and the restoration of healing in Christ brings new and even more glorious beauty from the most acrid ashes, the most profound joy from the deepest mourning. The hopeful good news of restorative justice is based on the power of Christ to transform trauma into testimony.

From the standpoint of Christian faith—that is, from communion with/in Christ—it is vital that recovery from trauma within a paradigm of restorative justice not be reduced to either social justice or self-actualization *apart from Christ*. Good and worthy as these goals may seem on their own, there is only one who is truly worthy to open the Book of Life: the Lamb who was slain, Christ Jesus (cf. Rev 5:9, 12; 13:8; Isa 53:7; John 1:29, 36; 1 Peter 1:19). Fundamentally, it is not merely human needs (felt, expressed, or observed) that direct Christian ministry; rather, it is the activity of Christ himself.¹¹⁰ Christian ministry is not undertaken on the basis of human strength or expertise, but rather in and through participation in the ministry of Christ by the Spirit according to the will of the Father.¹¹¹

Andrew Purves identifies two ways that ministry can easily (at times almost imperceptibly) fall away from Christ. The first gravitates towards the needs of others (giving)

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Shapiro, *Getting Past Your Past*, 244.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 43–47.

¹¹¹ Cf. Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 9–30.

and the second towards the needs of the self (receiving). First, Christian ministry must participate in the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. “Without that,” says Purves, “ministry collapses into social work.”¹¹² This assertion does not invalidate social work, but rather situates it within the domain of Christian worldview and clarifies the roles of different caregivers.¹¹³ Pastors are not social workers. However, the proclamation of the Word need not necessarily always be explicit even in ecclesial contexts or in pastoral roles (though it most often will be). Fundamentally, the proclamation is about participating in the life of the Word made flesh as the Church constitutes the Body of Christ in the world today. In other words, the proclamation of the Word (Christ) must not be merely words but a lived embodiment, abiding in Christ. Thus, it is the Incarnation of Christ that stands as the foundation and overarching framework of Christian life and ministry in the Church and world.

Second, those who receive ministry must be provided with a way to respond that is anchored and oriented in Christ. If Christian ministry does not provide a basis for life in Christ, then “all we encourage is self-help.”¹¹⁴ Whether it is recovery from trauma; food, clothing, and shelter for the hungry, exposed, and displaced; or liberation for those in captivity or oppression; the fundamental basis for healing, provision, and freedom is Christ.¹¹⁵ The avenue of such ministry, which does not render recipients passive, is Christ, the one who fulfills the mission of God’s Spirit in the world (Luke 4:18–19; cf. Isa 61:1–2):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

¹¹² Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 46.

¹¹³ Recall the discussion in Chapter 3; cf. Boerger, “Original Wound,” 315–19.

¹¹⁴ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 46.

¹¹⁵ On liberation and the eschatology of the Cross in conversation with Moltmann, see Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 140–49.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Purves helps emphasize the importance of providing those receiving care and ministry with a way to respond that situates their life in Christ:

If there is no word from the Lord, there is really no content to the gospel, and ministry has no sure center in God. And if there is no way given by God to respond to a word from God that is spoken or mediated to the people (consider, for example, the sacraments as the Word of God not spoken but mediated), the people are ultimately cast back upon themselves to do the best they can do in their response. This is a cruel, despairing, and unpastoral thing to do, for it defeats the grace of the gospel at the point where it is needed most of all.¹¹⁶

Therefore, in line van der Kolk's insistence that people must be participants not merely patients in their cure,¹¹⁷ active responses to the invitation of Christ are crucial to trauma recovery in Christ as well as all of Christian life and ministry.

In light of Purves's call for Christ-centred, Christ-empowered responses, the Eucharist may be viewed as the paradigmatic response to the gospel of Christ. Importantly, it is a mediated, embodied message and response that thereby transcends the content of the words of the liturgy (as the *work of the people*, liturgy is not reducible to words).¹¹⁸ For trauma survivors, the mediated nature of the Eucharist as an embodied, visceral encounter with the real presence of Christ is essential. The simple yet profound act transcends orderly words, linear cognition, and factual memory (fitting as these things are). The Eucharist provides the paradigmatic Christocentric and Christoform proclamation of and response to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹¹⁶ Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, 46.

¹¹⁷ van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 36–38.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 11–26; Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, 164–66.

Nowhere is such an embodied encounter more necessary than in the bodies, souls, and spirits of those who have been traumatized.

In keeping with the Christological foundation and participatory nature of Christian ministry and the sacramental nature of the cosmos, it is not the form or formality of the Eucharist that renders it real and effective (as discussed in the previous chapter). Just as Purves argues that Christian ministry collapses into either social work or self-help without Christ, so too does any celebration of the Eucharist collapse into ritualized tokenism or magical manipulation without Christ. The Eucharist, like all aspects of Christian life and ministry, fundamentally relies on the Person and presence of Jesus Christ, mediated and made present by the power of the Spirit (using whatever means the Lord deems fitting) as the will of the Father intends. The gravity and joy of the revelation of God with us should never cease to evoke wonder, particularly in the midst of daily life.¹¹⁹

The Church needs the Eucharist on an ongoing basis not because it is ineffective or incomplete but because it is fundamental to the nature of human-divine relations: we need God. Always. God gives of himself and provides for our life with/in him by giving us the life of Christ with/in ourselves, personally and communally. Thus, the restoration of life in Christ, the realization of justice, is an ongoing aspect of the Church's life and ministry in Christ. Likewise (or perhaps consequently), recovery and healing from trauma is never a self-sufficient undertaking of human resiliency and tenacity—though it surely will involve both.¹²⁰ Instead, it is Christ-reliant, Spirit-filled empowerment, involving resiliency and tenacity, by which trauma

¹¹⁹ On joy and the Eucharist, see Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 32–35.

¹²⁰ Cf. Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology*, 7–11, 94.

survivors and the communities around them *participate* in the life and ministry of Christ. Again, the Eucharist is central to and paradigmatic of the recovery from trauma as communion with/in Christ. This is one reason why the Eucharist is not only a taste but is also real, substantial sustenance of body, soul, and spirit as we anticipate and participate in the transformation of trauma into testimony.

Conclusion

This chapter has reflected on the risen body of Christ in relation to the tension of the “already and not yet” hope of the gospel. As the marks of Crucifixion on the risen body of Christ are crucial sites of invitational testimony, so too is the breaking of bread in the Eucharist God’s self-offering to us, meeting us in brokenness to welcome us into new wholeness. In Christ, salvation involves the reintegration of the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit—in (comm)union with Christ. As noted in Chapter 4, Irenaeus anticipates the “future reintegration and union of the three [body, soul, and spirit] . . . that they would share one and the same salvation.”¹²¹ The Christian vision of hope according to an eschatologically oriented paradigm of restorative justice described here may be viewed as the promised fulfillment of the salvific reintegration of humanity in Christ, even while we participate in its outworking in the present. While recovery from trauma may take a lifetime (or longer) our hope remains anchored in Christ. Thus, the Church maintains a crucial tension in the world, inhabiting a liminal middle space held together by Christ. Through ongoing communion with/in Christ, the Church abides in the vulnerable and resilient posture of trust in God, which is essential in the healing of trauma. By participating in

¹²¹ *Haer.* 5.6.1 (*ICF* 160); cf. *Haer.* 5.9.1.

communion with Christ, members of the Church support one another as we grow in Christ, recover from trauma, and embody a prophetic message of both challenge and hope to a broken, hurting world: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

THE GIFTS OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD: IN CONCLUSION

“Terrible fruit was on the tree
In the acre of Gethsemane;
For us by Calvary’s distress
The wine was rackèd from the press;
Now in our altar-vessels stored
Is the sweet Vintage of our Lord.”
—Gerard Manley Hopkins¹

“I do not give to you as the world gives.”
—Jesus, John 14:27²

This dissertation has argued that within the incarnate life and ministry of Christ, the Cross is the crucial site at which God in Christ takes into himself and integratively processes the trauma of sin and death, inviting humanity to the healing, wholeness, and reintegration of salvation in Jesus Christ. Through (trauma-informed) celebration of the Eucharist as the invitational encounter with his crucified and risen body, the Church communes with/in Christ and participates in his life and ministry, both receiving and sharing the saving life of Christ, which includes recovery from the past, sustenance in the present, and hope for the future. Thus, the understanding of Crucifixion (as the recapitulation and integrative processing of trauma), atonement (as reconciliation with God, self, and others), sacrifice (as self-giving love enacted in trust), sacrament (as participation in the reality of Christ), and justice and hope (as the ongoing restoration of life in Christ) all contribute to Christ-centred, trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist.

¹ Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Barnfloor and Winepress”; quoted in Zahnd, *Wood between the Worlds*, 15.

² Jesus also says in John 10:17–18, “I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

As the essential, embodied form of salvific sustenance, Communion is central and paradigmatic to life in Christ in the present age. The Eucharist is an ongoing practice that does not reach an overly neat and tidy terminal conclusion. By its sacramental nature, the Eucharist truly participates in the heavenly reality of Christ while simultaneously being grounded in the bodily context of human life in the present world. The unity and tension of sacramental encounters with divine presence, mediated through material creation—especially basic food and drink—are at the core of the dynamic life of the Church as the Body of Christ. Therefore, while trauma-informed celebration of the Eucharist may involve many diverse notes and voices—such as hope and lament, joy and sorrow, thanksgiving and silence—they should each be allowed to have their appropriate places in a harmonious blend that is neither triumphalistic in the erasure of trauma nor oppressive in the perpetuation or legitimization of harmful suffering and trauma.

This dissertation has worked to maintain the central, pivotal place of the Cross in relation to the Eucharist while situating the Person of Christ himself—incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended, and returning—as the fundamental point of reference and the light according to and by whom all else must be viewed, understood, and articulated. This argument is, therefore, fundamentally relational and practical since it is based on and contextualized in Jesus Christ and his incarnate life and ministry. This approach allows for and recognizes many valid perspectives which may at times seem conflicting. However, since we all see in part and know in part (cf. 1 Cor 13:9–12), it is crucial to the life and witness of the Church for many perspectives to be voiced not in monotonous uniformity, but in harmonious unison. Thus, the emphases in this work are not intended to stand on their own as an entirely balanced and self-contained work of theological witness but rather are meant to be situated within the wider body of other works of, approaches to, and perspectives on trauma-informed theology, especially regarding the Cross and

the Eucharist. Only by speaking together can the members of the Body of Christ begin to embody and proclaim a faithful and true (albeit partial) witness of the life and love of Christ.

There are many other practical implications of the argument presented here that have not been discussed at length. For example, the epidemic of sexual abuse and misconduct in churches must be addressed without excuse or exception.³ Churches cannot be places of restorative justice, healing, and hope if they are not safe. This dissertation has focused on trauma-informed, trauma-sensitive celebration of the Eucharist, highlighting the need for accessible, responsive, and engaged church communities. However, the details of establishing and maintaining such communities have not been given comprehensive treatment. There are many excellent resources for church community growth (in a qualitative sense), spiritual formation, practical administration, and so forth.⁴ It remains necessary to combine the suggestions for trauma-informed, trauma-sensitive celebration of the Eucharist provided here with other insights to and aspects of the life of the Church at all levels, from immediate local communities to the timeless ecclesial communion of the saints in Christ. While it remains important to appropriately contextualize the application of this argument, the nature of the Eucharist as the life of Christ mediated through food and drink by the power of the Spirit allows for many valid, life-giving forms of the Eucharist to be recognized and celebrated.

While challenges are inherent to following Christ in the world, including the perhaps life-long process of trauma recovery, participatory communion with/in Christ is the source of salvific life that anticipates the even greater fullness of resurrection life. At many times, especially in the

³ See, for example, Altaras and Penner, eds., *Resistance*.

⁴ E.g., Swinton, *Raging with Compassion*; Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*; Jones and Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence*.

aftermath of trauma, the sustenance of Christ's body and blood may be experienced as little more than a mechanical motion; but the absence of human perception does not negate the reality of the saving and sustaining presence and activity of God. Many times, the benefits may only be perceivable retrospectively. Nevertheless, in combination with the faithful presence of God with us, the gathered presence of the community of faith in the shared meal at Christ's table is a slow and steady work of waiting and worshipping.

Incarnation and Offering: Human Agency in Christ

A crucial tension running throughout this dissertation is that between suffering and hope, brokenness and wholeness. This tension is not erased or ignored in celebration of the Eucharist. Particularly where trauma-recovery is concerned, the Eucharist may in fact heighten this tension. As a fundamental form of divine *care* for the human body, soul, and spirit, the Eucharist may contribute to the "*cure*" of recovery from trauma and all else, but we must always wait for the full reality of resurrection life in Christ. Nevertheless, such hope should manifest in the present as practical action towards the restorative justice of life in Christ. "Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is," says Jürgen Moltmann, "but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present."⁵ The *flesh of every unfulfilled present* is most poignantly embodied in the bodies of trauma survivors as the community of faith gathers in celebration of the Eucharist. The promises of resurrection life in Christ are not neutral. Yet rather than merely adding further discomfort to the distress of trauma, the Eucharist is life-

⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21.

giving for it provides a glimpse of the joy set before us, inspiring endurance in the present through the enduring presence of Christ (cf. Heb 12:2).

As argued throughout this dissertation, humans need God, and God meets humans in their need and meets human needs. The presence of God with us in the midst of our need is a present reality, albeit an experience that may only become apparent in retrospect. While the risen body of Christ is the assurance of resurrection life in Christ (God meeting our needs), the fulfillment of this promise awaits consummate fulfillment in the age to come. Nowhere is this more keenly felt than in the aftermath of trauma and the anguish of grief.

The Eucharist is paradigmatic of the dynamic of reliance upon and empowerment in Christ through the Holy Spirit according to the will of the Father. While the first phase of the Eucharist is oblation,⁶ any way that we are able to offer anything to God is derivative of and dependent upon God's creative, providential, and redemptive activity. Therefore, the fundamental offering we bring to God in the Eucharist is our need. Thus, we may pray and proclaim:

Lord Jesus Christ,
 Our offering is our need.
 Our need is you.
 Lord, have mercy.
 Christ, have mercy.

Need is not a problem.
 Need is human.
 Need is fulfilled
 In the Human One,
 In the Son of Man,
 In Jesus Christ.

⁶ Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 120.

The celebration of the Eucharist corresponds to the four acts of the liturgical eucharistic drama as described in 1 Cor 11:23–25: Jesus took, he gave thanks, he broke the bread, and he gave.⁷ It is vital—in both theological thought and the practice of worship—that we acknowledge the primacy of Christ’s *offering*, which in turn makes possible both our *acceptance* and our *offering* in union with Christ. The receptive and active participatory nature of partaking of and sharing in Christ’s self-offertory gift reflect the nature of trauma recovery as an active process on the part of survivors that nonetheless depends on the presence and support of others and, most fundamentally, the presence of God with Us, Emmanuel, Jesus Christ who sustains and empowers us. In other words, Christ does what we cannot do for ourselves alone; but rather than rendering us passive patients,⁸ God’s invitation is to participate in the reintegrative process of salvation in Christ.

Our *acceptance* of the grace of God in Christ is demonstrated by taking the communion elements and by eating the body and drinking blood of Christ. Although, this is often referred to as an *oblation* in which we *offer* the materials for communion (bread and wine), the more fundamental offering of the Lord’s Supper is Christ *giving to us* his own body and blood. So while we do, in a sense, provide material food and drink for the ritual, the essential and more fundamental point is that God is our ultimate provider and the ultimate provision is Christ’s own body and blood. Anything good we bring to the communion table is a derivative participation in God’s gracious generosity.

⁷ The four phases of the Eucharist are oblation, eucharist, fraction, and communion. See Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 120.

⁸ Cf. van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*, 38.

This theological sequence is reflected in the words of Scripture: “While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body’” (Matt 26:26). First, it is Jesus who acts, exercising his own agency in taking, blessing and giving thanks, breaking, giving, and instructing. Therefore, it is God’s will, agency, and actions which are to be understood as essential and principal in celebration of the Eucharist and salvation itself, including the restorative re-integration of trauma-recovery.

Second, when Jesus initially takes the bread, rather than primarily representing our offering to him, this is better understood as emblematic of his taking human form/likeness, his Incarnation—after all, he says, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). By accepting the bread and wine as Christ’s body and blood, we remember the *kenotic* sacrificial offering (i.e., self-giving love) of his Incarnation, which, as a “holistic moment,” includes his death on the Cross.⁹ In the words of the hymn in Philippians 2:6–8, Jesus Christ

who, though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God
 as something to be exploited,
 but emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave,
 being born in human likeness.
 And being found in human form,
 he humbled himself
 and became obedient to the point of death—
 even death on a cross.

Therefore, it is most theologically fitting to begin the first act of the eucharistic drama with our recognition of the *holistic moment* of Christ’s self-offering in *kenotic* humility and by accepting him as God with us, Emmanuel, who takes on the form of human flesh to be life-giving bread for

⁹ O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 18.

us. This is crucial for what Paul calls “discerning the body” (1 Cor 11:29).¹⁰ Rather than first presenting an offering to God, it is God’s offering to us that we first recognize and accept. The Eucharist participates in this *moment* as the body, soul, and spirit commune with God, self, and others.

Moreover, the efficacy of the Eucharist does not depend on psychological sciences (nor metaphysical causes and effects) any more than it does any other form of human efforts or abilities. Rather, in celebrating the Eucharist, the Church proclaims, enacts, and embodies our complete reliance upon God. Rather than a disembodied, hyper-spiritualized notion of salvation, a trauma-informed view recognizes the inherently interconnected nature of the human body, soul, and spirit. Therefore, the psychological dimensions of salvation in/through Christ should not be severed from the promises of bodily resurrection and spiritual rebirth. The life of Christ—in the fullest sense—is a gift from God. The appropriate response is to receive the gift, share the gift, and give thanks. As we do so, we are brought into communion with God, ourselves, and others not through mechanical metaphysical motion or magical manipulation, but through the profound simplicity of sacramental participation in the mystery of the life of Christ.

The Church’s reliance upon the love of the Father, the life of the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit is the salvific source of our ability to really and truly participate in the life of Christ as the Body of Christ. The restoration of human agency in Christ lies at the heart of Eucharist, which is both paradigmatic and empowering for all of Christian life and faith. The participative nature of the Eucharist reflects the participative process of trauma recovery, which must occur in community but which cannot be done on behalf of another person and cannot be

¹⁰ Cf. Nash, “Discerning the Body,” 37–38; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 891–94.

passive on the part of survivors. As claimed in Chapters 3 and 4, Christ *reveals* the trauma of sin and *fulfills* the human need to integratively process trauma and all other wounds in spirit, soul, and body. Rather than merely providing a retrospective lens, psychological traumatology helps provide new language and insight into the life and ministry of Christ, particularly the Crucifixion, Descent, and Resurrection. Both survivors and supporters in communities of faith are invited in Christ to actively participate in the process of Christ's transformation of trauma to testimony.

While pastors and priests surely play a crucial role in the celebration of the Eucharist, this dissertation has highlighted the need for *communal* celebration in the fullest sense of the word, particularly where the lives and needs of traumatized members are concerned. Church communities are greater than the sum of their individual parts, and the ecclesial Body of Christ is united in Christ beyond space and time. In union with Christ, the whole Body, with all its diverse members, participates in giving and receiving of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist. By building accessible, responsive, and engaged church communities, we can create safe contexts into which worshippers can bring their honest, authentic selves in whatever state they may be.

The Lord's table is not sterile and static but dynamic and alive. Here, anger, lament, and anguish have their place alongside peace, joy, and thanksgiving, for all these and more are gathered up in Christ (as described in Chapter 4 and applied in Chapter 7). Rather than requiring that we make ourselves acceptable to enter into worship, God accepts us, invites us to take and eat, and in so doing meets with/in us in the simple, profound, and necessary practice of eating and drinking. For many traumatized people, meeting at the Lord's table requires great courage and should be met with all the gentleness and sensitivity at our disposal in Christ. Gathering with

one another, we offer ourselves to God and find God in our midst, offering Godself to us in the communion of love.

Our offering is our response to and participation in Christ's preeminent self-offering. It is only through humble recognition and acceptance of God's provision that we are able to make an appropriate offering of thankfulness from both the fruits of our labours and our accessible, responsive, and engaged presence and then also share it with others. In this way, the acceptance and offering of the communion elements reflect and empower the practice of receiving and giving love in the community of faith. As O'Donnell concludes, such communing love must be *embodied*: "Loving my body is loving and being in communion with other bodies, made possible by and as a response to the love of God."¹¹ As the central, core, and enduring embodied sacrament and mystery of Christian life and faith, the salvific sustenance of the Eucharist is fundamental to not only our physical bodies, but our souls, and spirits as well.

While bodies have been a neglected, misunderstood, marginalized, traumatized, and shamed aspect of eucharistic theology and practice, they have always been and remain essential to the Eucharist. Without either the Incarnate body of Christ or the literal bodies of the ecclesial Body of Christ, there is no Eucharist. These bodies are all essential, but this dissertation has also worked to uphold a multidimensional theological anthropology based on the Person of Christ and the language of Irenaeus: "human beings, not merely parts of them, were made in the image of God. . . . It is the commingling and union of all these [flesh, soul, and spirit] which constitutes a complete human being."¹² Accordingly, in and through celebration of the Eucharist we also

¹¹ O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*, 203.

¹² *Haer.* 5.6.1 (*ICF* 160); cf. *Haer.* 5.9.1. See discussion in Chapter 4.

anticipate and hope for the “future reintegration and union of the three [body, soul, and spirit] . . . that they would share one and the same salvation.”¹³ The Eucharist is not a magical cure, but it is an essential aspect of the reintegrative process of salvation, including recovery from trauma.

While this dissertation has argued for the essential and pivotal nature of the Cross in relation to the Eucharist and trauma-recovery, this focus has in part been a response to both theologies that perpetuate or legitimize harmful suffering, trauma, and death as well as theologies that displace or replace the Cross from trauma-informed theology and eucharistic worship. As has been maintained throughout the preceding chapters, the Cross of Christ is a crucial transcendent moment in the outworking of God’s salvific, redemptive work in the cosmos. However, it is not properly separable from any other aspect of the Incarnation—Annunciation, Resurrection, Ascension, and Return included. As it was for the first disciples turned apostles of Christ, discerning the wisdom, power, and presence of God in the midst of trauma may often be a retrospective and communal task. In this too is the presence of Holy Saturday: the silence of waiting, of unknowing, of paradox. As the polyphonic Gospels bear witness, no single view of life, death, and resurrection is adequate on its own. The faithful witness of the Church ever and always relies on a chorus of diverse voices, not as a disembodied angelic choir in the heavenlies, but as living, breathing witnesses of Christ, even and especially in the silence between death and resurrection, trauma and recovery.

Like those disciples on the ancient road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13–35), my prayer for those of us on the path of recovery is that one day, at a meal we may have eaten a thousand times before, we would recognize Christ in our midst and, recalling the burning of our hearts, know

¹³ *Haer.* 5.6.1 (*ICF* 160); cf. *Haer.* 5.9.1.

that we were never alone along the way. “Remember,” says Jesus, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).

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