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Following the Man of Sorrows: A Theology of Suffering for Spiritual Formation

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

FOLLOWING THE MAN OF SORROWS:
A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
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Portland Seminary
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 16, 2018
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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Biblical References: All biblical references are taken from the 2011 New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted. At times, other translations are preferred over the 2011 NIV for more nuanced gender-inclusive language, especially passages considered by this writer to be referring to all of humanity when a masculine term/metaphor/case ending is used in the original. Exceptions are made to this preference when a term or metaphor is considered part of the revelation and manifestation of the second person of the trinity, who is variously revealed as Son, Son of man, Lord, Prince, King, and so on.

Statement of Gender-Inclusiveness: Translation presents a complex and multi-faceted challenge for every language and culture, even those of the original languages. In this paper, preference is given to a construct of humanity that hopes to include equally every culture, every tribe, every nation, and all variations of human personality, attributes, and gender. Therefore, a beginning point for this paper will be that men and women, equally and together, are created in the image of God and called to spiritual formation into the image of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Even when masculine terms and metaphors referring to Christ as “Son” or “Man” are retained, as in the title of the paper, they are retained for revelatory reasons and not to exclude in any way daughters or women nor to elevate in any way sons or men.

Some directly quoted source material may not utilize preferred gender-inclusive language. Even though the original language may be retained in these quotations (e.g. “man” rather than humanity, people, or person), it is the opinion of this author that the spirit and meaning of the original material is in keeping with the statements above.

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Dedicated to

The walking wounded, comrades of the valley, who think they are alone and yet are not. Those in wilderness experiences, exiles, and victims: may you all rise up, like the Man of Sorrows, as wounded healers who will comfort and care for the least of these—Christ's living body.

And to God who has “reconciled [us] by Christ's physical body through death.”

May we all fill up in [our] flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of [Christ's] body, which is the church. [We] have become its servant[s] by the commission God gave [us] to present [...] the word of God in its fullness—[...] the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in [us], the hope of glory. [...] He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end [we] strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in [us].

Col. 1:22-29

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“Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand....
I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape.”

—Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*



Pietà (after Delacroix), Vincent van Gogh, 1889

Source: Van Gogh Museum, accessed November 26, 2017,
<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0168V1962>

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Abstract

Suffering. Salvation's conduit. People are often reluctant to talk about suffering, unable to find words. This reluctance usually lasts until, in the midst of crisis, the only way ahead is *through* suffering. In these crises, people typically reach out to caregivers—pastors and priests, counselors and social workers. But what if the same reluctance affects these caregivers? What if they, too, are often unable to find adequate words?

Jesus—Man of Sorrows—makes plain the imperative of taking up our cross. How is this accomplished? This dissertation offers an answer, a theology of suffering focused on spiritual formation—formation into the image of a suffering God. Emerging from lived experiences in valleys of adversity, this formational theology offers conceptual and practical ways to narrate biographies of adversity, then help others give sorrow words and grow, thus taking up our cross.

Chapter one introduces the challenges of approaching suffering in theological and formational language, and deciding what is both relevant and necessary.

Chapter two provides a brief survey of suffering as formative in the biblical narratives, where it emerges as a formative theme and a prerequisite to glory.

A five-type taxonomy in chapter three facilitates an examination of various views of suffering in Christian faith as relational postures to Jesus—Man of Sorrows. These perspectives offer a kaleidoscope of multiple postures, each insufficient by itself to give a full picture of suffering's role in formation.

Chapter four utilizes trauma psychology as a paradigm for constructs of growth through suffering.

Chapter five considers language, culture, and the arts—universal lenses mediating the perception of suffering and caregiving.

Finally, chapter six offers a new survey tool to assess relational postures, a graphic illustration of posttraumatic growth, a story arc approach to suffering, and a list of biblical parallels suggesting formative metaphors.

CHAPTER 1:

GETTING ACQUAINTED

“I wish for America, which I love very much,
that it may find a new way to a willingness
to understand and to accept suffering
and that God may preserve it from destructive illusions.”¹

—Helmut Thielicke

Introduction: Toward a Theology of Suffering for Spiritual Formation

I had no words. It was the spring of 1982, and I found myself sitting near the casket of my only brother Richard. The theology of my upbringing gave me many gifts, but left me speechless in my overwhelming grief. I knew the language of a triumphalist evangelicalism, “Oh, Victory in Jesus,” but not the language of a refined theology of suffering. I attempted to follow the advice of friends by leaning into a blind faith in resilience and submitting to the tyranny of prescribed joy.

My wife’s diagnosis of stage-4 lymphoma three years later caused my strategy to waver. Then, after several misdiagnoses, many medical mistakes, a six-year struggle, and a failed bone-marrow transplant at Mayo Clinic, my wife of only eight short years died—a victim of iatrogenic medicine.²

I began a journey, exhausted and ill-equipped, into the valley of suffering instead of away from it, acknowledging it—all of it—instead of avoiding it. Along the way, I met

¹ “Between Heaven and Earth: Conversations with American Christians—Helmut Thielicke,” 189, accessed June 27, 2017, <http://www.ccel.us/between.toc.html>.

² “Denoting response to medical or surgical treatment, as induced by the treatment itself; usually used for unfavorable responses or infections,” *Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary*. S.v. “iatrogenic,” accessed November 7, 2017, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/iatrogenic>.

many others on similar journeys, and writers who had journeyed through the valley before me, like Vance Havner: “I never dreamed so many were in the dark valley,”³ and Gene Edwards: “I utterly underestimated the number of devastated Christians out there.”⁴

I write to and for those who are, or one day will become, comrades of the valley; primarily, I write for those who endeavor to care for the suffering, either now or in the future. This is my hope: that the words written here will further honest dialogue about suffering in the life of the disciples of the Suffering Servant, a dialogue that is comprehensive, yet focused; multifaceted, yet clear; respectful of mystery, yet not mystifying; and inclusive of what is both relevant and necessary. I hope, too, that you find something to comfort you, that you realize you are not alone, and like Vance Havner, you discover that “our Lord is the leader of this society” of the shattered, our “fraternity of the brokenhearted.”⁵ He is the “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”⁶

This is the Jesus I had preferred not to follow; and yet the Man of Sorrows is the one all synoptic gospel writers announce as most necessary for discipleship: “Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”⁷ This dimension of discipleship is perhaps what was missing from American Christianity for twentieth-

³ Vance Havner, *Though I Walk through the Valley* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1974), 28.

⁴ Gene Edwards, *A Tale of Three Kings: A Study in Brokenness* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), ix.

⁵ Havner, *Though I Walk through the Valley*, 28-29.

⁶ Isa. 53:3 (OJB).

⁷ Matt. 10:38 (NIV). Matthew includes this twice. Here the statement is put in the negative, “whoever does not.” The other three times, Matt. 16:24, Mark 8:34, and Luke 9:23 are worded positively, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must take up the cross and follow me.” Luke adds the word “daily,” making it most emphatically a filter question: can you do this?

century German theologian Helmut Thielicke when he published in 1965 the words at the beginning of this chapter, “I wish for America, which I love very much, that it may find a new way to a willingness to understand and to accept suffering and that God may preserve it from destructive illusions.”⁸ Standing in his shadow, hearing the loud echo of his words, I am ushered to this moment asserting that his words are just as valid today—and perhaps more necessary.

To date, few works qualify as theologies of suffering. The first ten responses to a Google search of the terms “theology of suffering” do not include any books. The number three response is a very brief internet article on avoiding a “false” theology of suffering; the article offers no “true” theology of suffering.⁹

Why are there so few works that qualify as theologies of suffering? The answers are not complicated. No one wants to suffer. Additionally, a merely academic approach to suffering seems ill-suited to the task, making it even easier to understand the dearth of such works. For like Doug Frank, retired Oregon Extension professor, most of us are “loathe to follow the Crucified One to the place of tears”; we use “an infinite variety of ploys to keep [our lives] on the known track.” We run, he says, from “any vacuum that might suck [our] sadness, anger, or despair up into the center of [our] vision”; and we

⁸ “Between Heaven and Earth: Conversations with American Christians—Helmut Thielicke,” 189.

⁹ “Avoiding a False Theology of Suffering,” Ligonier Ministries, accessed September 12, 2017, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/avoiding-false-theology-suffering/>.

devour “theological systems in order to make [our] world cohere and avoid the invitation of Jesus into the dark.”¹⁰

When we do suffer, most seem to prefer finding comfort in one of the many astute first-person narratives, articulated by poets, theologians, and philosophers. These, I believe, belong in a category of what might be called “witness” literature,¹¹ such as Dr. Carolyn Forché’s *Against Forgetting*.¹² John Shutz’s label “biographies of reversal”¹³ also seems appropriate. Perhaps in suffering the demand for companions is greater than the demand for theories of possible meaning or attempts to answer the perennial lament, “Why?”

Global reconciliation efforts often facilitate collections of victim stories in order to give voice to the unheard minorities and to give legitimacy to the marginalized politically, economically, and religiously. These collections are often studied for terms of implacability and reconciliation, like Goran Basic’s study of the Bosnian war.¹⁴ These collections bear witness in biographies of reversal for whole people groups.

¹⁰ Doug Frank, “The Life of the Mind and the Disciple of Jesus” (Reviving the Christian Mind, Wheaton College; Wheaton, IL, 1997).

¹¹ Horace Engdahl, ed., *Witness Literature: Proceedings of the Nobel Centennial Symposium [Stockholm, 4 - 5 December 2001]* (River Edge, NJ: World Scientific, 2002), 5–6. In his introductory essay, “Philomela’s Tongue: Introductory Remarks on Witness Literature,” Horace Engdahl describes witness literature as “the literary innovation of our time” based on a remark by Elie Wiesel in 1977 regarding the “literature of testimony,” quoted in Elie Wiesel, “The Holocaust as a Literary Inspiration,” *Dimensions of the Holocaust*, ed. Elliot Leifkovitz (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1977), 9.

¹² Carolyn Forché, ed., *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

¹³ John Shutz in *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 133, quoted in Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus & Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 127. Agosto uses this term to refer to Paul’s list of suffering and hardships in 2 Cor. 6:4-10.

¹⁴ Goran Basic, “Conditions for Reconciliation: Narratives of Survivors from the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Journal of Criminal Justice and Security* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 2015): 107–126, accessed

A short list of works offered as Theologies of Suffering will be reviewed later in this chapter after a sampling of related theories from other closely related fields, like philosophy and history.

If Ignacio Martín-Baró's words are true—that “there are truths that can be discovered only through suffering or from the critical vantage point of extreme situations”¹⁵—then perhaps it is also easier to understand why most postures toward suffering, current and historical ones, and many beliefs about suffering are actually hindering the development of adequate theologies of suffering. In fact, even the disciples, when facing Jesus after his resurrection, do not have an adequate theology of suffering until he helps them develop one by explaining the role of suffering in the life of the Messiah. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus, whom Jesus called “foolish” and “slow to believe” because they did not understand suffering and the work of the Messiah, might be much like us. Even when we think we are highly developed in our Christology and theology, expounding on our view of what happened in Jerusalem, we miss the Man of Sorrows in our midst.

The Intersection of *Via Dolorosa* and *Imago*

Ignacio Martín-Baró's words suggest that there are truths about being shaped and molded into the image of Jesus, Man of Sorrows, that we may only discover through suffering—the intersection of suffering and Christian spiritual formation. To understand

November 25, 2017,
https://www.academia.edu/25104418/Conditions_for_Reconciliation_Narratives_of_Survivors_from_the_War_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.

¹⁵ Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J., *Acción e Ideología: Psicología Social Desde Centroamérica*, (San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990), x. Quoted in Kevin F. O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 218.

this intersection, we will investigate it from a variety of street corners through a variety of sources. The purpose of this dissertation is to present such an investigation in order to build the beginnings of a theology of suffering for spiritual formation.

A theology of suffering for spiritual formation or, more precisely perhaps, a formational theology of suffering, requires some defining and delimiting. One issue is how a theological treatment of suffering is to be informed by, yet distinguished from, a growing number of works in other disciplines. These works emerge in diverse fields, yet they radiate the same sense of urgency in responding to the increasingly significant challenge of understanding the global scale of human suffering.

Understanding the challenge of suffering in an interdisciplinary approach is the purpose of Ghent University senior researcher Stijn Joye's 2012 article, entitled "Suffering as a Discipline? Scholarly Accounts on the Current and Future State of Research on Media and Suffering."¹⁶ Joye's title alone suggests what he describes as "an emerging field of research within humanities and social sciences [which] concerns itself with the issue of suffering."¹⁷ In the social sciences, for instance, Ian Wilkinson, a University of Kent sociologist, attempts to explain how encounters with human suffering effect change in beliefs and attitudes, as well as how cultural attitudes shape our

¹⁶ Stijn Joye, *Suffering as a Discipline? Scholarly Accounts on the Current and Future State of Research on Media and Suffering*, eds. Bart Cammaerts and Nick Anstead, *MEDIA@LSE Electronic Working Papers*, 23rd ed. (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

perceptions of suffering.¹⁸ He notes particularly in his research how he was troubled by a lack of attention to the actual experiences of suffering.¹⁹

Historian Joseph A. Amato, in *Victims and Values: A History and a Theory of Suffering*, contends that in recent times, the competing claims of victims of suffering “threaten identity, conscience, and public discourse.”²⁰ Yet avoiding these claims is not an effective strategy, for he also says, “if we have no sufferings or sacrifices to call our own, we have no story to tell, and with no story to tell, we are no people at all.”²¹ So, for Amato, at the very least, identity formation of the people of God—their stories and their theologies—must also include their stories of suffering.

Princeton professor of English Jonathan Lamb, in *The Rhetoric of Suffering: Reading the book of Job in the Eighteenth Century*, masterfully and artfully demonstrates how views of order, norms, and narrative structures can easily influence one’s capacity to read and understand.²² Using Job as a trope, Lamb traces the abiding “cultural antinomy” between the literary norms—“principle, rule, and precedent”—and the “agitated and

¹⁸ Iain Wilkinson, *Suffering: A Sociological Introduction* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), ix.

¹⁹ Ibid. Wilkinson puts it this way: “For the most part, sociologists have not concerned themselves with ‘the problem of suffering’ *per se*.” viii.

²⁰ Joseph Anthony Amato and David Monge, *Victims and Values: A History and a Theory of Suffering*, Contributions in Philosophy, no. 42 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), xvii.

²¹ Amato and Monge, 210. Amato also writes rather emphatically, “Insofar as our heritage is Judeo-Christian, we believe God wants—even requires—suffering. Repeatedly, the Old and New Testaments teach that suffering is our path to God, and God appears to us in the form of the suffering stranger. Christians are taught that Christ is every victim,” 175. This posture is not unanimous in Christian theologies, as we shall see later in chapter three.

²² Jonathan Lamb, *The Rhetoric of Suffering: Reading the Book of Job in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995).

complaining voice of the first-person singular,” the sufferer.²³ In the contradictions and paradoxes of Joban dialogues, this enduring crisis of language rises even to “the doors of heaven, the furthest reaches of language and thought” and no longer represents anything other than “an apodictic echo.”²⁴ Lamb’s result is the representation of theologies of suffering in the eighteenth century and the illuminating suggestion that “the history of the reading of Job is strewn with crises mimetic of those it describes.”²⁵ In a later chapter, we will trace similar relational postures to suffering in current communities of faith, and, like Lamb, we will use Job as a lens to illustrate the role traumatic suffering plays in his transformation.

A significant contribution from the field of philosophy comes from Peter Kreeft, in *Making Sense Out of Suffering*.²⁶ Kreeft introduces his work as a personal exploration of “the mystery of suffering” and “life’s deepest journey, deepest cave, deepest question.”²⁷ He does not claim to “solve” the mystery but only to explore it; he does not claim ultimate “answers” but only ones still infused with and existing in mystery.²⁸ As such, Kreeft’s work is a mixture of theodicy—a wrestling with how an “all-powerful and all-loving God” can allow suffering—and theology, specifically Christology.²⁹ Moreover,

²³ Ibid., 5–6.

²⁴ Lamb, *The Rhetoric of Suffering*.

²⁵ Ibid., 6.

²⁶ Peter Kreeft, *Making Sense out of Suffering* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1986).

²⁷ Ibid., 17–18.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

in what Kreeft calls the “most important chapter”³⁰ of the book, he introduces Jesus Christ, the God who weeps, who is “gassed in the ovens of Auschwitz, sneered at in Soweto, and cut from limb to limb [. . .] in abortion clinics.”³¹ He introduces him with these words:

What then is suffering to the Christian? It is Christ’s invitation to us to follow him. Christ goes to the cross, and we are invited to follow to the same cross. Not because it is the cross, but because it is his. Suffering is blessed not because it is suffering, but because it is his. Suffering is not the context that explains the cross; the cross is the context that explains suffering. The cross gives this new meaning to suffering; it is now not only between God and me but also between Father and Son. The first *between* is taken up into the Trinitarian exchanges of the second. Christ allows us to participate in his cross because that is his means of allowing us to participate in the exchanges of the Trinity, to share in the very inner life of God.³²

This key passage highlights the invitation that becomes filter question: “Follow me” intensifies to “You must follow me here, too.” Sharing in Jesus’ life demands it.

In this paragraph, we have, in its very briefest form, a succinct statement of Kreeft’s theology of suffering for spiritual formation. In his brevity and simplicity, like so many other authors commenting on suffering, there is a simplicity on the other side of complexity.³³ This complexity needs to be explored.

³⁰ Ibid., 129.

³¹ Kreeft, *Making Sense out of Suffering*, 135.

³² Ibid., 137–138.

³³ A quote, often attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., mentions this simplicity and complexity: “I wouldn’t give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my right arm for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.” Warren Bennis, “Foreword,” in *Results-Based Leadership*, by David Ulrich, John H. Zenger, and W. Norman Smallwood (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), viii.

Preliminary Questions

A theology of suffering for spiritual formation. Combining these terms as qualifiers may suggest a recognizable concept, but how exactly do they go together? How do these words combine to form a clear and helpful construct? Several questions may come immediately to mind.

For instance, what kind of theology? A traditional academic theology focused on philosophical questions and rational arguments like theodicy? Or one focused more on the practical role of theology in human experience and the midst of congregations?³⁴ Or both? Will it be presented as theory, or as revealed truth rationally explained?³⁵ What relationship will exist between the authority of divine revelation and a system or method of development?

Additional questions about God inevitably follow: What kind of God? A God who suffers? Or an impassible God? Moreover, if God suffers, how does God suffer? And these questions about God's attributes: Does suffering affect God's essential qualities, or only affect God's mode of communicating with humanity, or God's activity? How do God's transcendence and suffering relate?³⁶ Can they be combined or do they exist in antinomial relation?

³⁴ Linda Cannell, "Theology, Spiritual Formation and Theological Formation: Reflections Toward Application," in Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, eds., *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010). In her essay, Cannell traces recent voices suggesting that academic theology is "currently of little use to the church," 233.

³⁵ William Young, "Theory and Theology—The Westminster Presbyterian," April 8, 1968, para. 11, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://www.westminsterconfession.org/the-doctrines-of-grace/theory-and-theology.php>. In Young's lecture, he seeks to describe the relationship between theory and theology, or more properly, between philosophy as "theory of theory" and theology as a "systematic [. . .] and historical science of Scripture revelation," para. 17.

³⁶ Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2011), 111.

These questions surface regarding Creation Theology: Does God suffer prior to creation or only as the result of a redemptive love of creation? If prior, is God's suffering then truly "inconsolable"?³⁷ How does God's being destroy non-being or death introduced by the curse?³⁸

The doctrine of the Trinity is affected as well: Does the incarnation of a suffering Christ touch the being of God or only the expression of God? How precisely does the human nature and the divine nature exist in a suffering Christ? Does Christ suffer only as deity, or humanity, or both? If Christ suffers as deity, how exactly does Christ's suffering influence the Trinity, or does it? Does this influence then change the Trinity? If so, in what way?

More specific to our focus in this dissertation, questions surface regarding spiritual formation: What kind of human suffering qualifies for inclusion in spiritual formation? Is God capable of using any suffering as formational? Or are there sufferings that ought to be excluded from such a list? Why would they be excluded? Do we ever truly enter Christ's sufferings? If so, in what way? Or is our "cross" always distinct? Is there a threshold of intensity that must be crossed in order to qualify as suffering? As formative? Is there a threshold of duration? If so, what are those thresholds? Are they different for each person? If so, how then shall we objectively define and categorize formative suffering? Or can we?

³⁷ Donald M. Hudson, "The Glory of His Discontent: The Inconsolable Suffering of God," *Mars Hill Review* 1, no. 6 (Fall 1996): 21–34.

³⁸ Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, 261–262.

Perhaps defining spiritual formation is a good beginning. What exactly is spiritual formation? How are we to understand the word *spiritual*? Or *formation*? How does it differ from human development? How is it similar? How does change or transformation occur? Is there a construct that can help make suffering accessible to our understanding of transformation? What does being formed into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ mean? Can we understand it if “what we will be has not yet been made known”?³⁹

Are there not thresholds for growth and learning, such as multi-perspective thinking or metacognition? If so, what role does our understanding play in formation through suffering? Can these thresholds or liminal spaces be identified? If so, how? Do they vary from person to person? Do they not require self-doubt and a willingness to be disillusioned? Or can it happen against our will and in an unwillingness to suffer? Do they not also imply/require a change in our faith? If so, how then does faith endure and remain steadfast?

And, quite to the point of the last chapter of this dissertation, how are we as caregivers to be comrades of the valley to the suffering faithful? How do we accompany the suffering faithful in their movement through a transformational process, nurturing changes and growth in faith while at the same time remaining attentive to its preservation?

Toward a Blueprint for a Construct

A formational theology of suffering seems best located in the discipline of practical theology or applied theology. The focus is praxis, but not only praxis;

³⁹ 1 John 3:2. In this passage, John also says, “We know that when Christ appears (or, when it is made known), we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” How this happens is still unclear.

metatheoretical concerns seem essential as well, as the questions above amply illustrate. Here, Richard Osmer, Princeton professor of Practical Theology, helps us blend the domains of praxis and metatheoretical concerns in his 2009 presentation on Perspectives and Paradigms at the Society for Practical Theology in South Africa. Rather than using paradigm to mean only an overarching set of assumptions in a large field like science or theology, Osmer advocates for framing multiple sets of assumptions operating in the same field at the same time as *paradigms* as well.⁴⁰ Osmer says, “The task before us is not so much identifying the ‘new paradigm’ of theology, [. . .] but coming to terms with intellectual pluralism, the reality of multiple and, often, competing paradigms within a single field.”⁴¹ This seems an especially valuable framework for understanding the relational postures toward suffering, which will be covered in chapters three and six. These postures emerge from a priori theological assumptions about what it means to image God, our views on the Trinity, how we understand Jesus’ demands of his disciples, how we understand salvation, and so on. This discussion of suffering and spiritual formation is one of many areas where praxis and metatheoretical issues converge. Osmer helps us frame praxis and metatheory as distinct levels within the discipline of theology.⁴²

Additionally, Osmer describes multiple paradigms as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

⁴⁰ Richard R. Osmer, “Practical Theology: A Current International Perspective,” *HTS Theologisches Studien/Theological Studies* 67, no. 2 (March 7, 2011): para. 4, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i2.1058>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., para. 5.

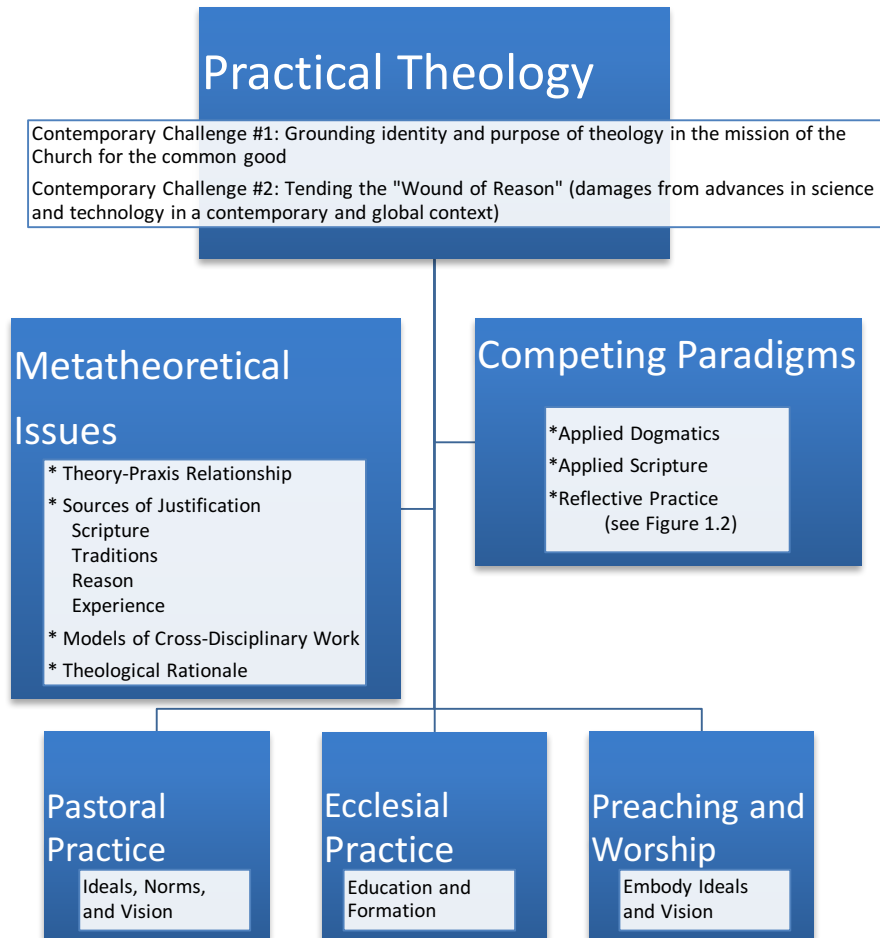


Figure 1.1. Competing Paradigms in Practical Theology.

Source: Adapted from Richard R. Osmer's "Practical theology: A Current International Perspective."⁴³

In Osmer's framing, paradigms and metatheoretical issues interact with each other in ways that directly influence the more observable outcomes of praxis. This interaction is usually invisible and, therefore, most often unexamined. In this dissertation, we will attend aspects of all four of Osmer's metatheoretical issues from a paradigm of reflective experience, which is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

⁴³ Ibid.

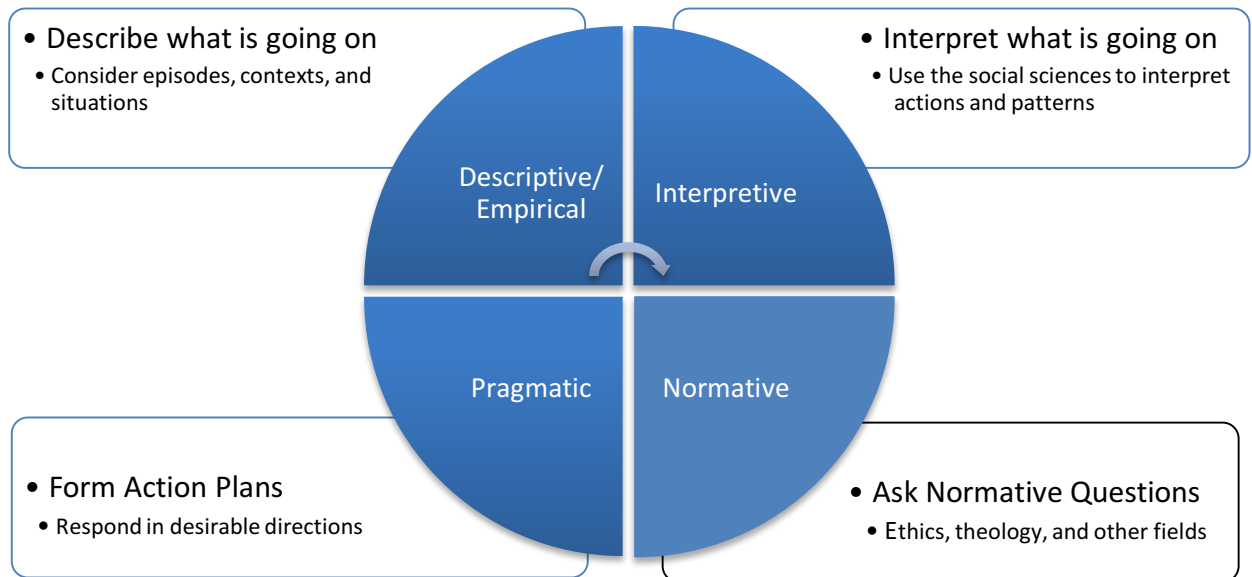


Figure 1.2. A Reflective Paradigm in Practical Theology.

Source: Adapted from Richard R. Osmer’s “Practical theology: A Current International Perspective.”⁴⁴

Osmer’s reflective paradigm parallels the approach of Mark Branson and Juan Martinez, both Fuller Seminary professors, in their collaborative work on congregational leadership and cultural engagement. Branson and Martinez list the steps of practical theology, which are summarized as follows:

1. Name and describe your current praxis.
2. Analyze your praxis. Use multiple perspectives.
3. Study and reflect on scripture, theology, and history.
4. Recall and discuss applicable stories.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

5. Discern and shape your new praxis. Prioritize and experiment with alternatives.⁴⁵

Their list is illustrated in Figure 1.3.

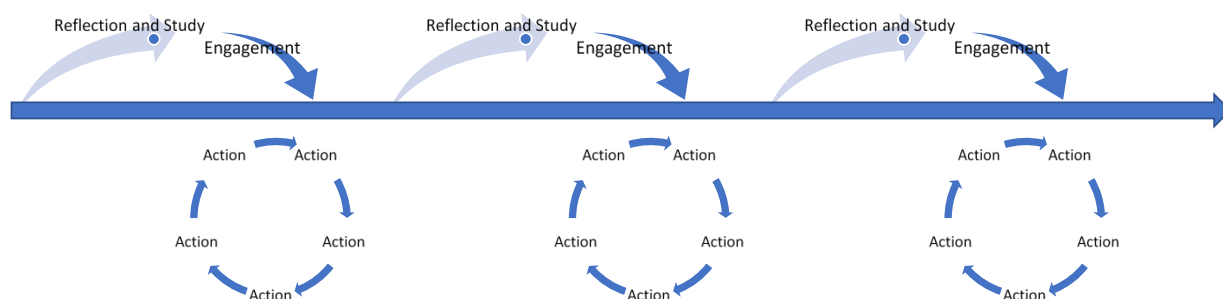


Figure 1.3. The Flow of Praxis: Steps for Practical Theology.

Source: Adapted from Mark Branson and Juan Martinez, *Churches, Cultures & Leadership*.⁴⁶

These examples of doing practical theology within a reflective paradigm serve as guidelines and a framework for this dissertation. A large part of chapter six will be practical applications of this theology of suffering, namely how a theology of suffering affects outcomes and applications in spiritual formation. These outcomes and applications will serve us as the action plan of Osmer's reflective paradigm and implementation of an emergent praxis as suggested by Branson and Martinez.

⁴⁵ Mark Lau Branson and Juan Francisco Martínez, *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 41–45.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Another idea that helps us frame our approach is Helmut Thielicke's "conceptual experience" vs. "primary experience."⁴⁷ And a corollary thought, theological reflection is not faith.⁴⁸ Allow me to illustrate.

In June 1991, I took an early morning walk in a state park along the shore of Lake Michigan while my wife still slept in the camper. I had my Bible for morning devotions—my usual morning routine. However, this day was anything but usual or routine. In two days, my wife and I would be leaving for Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota; she would be admitted for a bone-marrow transplant.

The passage I read was Genesis 22, where Abraham takes Isaac to the top of a mountain. Suddenly that morning, the familiar passage came alive. I felt like I understood some of what Abraham must have felt as he pondered the trip—it seemed like murder; it seemed too much like a pagan ritual. Why would God give him a son only to ask Abraham to kill him?

I perceived in my situation something of what Abraham's experience was probably like. God was asking me to offer up what was dearest in my life. I embraced the trip to Mayo as a trip to the mountain.

This moment, which remains one of the most moving experiences of my devotional life, was not yet a primary faith experience; it was a conceptual experience. This moment was an encounter with a story that shed light on our future. But it was not our story, not yet.

⁴⁷ Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), 11. Here Thielicke discusses education in concepts and theory as conceptual; primary experiences involve putting concepts and theories into practice.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

Several weeks after the transplant, after complications set in, my wife was lying comatose in the critical care unit. Doctors put her on a ventilator, gave her a large dose of cortico-steroids, and said, “She is in God’s hands now.” They had done all they could do.

Again, I approached Genesis 22. This time the story seemed even more real. I could feel the anguish of Abraham, gathering the wood and traveling alone with Isaac up the mountain. Could he go through with it? What would God do? Abraham would have to trust.

For me, the conceptual experience prepared me for the choices I would have to make regarding my wife’s care; I would have to trust. As her condition deteriorated, I begged God to save Sue, to heal her, to allow us more time together. However, finally, as her body failed due to the complications, I lifted my hands in anguished prayer and released her to God come what may. I imagined what Abraham felt when he raised the knife. I remembered the ram. There was still hope. But for us, there was no ram; the next day, my wife died. Then the story became my own—a primary experience, a true test of faith. Would I trust God to care for her even in her dying? Would I trust him even after he brought me such pain? The conceptual experiences, though quite significant in themselves, were preliminaries.

Gabriel Marcel, twentieth-century French playwright and Christian philosopher, makes a distinction between a problem and mystery. He writes, “A problem is something which I meet, which I find completely before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I am myself involved.”⁴⁹ Therefore, it is

⁴⁹ Gabriel Marcel, quoted in Brian Treanor and Brendan Sweetman, “Gabriel (Honoré) Marcel,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics

possible to discuss the “problem” of suffering, as many are prone to do, and refer to the analyses as “theodicies.” In this way, we may detach ourselves and find a safe perch above the fray. These conceptual experiences often offer objective frameworks for processing suffering or helping others do so; however, frameworks for processing are preparation but not processing. And as necessary as the frameworks and preparations may be, without primary experiences for process and reflection, they are like empty containers or unrealized ideals—information but not transformation. In order to qualify as practical theology emerging from lived experiences, this theology of suffering for spiritual formation will involve reflection on the other side of primary experience. Otherwise, it remains an untested hypothesis.

Our investigation into a variety of street corners will take us through preliminary considerations about God and suffering, and then to a look at ways of understanding spiritual formation. Defining spiritual formation more broadly, we will take advantage of traditions that may use different language and metaphors, which will enrich our understanding. We will then be in a better position to understand how and why suffering is a necessary part of spiritual formation. Finally, we will look at potential obstacles that often limit potential connections between suffering and spiritual formation.

A Theology of Suffering: A Review of Three Approaches

Like Dr. Natalie Kertes Weaver, Ursuline College professor of Religious Studies, notes, the goal of this paper is continuing “dialogue around the theology of suffering

rather than resolution—to start, rather than conclude.”⁵⁰ Weaver describes her work as “insights of a decade of teaching and studying the theology of suffering with people who are training for careers in the helping professions.”⁵¹ Weaver also offers her work as both practical theology and theoretical theology.⁵² She opens her work with a nod to philosophical theology and discusses theodicy, then moves to her adopted approach, “the experience of suffering as an essential frame for Christian theological dialogue.”⁵³

Gerald Peterman and Andrew Schmutzer, professors of Biblical Studies at Moody Bible Institute, offer *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering* as biblical theology. They begin by intentionally disjoining philosophical discussions from biblical discussions in their effort to distinguish philosophical theology from biblical theology.⁵⁴ Their stated goal is to present “what Scripture says about suffering well and [helping] others in their suffering.”⁵⁵

Both works have as their concern the care of others who suffer, Weaver from a nursing street corner, and Peterman and Schmutzer a pastoral one. Both review biblical texts, and both move into what they consider relevant and necessary discussions of other

⁵⁰ Natalie Kertes Weaver, *The Theology of Suffering and Death: An Introduction for Caregivers* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵² Weaver introduces her work as “attentive to a professional caregiver’s perspective,” yet also exploring theoretical questions.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Gerald W. Peterman and Andrew J. Schmutzer, *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

issues—Peterman and Schmutzer to abuse and mental illness, and Weaver to theological and soteriological issues and death.

Neither text discusses suffering as formation. Weaver does include many helpful suggestions as a “toolbox” for caregivers, including exercises, suggested films, and an annotated bibliography. How the “tools” help a person heal is not at all clear, so the path of healing is left to conjecture.

Peterman and Schmutzer, in their conclusion, imply that by facing suffering directly, we will somehow find healing and great joy vis-à-vis anticipation of the resurrection and a new earth.⁵⁶ However, like Weaver’s toolbox, the process of healing and how we find joy remains a mystery. Peterman and Schmutzer offer no such toolbox, no author index, and no subject index, merely an index of scripture references.

Both works accomplish their mission, offering helpful observations and cogent arguments for their points of view. Nevertheless, both leave unanswered the questions regarding suffering as formative: how is suffering spiritually formative, and how can we conceptualize the process of change through suffering? These are enduring questions.

McGill University professor of Christian theology Douglas John Hall, in *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross*, offers us a third work. Hall comes closer to answering the questions regarding formation and change through suffering. In Hall’s construct, suffering is divided into epochs of earth’s existence: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and The Church. In the fourth epoch, usually Restoration, which he changes to “The Church,” Hall means to describe how we as the Church are

⁵⁶ Peterman and Schmutzer, *Between Pain and Grace*, 297.

involved in restoration as we “participate in the suffering of Christ for the world.”⁵⁷

Hall’s chapter titles reveal something of his views of the changing nature of suffering in history:

- “Creation: Suffering as Becoming.” This chapter develops the view that suffering belongs in creation theology—integrative suffering, the struggle of becoming.⁵⁸
- “The Fall: Suffering as Burden.” In this chapter, he identifies “disintegrative and burdensome suffering” and what “should not be.”⁵⁹
- “Redemption: Conquest [of suffering] from Within.” Hall reminds us of the distinctiveness of a theology of the cross, and that “the anatomy of human suffering is infinitely more complex than triumphalism of every variety conceives it to be,” that it “defies the ‘answers’ of the powerful.”⁶⁰ God in the incarnation, in full solidarity and participation with creation, takes suffering into God’s being. And “the conquest of suffering begins just here.”⁶¹
- “The Church: Community of Suffering and Hope.” Hall’s replacement of Restoration highlights his view that Restoration is accomplished through the

⁵⁷ Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1986), 134.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 74-75.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 106.

⁶¹ Ibid., 118.

church: “suffering as the courage to become, and suffering as the soteriological conquest of suffering.”⁶²

A unique gift from Hall comes in his appendix, in which he “dialogs” with five other authors on human suffering. In these dialogs, particularly in his critique of C. S. Lewis’ philosophical approach to suffering, Hall says, “The only persuasive *theology* is articulated by persons who have become so thoroughly humanized that they must struggle with God.”⁶³ And, as a result of this struggle, the thoroughly human may then be transformed into the thoroughly human and divine image of Jesus Christ; this is the very heart of a theology of suffering for Christian spiritual formation.

Even though Hall offers his analysis as an entrance into the arena of transformation,⁶⁴ he does not describe the rest of the arena; he also does not answer these questions: how is suffering spiritually formative, and how can we conceptualize the process of change through suffering?

In these three works, and others not mentioned, we are still left wondering how suffering is transformative in the life of the individual. How do suffering and spiritual formation intersect?

⁶² Ibid., 128.

⁶³ Ibid., 169 (italics in original).

⁶⁴ Ibid., 91. Hall claims, “Understanding something of the suffering of human being, and its cause, is already to enter the realm of transformation.” Transformation is described in general terms and applied to the Church as participants in the salvation of the world, while spiritual formation in the life of an individual is left out of focus.

Impassibility, Theodicy, and Suffering

A theology of suffering may bring to mind early Christian apologists and theologians wrestling with Greek notions of perfection, change, and whether or not God can suffer. Early apologists believed a God who suffered would imply God was less than perfect, could change, and/or would no longer be sufficiently outside creation to serve as creator.⁶⁵ The result was a statement of the divine attribute of impassibility, which is variously understood as God's lack of a capacity to suffer.

The impassibility of God has been an enduring and often dominant view in Christian thought. For instance, the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 labeled as “vain babblings”⁶⁶ the idea that God could suffer. Also, the Westminster Confession in 1646, in Chapter II on “God, and of the Holy Trinity,” states that God is “invisible, without body, parts, or passions,”⁶⁷ which affirms the impassibility of God.

However, as Chalke notes, this view that God lives in “an emotionless cocoon, protected from the joys and sorrows of humankind, demonstrating his power via acts of judgement [sic] has been questioned by many, including the likes of Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Jurgen Moltmann.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Gerald Bray, “Suffering Servant, Sovereign Lord: Can God Suffer?” *Modern Reformation* (April 1999).

⁶⁶ Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 56.

⁶⁷ “Historic Church Documents at Reformed.org,” accessed April 23, 2016, http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html.

⁶⁸ Chalke and Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus*, 57.

Many of today's apologists believe the impassibility of God should be rejected or reformulated, notes Gerald Bray,⁶⁹ Distinguished Professor of Historical Theology at Knox Theological Seminary. Bray explains that God's divine nature is thought to be "immortal, incorruptible, and life-giving."⁷⁰ What is changing is not the belief in God's divine nature, especially among conservative evangelicals. What is changing, according to Bray, is "our understanding of suffering."⁷¹ We now, he suggests, possess a greater appreciation for the complexities of suffering.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, Noah Porter Emeritus Professor of Philosophical Theology at Yale University, gives a good summary of his reasons for rejecting impassibility, a conclusion he does not reach in a facile manner.⁷² Most noteworthy in his wrestling is that he identifies suffering as the "principle energizer" for his reflections on, and ultimately his rejection of, impassibility.⁷³ After his son's death,⁷⁴ Wolterstorff found it "existentially impossible" to accept that an impassible God "surveys with uninterrupted bliss what transpires in this vale of tears which is our world."⁷⁵ Wolterstorff's experience serves as an exemplar of how the experience of suffering in the life of someone

⁶⁹ Bray, "Suffering Servant, Sovereign Lord," Bray gives a brief summary of the doctrine and its challenges.

⁷⁰ Bray, "Suffering Servant, Sovereign Lord," para. 6. Bray cites Cyril of Alexandria's letter to Nestorius dated AD 429. Later Bray will defend the doctrine and say that the doctrine is not "wrong in its own terms," para. 8.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Does God Suffer? Interview with Nicholas P. Wolterstorff," *Modern Reformation*, October 1999.

⁷³ Ibid., para. 4.

⁷⁴ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987).

⁷⁵ Wolterstorff, "Does God Suffer?" para. 4.

possessing a highly refined theology often becomes a journey of exploration and discovery—a journey leading to the mysteries of God and whether or not the triune God suffers.

While impassibility may be a relevant discussion for theology proper, as it relates to spiritual formation it is not a necessary discussion. Therefore, our starting point will be a God who suffers, not because the arguments against impassibility are superior, but because our entry point into this dialogue is Jesus' insistence on disciples taking up our cross, drinking the cup, and being baptized with his baptism. Moreover, formation into the image of Jesus necessitates formation into the image of the Man of Sorrows.

The same will be true regarding theodicy. While the philosophical enterprise of theodicies may seem relevant and beneficial, especially since this dissertation may resemble soul-making theodicies, it is not a necessary discussion. More will be said on this in chapter four.

Suffering and Spiritual Formation

Suffering: Toward a Definition

Next, what is meant by suffering? Many take the time to iterate familiar and often helpful categories of suffering, such as these continuums offered in a June 2013 presentation by Truett Theological Seminary professor of theology Roger Olson:

Deserved/Guilty suffering \leftrightarrow Undeserved/Innocent suffering

Therapeutic/Developmental suffering \leftrightarrow Non-therapeutic/Gratuitous suffering

Objective/Real suffering \leftrightarrow Subjective/Imaginary suffering⁷⁶

These categories may initially seem helpful and necessary. However, their significance is elusive in discussions of spiritual formation, for they can all be formative in either integrative or disintegrative ways. Not only can they all be formative, but in the sufferings of Christ all these are present and endured as Jesus, “who knew no sin,” became sin for us.⁷⁷ Consequently, all categories of suffering are included and held to be potentially formative.

Spiritual: Toward a Definition

What do we mean by the word “spiritual” or “spirituality”? Philip Sheldrake, a Senior Research Fellow at Cambridge Theological Foundation, lists three broad approaches: “classic religious” spiritualities, “esoteric” spiritualities, and “secular” or “non-religious” spiritualities.⁷⁸ While these are the most common categories, Sheldrake also points out that these common categories are usually based on inadequate and overlapping definitions. He notes that even within Christian traditions, there are schools of spiritual wisdom with specific practices, such as Ignatian spirituality, Franciscan spirituality, and so on.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Roger Olson, “A Talk on God and Suffering (Given at ‘Theology Live’ Event in Beeville, Texas),” Patheos: Hosting the Conversation on Faith, June 25, 2013, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2013/06/a-talk-on-god-and-suffering-given-at-theology-live-event-in-beeville-texas/>, para. 12.

⁷⁷ 1 Cor. 5:21.

⁷⁸ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Guides for the Perplexed (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 12.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

Additionally, Sheldrake lists four broad styles of spiritual wisdom: ascetical, mystical, practical, and prophetic.⁸⁰ These four types of wisdom appear in each of the three approaches to spirituality mentioned earlier—religious, esoteric, and secular. The overlap in these approaches and the presence of all four styles of spiritual wisdom in each approach make a definition quite elusive.

Tracing the history of the word “spirituality,” Sheldrake finds academic discussions of spiritual experience and practice in a variety of disciplines. “Spirituality has become an alternative way of exploring the deepest self and the ultimate purpose of life. Overall, the spiritual quest has increasingly moved away from the outer-directed authority to inner-directed experience which is seen as more reliable.”⁸¹

For the purposes of this dissertation, there are no advantages in disallowing or excluding any of these understandings of the word “spiritual.” In fact, there are distinct advantages in allowing a variety of disciplines to inform our understanding of the word, particularly in this intersection of spiritual formation and suffering.

The previous paragraphs offer more of the semantic ranges than definitions of the terms “suffering” and “spiritual” allowing for more inclusive dialogue. While some may prefer a narrowing of these terms, inclusive dialogue is preferred over definitions, at least as we begin.

⁸⁰ Sheldrake, 14–16.

⁸¹ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 5.

Spiritual Formation: Toward a Definition

An Example in the Western Church—Protestant.

In a recent publication by evangelical Protestants, the goal of Christian spiritual formation was put briefly: “becoming like Christ through the Spirit.”⁸² This same work also presents a theological definition: “Our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”⁸³ This definition highlights the centrality of Jesus Christ in evangelical faith, and the second definition also highlights Trinitarian theology. An alternative version of this definition adds at the end the phrase “and for the glory of God.”⁸⁴

An Example in the Western Church—Catholic.

In Vatican II, Pope Paul VI gives a beautiful summary of Christian spiritual formation in the instructions for priestly training with a goal of “intimate and unceasing union with the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁵ He then describes intimate friendship with Christ and living the paschal mystery. This description

⁸² Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, eds., *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 10. This volume compiles the 2009 Wheaton Theology Conference and explores the theological, historical, and biblical dimensions of spiritual formation.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁴ MaryKate Morse, “What Is Spiritual Formation DMIN LSF 2016 HO” (Face to face at Cannon Beach, Cannon Beach, OR, Spring 2016). The addendum was part of a cohort discussion during the presentation.

⁸⁵ Pope Paul VI, “*Optatam Totius*,” 1965, accessed December 11, 2015, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html.

emphasizes the ultimate goal in formation, uses Trinitarian language, and then adds the significant element of friendship with Christ—an invitational approach.

An Example in the Eastern Church—Orthodox.

Vladimir Losskey explains an emphasis similar to Pope Paul VI’s goal of union with God when he discusses “theosis”—the soteriological dogma of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Losskey describes theosis, or deification, in stages through the action of the Holy Spirit ending in union, and “in this co-operation of man with God, the union is fulfilled”; the goal of theosis is partaking in the divine nature.⁸⁶

This small sampling of definitions provides some common ground for defining spiritual formation. Each has a goal of either attaining the likeness of Christ or union with him. Some scholars may resist this suggestion of common ground, particularly the suggestion that theosis or divinization has common ground with being formed into the image of Jesus. However, none of these definitions attempt to merge the essence of human with divine, as some have misunderstood theosis. As Dr. Michael Gama, Portland Seminary faculty member, notes:

It is safe to conclude that the doctrine of theosis, or divinization, cannot be regarded as promoting the confusion of human and divine essence, unless one gravely misunderstands the doctrine or its proponents, or confuses it with contemporary misunderstandings or heresies.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), 196.

⁸⁷ Michael Gama, “Theosis: The Core of Our Ancient/Future Faith and Its Relevance to Evangelicalism at the Close of the Modern Era” (George Fox University, 2014), 149, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/74>.

Still others may note that often the soteriological language and definitions of these branches of the Christian church contribute to the continuing divisions.

Nevertheless, without diminishing the importance of precise definitions, prolific inventor and Columbia professor Edwin Armstrong may provide a helpful reminder here: men “substitute words for reality and then argue about the words.”⁸⁸ Remembering that these words are symbols being used to describe an ultimate reality that has yet to be fully consummated may also help us. So, no matter which language we find most helpful, we can appreciate how and why a theology of suffering would be important to spiritual formation into the image of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows. How much better a theology of suffering that helps facilitate cooperation between these divergent branches of the body of Christ to better serve a suffering world.

Suffering: A Filtering Question for Discipleship

By Jesus’ own words and example, being shaped into the image of Jesus requires suffering. So high a place does Jesus give suffering that in his invitations to discipleship, suffering becomes a filter—if “you do not take up your cross, you cannot follow me.” The NT writers give suffering prominence in their self-identifying, their self-understanding, and their recommendations for those who would choose to join them. So why are there so few chapters on suffering in textbooks on spiritual formation? Why are there so few theologies of suffering written? Perhaps a look at obstacles and resistance to a theology of suffering will help.

⁸⁸ Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss, *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009), 440. Armstrong is said to have quipped these words after the U.S. Supreme Court’s initial ruling on patents, which were eventually given to him.

Perhaps the most obvious answers to questions like these come from resistance deep inside us. No one wants to suffer. And if we do, we have a pathological name for it—“masochism.”⁸⁹ Americans have been described as curating a death-denying and grief-avoiding culture.⁹⁰ It may also be argued that even Jesus resisted suffering in his Gethsemane prayers. Even so, Jesus’ words and example remain.

Perhaps another reason comes from an overdependence on education or the illusory hope that studying something changes us into that something, as if studying athletics makes us an athlete. For example, an informal study being conducted at Cornerstone University has been studying the effects of education on a specific form of suffering, namely death anxiety. Sections of an online sociology course entitled Grief and Loss, Death and Dying have been providing data to study the effects of five weeks of education on a measure of death anxiety. Utilizing the Death Anxiety Questionnaire (DAQ) at the beginning of the course and then again during the fifth week, results are compared looking for a statistical correlation between education and death anxiety. The initial hypothesis suggested that there would be a negative correlation between these two variables, meaning that as education increased regarding issues of grief and loss, and death and dying, the result would be a decrease in death anxiety. While the course has become one of the more popular electives at the undergraduate level, the results after three years and eleven sections reveal no statistically significant correlation between

⁸³ “*masochism*”- a form of perversion in which a person experiences pleasure in being abused, humiliated or mistreated.” Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary. S.v. “masochism,” accessed November 7, 2017, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/masochism>. A term originally coined in reference to Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Austrian attorney and writer of pornographic novels, 1836-1895.

⁹⁰ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

education about death and dying and measures of death anxiety. There is only a very slight negative correlation overall. So, while Christian education regarding issues of suffering may be helpful, and indeed quite necessary in preparing Christian professional caregivers, something else may be needed to produce the non-anxious presence typically needed by those who are suffering.

There are also other, less obvious, reasons for resistance, like our preference for controlling exegesis and interpretation of the Scriptures through artificially constructed hermeneutical rules that may nudge a naturally undesirable experience such as suffering to the periphery.

One such system of hermeneutical rules is typology—a hermeneutical tool of interpretation “based on the biblical perspective regarding the recurring pattern in God’s acts within history, thereby establishing continuity between the stages of redemptive history.”⁹¹ As we are shaped and molded into Christ’s image, it seems we serve as types, as representatives, as ambassadors of Christ. However, for someone to be recognized as a type of Jesus, according to typology, they must meet specific criteria. One such criterion is explicit NT authentication. In other words, without inspired and authoritative recognition as a type, persons may only be recognized as having merely a spiritual similarity to Jesus.

While these rules seem helpful on some levels, they also create a long list of persons that cannot be types. This list includes many in the OT who suffered in a way prefiguring Jesus: like Joseph, as his brothers attempt to murder him and then sell him,

⁹¹ G. R. Osborne, “Type, Typology,” ed. Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 1117–1118.

which in God's providence positions him to be the savior of the known world; Abel, slain by his elder brother Cain; and Naomi and Job, who are not acknowledged by any NT author as types. And yet their lives offer in literary terms the theme of acute suffering often typifying death and renewal, which represents, at the very least, formation through suffering. And prophets, like Hosea, seem to portray the relational posture of Yahweh as a betrayed husband to the nation of Israel. While all of these might be considered analogous to Jesus in regard to suffering, by the rules of typology, they cannot be types. Yet somehow, Jesus emphatically insisted that based on the Law and the Prophets, the two on the road to Emmaus should have understood that Messiah would suffer. Nor can we be types of Jesus because, according to the rules of typology, types cannot point back into the past; they can only point ahead. These rules of typology seem an unnecessary narrowing with little hermeneutical benefit.

These artificial hermeneutical controls may seem insignificant, as they do not disallow people from serving as examples of faith; however, their implications for formation are far-reaching. They may perhaps conveniently allow us the freedom to worship him, but not follow him; to like him, but not become like him; and to enjoy the benefits of his suffering, but reject formation into his image through our own suffering.

Another hindrance is a tendency to overextend distinctions between the old and new covenants. This tendency often sounds like the following: "Jesus satisfied the requirements of the law and suffered in my place, so now I am free from any legalistic-sounding requirements of suffering." And a theme song might be, "Jesus Paid It All." An appropriate response to this distortion is yes, Jesus died a substitutionary death, as Isaiah

makes plain, but again, Jesus' words and example remain. Can we take up our cross is still a filter question for determining disciples.

These are common obstacles and points of resistance. Not only do we find ourselves innately resistant to suffering, but we also have theological constraints that may hinder simple exploration.

A Brief Introduction to Remaining Chapters

This theology of suffering is introduced as an ongoing dialogue, both practical and theoretical. As such, the remaining chapters build toward providing practical help for both the suffering and those who provide care to the suffering. Chapter two will involve an in-depth look at the role of suffering in the Bible, particularly how it relates to spiritual formation and discipleship. Chapter three will focus on a way of understanding various beliefs about suffering by describing them as relational postures toward Jesus, the Man of Sorrows. Using a five-type taxonomy, we will consider biblical foundations, historical expressions, and theological traditions typical in these five types.

Chapter four explores the question, how precisely does suffering change us? Moreover, and more particularly, how does suffering accomplish formation into the image of Jesus, the Man of Suffering? Using the psychology of trauma, a model is suggested to help us formulate something of the possible trajectories of change.

Chapter five deals with the observation that in every language, in every culture, and in all the arts, “suffering seeks a voice.”⁹² So how do we adequately represent human suffering through the symbolic representation of words and images?

The concluding chapter, chapter six, will offer practical suggestions for professional caregivers, specifically Christian caregivers, who care for those who suffer. Included in these suggestions is a newly developed survey utilizing the postures of faith to suffering from chapter three. This survey is currently in validity testing and is already generating fruitful dialogue about our relationship to Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, who continues to invite us with these words: “Follow me.”

⁹⁰ Frank Brennan, “Suffering Seeks A Voice,” in *Perspectives on Human Suffering*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Norelle Lickiss (New York: Springer, 2012), 265.

CHAPTER 2:

EXPLORING THE TEXTS



1

“There are truths that can be discovered only through suffering or from the critical vantage point of extreme situations.”²

— Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J.

“‘Where is God? Where is He?’ someone behind me asked

For more than half an hour [the child in the noose] stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. [...] Behind me, I heard the same man asking:

‘Where is God now?’

And I heard a voice within me answer him:

‘Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows....’”³

— Elie Wiesel

¹ William Blake, *Job Rebuked by His Friends*, pen and black ink, gray wash, and watercolor, over traces of graphite, 1827, 1821, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://www.themorgan.org/collection/William-Blakes-World/27>.

² Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J., *Acción e Ideología: Psicología Social Desde Centroamérica*, (San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990), x. Quoted in Kevin F. O’Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 218.

³ Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 76–77.

Introduction: Toward a Theology of Suffering for Spiritual Formation

If Ignacio Martín-Baró's words are accurate, that we can only know certain things through suffering, then perhaps it is easier to understand the confusion of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, whom Jesus called foolish and slow to believe because they did not understand the role of suffering in the work of the Messiah. Perhaps it is also easier to understand our own ignorance about what is involved in bearing the image of a suffering servant and why it is necessary to consider that there are truths about bearing Jesus' image we will only discover through suffering. This necessity creates the critical intersection of suffering and spiritual formation. For this, we, especially in the West, need to rediscover a theology of suffering for spiritual formation.

To demonstrate this need, we will look at the basic contours of a biblical theology of suffering. Our exploration will take us through preliminary considerations about God and suffering, and then to a more in-depth study of the role of suffering in the Bible. We will look at the OT, particularly the role of the prophets, then we will move to the NT to study what Jesus says about discipleship and suffering and examine how the NT writers frame spiritual formation and suffering.

Part I: A Theology of Suffering

It is helpful to discuss what is meant by the term "theology" in a theology of suffering. Theology, as a field of study, is often qualified by one of several significant adjectives. For some, a theology of suffering calls to mind philosophical theology and the enterprise of theodicy, "a term used to refer to attempts to justify the ways of God to

man.”⁴ The philosophical approach often links suffering to the existence of evil, while predicating this link upon an arguable assumption that all suffering in the world is a consequence of sin and the result of the fall of Adam and Eve. Natural theology might consider forms of suffering as a result of natural “evil,” which is also often thought to be a result of sin and the fall. Historical theology typically traces chronologically the origin and development of various views of suffering, e.g., views of original sin, the curse of Eve, the curse of Adam, and so on. Biblical theology, not to be confused with the biblical theology movement of the mid-twentieth century, traces suffering as a theme as it emerges in the self-authenticating texts of Scripture. Practical theology might include applications of a theology of suffering in the pastoral care of those who suffer. Finally, theology proper would consider the person of God, God’s character, and attributes in consideration of suffering.

As mentioned in the introduction, the beginning point for this dissertation is a rejection of the impassibility of God and an embrace of a God who suffers. Because of this embrace, the implications penetrate deeply into our understanding what it means to bear the image of a God who suffers. These implications affect creation theology, anthropology, and eschatology. More particularly, our focus will be on what it means to be shaped and molded into the image of the Son, who is variously described as a Suffering Servant and a Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief. In light of this focus on spiritual formation, this theology of suffering gives rise to a formational theology.

⁴ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 1083. In this entry, J. S. Feinberg describes a successful theodicy as one that “resolves the problem of evil for a theological system and demonstrates that God is all-powerful, all-loving, and just, despite evil’s existence.”

This formational theology of suffering attempts to assimilate suffering in the commands to live like Jesus—to take up the cross, to drink his cup, to be baptized with his baptism—and to not only integrate suffering in our own lives, but also to help others do the same. As such, it is both practical theology and theoretical theology.⁵ While practical applications of suffering will be touched on as part of the conclusion, namely how a theology of suffering affects spiritual formation, they will also be the primary focus for a later paper. The goal of this chapter, like Natalie Kertes Weaver’s work articulated earlier, is continuing the “dialogue around the theology of suffering” rather than proposing conclusions.⁶

Another important discussion for a full understanding of the theology of suffering involves “suffering.” Roger Olson’s categories, noted earlier, is a potential beginning:

Deserved/Guilty suffering \leftrightarrow Undeserved/Innocent suffering

Therapeutic/Developmental suffering \leftrightarrow Non-therapeutic/Gratuitous suffering

Objective/Real suffering \leftrightarrow Subjective/Imaginary suffering⁷

Here Olson thoughtfully widens the range of what we typically understand as suffering. Olson explains that when he talks about God and suffering, he typically means innocent, gratuitous, and objective suffering. However, he never identifies the grounds for which he believes this is so. Would not a suffering divine Jesus also suffer subjectively in abandonment, suffer developmentally in growing up, and suffer from guilt as he who

⁵ Natalie Kertes Weaver, *The Theology of Suffering and Death: An Introduction for Caregivers* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 3. Dr. Weaver introduces her work as “attentive to a professional caregiver’s perspective,” yet also exploring theoretical questions.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Olson, “A Talk on God and Suffering,” para. 12.

knew no sin became sin for us? To address these and related critical questions, in addition to practical and theoretical, we will need a biblical theology of suffering.

Part II: The Role of Suffering in the Bible

The OT and Suffering

Suffering clearly *resulted* from the curse of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:14-19.

However, whether or not suffering in human experience *began* with the curse is a matter of no small significance. Adam's loneliness and temptation, forms of innocent and subjective suffering according to Olson's categories, were both part of God's design before the fall, as reflected in the second account of creation in Genesis 2. This pre-fall suffering indicates that some form of suffering was anticipated and part of God's original design in creation as well.⁸ By way of analogy, also consider the oppression and slavery of Israel in Egypt before the Exodus, during which the nation of Israel fails its test. The creation of Eve includes suffering as well. The account of Eve's creation involves Elohim causing Adam's *נִמְנוּם* (deep sleep), the removal of one of the man's *צִלְעוֹתָיו* (sides, ribs), and Elohim closing up the *בָּשָׂר* (flesh). Several commentators draw the analogy of death and resurrection to this first surgical procedure, and it seems appropriate as the side of our Lord was also wounded in his death, the event which birthed his bride, the church.

⁸ Mark Whorton, *Peril in Paradise: Theology, Science, and the Age of the Earth* ([Chicago?]: Intervarsity Press, 2005). Whorton argues that Rom. 8:20-21, which presents the "frustration" and "bondage to decay" of creation, refers to original design and not a consequence of sin.

Another significant question regarding suffering before the fall and curse concerns the sometimes-contentious issue of animal death prior to the sin of Adam and Eve. This issue is dealt with by NASA scientist and engineer Mark Whorton.

In his 2005 project entitled *Peril in Paradise*, he argues for an old universe that included forms of suffering from the beginning, and, by implication, suffering as part of God's original design. He sets up a comparison between two paradigms holding often-divergent views on several things, including suffering and animal death. The "Perfect Paradise Paradigm"⁹ presumes that the "very good"¹⁰ creation represents God's original ideal design for us, and all suffering, pain, and death result from the fall as punishment for sin. In comparison, Whorton offers the "Perfect Purpose Paradigm,"¹¹ which presumes that "very good" represents God's assessment in relation to an eternal purpose. The following chart highlights his comparison of these two paradigms:

⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰ Gen. 1:31. These words represent God's assessment following the consummation of creation on the sixth day.

¹¹ Whorton, *Peril in Paradise*, 26.

Mark Whorton's <i>Peril in Paradise</i>		
	Perfect Paradise Paradigm	Perfect Purpose Paradigm
View of Creation/Universe	6-Day Creation/Young Universe	Progressive Creation/Old Universe
Purpose for Creation	Create a place for humanity to inhabit	Bring Glory to God by overcoming evil
Understanding of "Very Good"	Perfect in all ways-no suffering/death	Perfect for God's purpose/animals died
View of the Fall	Not part of God's plan	Part of God's purpose
View of Christ's suffering/death	Not planned/necessitated by sin	Part of God's original purpose
View of suffering	Incompatible with all-loving/all-powerful God/is a result of sin	From the beginning, part of God's purposes in the redemption of all things
View of the Garden of Eden	Idyllic maintenance-free (possibly global)	Distinct from the rest of earth/east of Eden
View of "subdue the earth"	No resistance or minimal (globally) in obedience	Resistance implied and more intense outside of the Garden in obedience
View of astronomical evidence 10,000 light-years or more away	Events didn't happen or created to appear as if they did	Information in the light transmission is reliable and follows astronomical laws
View of normal pains and suffering	God prevented them from common injuries	Part of God's purpose
View of carnivores and defenses	God created them with the potential / or evolution took place	Part of God's purpose
View of the curse in Genesis 3	Applies to all nature, the animals, and the ground	Applies to the serpent, the woman, and the man through the ground
View of nature	Cursed and does not bear reliable witness	Trustworthy as a source of truth and revelation
View of predator/prey	Result of the fall	Something God takes credit for
View of dietary change at Flood	Applies to humans and animals	Applies to humans only
View of the fossil record of animal death	Unreliable	Reliable

Figure 2.1. Comparison of Two Paradigms of Creation.

Source: Adapted from Mark Whorton's *Peril in Paradise*.¹²

Whorton presents compelling arguments against the view that animal death, human pain, and all suffering begin with the fall and the curse. In his view, they are all part of the "very good" creation. Using evidence from the fossil records, Scripture, nature, and astronomical events, Whorton makes a case for his Perfect Purpose Paradigm, which glorifies God through the redemption of all things and the defeat of evil.

Douglas John Hall, McGill professor of Christian theology, comes to similar conclusions in his creation theology. Using terms like the "mythic Golden Age,"¹³ the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 54.

“paradise syndrome,”¹⁴ and a “mythopoetic escape”¹⁵ from our present world, Hall describes the understandable but mistaken construct of a time in human existence which was exempt from pain and suffering.

Hall traces four kinds of suffering evident in the pre-fall creation story: Adam’s loneliness, which Hall asserts is the prerequisite to love,¹⁶ even in the “very good” creation; limitation, which for Hall means the ordinary finiteness of creatureliness; temptation, which implies the possibility of “radical alternatives to righteousness, justice, truth, obedience”;¹⁷ and, finally, the anxiety from the “threat of non-being” and the struggle for the “full realization of our potentiality for spirit.”¹⁸ Contrary to a construct of a mythic Golden Age in a creation without suffering, Hall puts forward a different one defined as follows:

What I am contending is that there are, in fact, forms of suffering which belong, in God’s intention, to the human condition. Not *all* of what we experience as suffering is totally absurd, a mistake, an oversight, or the consequence of sin. There is something about a significant portion of the suffering through which we pass that belongs to the very foundations of being—something without which our human being would not and could not be what it is meant to be. There is, as it might be said, a certain logic—a *theo*-logic—in at least such dimensions of human suffering.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 58.

¹⁷ Ibid., 59.

¹⁸ Ibid., 60–61. Paul Fiddes, in *The Creative Suffering of God*, says something similar in his comments regarding God’s overcoming death: “We can only conceive of Being in dialectic tension with non-being,” 262. Hall describes this awareness of non-being as anxiety.

¹⁹ Hall, 57.

While Whorton's and Hall's constructs of suffering in creation theology do not definitively answer what it means to be created in the image of a suffering God, they do provide a more satisfying theology for believing physical scientists when examining compelling evidence of an old earth. These constructs provide for a more robust conversation about suffering than simply tracing all suffering to a consequence of one singular human cause.

Paul Fiddes, noted earlier, asserts that not only does this suffering God overcome evil and death—or “non-being” or “nothingness”—but also that “throughout human history, indeed from the beginning of creation, God has been encountering death by making it serve him.”²⁰ We see this encounter again and again as we survey the narratives of the OT.

In the Pentateuch, experiences of suffering in the lives of the patriarchs serve as part of the formation of the identity of individual Israelites and, hence, the identity of the nation. Abraham offering Isaac dramatizes and foreshadows the suffering of God in the death of the Son and becomes the exemplar of faith credited for righteousness. The story of Joseph's suffering foreshadows the suffering of God as Christ, as well as a picture of salvation. The Exodus is another dramatic suffering/slavery-to-freedom narrative played out in the spotlight of the world's super-powers as Yahweh and the nation of Israel encounter Israel's oppressor, Egypt.

More examples arise in Joshua. The conquest dramatizes the ultimate overthrow of all things that set themselves in opposition to life through the God of Israel. In Judges,

²⁰ Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, 266.

the suffering of the feminine characters, like the concubine at the threshold,²¹ become an enduring symbol foreshadowing the cross of Christ, where violence and evil merge and emerge from God's own people.

We see more examples in the later periods of Israel's history. In Ruth, the suffering Naomi, a female Job, is restored to life in the community of faith, another death and resurrection motif displaying and foreshadowing the ongoing suffering of God. The Books of the Kings begin in prologue with the suffering of Hannah, a barren woman; a miraculous birth; and a separation for submitted service and obedience.

In the wisdom literature, Job presents a form of suffering attributable not to sin, but to Satan's attempt to destroy faith in the most righteous person on earth—a form of innocent suffering.²² According to some, the book of Job also deconstructs theodicy, as there is no satisfying response to Job's questions, contrary to the beliefs of some that at least one of his friends may have been right.²³

Suffering and Lament.

“‘Why do you cry when you pray?’ he asked me, as though he knew me well. ‘I don’t know,’ I answered troubled. I had never asked myself that question. I cried because ... because something inside me felt the need to cry. That was all I knew.”²⁴

— Elie Wiesel

²¹ Judg. 19.

²² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987).

²³ David B. Burrell, *Deconstructing Theodicy: Why Job Has Nothing to Say to the Puzzle of Suffering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008).

²⁴ Wiesel, *Night*, 4.

The lens of lament in the OT, which includes over half the psalter,²⁵ presents an extensive catalog of suffering, much of which is unaccompanied by confession of sin.²⁶ According to Claus Westermann, noted twentieth-century University of Heidelberg OT professor and Psalm scholar, in the Israelite Psalms of Lament, the order of placing lament *before* praise to God for deliverance is unique among other nations with psalmic traditions.²⁷ Both Egyptian and Babylonian psalms always offer praise before petitions or lament, if lament is present at all.²⁸ He further identifies praise used before lament as a “means to an end,” like “battering God up” before asking for something, which never occurs in the OT.²⁹ Often the lament comes immediately, without any opening address, as in Psalm 13, “How long Lord? Will you forget me forever?” These features of Israelite lament suggest an interesting picture of salvation or deliverance coming after lament or crying out in faith due to suffering.³⁰

²⁵ If we count both laments and mixed types that contain lament.

²⁶ Claus Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim, German edition of *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen*, 1961 (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965).

²⁷ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981).

²⁸ Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms*, 42-44. Westermann also notes the pattern in Israelite lament, that deliverance or salvation comes after petition and lament, and then becomes the basis for praise to God who responds in times of trouble.

²⁹ Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*.

³⁰ This presents a distinctly different *ordo salutis* than a typical Reformed or Catholic one where a work of God is necessary first in order for a person to experience salvation. This can be seen in the primary OT picture of salvation in the exodus: the Israelites cry out, God hears their groaning, and he responds by delivering them. Some may object that the Abrahamic covenant is a prior act of God. However, stories like Ruth, Naaman the leper, and the widow of Zarephath present interesting questions for this position: Ruth was a Moabitess, Naaman a Syrian Army Captain, and the widow whom Elijah saved, along with her son whom he brought back to life, were from the area of Sidon; they were all Gentiles.

Often royal psalms of lament—laments attributed to the king or written by a king—serve as representatives for how an individual might pray.³¹ For example, Psalm 22 includes King David’s lament over abandonment during a time of intense suffering. As such, this is spiritually formative for the ancient Israelite readers. King David’s response to abandonment informed and formed Jesus’ response on the cross, which then informs and forms Jesus’ disciples as they follow him by taking up their cross and enduring intense suffering. This passage serves as a powerful model of the use of Psalms of Lament for those who follow Jesus.

Suffering and the Prophets.

The prophet’s suffering is often understood as representative of the people’s suffering. In Ezekiel 4, Ezekiel lies on his left side for 390 days, a day for each year, for the sins of the northern kingdom. Then he lies on his right side for 40 days for the sins of the southern kingdom, a day for each year. Next, he is directed by God to eat about eight ounces of food each day with a half-liter of water, illustrative of the coming judgment, anxiety, and despair. As Ezekiel bears the sins of the people, he embodies many sacrificial metaphors, which resonate with this picture. Perhaps the most potent metaphor is his unique title, “son of man,” which becomes Jesus’ primary self-designated title.³²

³¹ Brian L. Webster and David R. Beach, *The Essential Bible Companion to the Psalms: Key Insights for Reading God’s Word*, Essential Bible Companion Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 17. Beach and Webster also include a complete listing of each type of psalm.

³² Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*, Overtures to Biblical Theology 14 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 163. Here Fretheim also lists the scapegoat language of Leviticus 16 and the Suffering Servant motif in Isaiah 53.

The prophets' suffering also serves as representative of God. Hosea serves as an example of God's suffering as God gives a graphic picture of covenant love despite the repeated infidelity of Israel depicted by Hosea's wife, Gomer.³³ Ezekiel also depicts God's suffering in Ezekiel 24, as God tells him his wife will die and names her as "the delight of your eyes, and the object of your affection." God tells him to say to those who ask that they, too, will lose the delight of their eyes, the object of their affection, which is Jerusalem and their children—all soon to be destroyed.

The metaphorical significance of the word *delight* shows up in the voices of other prophets as well. Interestingly, through Isaiah, God identifies Israel and Judah as "the vines" in which he delighted.³⁴ Moreover, in Jeremiah, Jerusalem is identified as God's delight and Ephraim the child for whom God yearns.³⁵ This syzygy puts Ezekiel in the unique position of representing both the people and God in suffering profound grief and loss. Here, Terence Fretheim, Luther Seminary's Elva B. Lovell professor of the Old Testament, offers an interesting analysis, especially in light of what we will see in Jesus' language: "The heart and mind of God pass over into that of the prophet to such an extent that the prophet becomes a veritable embodiment of God."³⁶

³³ Hos. 1:2.

³⁴ Isa. 5:7.

³⁵ Jer. 49:25 and 31:20, respectively.

³⁶ Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 150. Those who hold to impassibility will obviously not embrace this understanding of Ezekiel embodying the suffering of God. However, the self-identification of Jesus as "Son of man," does suggest Ezekiel as a type of Jesus Christ with differences of opinion as to the extent to which Ezekiel typifies and embodies the divine.

In this brief survey of suffering in the OT, we see suffering's role in the formation of Adam through his loneliness and temptation, the formation of the patriarchs, the formation of the nation of Israel, and the formation of the prophets. Through this lens, scenes of suffering such as the desert wilderness and exile, perhaps too often understood primarily as judgment for sins, become instead more robust and pregnant liminal spaces offering transformation.³⁷

Suffering in the NT

Suffering in the Life of Jesus.

Although listing each of Jesus' sufferings is beyond the scope of this study, several are significant for our consideration: the description as the "Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief" and as "the suffering servant" who carries our sorrows, both from Isaiah 53. Another would be his self-designated title, "Son of man," which, as we saw earlier, places him in the prophetic tradition of Ezekiel, another vicarious sufferer for both the people and God.

The gospel writers plainly tell us that while Jesus understood the story of the OT and the significance of suffering, his disciples did not, nor did anyone else. When Jesus began to explain the role suffering would play in his life, he explained it as suffering "many things."³⁸ Peter, perhaps serving as a spokesperson for all the disciples, rebuffed his Lord and his predictions of suffering. Jesus, aware of the place of suffering in the

³⁷ Thomas Rundel, "Liminal Spaces—A Narrative Spirituality of the Bible" (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2015).

³⁸ In both Matt. 16:23 and Mark 8:33.

economy of his Father, sharply rebukes Peter: “Get behind me, Satan.”³⁹ In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus adds, “You are a stumbling block to me,”⁴⁰ which is instructive for us. Jesus’ words emphasize that by misunderstanding, resisting, or denying suffering, we can, like Peter, actually hinder Jesus’ life and/or work. This crucial recognition is a cornerstone of the foundation of our theology of suffering. Both Matthew and Mark continue with this: “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”⁴¹ These words serve to further Jesus’ emphasis on the role of suffering and his strong words rebuking resistance or denial.

Then, extending the implications of Jesus’ emphasis, in both gospels, Jesus immediately follows this rebuke with words that clearly indicate the role of suffering as an imperative in a disciple’s life: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”⁴² According to Richard Rohr, this is an initiation into the downward journey, “the oldest form of spiritual instruction in the world,” without which we become self-seeking and even dangerous.⁴³ Rohr adds that

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Matt. 16:23 (TNIV).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Matt. 16:24-25 and Mark 8:34-35.

⁴³ Richard Rohr, *Dancing Standing Still: Healing the World from a Place of Prayer: A New Edition of a Lever and a Place to Stand* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 89.

Jesus insists on “the necessity of suffering,” but his disciples resisted him every time, so he must show them how and then tell them, “Follow me.”⁴⁴

According to the writer of Hebrews, suffering was necessary for Jesus to learn obedience, even though he was the Son of God.⁴⁵ This necessity is perhaps one of the most powerful passages demonstrating the need for suffering in order to be shaped into the image of Jesus. For as Jesus also tells us, “Students are not above their teacher, nor servants above their masters.”⁴⁶ The words of Jesus in the gospels unequivocally and repeatedly emphasize the necessity of suffering in his life and in the lives of those who follow him.

Suffering and the Disciples.

The disciples clearly did not understand how central suffering was until Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. In Luke 24, Jesus meets two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Their exchange evinces their misunderstanding of how suffering was part of redeeming Israel. Jesus rebukes them and calls them “foolish and slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”⁴⁷ Jesus had been trying to explain the suffering that had to happen, but they did not, or could not, understand. Even more interesting is that they were kept from recognizing him, even while they walked together. Then, perhaps most significantly,

⁴⁴ Ibid. Rohr continues by suggesting that we easily substitute “worship me” for “follow me” and thereby avoid suffering.

⁴⁵ Heb. 5:8.

⁴⁶ Matt. 10:24 (TNIV).

⁴⁷ Luke 24:25-27 (NIV).

these travelers to Emmaus only recognized their Lord in the “breaking of the bread,” an act illustrious of the apex of Christ’s sacrifice, love, and, indeed, suffering. Could it be that, like the travelers to Emmaus, our own lack of understanding of suffering also keeps us from recognizing him?

Other such situations underscore this possibility. Later, Jesus appears to the eleven in Jerusalem. As Luke describes it, Jesus reminds them that he had explained everything that had happened. Then Luke writes, “He opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures” and prophecies that Messiah would suffer.⁴⁸ Could it be that we do not understand suffering until after it happens and then only after a work of illuminating grace?

Suffering in the Epistles.

The NT repeatedly pairs suffering and glory. Peter, remembering Jesus’ seminar in OT hermeneutics, describes prophecy as predicting the Messiah’s sufferings and his glories. Then Peter links his readers’ suffering of “grief in all kinds of trials”⁴⁹ with coming glory. Later, again he reminds his readers, “But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”⁵⁰ In all these passages, we hear an echo of the dynamic pairing of suffering with glory from Luke 24.

⁴⁸ Luke 24:45-46.

⁴⁹ 1 Pet. 1:6.

⁵⁰ 1 Pet. 4:13.

Passages from Paul show that he uses these same terms. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul links his sufferings with their glory.⁵¹ In Colossians, he says his sufferings actually continue, finish, or fill up what is still lacking with regard to Christ's afflictions.⁵² These words strongly suggest that Paul understood that, at least in part, suffering is something in which we choose to participate. Also in Philippians, Paul uses the phrase "participation in his suffering" as a way of knowing and becoming like Jesus, which then leads to knowing the power of, and attaining to, the resurrection from the dead.⁵³

Suffering in Revelation.

John introduces himself in Revelation in an interesting way. He calls himself "your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus."⁵⁴ John is the most mature, the longest living, and perhaps the one who endured the most suffering (simply because he lived so long) of all the disciples, and this is how he understands and identifies himself: "a companion in the suffering" that is "ours in Jesus."⁵⁵ Notice the order: he mentions suffering before he mentions the kingdom. So here again with John, suffering leads to glory.

⁵¹ Eph. 3:13.

⁵² Col. 1:24.

⁵³ Phil. 3:10-11.

⁵⁴ Rev. 1:9.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The words of Jesus in the gospels are unequivocal and strong in emphasizing the necessity of his suffering. His words are equally strong in emphasizing the necessity of suffering in following him. The NT writers also give us a compelling expression of how they understood the connection between following Jesus and suffering. We see, strangely enough, that suffering is the necessary doorway to glory. It is for these reasons that we need a theology of suffering as a catalyst for spiritual formation.

Conclusion

The entire Bible—both testaments—makes it clear that spiritual formation has always required suffering. Through this exploration of the life of Jesus, the words of Jesus, and the writings of some of his disciples, we have seen that there are aspects of the image and likeness of Jesus that we can only discover and attain through suffering. Therefore, we need a theology of suffering for spiritual formation. Again, as Ignacio Martín-Baró says, “There are truths that can be discovered only through suffering.”⁵⁶ Amen.

⁵⁶ Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J., *Acción e Ideología: Psicología Social Desde Centroamérica*, (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1990), x, quoted in Kevin F. O’Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 218.

CHAPTER 3: MULTIPLICITY



“All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain.”²

— Richard Rohr

Introduction: Toward a Theology of Suffering for Spiritual Formation

If Richard Rohr is correct in saying “All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain,” then perhaps it is easier to understand the difficulty in experiencing and observing greatness in spirituality. We often exhibit ambivalence about pain in our language. We label as pathological the preferences for pain in the lives of others and the self—“sadism” and “masochism,” respectively—and we also label as pathological the inability to feel pain—“analgesia.” In a classic double bind, we label those motivated by

¹ “Blossom of Pain” at “Vigeland + Munch,” Munchmuseet, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://munchmuseet.no/en/exhibitions/vigeland-munch>.

² Richard Rohr, *What the Mystics Know: Seven Pathways to Your Deeper Self* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2015), 59.

pain avoidance as insecure and risk-averse, yet we often call reckless and foolish those who cause themselves pain by ignoring risks of injury. It is no surprise then that we find a wide variety of responses to suffering and pain in the lives of those who choose to follow Jesus Christ, the Man of Sorrows.³ Perhaps these things also explain our resistance to the suffering and pain involved in bearing his image and our faltering when we read Jesus' question to the sons of Zebedee, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"⁴

However, just as Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered,"⁵ and as Martín-Baró reminds us, there are truths about formation we will only discover through suffering. These discoveries through suffering illuminate the intersection of suffering and spiritual formation, and the stated goal of this dissertation is to articulate that intersection.

To accomplish this goal, we have briefly surveyed prevailing ways of understanding suffering and pain. This survey also named some difficulties in defining and identifying pain and suffering.

Our exploration has taken us through preliminary considerations about God and suffering, the role of the prophet and suffering, and then to Jesus as prophet and what he says about suffering. And now we begin this section with a question: how have people of the Christian faith understood suffering, and how might our survey approach help us see better the issues involved in Christian ministries of caregiving to suffering people?

³ Isa. 53:3 (NRSV, alternate reading).

⁴ Matt. 20:22 (NIV).

⁵ Heb. 5:8.

A five-type taxonomy will propose a system of classifying and describing ways of responding to suffering in the life of faith. For each type, we will briefly consider biblical foundations, historical expressions, theological traditions, and personal experiences.

Part I: The Incarnation and its Implications

The writer of Hebrews says Jesus is “the exact imprint of God’s very being.”⁶ Jesus, as already stated, says to the two on the road to Emmaus, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”⁷ It seems clear from these passages that Jesus is God, and Jesus suffered; therefore, by simple laws of logic, God suffers.

If we accept this, then we also must accept its implications. One of the implications is this: the only way to fully image the incarnate Christ is through suffering. This implication in no way excludes other ways of imaging Christ, such as through love. Yet even the highest form of love is seen through suffering, as we read, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”⁸ (though laying down one’s life for one’s enemies might arguably be greater). To make the point even more strongly, the resurrected Jesus, after his seminar in hermeneutics, commissions his

⁶ Heb. 1:3.

⁷ Luke 24:25-26.

⁸ John 15:13 (NRSV).

disciples with these words, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you,” and with his own breath, whereby they received the Holy Spirit.⁹

For these reasons, this dissertation proposes that suffering is then the central way to image Jesus, the incarnate Christ. While this truth seems easily accessible in its logic, it also seems we do not practice it or even understand it well as Christians; as Christians, we may conceptualize imaging the Man of Sorrows while stopping short of actualizing it. Perhaps we need what Jesus did for the disciples when they did not understand. As noted previously, “He opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.’”¹⁰ So, how might we take advantage of what Jesus is telling us through these words to his disciples? And how might we discover how Christians understand and relate to the Man of Sorrows and suffering today?

Part II: Toward a Framework for Understanding: A Five-Type Taxonomy of Relational Postures Toward Suffering

Introduction

Richard Niebuhr, in his now-classic *Christianity and Culture*,¹¹ uses a five-type faceted taxonomy to name the complex and varied responses of Christianity to culture. Borrowing from his approach, five postures of Christian faith to suffering are proposed. These proposed postures represent ways of relating to Jesus, Man of Sorrows, as he

⁹ John 20:21-22 (NIV).

¹⁰ Luke 24:45-46.

¹¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951). This multi-faceted approach has become popular and is used by others to represent Five Views of Apologetics, Sanctification, Biblical Inerrancy, The Law and Gospel, the Integration of Christianity and Psychology, and so on.

invites followers to the place of tears. With a view toward biblical foundations, theological traditions, and historical expressions, this examination and overview of the postures will present more of a survey than critique, and more of an exploration than analysis.

Type 1: The Christian Life Against Suffering

Biblical Foundations.

It is not difficult to understand someone's preference for the relational posture of the Christian life against suffering. As Henri Nouwen sympathetically notes, "There is so much pain, so much anguish, so much violence. Why should we drink the cup? Wouldn't it be easier to live normal lives with a minimum of pain and a maximum of pleasure?"¹² In addition to our natural preferences for pleasure without pain, there are several biblical foundations for this posture.

The Psalter begins by identifying two paths, the way of the righteous and the way of the unrighteous. Blessed is the way of the righteous "in all that they do they prosper,"¹³ but cursed is the way of the unrighteous. So, shouldn't the way of the Christian, like the righteous Israelite in Psalm 1 also be marked by prosperity?

This seems entirely consistent with the blessings and cursings of Deuteronomy 28, where we see a short listing of blessings, ten verses, and a much longer listing of curses, over five times longer. If, as Paul says in Romans 8, there is "no condemnation

¹² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink the Cup?* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 20.

¹³ Ps. 1:3.

for those who are in Christ,”¹⁴ and if the “just requirement of the law” has been met for us in Jesus,¹⁵ does it not make sense that we have escaped these curses and that we instead have these blessings?

Jesus heals the sick; he feeds the hungry; he raises from the dead, and says he has come to give us abundant life. Does it not follow that this abundant life includes deliverance from sickness, from hunger, and even from death? After all, doesn’t Jesus say, “Take courage; I have conquered the world”?¹⁶ These passages, and more, make it seem biblically plausible that we may reject all forms of suffering as we embrace the abundant life Jesus offers.

Theological Traditions.

The theological positions that reject the merits of suffering in the Christian life can be seen through the lens of the response to the tradition of imitating Christ, or *imitatio Christi*. For example, the Johannine epistles and the fourth Gospel make plain that we are to imitate Jesus. In 1 John, we read that anyone who claims to abide in Christ, “ought to walk just as he walked.”¹⁷ The plain sense of the passage makes imperative living like Christ, or imitating Christ. Several perennial favorites in devotional Christian

¹⁴ Rom. 8:1.

¹⁵ Rom. 8:4.

¹⁶ John 16:33.

¹⁷ 1 John 2:6b.

writing deal with imitation as a major theme, and even use it as the title.¹⁸ This means imitating Jesus, as Jesus taught, by taking up the cross, drinking the cup, and being baptized with his baptism, and so on.

However, in Augustine's attacks on Pelagius, he argued against the understanding of Pelagius that people become sinners by imitating Adam, and against the argument that people become righteous by imitating Christ.¹⁹ Augustine framed imitation as an attempt to prepare the soul for salvation, which of course in Augustine's view was impossible. Also, during the Reformation, the emphasis on grace alone through faith alone pushed aside the imitation of Christ; imitation seemed a threat to salvation by grace alone—*sola gratia*—in that it would focus on works.²⁰ The emphasis shifted to the finished work of Jesus being sufficient for salvation, usually to the exclusion of everything else. So, for fear of sounding Pelagian, and in any way adding to the need for grace alone by faith alone, many, particularly in the more Reformed traditions, tend to avoid the language of imitation. This is illustrated in the following quote from Alister McGrath: "Imitation brings in its wake a whole range of ideas and attitudes that are profoundly hostile to the gospel of grace."²¹ In this view, the imperative of taking up one's cross is then variously reframed as putting to death the false self, the ego, or the flesh, in order to receive by

¹⁸ Thomas Haemerken (a Kempis), *The Imitation of Christ*, eds. Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003). There are many other editions of this classic, written during the first quarter of the 15th century.

¹⁹ Jimmy Agan, *The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke: Growing in Christlike Love for God and Neighbor* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 2014), 4.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Alister McGrath, "In What Way Can Jesus Be a Moral Example for Christians?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 3 (September 1991): 297.

faith the resurrected life of Christ, something akin to offering up a blemished lamb, or a lame bull.

Another movement against embracing and imitating the suffering of Christ comes from those who believe more in Christ's uniqueness than his likeness to human beings. They believe something is lost if the uniqueness and salvific nature of his sufferings and death are not championed and defended against those who might see him as merely a victim of cruelty and a symbol of non-violent resistance. This is seen in recent comments by John Schneider, the former chair of religion and theology at Calvin College: "There is no doubt, I believe, that the tradition of *imitatio Christi*, admirable as it may be, undervalues the uniqueness of Christ's particular experience and its sufferings."²²

Historical Expressions.

The language of this posture is characterized by emphasizing the abundant life now, using language of triumph and glory. As mentioned above, this posture is often expressed in more Reformed traditions out of fear of sounding Pelagian. It is also expressed in the American tradition of the jeremiad. Sacvan Bercovitch describes the jeremiad as a rhetorical device meant to appeal to an unrealized ideal, either from the past or from future hopes, however utopian they may be.²³ It tends to shift responsibility for

²² John R. Schneider, *The Good of Affluence: Seeking God in a Culture of Wealth* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 149, quoted in Kelly Kapic, "Evangelical Holiness: Assumptions in John Owen's Theology of Christian Spirituality," Greenman and Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit*, 2010. Schneider argues for capitalism and that the accumulation of wealth is a good thing.

²³ Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1978), xi. Some suggest the jeremiad is a central rhetorical component to public life in America, tracing it all the way back to sermons preached on the boats coming over from Europe to America in the 17th century.

calamities from institutions or organizations to guilty groups or individuals—the Jonahs on the boat, the Achans in the camp, or the Judases at the table.²⁴ In this, it appeals to a moral construct similar to Deuteronomy 28, with blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

This posture is also seen in other narratives of moral decline²⁵ emerging from “a mainstream and deeply American way of thinking about the nation’s past, present, and future.”²⁶ These ways of thinking equate suffering with judgment and sin.

Another common expression is the prosperity gospel, an outgrowth of the desire to be blessed and not cursed, and understanding God’s will as a desire for us to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. Historian Kate Bowler says blessed “is a perfect word for an American society that ... believes the American dream is based on hard work.”²⁷ Bowler, professor of the history of Christianity at Duke Divinity School, says:

The modern prosperity gospel can be directly traced to the turn-of-the-century theology of a pastor named E. W. Kenyon whose evangelical spin on New Thought taught Christians to believe that their minds were powerful incubators of good or ill. Christians, Kenyon advised, must avoid words and ideas that create

²⁴ Ibid, 192. In Bercovitch’s analysis of Melville’s Captain Ahab, he contrasts two forms of individualism in America—the American and the “false” American—and sees Melville advocating the exorcism of the “rebellious Ahab in our souls,” 192.

²⁵ Matt McCullough, “The American Jeremiad: A Bit of Perspective on the Rhetoric of Decline,” accessed April 23, 2016, <https://9marks.org/article/the-american-jeremiad-a-bit-of-perspective-on-the-rhetoric-of-decline/>. In this article, McCullough, a Nashville pastor, uses the phrase “narratives of decline” in warning against the jeremiad as illegitimate “appeals to a past that never existed or to a future that God hasn’t promised us.”

²⁶ Andrew R. Murphy, *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

²⁷ Kate Bowler, “Death, the Prosperity Gospel and Me,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/opinion/sunday/death-the-prosperity-gospel-and-me.html>, 13. Bowler also wrote *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). She uses her book as a source for the *NYT* article.

sickness and poverty; instead, they should repeat: “God is in me. God’s ability is mine. God’s strength is mine. God’s health is mine. His success is mine. I am a winner. I am a conqueror.” Or, as prosperity believers summarized it for me, “I am blessed.”²⁸

In this perspective, the line is blurred between prosperity as God’s gracious gift and prosperity as simply a reward for hard work.

Type 2: The Christian Life Equals Suffering

Biblical Foundations.

The relational posture that the Christian life equals suffering flows easily out of biblical passages that equate life with suffering and link discipleship with suffering and trials. These include Job’s lament: “Human beings are born to trouble just as sparks fly upward.”²⁹ They also include previously mentioned words of Jesus: “taking up your cross,”³⁰ “drinking the cup,”³¹ and being “baptized with his baptism.”³² The words of Jesus listed here, coupled with Paul’s longing for the “participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death”³³ and his filling up “in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s affliction,”³⁴ represent strong foundational passages for this posture. Additionally, in Acts 9 Jesus reveals to Ananias his selection of Saul of Tarsus as his

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Job 5:7.

³⁰ Luke 9:23.

³¹ Matt. 20:22-23.

³² Mark 10:38-39.

³³ Phil. 3:10.

³⁴ Col. 1:24.

emissary: “But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’”³⁵

Theological Traditions.

The tradition of *imitatio Christi* fits well here, as the imitation of Christ is seen as the test of authentic discipleship.³⁶ *Imitatio Christi* includes a wide variety of people, usually practicing a mystical faith within various traditions. This posture especially includes those who pray to participate in the suffering of Jesus or receive the marks of his suffering by some method. The Apostle Paul says at the end of Galatians, “I carry the marks (*stigmata*) of Jesus branded on my body.”³⁷ Perhaps most memorably, Frances of Assisi carried stigmata as well.³⁸ For this reason, those who carry markings of Jesus’ suffering are also called *stigmatics*.

In the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius, during the “third week,” participants make their goal to be with Jesus in his sufferings: “We accompany Jesus into the mystery of human suffering.”³⁹ Participants’ prayers for this week vary from prayers for confusion and regret, to prayers for “sorrow with Christ in sorrow; a broken spirit with Christ so

³⁵ Acts 9:15-16.

³⁶ Dirk Gysbert van der Merwe, “Imitatio Christi in the Fourth Gospel,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 22, no. 1 (2001): 131–148, 147.

³⁷ Gal. 6:17b.

³⁸ Mike Dash, “The Mystery of the Five Wounds,” *Smithsonian*, November 18, 2011, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-mystery-of-the-five-wounds-361799/>.

³⁹ O’Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure*, 213.

broken; tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for me.”⁴⁰ This Ignatian prayer clearly *requests* suffering.

Historical Expressions.

Martyrs, mendicants, and mystics are typical examples of some form of identification with Christ in his sufferings. They accept and even choose a life of suffering—the martyrs in their dying, the mendicants in their voluntary poverty, and many mystics in their embrace of suffering. There are many first-century martyrs, including Papyrus, Carpus, Perpetua, Ptolemaeus, and Polycarp.⁴¹ There are many being martyred today.⁴²

Mendicants, “ascetics who lived in the world, begged for food, and preached the gospel,”⁴³ include the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and multiple lay movements beginning in the later Middle Ages.⁴⁴

Mystics have traditionally focused on knowing God through union, often expressed through the tradition of mystical theology and less through systematic doctrine. Their numbers include many clergy and lay persons throughout the history of the church. Notable among them, but by no means an exhaustive list, are Dionysius, John Climacus,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 223.

⁴¹ Gerald Lawson Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 34-43.

⁴² James C. Hefley and Marti Hefley, *By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996).

⁴³ Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well*, 193.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 193-203.

John Bonaventure, Bernard of Clairvaux, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila.⁴⁵

For many, the language of this posture matches their sentiments during periods of their lives. Moreover, for some, like those who suffer from chronic pain or disabilities, it may match their lifelong sentiments. The language of this posture can often sound like “life is hard” or “life is pain.” These sentiments are often expressed in art traditions also, like the work of Edvard Munch or like the music of the blues or the spirituals: “Every Day I Have the Blues”⁴⁶ and “Lord, I Just Can’t Keep from Crying Sometimes.”⁴⁷

This posture also matches the personal experiences of minority Christians during periods of persecution and oppression. For example, distinguished Union Seminary Professor of systematic theology James Cone captures the experience of Africans in early America and African-Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries using a powerful parallel between the metaphor and the reality of the cross and the lynching tree.⁴⁸ Here he describes the experiences of Africans and African-American individuals and communities. These examples give historical evidence for this posture and its prevalence. Often these experiences of suffering in minority groups serve as organizing

⁴⁵ Ibid., 163-186.

⁴⁶ Aaron “Pinetop” Sparks and Milton Sparks, *Everyday I Have the Blues*, Music 10" 78rpm (Chicago: Bluebird, 1935).

⁴⁷ Blind Willie Johnson, *Lord, I Just Can’t Keep from Crying Sometimes*, 10" 78rpm (Dallas: Columbia, 1929). Blind Willie Johnson was a street preacher in Dallas who played his messages using a slide guitar and his raspy voice.

⁴⁸ James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 3. Cone says, “The lynching tree joined the cross as the most emotionally charged symbols in the African American community—symbols that represented both death and the promise of redemption, judgment and the offer of mercy, suffering and the power of hope.”

principles for schools of spirituality, as illustrated in Kees Waaijman's work on leadership.⁴⁹

Type 3: The Christian Life Transforms Suffering

Biblical Foundations.

The posture of the Christian life transforming suffering (which could also be stated conversely as suffering transforming the Christian life) can be seen in the OT traditions of lament. The laments of individuals and the community of Israel usually broadly follow a pattern: address to God, a complaint or lament, a turning to God, some result or realization, and then a vow of praise or a blessing of God. Here, the turning to God is the expression of faith resulting in deliverance—salvation in synecdoche. Also, we see this in the Joseph narrative. He says to his brothers, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.”⁵⁰ In this conversation, Joseph demonstrates how his posture toward suffering had changed; he could see that God transformed his suffering and worked deliverance—again, salvation in synecdoche.

In this posture, biblical passages listed for the previous posture may also be foundational, such as those by the Apostle Paul. Paul articulates his reasons for accepting and choosing suffering as being connected to a result either in his own life, or the lives of others. In Colossians 1, Paul says that he is “completing what is lacking in Christ’s

⁴⁹ See Appendices 1 and 2.

⁵⁰ Gen. 50:20.

afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.”⁵¹ He does this to “present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.”⁵² and to “make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”⁵³ and finally “so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”⁵⁴ So Paul’s embrace of suffering in his own body results in transformation for others.

The connection of suffering to glory is evident in Paul’s words in Philippians as well. Here Paul expresses the desire to share in Christ’s sufferings by becoming like him in his death, in order to “know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”⁵⁵

Another foundation for this posture comes from one of Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. Paul writes:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.⁵⁶

Here Paul expresses a purpose for suffering being that we would receive comfort and then comfort others. So our comfort results in, or is transformed into, comfort for others.

⁵¹ Col. 1:24.

⁵² Col. 1:25-26 (TNIV).

⁵³ Col. 1:27 (NIV).

⁵⁴ Col. 1:28.

⁵⁵ Phil. 3:10.

⁵⁶ 2 Cor. 1:3-5.

Theological Traditions.

This posture is seen in the Orthodox and Catholic traditions of liberation from oppression and bondage of sin through practicing the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist or celebration of Mass, which is receiving the body and blood of Jesus sacrificed for us.⁵⁷ In these practices, Jesus is continually liberating us through his suffering as the redeeming sacrifice, which is the means of transforming us. Here, it is worth noting that in the ancient Church, the Eucharist is often called the “Medicine of Immortality,” recognizing that the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ are efficacious in saving us from death.⁵⁸

Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian scholar and Catholic Priest in the Dominican Order, describes his liberation theology as having social and political elements as well.⁵⁹ Gutierrez advocates a posture of poverty as “an act of loving solidarity with the poor,” and adds two additional elements to the notion of liberation from sin: liberation socially and politically and eliminating the causes of injustice and poverty.⁶⁰

Likewise, the recently canonized St. Faustina was told by God that while there are souls living in the world who “love me dearly,” they “are few.” Nevertheless, “the love

⁵⁷ “The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions and Answers,” accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/order-of-mass/liturgy-of-the-eucharist/the-real-presence-of-jesus-christ-in-the-sacrament-of-the-eucharist-basic-questions-and-answers.cfm>.

⁵⁸ Laurence Freeman, “The Eucharist—Medicine of Immortality.” *The Furrow* 62, no. 10 (2011): 552-555. Freeman uses a term generally attributed to Ignatius of Antioch, a second-century theologian.

⁵⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Liberation Theologies*, accessed April 24, 2016, <http://liberationtheology.org/people-organizations/gustavo-gutierrez/>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

and sacrifice of these souls sustain the world in existence.”⁶¹ Thus, our suffering is for others in a way that transforms the world here and now.

This posture also can be seen in traditions that fully practice the liturgical calendar, which includes celebrating all the elements of the Paschal Mystery.⁶² This calendar includes often-obscure days that are nonetheless part of the process of Christ’s transforming the world, such as Shrove Tuesday, Maundy Thursday, Holy Saturday, and the days after Easter and before the Ascension and Pentecost.⁶³

Historical Expressions.

Recently, a group of Christian monastics met with a group of Buddhist monastics at Gethsemani Abbey,⁶⁴ a Trappist monastery in Kentucky, to discuss transforming suffering. “To deepen our identity in Christ, to become ever more deeply immersed in the Paschal Mystery, is to become increasingly spirit-filled. Here an emphasis on the Paschal Mystery is the pattern or archetype of Christian transformation.”⁶⁵ This is an emphasis in Catholic, Orthodox, and some Protestant spiritualities and lived out through the church calendar.

⁶¹ St. Faustina Kowalska, *St. Faustina Kowalska Diary—Divine Mercy in My Soul*, n.d., 113, <http://archive.org/details/St.FaustinaKowalskaDiary>.

⁶² See Appendix 3.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Home,” accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.monks.org/>. This is the website for the Abbey of Gethsemani.

⁶⁵ Donald W. Mitchell and James A. Wiseman, *The Gethsemani Encounter a Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 126.

This posture can also be seen in the wounded healer myth and metaphor in Jungian analytical psychology and elsewhere. Writing from a Jungian perspective, Erich Neumann, a developmental psychologist and past president of the Israel Association of Analytical Psychologists, writes:

As the myth puts it, only a wounded [person] can be a physician, a healer. Because in [their] own suffering the creative [person] experiences the profound wounds of [their] collectivity and [their] time, [they] carry deep within [them] a regenerative force capable of bringing forth a cure not only for [themselves] but also for the community.⁶⁶

“Wounded Healer” is also a popular book title, including one by Henri Nouwen on ministry in which he applies the metaphor to ministers of the gospel.⁶⁷

Analogous to the wounded healer is the idea of creative suffering. Paul Tournier writes of discovering the ideas of Pierre Rentchnick of Geneva in 1975 in an article entitled, “Orphans Lead the World.”⁶⁸ Rentchnick compiled a list of almost three hundred names of people throughout history who have had great influence, and in his list, there was one characteristic they all had in common: all of them had been orphans.⁶⁹ Tournier describes his book as the result of his investigation into suffering and how an attitude of

⁶⁶ Erich Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 186.

⁶⁷ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972). The wounded healer is seen also in the Greek myth of Chiron. It is also an underlying theme for many other books, such as Joan Chittister’s *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁶⁸ Paul Tournier, *Creative Suffering*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

courage and hope can transform suffering into something that was not possible without suffering.

Creative suffering is also the subject of Eric Maisel's work, *The Van Gogh Blues*.⁷⁰ Maisel writes specifically about depression, but his comments are often applied to other forms of suffering. He asserts that "100 percent of creative people will suffer from episodes of depression."⁷¹ Maisel also cites *The Price of Greatness*, Arnold Ludwig's study of 1,000 eminent twentieth-century people, listing "77 percent of poets, 54 percent of fiction writers, 50 percent of visual artists, and 46 percent of composers had suffered from at least one significant depressive episode."⁷² This list he correlates to creators investigating meaning in life, exploring doubts and questions, and being skeptical of received systems of meaning.

Type 4: The Christian Life as Above Suffering

Biblical Foundations.

The relational posture of the Christian life above suffering can be seen in passages that present a comparison and a greater-than-lesser-than relationship. Consider Paul's words, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us."⁷³ Consider also, "For our light and momentary

⁷⁰ Eric Maisel, *The Van Gogh Blues: The Creative Person's Path through Depression* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008).

⁷¹ Maisel, *The Van Gogh Blues*, 4.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Rom. 8:18.

troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”⁷⁴ James can be listed here as well: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”⁷⁵ In these passages, a comparison is made, and one thing is valued above another. Future and eternal glory are above present suffering and temporal troubles; and perseverance is above trials and testing. Other comparisons are also direct statements that one thing is greater than another, such as Moses considering “abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward.”⁷⁶ Peter, writing of suffering in the lives of his readers, writes, “These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”⁷⁷ These comparisons are values-based appeals to consider the future, the reward, praise, glory, and honor as above suffering. This comparison is the dominant characteristic of this posture.

Theological Traditions.

As Niebuhr points out in the posture of Christ above culture, this position avoids the extremes of either end of the continuum, the extreme on one end of thesis-antithesis, and the extreme on the other end of equalization; this posture he describes as the center.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ 2 Cor. 4:17.

⁷⁵ James 1:2-3 (NIV).

⁷⁶ Heb. 11:26.

⁷⁷ 1 Pet. 1:7.

⁷⁸ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 120.

So this posture of the Christian toward suffering, not against suffering and not equated with suffering, may be present in many theological traditions, but perhaps more so in traditions that emphasize the language of comparison: earth and heaven, temporal and eternal, of this world and not of this world, secular and sacred, human and divine, present suffering and future glory, suffering in hell and rewards in heaven, suffering as a sinner and suffering as a beloved son, and so on. The attention is directed away from the suffering, away from the present, and toward something more significant, something more attractive, and something more enduring.

Historical Expressions.

This posture is often expressed in movements that embrace suffering in a similar way to those who equate the Christian life to suffering; however, the motive here is more to transcend suffering, not so much to join the suffering Christ or experience union with a suffering God.

Often the goal of Buddhism can be described in this way: to break through this life to one that is perfect in peace, joy, and happiness.⁷⁹ Many Christians see a clear analogy in Christianity and Buddhism in this striving for what is better or choosing to think on what is greater.

There is a darker side to this posture, at times, and one that can be seen in attitudes toward the unjust, the unrighteous, or the unclean. Perhaps this dark side is a

⁷⁹ “Common Buddhist Misunderstandings,” accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.buddhanet.net/cbp1_f6.htm.

greater vulnerability to *schadenfreude*⁸⁰—something Jesus addresses in the parable of the Good Neighbor or the Good Samaritan. Not only was he illustrating love, but he was also subverting the notions that the unjust or unclean deserve to suffer. Ironically, this tendency to believe others deserve to suffer has been quite pervasive in Christian attitudes toward the Jews. Like the jeremiads toward “sinners,” the attitudes toward the suffering of the Jews as “Christ killers” can often seem justified, something Colin Leach describes in his studies on *schadenfreude*, which Leach describes as a “malicious enjoyment of the misfortunes of others.”⁸¹

Peter Ochs, writing of the challenges facing postliberal Christianity in relationship to Israel and the suffering of the Holocaust, critiques attempts to repair suffering by reducing the “logic of repair” to a “logic of dyads” where suffering is seen as a consequence of bad behavior or the absence of good behavior.⁸² Ochs pinpoints where repair logic is reduced to setting up this sort of dyad between good and bad. In this case, it is good to be a Christian and accept Christ and bad to be a Jew who does not accept Christ. Ochs suggests a better solution is relational logic, which is “being able to give oneself to another.”⁸³ This relational logic seems to be what Jesus advocates in the

⁸⁰ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “schadenfreude,” accessed November 22, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/schadenfreude>. “Pleasure derived by someone from another person’s misfortune” or literally, “harm” + “joy” in German.

⁸¹ Colin Leach, “*The Value of Other’s Suffering: Schadenfreude & Its Sisters*,” MP3, Suffering’s Role and Value, accessed April 20, 2016, http://media.gla.ac.uk/podcasts/subjects/arts/philosophy/valueofsuffering/sufferingsroleandvalue/9_Colin_Leach_f.mp3.

⁸² Peter Ochs, *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 11.

Sermon on the Mount when he says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”⁸⁴ An emphasis on transcending suffering seems more likely to effect a movement away from joining a suffering Christ, away from union with a suffering God, and away from solidarity with others who suffer, perhaps especially our enemies.

Type 5: The Christian Life and Suffering in Paradox

Biblical Foundations.

Paradox may be defined simply as “A seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which when investigated may prove to be well founded or true.”⁸⁵ Another definition fits here as well: “A person or thing that combines contradictory features or qualities.”⁸⁶

The biblical foundations for a relational posture that holds the Christian life and suffering in paradox are many. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” is perhaps one of the best-known sayings of Job.⁸⁷ Giving and taking are set in tension. Another well-known passage comes from Solomon:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

⁸⁴ Matt. 5:43-45.

⁸⁵ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “paradox,” accessed November 23, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paradox>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Job 1:21.

a time to be born, and a time to die;
 a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
 a time to kill, and a time to heal;
 a time to break down, and a time to build up;
 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
 a time to mourn, and a time to dance.⁸⁸

These passages set opposites in tension. In Job's case, the attribution is toward God, so God is the author of this tension; God has given life, and God is seen as active in Job's suffering.

The NT writers offer examples as well. Paul describes his life as caught in the tension between the spiritual and the unspiritual: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."⁸⁹ And again in his letter to the Corinthians: "For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?"⁹⁰ In these passages, it is easy to understand the reasons for this posture and for seeing suffering through this lens; God has ordained these tensions as part of the groaning of creation in Romans 8. So our part should be to accept without protest what a sovereign God has given just as we receive the gift of life. This posture might also appeal to a more stoic approach to hardship.

⁸⁸ Eccles. 3:1-4.

⁸⁹ Rom. 7:15.

⁹⁰ 2 Cor. 2:15-16.

Theological Traditions.

This relational posture of the Christian life and suffering in paradox is seen in theological traditions that emphasize the kingdom of God as “already/not yet” or as “here, but not of here.” Jesus says to the Pharisees, “The kingdom of God is among you,”⁹¹ yet he also says to Pilate, “My kingdom is not from here.”⁹²

This relational posture is found in many theological traditions, perhaps all of them, as paradox is woven into the fabric of life and life with Jesus.

Historical Expressions.

Perhaps mystical and contemplative spiritualities best express living in paradox. Richard Rohr, the director of the Contemplative Action Center (paradox harnessed in a name), points us to the words of Pope John Paul II, who points us even further back:

The venerable and ancient tradition of the Eastern Churches, that is the teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers on divinization (*theosis*), passed into the tradition of all the Eastern Churches and is part of their common heritage. This can be summarized in the thought already expressed by St. Irenaeus at the end of the second century: “God passed into man so that man might pass over to God.”⁹³

Here Pope John Paul II reminds us of Irenaeus’ quote, capturing what is perhaps the most enduring expression of paradox for all time.

More recently, Tullian Tchividjian captured paradox in the Christian life: “Amid our glorious ruin, Jesus is strong, so we’re free to be weak; Jesus won, so we’re free to

⁹¹ Luke 17:21.

⁹² John 18:36.

⁹³ Pope John Paul II, “*Oriente Lumen*,” Apostolic Letter of May 2, 1995, I:6, in Richard Rohr, *Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 118-119.

lose; Jesus was a somebody, so we can be a nobody; Jesus was extraordinary, so we are free to be ordinary; and Jesus succeeded for us, so we are free to fail.”⁹⁴ Here Tchividjian lists these opposites held in tension—perennial paradoxes—as part of the Christian life and as enduring aspects of a relationship with Jesus. Tchividjian, as an author, is also an example of another kind of paradox in that he expresses in his short book all but the first posture, the Christian life against suffering. A living paradox indeed.

*Another Possible Relational Posture in Search of a Taxonomy:
The Christian Life as a Causal Agent of Suffering*

Some might believe that the church is to militantly pursue justice in defense of the poor, the disenfranchised, the immigrant, the widow, and the orphan. Or perhaps militantly protect ourselves, at times, against injustice, persecution, or oppression. So this possible posture is explored but not included, considered but not embraced.

Possible Biblical Foundations.

The biblical foundations for what might be an additional posture, the Christian life as an agent or cause of suffering, are typically controversial, as one might suspect. However, perhaps they are worth mentioning even though this posture will be rejected. In the OT, many texts describe the warfare during the Conquest from Joshua to David and the commands to destroy whole people groups and to occupy their cities and lands.

In the OT prophecies and in the NT, Jesus is known as the Son of David, a warrior king. David conducted much warfare in an earthly sense, which ushered in the

⁹⁴ Tullian Tchividjian, *Glorious Ruin: How Suffering Sets You Free*, Reprint edition (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2014), 169-170.

golden era of the united monarchy in the nation of Israel. The Christ, it was believed, would usher in a new era and restore the nation to its former glory, including warfare.

However, Jesus began his ministry by preaching about the kingdom of heaven. In fact, contrary to those who might embrace this militant posture, Jesus says quite plainly to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”⁹⁵

Additionally, the mistaken Messianic expectations of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus follow along these lines as well: “We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”⁹⁶

Some passages have been noted as advocating for some kind of armed resistance. One of interest is “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.”⁹⁷ Some have translated the word “violent” as “eager,” or, like *The Living Bible*, “ardent,” rendering the phrase, “ardent multitudes have been crowding toward the Kingdom of Heaven.” This rendering opens the possibility that advancing the kingdom by force could be something desirable.

To a lesser degree, another passage from Matthew might be seen in this light: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”⁹⁸ While most take this as an extension of the hostility his followers will face,

⁹⁵ John 18:36.

⁹⁶ Luke 24:21.

⁹⁷ Matt. 11:12.

⁹⁸ Matt. 10:34.

it's easy to see why some might understand it literally, as later he advises his disciples to buy a sword if they don't already have one. Shortly before his arrest, "He said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.'"⁹⁹

Another interesting passage occurs in a Lukan parable, the parable of the ten minas. Here, a noble gives ten servants ten minas before departing on a journey to become king. Upon returning, many servants have varying levels of financial return from the original amount. But some have only the original amount they refused to invest, and, perhaps more importantly, refused him as king. Of these, the new king says, "Bring them here and slay them in front of me."¹⁰⁰ An exegetical caution here would be to not extend too far secondary and tertiary elements of the parable, which usually has one main point of application in its original context.

While this additional posture is conceivable and somewhat understandable based on these passages, it seems much less of a posture towards Jesus, Man of Sorrows, and more of a posture against those one views as "unworthy" or "unbelieving." For these reasons, it does not seem congruent with the postures already listed. Therefore, it will not be included in our taxonomy.

Part III: Spiritual Formation and Suffering

For those who accept that God suffers, participating in *imago Dei* will require suffering or at the very least a deeper appreciation for suffering. Whether one rejects or

⁹⁹ Luke 22:36.

¹⁰⁰ Luke 19:27.

accepts impassibility, obedience to the words of Jesus—the Man of Sorrows—and being shaped and molded into his image requires suffering.

Jesus uses suffering as a filter for discipleship: “Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”¹⁰¹ The NT writers list suffering in their self-identification and in their recommendations for those who would choose to join them. However, for some reason, there are few chapters on suffering in textbooks on spiritual formation; there are few theologies of suffering written, and those that are seem to neglect entirely a development of a formative purpose.

Conclusion

Through this exploration of the intersection of spiritual formation and suffering, the variety of beliefs about suffering in the life of faith have been framed in terms of a relationship to Jesus, the Man of Sorrows. We have seen that the relationship is varied and complex; there is no “right” posture, per se.

There may be some value in exploring the possibility of a developmental arrangement in this taxonomy considering the maturing of one’s individual faith and considering the historical development and maturing of the Christian church. Depending on the result, it also may prove fruitful to arrange these postures as various stages of development of one’s faith, and perhaps even as reflective of various stages of the development of the church. As a theology of suffering for spiritual formation, such an exploration and arrangement seems necessary, particularly in light of the stages of faith and maturity. More will be said about this in chapter six.

¹⁰¹ Matt. 10:38.

The goal of this chapter has been to explore and name the varied and complex relationship between Christian faith and suffering. I have done so knowing that, as Richard Niebuhr concluded his study of Christianity and Culture, “no single [person] or group or historical time is the church; but that there is a church of faith in which we do our partial, relative work and on which we count.”¹⁰²

¹⁰² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 256.

CHAPTER 4:
THROUGH A LOOKING GLASS



“When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery.”²

— Judith Lewis Herman, MD

Introduction: Toward a Formational Theology of Suffering

David Little, a retired Harvard professor, says, “Religions are inconceivable apart from the experience of suffering,” and each religion faces the difficulty of “producing a consistent and satisfying explanation of it.”³ In Christianity, salvation comes through Jesus Christ—through his traumatic suffering, his violent crucifixion and death, and his resurrection. Through this trauma, salvation is possible as Jesus defeats the power of Satan, evil, and death. And, as Balthasar, a twentieth-century Catholic theologian,

¹ “Trauma by Dennis Sibeijn,” accessed December 3, 2016, <http://dighist.fas.harvard.edu/courses/2016/HUM11c/exhibits/show/reading-history/item/190>.

² Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: BasicBooks, 2015), 1.

³ David Little, “Human Suffering in Comparative Perspective,” in *They Shall Not Hurt: Human Suffering and Human Caring* (Boulder, CO: Colorado Associated University Press, 1989), 54.

reminds us, the uniqueness of Christianity—in contrast to non-Christian indifference—is that it “allows the deepest self to be open to suffering if God wills it.”⁴

But Christians often exhibit ambivalence about suffering. The doctrine of divine impassibility—an unfortunate term of negation, meaning “incapable of suffering or pain; not subject to suffering,”⁵—might be seen psychodynamically as a symptom of ambivalence about a suffering God.

Additionally, theodicy—any attempt to “reconcile the existence of evil with that of a good Creator”⁶—also can be seen as ambivalence about human suffering. Many today see theodicies as attempts to explain evil and suffering in defense of an all-powerful and all-loving God while providing little comfort to sufferers. Many also agree with theologian Fleming Rutledge, who asserts theodicies are a “misbegotten enterprise”⁷—distractions from “the real-life predicament of sufferers.”⁸

This chapter focuses on the real-life predicaments of those who suffer and on this question: “How does God shape and mold us into the image of Jesus, a ‘man of suffering, and familiar with pain’?”⁹ Real-life predicaments and this question about imaging Jesus,

⁴ Raymond Gawronski, *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West*, 3rd ed. (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press/Second Spring, 2015), 196.

⁵ *OED Online*, s. v. “impassible, adj.,” accessed December 9, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/92130>.

⁶ Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 431. Here Rutledge is summarizing the 18th-century philosopher Gottfried Leibniz, who is believed to have coined the term “theodicy.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Isa. 53:3.

the Man of Suffering, take us to the intersection of suffering and spiritual formation where we can continue the beginnings of a formational theology of suffering.

**Continuing the Dialogue:
The Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and Their Implications**

The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is “the exact imprint of God’s very being,”¹⁰ making clear and emphasizing that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus rhetorically asks the two on the road to Emmaus, “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”¹¹ So Jesus was God; Jesus endured traumatic suffering and violent crucifixion, as declared by the prophets, and rose from the dead. This trauma and resurrection bear fruit in the transformation of the whole universe. And, all the while, we are being made into the image of Jesus. But, just exactly how are we to speak of and be made into the image of this crucified God? Kenneth Leech writes:

In order to speak of the crucified God we need a theology of abandonment, of dereliction, of an alienation so profound that it can only be expressed in language marked by paradox and by great daring and risk. The crucifixion of the Son of God by one of the most advanced civilizations in the ancient world does not seem to be an acceptable or reasonable method of redeeming the world. There is something so outrageous and obscene about it that the agony in Gethsemane becomes the only comprehensible part of the whole saga.¹²

If we accept Leech’s assessment, then it seems the only way to conceptualize and to speak clearly of the image of this crucified God is through the language of suffering. By Jesus’ very words, suffering is also a requisite component of meeting his expectations for

¹⁰ Heb. 1:3.

¹¹ Luke 24:25-26.

¹² Kenneth Leech, *We Preach Christ Crucified* (New York: Church Pub., 1994), 69-70.

discipleship: “Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”¹³ So the implications of following this crucified God seem quite clear: to bear his image, we will be asked to suffer.

In chapter two, we learned that suffering is clearly part of spiritual formation in both the Old Testament and the New. But precisely how does suffering change us? And then, more particularly, how does suffering contribute to and ultimately accomplish our formation into the image of Jesus, the man of suffering?

How can we answer these questions? As noted earlier, we need Jesus to open our minds: “He opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.’”¹⁴ Indeed, we do need Jesus to open our minds. Let us also explore current literature of suffering and change.

Part I: Suffering and Trajectories of Change – Toward a Framework for Understanding

Preliminary Considerations

One preliminary consideration in discussing suffering and change involves specifying what we mean by the terms. Suffering—“the bearing or undergoing of pain, distress, or tribulation”¹⁵—may be endured without significantly changing the sufferer. While this neutral outcome may, at times, be our personal preference, the interests of this

¹³ Matt. 10:38.

¹⁴ Luke 24:45-46.

¹⁵ *OED Online*, s. v. “suffering, n.,” accessed December 9, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/193531>.

dissertation are necessarily, and hopefully profitably, focused on the types and intensity of suffering that changes and forms people. Trajectories of *change*—“alteration in the state or quality of anything; the fact of becoming other than it was; variation, mutation” or “conversion to a different frame of mind”¹⁶—like story arcs, may take various forms: short or long, intense or less so.

Another preliminary consideration in exploring how suffering changes people involves selecting the ideal theoretical lens through which we might best categorize and evaluate changes caused by suffering. For the purpose of helping educators and caregivers, this dissertation will consider suffering and change through the lens of the social sciences. This seems a more appropriate choice as the epistemological method for the social sciences includes an enhanced appreciation for theory and research as opposed to an epistemological method reliant on rational-inductive argumentation, such as philosophy or theology.

Additionally, a brief review of literature, religion, art, and psychology underscores the important formative roles suffering plays.

Views of Suffering: Literature, Religion, Art, and Psychology

As Christian theology and tradition propose, the salvation of the world comes through trauma. If such a proposal initially seems outrageous, it may seem equally outrageous that suffering would contribute to positive spiritual formation.

¹⁶ *OED Online*, s. v. “change, n.,” accessed December 9, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/30467>.

However, in a brief review of the literary arts, we find suffering contributing positively in character development. In the story arcs of tragedy, from Euripides' "Medea" and Sophocles' "Creon" to Arthur Miller's "Willy Loman," suffering is a precipitate of change. More markedly, in Dorothea Krook's descriptions of the four elements of tragedy—"the precipitant, suffering, knowledge, and affirmation"—suffering is believed *necessary* for full human development.¹⁷ From Aristotle's "reversal of fortune"¹⁸ to Joseph Campbell's "hero's journey,"¹⁹ suffering has influenced characters from ancient Greece to George Lucas' *Star Wars* and beyond.

In religious literature, David Little traces four types of suffering: "retributive, therapeutic, pedagogical, and vicarious."²⁰ All these manifestations or "types" of suffering can be located in the Christian faith, not only in the life and teaching of Jesus, but in the lives and teaching of his disciples as well.

In Makoto Fujimura's *Refractions*, this internationally famous artist describes his experience of *Operation Homecoming*, a National Endowment for the Arts publication meant to give the soldiers returning from Afghanistan and Iraq an opportunity to tell their stories. He calls their stories, "Epistles of Injury."²¹ He poses the question, "How much of

¹⁷ Dorothea Krook, *Elements of Tragedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), 8, quoted in Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun, *Trauma & Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 3-4.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, quoted in Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 3rd ed. (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007), 320.

¹⁹ Vogler, *The Writer's Journey*, 3-20.

²⁰ Little, "Human Suffering in Comparative Perspective," 60.

²¹ Makoto Fujimura, *Refractions: A Journey of Faith, Art, and Culture* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009), 159.

the world's literature is linked to wartime experiences?"²² In answering this question himself, he adds appropriate and potent laments:

The writings of soldiers, or writings about wars in general, have indeed defined our literature and the arts, from Homer to Dante to Hemingway. If you removed works of art that do not in some way relate to or respond to wars, our cultural landscape would be full of holes (think of Picasso's great masterpiece of Spain's civil war, *Guernica*).²³ Perhaps that's what Jesus meant when he warned us "such things [wars] must happen" (Matt. 24:6) Must we be haunted by wars as part of God's plan of redemption? Must art exist as primarily funerary?²⁴

Fujimura's laments highlight the role of suffering, particularly the trauma of war, in art and also in redemption. He continues by tracing the experiences of war in some of the most beloved writers of the last century—J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and T. S. Eliot. Then he adds an important caveat: "Going through such horrors is no guarantee of a recovery of faith, but it does suggest that faith and culture are linked to the crisis that surrounds us."²⁵ In every era of human history, faith and human life must exist in these varied crises of surrounding cultures, and all of these crises have the potential to provoke and give rise to various forms of suffering.

Recent developments in trauma studies substantially enlighten our investigation of how suffering changes people. These studies direct our attention to the social sciences, especially psychology, and more particularly trauma theory and the healing of trauma. Since the publication of DSM-IV in 1994 with the first official listing for Posttraumatic

²² Ibid.

²³ See Appendix 4.

²⁴ Fujimura, *Refractions*, 159-160.

²⁵ Ibid.

Stress Disorder (PTSD), clinical discussions of a constellation of symptoms have prompted many to explore and research pathologies emerging from traumatic suffering.²⁶

Part II: Understanding Suffering and Change: Trauma and Recovery as a Paradigm

Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, a pioneer in trauma studies, writes, “By understanding trauma we learn about ourselves, victim and non-victim alike, and begin to become aware of our greatest weaknesses and our surest strengths.”²⁷ I suggest that the psychological literature on trauma provides a paradigm that integrates findings in multiple fields: developmental psychology, social psychology, neuropsychology, neurobiology, brain studies, and others. As a paradigm, trauma and recovery allow a wide view of multiple forms of suffering, a nomothetic approach—“relating to or concerned with the study or discovery of the general laws.”²⁸ A predictable consequence of a nomothetic approach is the limiting of our exploration to generalized and overarching observations. Such approaches often overlook the uniqueness of each situation and each individual, an idiographic approach—“concerned with the individual, relating to or descriptive of single and unique facts and processes. Opposed to nomothetic.”²⁹ One approach gives us more

²⁶ Robert C. Scaer, *The Trauma Spectrum: Hidden Wounds and Human Resiliency* (New York: Norton, 2005), 2. In his introduction, Scaer also argues for an understanding of trauma that allows for a cumulative experience of normal life that includes “little traumas.” These accumulate and can produce symptoms of trauma, particularly when socio-cultural norms allow behaviors and trivialize their effects.

²⁷ Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 4.

²⁸ *OED Online*, s. v. “nomothetic, adj.,” accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/127772>.

²⁹ *OED Online*, s. v. “idiographic, adj.,” accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/284770>.

of a kaleidoscope; the other gives us more of a microscope. Let's look into the kaleidoscope first and then the microscope.

Toward a Paradigm for Suffering: The Psychology of Trauma

What exactly is trauma? Attempts to define trauma highlight the aforementioned tension between a nomothetic approach and an idiographic one. Explaining how to characterize a traumatic event, Janoff-Bulman writes, "There is always an appraisal process that occurs, and it is how an event is understood that ultimately determines whether it will be traumatic or not."³⁰ Taking an interactionist approach (noticing both the person and the situation), she suggests this simple statement: "Traumatic events—those that are most apt to produce a traumatic response—are out of the ordinary and are directly experienced as threats to survival and self-preservation."³¹ Neurologist Robert Scaer describes trauma as "a continuum of variably negative life events occurring over the lifespan, including events that may be accepted as 'normal' ... because they are endorsed and perpetuated by our own cultural institutions."³² These descriptions highlight the difficulty in satisfying the need for a clear, objective, and precise definition of trauma, much the same as in defining "suffering." The difficulty lies in the variability of responses from one person to the next.

³⁰ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 52.

³¹ Ibid., 53. Janoff-Bulman describes this as a "probabilistic" approach, one that recognizes "a trade-off between the power of a situation and the degree of individual differences."

³² Scaer, *The Trauma Spectrum*, 2.

Even so, a survey of recent trauma studies from various theoretical perspectives reveals several points of commonality. One of these points is obvious: trauma can have devastating effects on human functioning. Another point is that the nature of these effects might be separated into four basic patterns: they can be acute and of short duration, latent with effects lying dormant, cascading or cumulative with a “pile-up” effect,³³ or they can be chronic with life-long effects. Additionally, some symptoms of trauma are quite responsive to therapy, often the more physiological ones, while other symptoms are more chronic, persistent and enduring, and less responsive to therapy, often those related to dysfunctional styles of relating and perceptual and cognitive distortions. Also, because of the variety of traumatic events—loss, illness, war, rape, poverty, divorce, natural disaster, genocide, etc.—each tends to have its own thumbprint on human hearts and minds. And finally, because some people seem more resilient than others, inconsistent patterns of trauma effects make them more difficult to assess and treat.

This variegated terrain makes the emerging psychology of trauma more elusive, multi-faceted, and yet more essential.

Seeing trauma as a contributing cause of psychological disorders is usually traced back to Jean-Martin Charcot in the late 1800s.³⁴ Focusing on hysteria, Charcot began giving refuge to women suffering from exploitation. At the Salpêtrière Asylum in Paris, he began studying hysteria, and by 1880 he demonstrated that the symptoms were

³³ John H. Harvey, *Perspectives on Loss and Trauma: Assaults on the Self* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 14–16. Harvey discusses a phenomenon called “pileup” and describes it as chains of loss events often coming in multiples. He also uses this term for the generational effects of the Holocaust with continuously emerging media stories of complicity and other acts of genocide.

³⁴ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 1.

psychological, not manifestations of a physical disease.³⁵ Among his students in Paris were Sigmund Freud, William James, Pierre Janet, and others. Pierre Janet was perhaps the first to describe maladaptive reactions to trauma as an inability to integrate traumatic events into memory, the first to describe and name “dissociation,” and to coin the word “subconscious.”³⁶ Freud’s emergent psychoanalytic theories would evolve to name trauma symptoms as anxiety resulting from a failure of repression to defend the ego from overwhelming affect.³⁷

From the long shadows of these early psychoanalytic schools to the successive schools that have dominated the field of psychology—behavioral, cognitive, constructivist, and, more recently, neurobiological—what emerges is a multi-faceted theoretical psychology of trauma. This complex and multi-faceted nature of trauma and recovery makes it most suitable as a paradigm for suffering and provides a compatible model for Christian caregiving. Only with an interdisciplinary and trans-theoretical paradigm, like the psychology of trauma, do we have a chance to appreciate the many kinds of suffering and its many effects.

³⁵ Ibid., 10-11. Herman describes how prior to Charcot, hysteria was described as a disease of a woman’s uterus and commonly used as a metaphor for everything mysterious in women.

³⁶ Pierre Janet, *Psychological Healing* 1925 ed., vol. 1–2, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1919), quoted in Marion Fried Solomon and Daniel J. Siegel, eds., *Healing Trauma: Attachment, Mind, Body, and Brain*, Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

³⁷ Henry Krystal, “Trauma and Affects,” *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 33 (1978): 81–117. quoted in I. Lisa McCann and Laurie Anne Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor: Theory, Therapy, and Transformation*, Brunner/Mazel Psychosocial Stress Series, no. 21 (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990), 46.

Looking through the kaleidoscope at only one of these successive schools seems inadequate; but considered together in an aggregated model, each one focuses on some necessary aspect of suffering. Behavioral models focus on conditioning explanations using the stimulus-response language of learning theories to explain anxiety avoidance behaviors. Cognitive models focus on information processing systems, integration of traumatic memories into cognitive schemas—“assumptions, beliefs, and expectations about self and the world”³⁸—and defenses against overwhelming emotions. Constructivist theories contribute insights from cognitive models regarding schemas and integrate ideas from self-needs, such as affect regulation, cohesion, and stability.³⁹ Neurobiological models focus on structural brain changes and changes in neurotransmitters, which can occur with just one traumatic event, and the prolonged effects of repeated trauma. It also focuses treatments on utilizing brain functioning to aid healing. Each model contributes a theoretical approach to viewing the problems, which then guides interventions and intended outcomes.

These theories and models contribute to the continuing development of a variety of techniques for healing the effects of trauma. And combining these approaches together provides a model well-suited for delivering care to suffering people.

³⁸ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 57. This brief definition is expanded by McCann and Pearlman. The expanded version can be found in Appendix 8.

³⁹ McCann and Pearlman, 54–55. This is a very brief summary of their Constructivist Self-Development Theory (CSDT).

Understanding the Effects of Suffering: Symptoms of Trauma

McCann and Pearlman review empirical literature on victimization, listing five categories of symptoms among survivors of various traumas: emotional, cognitive, biological, behavioral, and interpersonal.⁴⁰ The expanded list in Appendix 5 summarizes these five categories of the effects of trauma as “response patterns.”⁴¹ While lists of effects vary among theoretical perspectives, these main categories seem to be transtheoretical.

Others add a spiritual dimension, like Ursula Wirtz, a Jungian Analyst in Zurich. She describes spirituality as a “fundamental way of being in the world, a framework through which we try to live, both in our inner consciousness, and in our outer behavior, in a close relationship with ourselves, our physical and social environment, and the Infinite.”⁴² Wirtz presents ways of comprehending and linking the spiritual with the physical and psychological components of trauma. Still others include a spiritual dimension by using basic terms of trauma to describe its effects on the spiritual dimension of persons, like Kenneth Doka. Doka, writing about the trauma of loss, lists specific aspects of a “spiritual assumptive world,”⁴³—which Doka describes variously as

⁴⁰ Ibid., 38–46.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ursula Wirtz, *Trauma and Beyond: The Mystery of Transformation* (New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal, 2014), 37. Using dying and becoming as both metaphor and reality, Wirtz synthesizes many traditions including the wisdom traditions. Spirituality and transformation, she suggests, have to do with growing beyond one’s self.

⁴³ Kenneth Doka, “How Could God?: Loss and the Spiritual Assumptive World,” in Jeffrey Kauffman, ed., *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*, The Series in Trauma and Loss (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 49. Doka notes that not all losses challenge meaning; some may actually reaffirm it.

“beliefs about God,” the “fairness of the world,” and “personal constructs” of faith that individuals use to “attribute meaning to their world and life.”⁴⁴

Trauma and Trajectories of Change: Toward Healing for the Suffering

Descriptions of change after trauma vary nearly as much as do descriptions of the effects and are often described with metaphors. When the trajectories of change arc toward life and health, assumptive worlds are “reconstructed”⁴⁵ or “rebuilt.”⁴⁶ Traumatic memories are “integrated”;⁴⁷ disturbed schemas are “resolved”;⁴⁸ we “grow”;⁴⁹ and we experience “transformation.”⁵⁰

And when the trajectory of change arcs away from life and health, the “murdered soul” may “walk as though dead in the midst of life.”⁵¹ The “fragments of self” remain “disintegrated”;⁵² the protective denial of “psychic numbing” evolves the sufferer into

⁴⁴ Tedeschi and Calhoun, *Trauma & Transformation*.

⁴⁵ Kauffman, *Loss of the Assumptive World*, 50.

⁴⁶ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 115.

⁴⁷ Peter A. Levine, *Trauma and Memory: Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past: A Practical Guide for Understanding and Working with Traumatic Memory* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2015).

⁴⁸ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 168-170. McCann and Pearlman artfully use Plato’s allegory of the cave to illustrate a progressive resolution.

⁴⁹ Tedeschi and Calhoun, *Trauma & Transformation*.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Wirtz, *Trauma and Beyond*, 23.

⁵² Kauffman, *Loss of the Assumptive World*, 206.

“musselmen”,⁵³ and “liminal space” becomes a permanent “limbo.”⁵⁴ So what differences are observable from one arc to the other; what determines, if anything, which direction a trajectory will go? Can we predict who will grow?

Possibilities for Growth after Suffering: Personalities and Principles

One variable consistently listed in metrics measuring successful coping and survival is personality or personality traits. McCann and Pearlman list them as “ego resources” and “self capacities.”⁵⁵ These labels highlight the benefits of using metrics of personality and personality traits. University of North Carolina professors John Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun name several personality characteristics that seem to be correlated to possibilities for growth.⁵⁶ They also list seven general principles to help others move, regardless of personality traits, from merely coping and survival to growth.⁵⁷

However, Judith Herman identifies difficulties in the use of types and traits. According to Herman, past attempts to label and define personality types and traits that tend to *hinder* growth are problematic, particularly because of the risk of victims of

⁵³ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 100. “Musselman” refers to Primo Levi’s word for the Holocaust inmates who are at the end of their tether and have entered the zone from which there will be no return.

⁵⁴ Wirtz, *Trauma and Beyond*, 62–64.

⁵⁵ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 125–130. See also Appendix 6.

⁵⁶ Tedeschi and Calhoun, *Trauma & Transformation*, 43–55. These traits include: internal locus of control, self-efficacy, optimism, hardiness, resilience, and a sense of coherence.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 77–91. See also Appendix 7.

trauma being “misdiagnosed as having personality disorders.”⁵⁸ The diagnostic criteria for these personality disorders make no allowance for people victimized by trauma, especially the trauma of abuse. Interestingly, one of Tedeschi and Calhoun’s principles for helping is allowing the trauma to take a central place in one’s story. Following this principle, a kaleidoscopic view shifts to a microscopic—a nomothetic approach shifts to an idiographic approach to one person’s story. This shift offers a fitting segue to the next section—suffering in the life of an individual.

Suffering in the Life of the Individual: Biblical Case Studies in Trauma

The Bible narrates many stories of traumatic events in the lives of its characters. Would we not easily expect symptoms of trauma in the life of Noah? Or Joseph? David? Tamar? Naomi? Jonah? Daniel? The disciples? And Paul? While flannel-graph versions for children may be our first exposure to most of these stories, as adults we can imagine more realistic and psychologically informed stories. Most of these stories are told with a sophisticated subtlety and understatement with which we are not typically familiar.⁵⁹

It may be argued that in ancient cultures, different assumptive worlds and schemas may have buffered the potential sufferers. However, trauma symptoms have been evident as far back as ancient Egypt.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 117-118. Herman describes as common the mislabeling of trauma victims to be “dependent, masochistic, or self-defeating.” She also describes participating in a group of women’s representatives invited to present at the American Psychiatric Association’s evaluation of these labels. Their contributions were relegated to the status of merely an appendix—“apocryphal status within the canon, where it languishes to this day.”

⁵⁹ Peter D. Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii-xxv.

⁶⁰ Charles R. Figley, “Foreword,” in *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Syndromes*, eds. J. Wilson and B. Raphael (New York: Plenum, 1993), xvii. Figley’s history of the field includes an ancient

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as Alwyn Lau, Monash University professor, writes, “The Christian faith is centered around the historical trauma of the suffering, death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus.”⁶¹

For the sake of application, we will consider as a psychological case study the story of Job, arguably one of the oldest Old Testament manuscripts, as we have access to his thoughts and feelings in the form of the poetic dialogues.

Job: A Case Study and Trauma Theory as Interpretive Lens.

While Job endures multiple losses, it is conceivable that each loss contained multiple stressors, like concentric circles magnifying the effects of the previous loss.⁶² Marcia Webb, a psychology professor at Seattle Pacific University, applied trauma theory and biblical scholarship in an intriguing article on Job. She notes Job’s loss of a former schema of God in Job 29:2, 4: “How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me ... when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house.”⁶³ This loss of his assumptive world is consistent with trauma literature. She notes, too, Job’s resistance as “cognitive conservatism”⁶⁴—our tendency to hold on to our established

Egyptian physician’s notes regarding hysteria published in 1900 BC and believed to be the first medical text. The symptoms included pain in various parts of the body.

⁶¹ Alwyn Lau, “Saved by Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Atonement,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 55, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 273.

⁶² Marcia Webb, “The Book of Job: A Psychologist Takes a Whirlwind Tour,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 44, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 157.

⁶³ Job 29:2, 4.

⁶⁴ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 26. Janoff-Bulman also compares cognitive conservatism to the resistance to scientific revolutions described by Thomas Kuhn in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 27, 43.

beliefs. Webb also suggests Job's vulnerability to "cognitive distortion,"⁶⁵ even without traumatic stress, due to his prior sense of great personal control over his life. Job's initial resistance may be seen as an adaptive form of denial and avoidance as he gathers the strength to confront the challenges ahead.⁶⁶ Webb describes Kenneth Doka's spiritual assumptive world challenges, noted earlier, and applies them to Job, including the potential for disillusionment with religious communities and possible loss of faith.⁶⁷ Webb notes two other interesting trauma responses of Job: "adaptive rumination"⁶⁸ and "cognitive flexibility."⁶⁹ Webb narrates Job using trauma terms—a schematic crisis⁷⁰ followed by cognitive restructuring.⁷¹ She lists many schemas of the world mentioned by Job and his friends, including a just world, the reward for goodness, and the punishment of sin.⁷² God speaks and these are restructured. Job's words of change are "Therefore I

⁶⁵ Cordelia Fine, *A Mind of Its Own: How Your Brain Distorts and Deceives* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 79–104, quoted in Webb, "The Book of Job," 158.

⁶⁶ Webb, "The Book of Job," 159.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁶⁸ Tedeschi and Calhoun, *Trauma & Transformation*, 60–61, quoted in Webb, "The Book of Job," 161. See also Appendix 6.

⁶⁹ John P. Dennis and Jillon S. Vander Wal, "The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory: Instrument Development and Estimates of Reliability and Validity," *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 34, no. 3 (2010): 241, quoted in Webb, "The Book of Job," 161. See also Appendix 8.

⁷⁰ Webb, "The Book of Job," 161.

⁷¹ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 93, quoted in Webb, "The Book of Job," 166.

⁷² Webb, "The Book of Job," 164.

retract my words, and I am comforted concerning dust and ashes' (i.e., the human condition).”⁷³

Webb’s interpretation of Job’s repentance as change and growth following suffering artfully integrates trauma theory with biblical scholarship. It also serves as an example of possibilities for a formational theology of suffering.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored how suffering, particularly trauma, changes us. Makoto Fujimura, speaking of the novel *Silence* by Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo, writes,

Endo’s offerings, his words, are words of pain, of brokenness and of trauma. Father Rodrigues reaches the nadir of experience that any priest can go through. He ends in the deepest darkness. But precisely in such a place a new beginning is possible. However faintly, however unexpectedly, Father Rodrigues retains his faith. There is now resiliency in his faith that did not exist before.⁷⁴

Like Endo’s Father Rodrigues, there are parts of the image and likeness of Jesus that we can only acquire through suffering. For these reasons, we need a formational theology of suffering.

⁷³ Carol A. Newsom, “The Book of Job,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 4 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 629, quoted in Webb, “The Book of Job,” 161.

⁷⁴ Makoto Fujimura, *Silence and Beauty: Hidden Faith Born of Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 207.

CHAPTER 5:
LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS



“Recovering from suffering is not like recovering from a disease. Many people don’t come out healed; they come out different.... They hurl themselves deeper and gratefully into their art, loved ones and commitments. The suffering involved in their tasks becomes a fearful gift.”²

—David Brooks

**Introduction: Toward a Formational Theology of Suffering
for Specific Cultures**

Suffering: The Universal Challenges of Local Communities

One of the challenges facing any theology of suffering involves situating such a theology in a particular culture. Consequently, forming a theology of suffering for America in the twenty-first century includes locating it in a postmodern consumer

¹ “The Incredulity of Saint Thomas, 1603 by Caravaggio,” accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.caravaggio.org/the-incredulity-of-saint-thomas.jsp>.

² David Brooks, “What Suffering Does,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 2014, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/08/opinion/brooks-what-suffering-does.html>.

culture. Vincent Miller, professor of Theology and Culture at the University of Dayton, lists three tasks for doing theology in a consumer culture:

1. Learn to attend the structures and practices that connect belief to daily life.
2. Learn to attend the lived, everyday theology of believing communities.
3. Adopt the task of helping communities preserve and sustain their traditions in the face of the erosions of globalizing capitalism(s).³

Miller's additional suggestions of immersion in and listening to believing communities are not new tasks; however, exercising the "skills and methods for attending to the lived religion of believing communities"⁴ will be relatively new and challenging. For academic theologians, at least for those unfamiliar with spiritual formation and the social sciences, these new tasks demand attending not to the classroom, but to the components of daily life in community.

One major component of everyday life in community is human suffering. So attending to the "lived, everyday theology of believing communities" requires an examination of how communities understand and respond to suffering. This examination will manifest some kind of lived, everyday theology of suffering. Not only do these lived theologies affect the perception of suffering in the minds of the sufferer, they also affect how helping professionals define and deliver care. So doing the tasks of theology noted earlier by Miller seems paramount. Meeting these demands will serve local believing

³ Vincent Jude Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Religion* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 226–227.

⁴ Ibid., 227.

communities and especially serve helping professionals as they develop working constructs of what constitutes truly compassionate care.

The Roles of Language, Culture, and the Arts

The apostle Paul writes that “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth.”⁵ Not only does the creation groan, but also the Holy Spirit “groans.”⁶ And, in every language, in every culture, and in all of the arts, “suffering seeks a voice.”⁷ So it is not surprising to find creation’s groaning and the Holy Spirit’s groaning deeply embedded and struggling for expression in every language, in every culture, and in the creative arts.

As noted earlier, one of the challenges in any language is defining and describing suffering. How do we adequately represent human suffering through the symbolic representation of words? In *Perspectives on Human Suffering*, a collection of essays on suffering, the honorable Peter Underwood, governor of Tasmania, writes of this challenge. Noting the many definitions offered throughout the book, he says they “collectively ... take into account the innumerable ways that one can ‘suffer.’”⁸ Some of the definitions he refers to appear in the next section on language. These definitions are

⁵ Rom. 8:22.

⁶ Rom. 8:26.

⁷ Brennan, “Suffering Seeks A Voice,” 265.

⁸ Peter Underwood, “Foreword,” in *Perspectives on Human Suffering*, eds. Jeff Malpas and Norelle Lickiss (New York: Springer, 2012), v.

significant because, in many ways, our language about suffering creates our perceptions of, and our responses to, suffering.⁹

Another significant influence in our constructs of suffering is our particular culture. Cultural influences shape our capacity to see and respond to suffering in socially acceptable ways, whether we are shaped by them directly or by our reactions against them. This includes both our own suffering and that of others.

We will look primarily at two kinds of cultures (or perhaps more properly identified as two subcultures): the health and human services culture and the legal culture. Both cultures reflect the following in each society: what is and is not curative and/or therapeutic suffering; and what is and is not rehabilitative and/or retributive suffering. In other words, they reflect acceptable suffering—generally administered by an authorized individual, agency, or institution—and unacceptable suffering. These two cultures greatly influence our perceptions of, and therefore our responses to, suffering.

The third and final part of this chapter covers the role art plays in expressing the often-ineffable nature of suffering. Chapter four includes material from artist Makoto Fujimura, who reminds us of the power of art to “heal as well as disturb.”¹⁰ In this current chapter, a small selection of different kinds of art will illustrate the role art plays in every

⁹ James M. Henslin, *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach: Core Concepts*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2015), 48. Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf’s hypothesis is that language actually creates ways of thinking and perceiving. This came from their study of the Hopi Indians and their lack of both a word for and concept of “future.”

¹⁰ Philip Yancey, "Foreword," in Makoto Fujimura, *Silence and Beauty: Hidden Faith Born of Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 11.

culture as artists capture and convey both the reality and the effects of suffering. First, let us establish the vital role of language.

Part I: Suffering and the Role of Language

“Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
whispers the o’er fraught heart, and bids it break.”¹¹

—Malcolm in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*

Preliminary Considerations

Few other experiences in human existence take us to the limitations of language as often as suffering. Unspeakable. Unthinkable. Unimaginable. These are all descriptors often associated with different kinds of experiences of acute suffering. Even the Holy Spirit’s groans are *unutterable* (αλαλητος).¹²

Many approaches to suffering, for distinctly different purposes, attempt to objectively define and delimit suffering in ways that facilitate more quantitative research in one area of suffering. These attempts often make more difficult the task of normalizing such definitions to other kinds of suffering. For example, the ongoing dialogue regarding the potential for trauma in multiply deployed soldiers fuels research and training in the area of resilience. However, utilizing these studies in a population of children, for example, can be complicated by a lack of operational definitions of resilience appropriate for children.¹³

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act 4, scene 3.

¹² Rom. 8:26.

¹³ David Fletcher and Mustafa Sarkar, “Psychological Resilience: A Review and Critique of Definitions, Concepts, and Theory,” *European Psychologist* 18 (April 1, 2013): 12–23, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000124>.

This section considers the powerful role of language in shaping our understanding of suffering along with the difficulty of using more objective language to conduct meaningful research that advances our ability to respond well to the subjects of suffering—persons.

On the edges of language and meaning, metaphors often serve as vehicles of expression and bridges between the soul and the surrounding culture. For instance, an “abyss,” a “shattering,” “drowning”—these all convey nearly universal understandings of someone’s subjective experience of suffering.

Suffering and Language

Objectivity.

Categorizing suffering in satisfactory and objective ways continues to prove challenging. The attempts noted thus far include one by David Little, retired professor at Harvard Divinity School. Tracing suffering in religious literature, he describes four types of suffering: “retributive, therapeutic, pedagogical, and vicarious.”¹⁴ While these types seem reasonably accessible, the boundaries between one type and another often seem more obscure. Another attempt, that of Roger Olson, takes a different approach. As previously noted, Olson’s types of suffering appear as follows:

Deserved/Guilty suffering \leftrightarrow Undeserved/Innocent suffering

Therapeutic/Developmental suffering \leftrightarrow Non-therapeutic/Gratuitous suffering

Objective/Real suffering \leftrightarrow Subjective/Imaginary suffering¹⁵

¹⁴ Little, “Human Suffering in Comparative Perspective,” 60.

¹⁵ Olson, “A Talk on God and Suffering.”

In just these two samples from religious literature, we see some of the possible variations of labels attributed to suffering. While these variations do not validate or invalidate the use of these categories, they do illustrate the complexity and difficulty of objectively defining and describing suffering. Without knowing the subjective effects, objectively categorizing suffering proves elusive.

In health sciences literature, particularly in medicine and psychology, suffering has been categorized, described symptomatically, and encoded. This categorization and encoding is partly an attempt to validate a universal system of justifiable charges to third-party payers for services like insurance companies and employers; it also is partly driven by the desire to establish a shared language, to collaboratively name, and thereby perhaps to control, human suffering. In psychology, the current edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM), DSM-5 published in May 2013, is synchronized with codes from the International Center for Diseases (ICD) in its latest iteration, ICD-10. These codes represent a global socio-cultural language, not only to name various disorders and diseases but also to describe diagnostic criteria in gradations of severity, often detailed to a six-digit, three-decimal-place number. These labels and codes attempt to provide a clinical, objective way to define and describe certain forms of suffering in an increasingly universal language. For example, chapter four noted that in 1994, an official listing for PTSD appeared in the DSM-IV-TR. Even now in the psychology of trauma, clinical discussions of a constellation of symptoms are prompting new research and exploration of trauma's effects and evidence-based treatments. This process of establishing a shared language and collaboratively naming certain diseases and disorders is dynamic, expanding, and often highly contentious.

In some ways, it may seem helpful to attempt to categorize which kinds of suffering might be considered “formative” and which ones less so. However, taking into account that each kind of suffering was present in the life of Jesus, as we noted in chapter one, these attempts seem more hindrance than help, not to mention possibly suggesting that some kind of suffering might be beyond the redemptive reach of God.

Subjectivity.

In what Norelle Lickiss, MD, founder and director of the Sydney Institute of Palliative Medicine, names as “a landmark paper” in 1982, Eric Cassell introduced an operational definition for suffering in medical literature: “a sense of impending personal disintegration.”¹⁶ Lickiss also names the shift here to a more subjective understanding of suffering, calling it, variously, “quintessentially subjective” and “intrinsically subjective,” thereby describing also the elusiveness of suffering in quantitative research.¹⁷

A 2004 study of patients facing cancer lists the core dimensions of suffering as the following: feeling subjected to violence, being deprived and/or overwhelmed, and living in apprehension.¹⁸ These descriptors are all quite subjective and thus indicative of

¹⁶ Eric J. Cassel, “The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 306 (1982): 639–645, quoted in Norelle Lickiss, “On Facing Human Suffering,” in *Perspectives on Human Suffering*, eds. Jeff Malpas and Norelle Lickiss (New York: Springer, 2012), 247. Lickiss also notes that Cassell’s model differentiates pain from suffering, while other models combine them in more complex definitions of suffering.

¹⁷ Norelle Lickiss, “On Facing Human Suffering,” in *Perspectives on Human Suffering* (New York: Springer, 2012), 248.

¹⁸ S. Daneault, V. Lussier, and S. Mongeau et al., “The Nature of Suffering and Its Relief in the Terminally Ill: A qualitative study,” *Journal of Palliative Care* 20 (2004):7-11, quoted in Norelle Lickiss, “On Facing Human Suffering,” in *Perspectives on Human Suffering*, eds. Jeff Malpas and Norelle Lickiss (New York: Springer, 2012), 248.

the idiographic variables that are often excluded from operational definitions. So the interplay between the desire for an objective, shared language for suffering, which is easier to measure and validate through empirical research, and the simple observations that individuals will all suffer the same event differently make incredibly complex this element of language in the study of suffering.

Metaphors.

Adding to this difficulty is the increasing sensitivity to and recognition of the value of paying attention to a client's (or patient's) own use of language. In studying the need for professionals to learn the "patient's own words for the immersion into ... memories and events,"¹⁹ John Wilson and Jacob Lindy describe the power of metaphor in trauma studies as "an organizer of spontaneous verbal pictures of the traumatic event."²⁰ They illustrate the importance of learning patients' metaphors in work with veterans of the Vietnam war; they advise learning to use specific language common to patients' experiences. "Language is the key to the inner world of the trauma patient,"²¹ they assert.

This idea also appears in more theoretical discussions of metaphors, noting that in modern Greek, the word "metaphor" is a means of transport—the way you carry freight

¹⁹ John P. Wilson and Jacob D. Lindy, *Trauma, Culture, and Metaphor: Pathways of Transformation and Integration*, Routledge Psychosocial Stress Series (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 197. Wilson is a Cleveland State University professor of psychology and is co-founder and past president of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS). Lindy is a University of Cincinnati College of Medicine professor of psychiatry.

²⁰ Ibid., 6. Wilson and Lindy develop the power of using the language of trauma metaphors to understand and help trauma sufferers suggesting that metaphors serve as "portals of entry into the central impact of trauma to self-processes," 3.

²¹ Ibid., 197.

from one point to another.²² In this discussion of suffering, metaphors then carry the meaning of suffering from one person to another. Cooper-White notes that metaphors draw on “shared cultural or communal images, or [invoke] new ones,” thus making them “intrinsically relational”—“concealed invitation” and “acceptance.”²³

This transactional approach to communicating meaning elucidates something useful for a formational theology of suffering in a postmodern context. In our increasingly digital and multiliterate cultures,²⁴ and in order to attend to the lived, everyday theology of believing communities, we need a theology that is versatile and adaptable in multicultural and intercultural settings. Not only that, we need one that can bridge the gap to emerging orality as our post-literate culture shifts to a more enstoried and visual transmission of information and education.²⁵

This approach is even more helpful in light of the highly metaphorical references to suffering in the Bible. A short list of metaphors for suffering in the Bible will illustrate this:

- Taking up your cross²⁶
- Drinking the cup²⁷

²² Pamela Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God and Persons* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 7.

²³ Ibid., 8.

²⁴ Thomas Hansson, ed., *Handbook of Research on Digital Information Technologies: Innovations, Methods, and Ethical Issues* (n. p.: IGI Global, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-970-0>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Matt. 10:38, 16:24; Luke 8:34; Mark 9:23.

²⁷ Matt. 20:22-23; Mark 10:38-39; John 18:11.

- The patience of Job²⁸
- Rachel's cry²⁹
- Armageddon³⁰
- The valley of shadows (or the shadow of death)³¹
- Hiding the face (abandonment)³²
- The four horsemen³³
- The sacrificial lamb³⁴
- The scapegoat³⁵

People, places, and things all serve as metaphors in the Bible's variegated landscape of suffering. The following figurative language, much of it from Isaiah 53, is understood as referring prophetically to the suffering of Jesus Christ:

- "Man of sorrows, familiar with suffering"³⁶
- "No beauty or majesty, nothing in his appearance to attract us to him"³⁷
- "One from whom people hide their faces"³⁸
- "Considered punished by God, smitten, and afflicted"³⁹
- "The stone the builders rejected"⁴⁰

²⁸ James 5:11 (KJV).

²⁹ Jer. 31:15; Matt. 2:18.

³⁰ Rev. 16:16.

³¹ Ps. 23:4.

³² Deut. 31:17-18; Job 13:24; Ps. 13:1, 44:24, 69:17, 88:14, 102:2, 143:7; Jer. 33:5; Mic. 3:4.

³³ Rev. 6:1-8.

³⁴ Exod. 12:3-21.

³⁵ Lev. 16:8-10.

³⁶ Isa. 53:3 (OJB).

³⁷ Isa. 53:2. (NIV).

³⁸ Isa. 53:3 (TNIV).

³⁹ Isa. 53:4 (NIV).

⁴⁰ Ps. 118:22.

- “Despised and rejected”⁴¹
- “Assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich”⁴²
- “Cut off from the land of the living”⁴³
- “The lamb of God”⁴⁴
 - “A lamb to the slaughter”⁴⁵
 - “As a sheep before her shearers is silent”⁴⁶
- “Son of man” (a reference to Ezekiel, who bore the sins of the people, the pain of God, and was given the ministry of groaning)⁴⁷

All of these figures of speech apply to Jesus, and, therefore, potentially to all those who will be shaped and molded into his image. This figurative language also gives us a picture of suffering in a specific cultural setting. So it is to the role of culture we turn next.

Part II: Suffering and the Role of Culture

“Human kind cannot bear too much reality.”⁴⁸

– T. S. Eliot

Preliminary Considerations

Every culture provides a compost heap from which participants construct working representations of reality, usually somewhere between an imagined ideal world and a

⁴¹ Isa. 53:3.

⁴² Isa. 53:9.

⁴³ Isa. 53:8.

⁴⁴ Gen. 22:8; John 1:29, 36.

⁴⁵ Isa. 53:7.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Son of man”—93 times in Ezekiel; 29 times of Jesus in Matthew, 17 times in Mark, 28 times in Luke, and 12 times in John. Ezekiel’s ministry of groaning is commanded in Ezek. 21:6, “Groan before them with broken heart and bitter grief.”

⁴⁸ T. S. Eliot, from stanza 1 in “Burnt Norton” in *The Four Quartets* (London: Faber, 1943).

worst-case scenario. Deeply ingrained in each construct of reality is the framework for an idea of “normal” from which expectations emerge. This section considers two influences in every culture: the health and human services culture and the legal and judicial culture. Biblical and historical examples of culture helped us understand various relational postures toward suffering in chapter three; this chapter will make general comments that apply to specific kinds of cultures. We will also look at an “ableist” bias within cultures by looking at how the *dis*-abled are commonly viewed and treated.

Suffering and the Health and Human Services Culture

What is *normal* biological or physical functioning? What is *normal* psychological, emotional, or social functioning? Answers to these questions generally follow similar patterns for every culture and are affected by the language issues named earlier in Part 1. To illustrate the function of normal, consider the conceptual model of the normal distribution curve (shown in Figure 9.1 in Appendix 9). In the health and human services field, the normal distribution curve establishes in many cases the level of severity or abnormality necessary to substantiate a diagnostic label (e.g., physical abilities/disabilities, presence of symptoms, frequency, and intensity of symptoms, cognitive functioning, and so on). Most diagnostic labeling is guided by models heavily influenced by this approach to what is considered *normal* or *able-bodied*.⁴⁹ People generally do not need to understand the more technical and statistical features of a normal distribution curve to feel the pressures to conform to the norms. Additionally, each

⁴⁹ Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2011). Yong labels “ableism” as a hermeneutic of discrimination and “normate” bigotry, 11-12. For Yong, disabilities, as medical/biological experiences of suffering, additionally are experiences of oppression, marginalization, and exclusion.

person has his or her own levels of *normal* in daily functioning. As a result, what a surrounding culture considers normal is far less likely to be considered suffering. Further, each culture's ideas of *a normal life* create powerful expectations that delimit what individual members consider suffering. So when an individual's normal conflicts with the surrounding culture's normal, or when one culture conflicts with another culture, a kind of suffering delimiter collision⁵⁰ occurs, such as in the following case.

In Anne Fadiman's award-winning *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, we find a profoundly sad and moving story about the lack of cultural sensitivities in certain medical facilities. Fadiman traces the Lee family, a Hmong refugee family from Laos, to their relocation to Merced, California in the 1970s. Their young daughter, Lia, at 3 months old, began having seizures. The medical personnel at Merced County Medical Center examined her and diagnosed epilepsy. The parents were told the diagnosis and given medications with clear instructions both in writing and orally. The problems started there. The parents could not speak nor read English, and the person briefing them about the medications was unaware of this. A bigger problem was that in the Hmong culture, a child with epilepsy is considered to possess a gift from God allowing them to see what others cannot. "Hmong epileptics often become shaman because of this belief."⁵¹

When young Lia came in for a check-up, the medical personnel thought the parents were neglecting her by withholding her medications. Eventually, Lia was legally

⁵⁰ Delimiter collisions are a common phenomenon in programming language and can create vulnerabilities exploited by hackers.

⁵¹ Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 21.

removed from the home of her parents.⁵² The removal was one of the worst results that could have happened and precipitated suffering for Lia due to lack of nurture. The removal was devastating to the parents as well, who had heard back in Laos that Americans kill their babies; the parents thought Lia would be killed. Eventually, a translator was hired.

A significant question for our purposes in investigating the role of culture in human suffering is this one: Whose culture determines what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in this case? The medical culture or the parents' culture? Are the Hmong cultural beliefs not acceptable and our Western beliefs superior? Or vice versa? What rules of ethics and etiquette govern cases like this? From a more historical point of view, how should one culture as hosts show gratitude and repay dislocated peoples who helped in times of war, as the Hmong helped the U.S. in Vietnam?

Adding another layer to this tragedy, according to physician Robert Dunlop, MD, "physicians have difficulty recognizing and dealing with suffering Personal avoidance techniques such as denial and relabeling are reinforced by professional

⁵² Margalit Fox, "Lia Lee Dies; Life Went on around Her, Redefining Care," *The New York Times*, September 14, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/15/us/life-went-on-around-her-redefining-care-by-bridging-a-divide.html>. "In 1986, when Lia was 4, she suffered a grand mal seizure that lasted nearly two hours before doctors were able to bring it under control. At some point, amid the many procedures her condition required that day, an infection set in. She went into septic shock, and her organs began to fail. By the time she was stabilized, Lia had lost higher brain function. Her doctors expected her to die. She did not die. She could breathe and whimper but could not speak; she was capable of little voluntary movement but could still feel pain. It was unclear how much she could see or hear." Lia Lee lived 26 more years and eventually died Aug. 31, 2012.

training.”⁵³ So, even without cultural differences like the preceding scenario, difficulties in identifying and dealing with suffering seem sadly far more probable.

In chapter four, neurologist Dr. Robert Scaer’s definition for trauma is listed as follows: “a continuum of variably negative life events occurring over the lifespan, including events that may be accepted as ‘normal’... because they are endorsed and perpetuated by our own cultural institutions.”⁵⁴ Scaer’s inclusion of normal is insightful. What is “endorsed and perpetuated” in the health and human services sector might include suffering that is thought to be curative, like heart surgeries, electroconvulsive therapy, organ transplant operations, chemotherapies, and root canals. We tolerate these as not only endorsed but necessary, medically and ethically. We even consider it unethical for a doctor not to perform these procedures, though the track records, particularly in the applications of chemotherapy, are abysmally poor.

Additionally, deaths due to iatrogenic medicine—“denoting response to medical or surgical treatment”⁵⁵—are nearly an unknown statistic because almost no one dares to include it as one of the leading causes of death.⁵⁶ This absence of statistics in America demonstrates the sheer power of our culture, particularly those in powerful positions in

⁵³ Robert Dunlop, MD, in “Physician’s Perspective on Suffering” in *Suffering*, ed. Betty Rolling Ferrell (Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 1996), 152.

⁵⁴ Scaer, *The Trauma Spectrum*, 2.

⁵⁵ “iatrogenic,” (n.d.) *Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary* (2012), accessed November 24, 2017, <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/iatrogenic>.

⁵⁶ “Death by Medicine—Iatrogenic Illness” www.sustainablemedicine.org, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.sustainablemedicine.org/un-sustainable-medicine/death-by-medicine-iatrogenic-illness/>.

health and human services, to establish what is acceptable suffering and what is not acceptable. This power shapes another cultural influence, that of law and justice.

Suffering and the Culture of Law and Justice

According to Norchaya Talib, a law professor at the University of Malaya, legal and medical perspectives on suffering are divergent. “Legal definitions of suffering are more cause-specific.”⁵⁷ In civil law, these definitions tend to follow the legal requirements for establishing negligence or injury due to wrongdoing with a view toward awarding “compensatory damages.”⁵⁸ Thus, pain and suffering are seen as the “probable consequence of a wrongful conduct.”⁵⁹ Civil law serves to “restore the individual to his original position before the injury,”⁶⁰ or compensate accordingly, whereas criminal law “imposes punishment,” and this “infliction of suffering” serves the purpose of “securing both present and future peacekeeping in the society.”⁶¹ As a result, in criminal law, the suffering of the victim is not the focus; instead, the focus is on sanctioning offenses and “so preventing the future suffering of other members of the society.”⁶² Both civil law and criminal law seek to “regulate human conduct in order to achieve its central purpose, the

⁵⁷ Norchaya Talib, “Suffering: A Perspective from Law,” in *Perspectives on Human Suffering*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Norelle Lickiss (New York: Springer, 2012), 215.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 216.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

attainment of justice.”⁶³ So justice is seen as something that relieves a society’s suffering. In the administration of justice, attempts to relieve the wrongly injured in a society are considered successful when they impose suffering on the offender(s).⁶⁴ So, like medicine, legal systems *theoretically* consider the well-being of the individuals they serve.

Yet even in the administration of justice, many times additional suffering often results due to lengthy depositions, delays in resolution by trial or mediation, and due to failures to adequately establish alleged wrongdoing. In this way, systems of justice are far less focused on the suffering of any one person than is the field of medicine. As Talib observes, “The tension between private and public rights and interests will always be present. As more competing interests arise, the individual might have to make way for the interests of the collective.”⁶⁵

So while we might appeal to systems of law and justice to help us understand what kinds of suffering are acceptable, normal, and necessary, the results of administering justice in terms of suffering individuals can seem grossly out of focus, like iatrogenic results in medicine. Guy Green, past chief justice of the Supreme Court of Tasmania, observes that preventing suffering “has never been the primary rationale of the criminal law.”⁶⁶ In earlier times, the interest was in simply preventing damage to property and keeping the peace.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 223.

⁶⁶ Guy Green, “Some Aspects of Human Suffering and the Criminal Law,” in *Perspectives on Human Suffering*, eds. Jeff Malpas and Norelle Lickiss (New York: Springer, 2012), 207.

More recent sensitivity to injuries from crimes includes “the additional element that the victim must have suffered *a particular kind* of injury, which would *almost invariably cause suffering or distress*”⁶⁷ (emphasis added). This influence, like the earlier discussion of normal, essentially favors the social norms over the individual. However, citing legal scholar Andrew von Hirsch, Green adds that there is a limit to retributive or punitive suffering:

[Punishment becomes unacceptable] when it denies offenders their status as members of the moral community who remain persons, whatever they have done; when it is dehumanizing; when it involves degradation as opposed to merely censure; or when it causes suffering which entails destruction of the human personality. . .⁶⁸

While the limits mentioned above would seem reasonable, and possibly even morally and ethically necessary, the use of this rather vague language increases the difficulty of setting these limits. What specifically is “the status of the members” (read: normal)? What specifically is considered humanizing or dehumanizing? Who decides? Where specifically does censure end and degradation begin? What specifically is the human personality, and what specifically constitutes its destruction?

In these two powerful cultural influences, health and human services and law and justice, we see the shaping of cultural norms and societal expectations. These influences, expressed through languages, are inherently complex. Not only do they shape the norms and expectations in any culture, they easily shape and influence our reading of Scripture,

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 211.

our doing of theology in the way Vincent Miller suggested previously, and our practice of religion. As a result, they will also inform our constructs of what is compassionate care.

“Ableist” Hermeneutics, “Normate” Cultures, and Post-Resurrection Wounds

Amos Yong, Fuller Seminary professor of theology and director of its Center for Missiological Research, asks a valuable question for our study: In our eschatological vision of a perfect world, is there any room for physical disability or deformity, psychological disability or deformity?⁶⁹ If not, Yong argues, then the gospel for today would also have no room for disabilities, except as expressions of the effects of sin and opportunities for healing and miracles.⁷⁰ Yong notices this lack of adequate room in the language employed to describe those we deem in need of healing: “*dis-abled, in-capacitated, in-capable, ab-normal*, and so on.”⁷¹

Yong argues for a hermeneutic of suspicion:

Part of the challenge of ableism as a worldview is that it is often difficult to distinguish what the Bible says from how the Bible has been received, what our religious traditions say about it, and how we have been taught to interpret it. This means that we’ll often presume our normate understandings of the Bible are exactly what the biblical authors intended to communicate to us. The task before us, then, is to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion not necessarily to the biblical text but to our own traditions of interpretation that have taught us how to read it. The goal is to question our own presuppositions about disability in order to see afresh how the Bible is and can be good news not only for people with disabilities but also for societies with people across the spectrum of abilities. This won’t be easy, but we have no choice except to make the effort.⁷²

⁶⁹ Yong, 15, 29. Yong cites John Calvin’s remarks in sermons on Deuteronomy 27 and 28 as examples of a theological world view that disallows disability or disease as any kind of a “normal” human experience. Yong argues against this “ableist hermeneutic” and “normate bias” that uncritically invalidates in some way the points of view of those who are different.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 121–122.

⁷¹ Ibid., 10.

⁷² Ibid., 12.

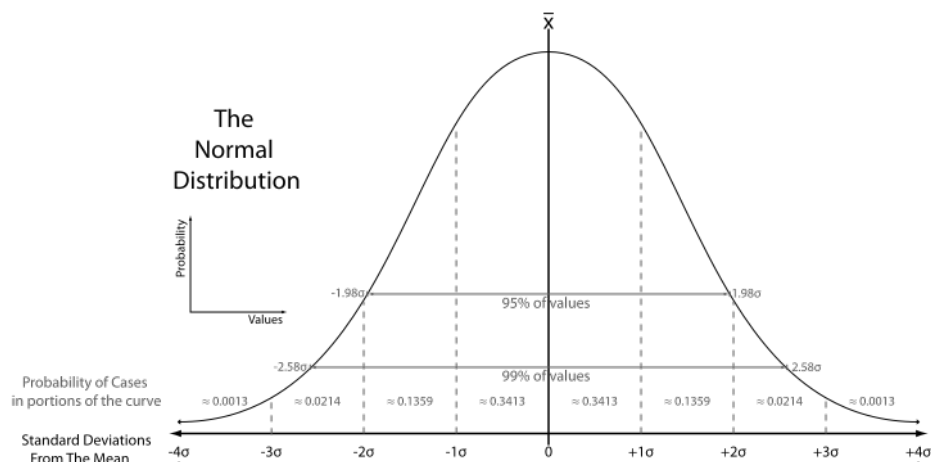
Not only have we suggested that a formational theology of suffering challenges us to reexamine our beliefs about creation “pre-fall,” but now Yong’s challenge is to reexamine our beliefs about our eschatological hope as well. The common and ordinary hope of many Christians is that in the afterlife, there will be no disability, no deformity, or “suffering,” as we are wont to understand it. However, at the beginning of this chapter, Carravagio’s *The Incredulity of Thomas* shows a beautiful piece for contemplation. In this seventeenth-century artist’s depiction, not only are Jesus’ wounds still visible post-resurrection, but also Jesus is strategically guiding Thomas’ hand to investigate, as recorded in John 20:27. Yong invites us to consider “the possibility that the marks of impairment follow not only Jesus but all those who are resurrected in his train. [...] Jesus’ marked body becomes paradigmatic for our understanding of eschatological life.”⁷³ Yong’s strong suggestion then is that because the marks of impairment endure beyond the resurrection, we should not stigmatize them now. These are not only interesting thoughts but compelling ones, especially when we extend them to other forms of suffering and “marks of impairment.”

Normate Cultures.

In the field of psychology, typically a parallel to the medical model, the central point of reference is a construct of wellness or “normal.” In this scheme, the severity of symptoms is analogous to deviation from the socio-cultural norm in psychological

⁷³ Yong, 130.

functioning (see below). In reality, “a relatively fine line divides normality from abnormality.”⁷⁴



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Figure 5.1. Normal Distribution Curve.

Source: Adapted from <https://math.stackexchange.com>.

One background assumption in this theoretical framing is that each culture is capable of constructing its own “normal”; consequently, each individual culture and subculture then becomes self-referentially “normal,” which then, in subsequent evaluations, actually works to strengthen judgments of those considered abnormal or deviant. Often this serves to limit future movements toward more healthy inclusion of variations—more acceptable healthy behaviors, cognitions, affect regulation, etc.—in other words, movements toward an expanded “normal.” This limiting phenomenon is commonly referred to as deviance

⁷⁴ Paul D. Meier, Frank B. Minirth, and Donald Ratcliff, *Bruised and Broken: Understanding and Healing Psychological Problems* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 13.

⁷⁵ The Normal Distribution, accessed November 16, 2017, <https://i.stack.imgur.com/UdNHK.png>.

reinforcing the norm.⁷⁶ In this phenomenon, observing the suffering or punishment of deviance serves to reinforce conformity to social and cultural norms.

By this framing of normal, Jesus would, by necessity, be abnormal in several categories—some categories because he did less of something, like sin; and other categories because he did more of something, like walk on water. He was, in a word, *deviant*—in the statistical sense of the word, ab-normal. And he tells us to “follow” him;⁷⁷ we are to “live like he did.”⁷⁸ Perhaps this helps us understand why the disciples on the road to Emmaus and later those in an upper room needed him to explain suffering, to help them read differently and think differently about suffering in the life of the submitted Servant of Yahweh.

Part III: Suffering and the Role of the Arts

“To try to talk about art and about Christianity is for me one and the same thing, and it means attempting to share the meaning of my life, what gives it, for me, its tragedy and its glory.”⁷⁹

– Madeleine L’Engle

This final part of the chapter covers art and the role art plays in expressing the often-ineffable nature of suffering. The last chapter included material from artist Makoto

⁷⁶ Jean Stockard, *S.G. Sociology: Discovering Society* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996), 45. This view is commonly attributed to Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, (1858-1917).

⁷⁷ John 1:43.

⁷⁸ 1 John 2:6.

⁷⁹ Madeleine L’Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith & Art* (Wheaton, IL: H. Shaw, 1972), 16.

Fujimura, who reminds us of the power of art to “heal as well as disturb.”⁸⁰ In this chapter, a selection of different kinds of art will illustrate the role art plays in every culture as artists capture and convey both the reality and the effects of suffering.

So how shall we best communicate the role suffering plays in the formation of the faithful and how suffering lies at the heart of the gospel? In Cameron Anderson’s *The Faithful Artist*, he poses a provocative question: “Is it *word* or *image*, the *verbal* or the *visual* that is best suited to communicate the Christian story? In Christian history both modes have occupied a place of honor.”⁸¹ Anderson is writing of the visual arts, but the same question could also be asked of declarative statements and poetry, theoretical abstractions and sculptures, or factual statements and music. Often, only art can capture and express what eludes the philosopher and theologian, who prefer to know only through rational-inductive argumentation. The artistic presentation of something often proves true the old adage: a picture is worth a thousand words.⁸²

Consider the hauntingly faint smile from this famous section of Russian poet Anna Ahkmatova’s *Requiem*:

On that occasion there was a woman standing behind me,
her lips blue with cold, who, of course, had never in
her life heard my name. Jolted out of the torpor
characteristic of all of us, she said into my ear

⁸⁰ Philip Yancey, "Foreword," in Makoto Fujimura, *Silence and Beauty: Hidden Faith Born of Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 11.

⁸¹ Cameron J. Anderson, *The Faithful Artist: A Vision for Evangelicalism and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 148.

⁸² “Language - Oxford Reference,” accessed February 15, 2018, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00006488>. According to this listing, the phrase is a variation of the original, “One picture is worth ten thousand words,” attributed to Frederick R. Barnard in *Printers’ Ink* on March 10, 1927.

(everyone whispered there) - '*Could one ever describe this?*' And I answered - '*I can.*' *It was then that something like a smile slid across what had previously been just a face.* [emphasis added]⁸³

Describing the indescribable is often the glory of art depicting suffering; such is the gift of this piece, even though we have no immediate referent for “this” in the woman’s question. Also in the literary arts, Carolyn Forché, poet and Lannan Chair in poetry at Georgetown University, offers her landmark anthology in witness poetry, *Against Forgetting*, which includes Bertolt Brecht’s *Motto*: “In the dark times, will there be singing? /Yes, there will be singing. /About the dark times.”⁸⁴ These are our lament psalms; our epistles of injury; our biographies of reversal; our witnesses.

All of the various art forms bear profound witness to human suffering and, by doing so, not only do they shape our experience of suffering but also inform and illuminate all of human existence. Picasso’s *Guernica*,⁸⁵ in the visual arts, bears profound witness to a tragedy little-known until he painted it. And in storytelling, the journey of the hero is now expected to take her through suffering in order to return transformed. In a recent magazine article, we read the following: “In the monomyth, the hero must experience a period of painful exile in order to return to his community with

⁸³ Anna Andreevna Akhmatova, “Requiem,” in *Selected Poems*, trans. D. M. Thomas (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 87. A more expanded version of this section of her poem can be found in Appendix 11.

⁸⁴ Bertold Brecht, “Motto” in Forché, *Against Forgetting*, back cover.

⁸⁵ “Pablo Picasso (Pablo Ruiz Picasso)—Guernica,” accessed December 12, 2016, <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/guernica>. It is included again from chapter four in Appendix 4.

the power to change things.”⁸⁶ Art depicts suffering and bears witness with a power to change things.

Suffering also shapes the artist. Suffering in the life of Michelangelo actually shifts his art from the serenity of his early “Pieta,”⁸⁷ which depicts a youthful, closed-eyed and meditative Mary holding the body of her dead son, Jesus. His later “Pieta Rondanini”⁸⁸ depicts a Mary whose serenity has turned to weakness and inability, as Jesus’ dead body seems not only too heavy and falling, but also it appears that Mary is leaning on his body. Michelangelo never finished this portrayal of sorrow.

Consider, too, the life and art of Edvard Munch, an artist who suffered much. His art has captured the attention of many in depicting different aspects of anxiety,⁸⁹ and relational postures toward grief and loss, similar to the five postures noted in chapter three.⁹⁰ One version of Munch’s *The Scream* has this poem etched on the frame:

I was walking along a path with two friends—the sun was setting—suddenly the sky turned blood red—I paused, feeling exhausted, and leaned on the fence—there was blood and tongues of fire above the blue-black fjord and the city.

My friends walked on, and I stood there trembling with anxiety—and I sensed an infinite scream passing through nature.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Matt Vella, “What Silicon Valley Can Learn from Travis Kalanick,” *Time*, July 3, 2017, 23.

⁸⁷ See Figure 10.12 in Appendix 10.

⁸⁸ See Figures 10.13 and 10.14 in Appendix 10.

⁸⁹ See Figures 10.9, 10.10, and 10.11 in Appendix 10, *The Scream*, showing the various scenes on the same bridge with the same sky.

⁹⁰ Munch’s postures are observable in Figures 10.1—10.3 in Appendix 10. Notice those turning away, those who close their eyes, and those who gaze elsewhere. Also included, in Figures 10.4—10.8, are the relational postures from chapter three as depicted in visual art from *LSFI_Beach_Dave_CannonBeach_2017revised.pptx*, accessed April 25, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1x6NJSYpe8vZkJWNHJ5T1E2ZIU>.

⁹¹ Edvard Munch, “Edvard Munch Biography,” accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.edvardmunch.info/biography/>.

His words capture the resounding echoes of a suffering creation—and the whole creation groans.⁹²

Conclusion

Pamela Cooper-White says, “We need a ‘thick theology’—multilayered, complex, and open to a multifariousness and modes of symbolization in both our psychological and anthropological conceptualizations of persons ... as well as in our understanding of the transcendent, of God.”⁹³ Nowhere does this seem more evident than in our need for a robust and formational theology of suffering. In order to fulfill Miller’s tasks, mentioned earlier, we need a theology that allows us to think metaphorically, one that links our everyday lived experiences of suffering in the world to spheres of sacred mystery and incarnation—a formational theology of suffering—one that lives up to the artist Rick Beerhorst’s rendering *Imitation of Christ*.⁹⁴

⁹² Rom. 8:26.

⁹³ Cooper-White, *Braided Selves*, 5.

⁹⁴ See also in Figure 10.15 in Appendix 10.

CHAPTER 6:

COMRADES IN THE VALLEYS



“Given then that throughout his earthly life man walks in one way or another on the path of suffering, the Church at all times [...] should meet man on this very road. The Church, which is born of the mystery of Redemption in the Cross of Christ, has to try to meet man in a particular way on the path of his suffering. In this meeting man “becomes the path for the Church, [sic] and is one of the most important paths.”²

—Pope John Paul II

Introduction: Toward a Conclusion

How should we then meet people on the path of their suffering?³ In the words above from Pope John Paul II, this chapter is an attempt to articulate a “particular way”

¹ Rick Beerhorst, *Imitation of Christ*, 2008, Painting, accessed November 25, 2017, https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/-p6t2ytUOOVE/TGIO4nnt01I/AAAAAAAAAZ0A/NDV7VW8T1UAKkQgp-Njtg_1jvNWf6n3WgCHMYBhgL/s912/Rick%2BBeerhorst%2BThe%2BImitation%2Bof%2BChrist.jpg.

² Pope John Paul II, “Salvifici Doloris,” February 11, 1984, para. 5, accessed November 25, 2017, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris.pdf.

³ This question borrows from an old title by Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, L’Abri 50th anniversary ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005).

to meet people on the path of suffering—the “path for the church” and “one of the most important paths.”⁴ This particular way emerges from an effort to locate our frame of reference in Christian spiritual formation. By Christian spiritual formation, we mean not an adjunct or alternative to other theologies, but the very heart of the salvation and sanctification of humankind, the overarching purpose of God for humanity through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Review of Chapters 1 through 5

Because this chapter will supplement and bring together the main points of earlier chapters, a quick review follows. Chapter one introduces, describes, and explains the function and value of a biblically based formational theology of suffering. After setting aside as relevant but not necessary a discussion of impassibility, we choose a suffering God as a starting point. We briefly trace the implications of embracing a suffering God for creation and *imago Dei*. An analysis of suffering in the Bible constitutes the next chapter, particularly how suffering relates to spiritual formation in the lives of the patriarchs and the prophets.

Chapter three focuses on beliefs about suffering evidenced in Christian history, teaching, and practice. These beliefs, described as relational postures in response to suffering, are classified using a five-type taxonomy. Each type manifests different biblical foundations, historical expressions, theological traditions, and personal experiences.

⁴ Pope John Paul II, “*Salvifici Doloris*.”

Chapter four presents the need for a more specific look at the effects of suffering and how we might articulate a formational growth arc after suffering. The lens of trauma psychology gives us a vocabulary for suffering and a model of trajectories of growth after suffering. Then, using the dialogues in the Old Testament book of Job, the chapter borrows trauma psychology's language of assumptive worlds, cognitive conservatism, and cognitive reconstructions to illustrate a growth trajectory in Job's life.

The fifth chapter connects the core elements of a formational theology of suffering developed thus far to the demands of locating suffering and formation in specific situations. We discuss language issues, particularly the limits of language and the value of metaphor. Various cultural issues reveal the complexity and difficulty of writing on suffering regardless of geography. Additionally, we witness the contributions of artists of many kinds in expressing the inexpressible.

This concluding chapter assembles insights from previous chapters and offers practical suggestions for professional caregivers, specifically Christian caregivers, who care for those who suffer. These suggestions include an in-depth discussion of the POFTSS, the newly developed survey utilizing the postures of faith to suffering from chapter three. Currently in pretesting and validity testing, the POFTSS is already generating fruitful dialogue about our relationship to the Man of Sorrows.

The next section offers a conceptual model using the vocabulary of trauma from chapter four. Additionally, a second model arranges the elements of growth emerging from trauma into a story arc form. A third tool identifies parallels in the life of the nation of Israel, the life of Christ, and the lives of the disciples. By way of analogy, the story arcs of suffering in the communities of faith in the Bible offer us a rich vocabulary of

metaphors to inform the adaptive process of reconstructing assumptive worlds. This vocabulary helps us assimilate the formative events in the life of the one whose words continue to invite us—“Follow me.”

Part I: Implications for Caregiving in the Twenty-first Century

“That world of suffering which in brief has its subject in each man, seems in our age to be transformed—perhaps more than at any other time—into a particular ‘suffering of the world’: of a world transformed as never before by progress through man’s work and, at the same time, danger, as never before, because of man’s mistakes and offences [sic].”⁵

—John Paul II

Preliminary Considerations

According to Amy Hale-Smith et al., “One essential set of religious beliefs, those concerning ... human suffering, has remained virtually unexamined despite the potential clinical relevance of these beliefs.”⁶ Nowhere do we experience the relevance of these beliefs as we do in the process of caregiving for the suffering.

In these conversations, we are perhaps closest to hearing the “unutterable groanings” of God the Spirit groaning with creation, longing for our spiritual formation to be accomplished—our *συμμορφος* (*symmorphos*) being “conformed to the likeness or image.”⁷

⁵ Pope John Paul II, “Salvifici Doloris,” para. 18.

⁶ Amy Hale-Smith, Crystal L. Park, and Donald Edmondson, “Measuring Beliefs about Suffering: Development of the Views of Suffering Scale,” *Psychological Assessment* 24, no. 4 (December 2012): sec. abstract, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027399>.

⁷ Rom. 8:26.

Perhaps we are also closest to the “fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings” through which we become like him—*συμμορφιζω* (symmorphizo) and “take on the same form as; conform to.”⁸ Jesus—Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief, the Suffering Servant—is the likeness, the image into which we *are being conformed* so that we might “know [Christ]” and “the power of his resurrection.”⁹ All of these together represent the goal Paul had not yet reached and on to which he pressed; this is “the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”; to live in any other way risks living as “enemies of the cross of Christ.”¹⁰ “Taking on the same form” and “conforming to” is the goal of Christian spiritual formation as Paul expresses it in several passages.

Our focus has been distinctively the present-day living reality of Jesus as *Man of Sorrows, Suffering Servant, Lamb of God*, and other similar names. Taking on this form of Jesus, a facet among many facets, is what we have understood Jesus to say when he commands us to deny ourselves and take up our cross, and likewise, to drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism. Nowhere is this more necessary than meeting people on their path of suffering—Christian caregiving. And nowhere is this more important, for, as Pope John Paul II suggests, this becomes the path for the Church¹¹—the way, the narrow path found by few, the foolish thing that confounds the wise. Caregiving of this kind requires a framework.

⁸ Phil. 3:10.

⁹ Phil. 3:10.

¹⁰ Phil. 3:14-18.

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, “Salvifici Doloris.”

Toward a Framework for Caring Professionals

“Recovery [from trauma] can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.”¹²

—Judith Lewis Herman, MD

The Importance of Schemas.

Schemas, briefly defined in chapter four, are “organized elements of past reactions and experience that form a relatively cohesive and persistent body of knowledge capable of guiding subsequent perceptions and appraisals.”¹³ Our schemas are formed in the dynamic process of attempts to integrate experience, memory, learning, motivation, social settings, goals, and so on. Neurobiologists, like Dan Siegel, MD, clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, locate this process in the orbitofrontal region, a part of the brain right behind our eyes that integrates and regulates information from different systems within the brain.¹⁴ Our schemas serve as our guide in many things, including comprehending our suffering and observing our emotions. Schemas govern our ability to discover options for responding. And our schemas guide perceptions of our suffering clients and the discernment of options for providing compassionate care. Over time, our schemas become the automatic grid through which we filter the world and our interactions with it. Utilizing the vocabulary of trauma psychology, we find in our schemas our assumptive world, that part of us that gets

¹² Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 133.

¹³ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 57. See also Appendix 8.

¹⁴ Solomon and Siegel, *Healing Trauma*, 25–27.

disrupted, feels overwhelmed and sometimes shattered. How do we respond in our caregiving to such shatterings?

In Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, she lists faculties that are "originally formed in relationships with other people. These faculties include basic capacities for trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy."¹⁵ Herman adds that in healing, "they must be *re*-formed in such relationships"¹⁶ (emphasis added). Bessel van der Kolk, "one of the world's foremost experts on trauma,"¹⁷ agrees and says, "The role of those [healing] relationships is to provide physical and emotional safety, including safety from feeling shamed, admonished, or judged, and to bolster the courage to tolerate, face, and process the reality of what has happened."¹⁸ So our caregiving becomes a holding space for adaptation and healing.

The Problems of Assessment and the Importance of Empowerment.

Our capacity to see and understand the problems of our clients comes from various aspects of our own dynamic schemas, which include our theoretical constructs of what it means to be a person. These constructs also include our vision of *imago*—the ultimate and final realized human state to which we all are being drawn and for which even the Holy Spirit groans within us.¹⁹ This is the terminus of formation, the joy and

¹⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 133.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), back copy.

¹⁸ Ibid., 212. He adds that this is especially true for trauma that occurred within relationships.

¹⁹ Rom. 8:22-26.

glory to which we are being called, and, by necessity, it includes the facet of Christ as suffering servant. Yet most of our clients will long for us to “fix their problem” by taking their suffering away. And we will be tempted to satisfy them by alleviating psychological symptoms, as well we must. However, our approach to psychological and emotional health needs to be integrated with the holistic understanding and larger framework of spiritual formation advocated here. So, while we may fill our filing cabinets with tests and measures for psychological dysfunctions and symptoms—anxiety disorders, mood disorders, stress disorders, and so forth—a more difficult yet essential task is assessing the assumptive world of clients seeking help in and through their suffering.

An even more challenging task is helping clients construct new narratives of meaning, ones that assimilate their suffering in a way that offers them potential frameworks for understanding along with prospective answers for what’s next. van der Kolk helps us understand these challenges in his chapters on “Owning Your Self”²⁰ and “Self-Leadership.”²¹ Hermann notes that “caregivers schooled in a medical model of treatment often have difficulty grasping this fundamental principle [of empowerment] and putting it into practice.”²² Moreover, it is nearly impossible to do these things for others if in our schemas as caregivers we have not yet assimilated the primary experiences of having traveled these valleys ourselves. As van der Kolk says, “Ideally the therapist will also have been on the receiving end of whatever therapy he or she

²⁰ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 205. Van der Kolk says, “The challenge of recovery is to reestablish ownership of your body and your mind—of your self.”

²¹ Ibid., 279.

²² Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 133.

practices.”²³ This quote clearly endorses 2 Corinthians 1:4 and the communicable comfort we receive and then are to give. So to accomplish the initial tasks of meeting people on the road of their sufferings, as Pope John Paul advises, we must address these difficulties in order to stay on the path.

Metaphors.

As we saw in the previous chapter, adding to these difficulties are limitations of language and the need for becoming fluent in our client’s vocabulary. Most suffering, like traumatic events, “[is] almost impossible to put into words. This is true for all of us, not just for people who suffer from PTSD.”²⁴ Wilson and Lindy describe metaphors in trauma studies as “organizer[s] of spontaneous verbal pictures of the traumatic event.”²⁵ Their description illuminates the value of working with the imagination and metaphors of our clients, and it provides a key to helping them find their way. Moreover, as Cooper-White describes them, metaphors share cultural meanings and thus have relational value;²⁶ these we need to assess and understand our client’s assumptive world regarding suffering.

Another feature of an assumptive world is an overall posture toward suffering in the life of faith. Amy Hale-Smith, noted earlier, joined with others to create an

²³ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 214.

²⁴ Ibid., 233.

²⁵ Wilson and Lindy, *Trauma, Culture, and Metaphor*, 6. Wilson and Lindy develop the power of using the language of trauma metaphors to understand and help trauma sufferers, suggesting that metaphors serve as “portals of entry into the central impact of trauma to self-processes,” 3.

²⁶ Cooper-White, *Braided Selves*, 7.

assessment tool to measure beliefs about suffering. In 2012, her team developed the Views of Suffering Scale (VOSS).²⁷ Intended for participants of various theological persuasions, the VOSS assesses fundamental beliefs about suffering. The central organizing principle for developing the VOSS was theodicy; after an initial pilot test, additional items were added.²⁸ The VOSS is a helpful tool in considering views of suffering, especially in light of how these beliefs might affect the delivery of care and other supportive conversations.

However, theodicy, as noted earlier, though relevant in some ways and perhaps attractive to some, particularly those in apologetics, is not a central nor necessary issue in this dissertation on formation.

In 1998, Philip Yancey, editor for *Christianity Today*, wrote of observing in American Christianity “at least five biblical approaches to suffering.”²⁹ These approaches Yancey arranged in what he arranged called “The Hardship Ladder.”³⁰ The stages of the ladder are as follows:

1. A person living right should never suffer.
2. Good people do endure hardship, but they will always get relief.
3. All things work together for good.
4. Faithful people may be called to suffer.
5. Holy indifference (only one thing matters, exalting Christ).

²⁷ See Appendix 12.

²⁸ Hale-Smith, Park, and Edmondson, “Measuring Beliefs about Suffering,” 857.

²⁹ Philip Yancey, *I Was Just Wondering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 182.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 183-186.

Yancey also observed few people progressing to the fifth stage. He also observed ironically, that the Apostle Paul, whom he placed in stage five, would fit right back into stage one. This approach, like the VOSS, arranges options around beliefs about suffering and evil.

Rather than measure beliefs about suffering and evil, a tool measuring attitudes and behaviors in terms of a relational posture to Jesus would be more useful. Due to this shift in focus, and because such a tool did not yet exist, spiritual formation became the central organizing principle, and a new tool was developed.

This new tool, the Postures of Faith Toward Suffering Scale (POFTSS),³¹ is currently in pilot tests and initial validity tests. The methodology for development of the POFTSS appears below in Figure 6.1.

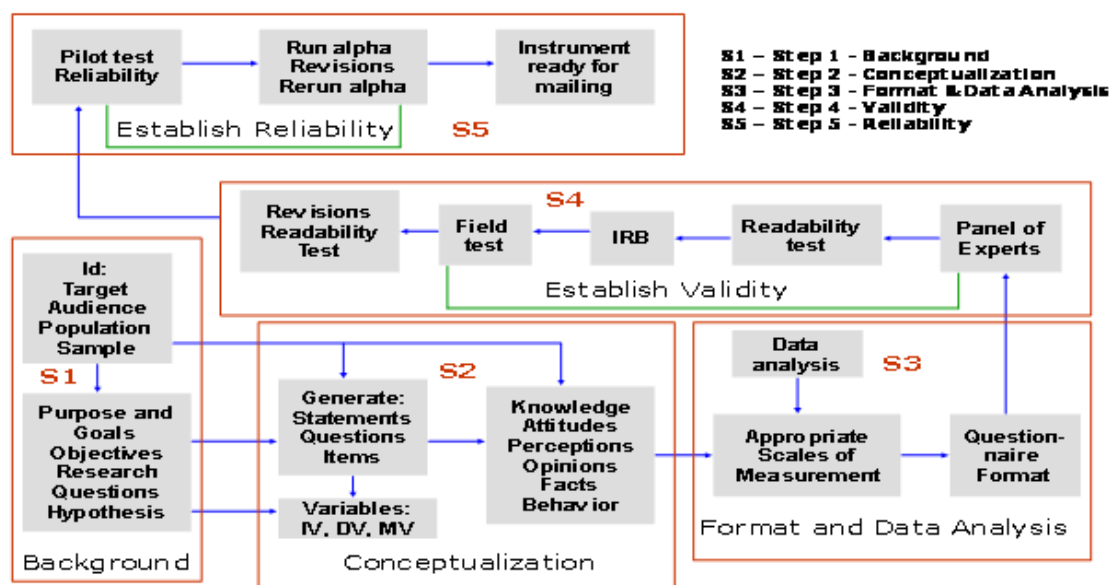


Figure 6.1. Sequence for Questionnaire/Instrument Development.

³¹ See Appendix 13.

Source: Rama B. Radhakrishna, “Tips for Developing and Testing Questionnaires/Instruments.”³²

Utilizing the metaphor of a *relational posture*³³ toward Jesus, Man of Sorrows, beliefs are framed as belonging to one or more basic postures.

Richard Niebuhr’s descriptions of historical Christian faith in relational postures toward culture, mentioned in chapter three, might be said to represent a five-sided kaleidoscope: Christ Against Culture, Christ of Culture, Christ Above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox, and Christ the Transformer of Culture. With the VOSS as a model and Niebuhr’s five-type taxonomy as a framework, the POFTSS kaleidoscope names five postures: Faith Averse to Suffering, Faith Above Suffering, Faith Equals Suffering, Faith and Suffering in Paradoxical Tension, and Faith Transformed by Suffering.

As demonstrated in chapter three, each relational posture has biblical foundations and historical expressions, describes certain theological traditions, and often emerges from various personal experiences. Consequently, these postures are not discrete, nor do they need to be exclusive of each other. The postures are represented by the following groups of statements for which a number is selected from -3 to +3, strongly disagree to strongly agree, respectively.

Faith Averse to Suffering

- ___ 2. If people would do what God requires, they would avoid pain and suffering.
- ___ 27. God will relieve our suffering if we pray and have faith.
- ___ 29. Jesus came to provide abundant life, so when we suffer, we are not experiencing the life Jesus came to give us.
- ___ 30. When something bad happens in my life, my first thought is usually, “What did I do wrong to deserve this?”

³² Rama B. Radhakrishna, “Tips for Developing and Testing Questionnaires/Instruments.” *Journal of Extension*, 1TOT2, 45, no. 1 (February 2007), accessed November 20, 2017 at <https://joe.org/joe/2007february/tt2.php>.

³³ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s. v. “posture,” accessed October 24, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/posture>. Noun: 2, “A particular way of dealing with or considering something; an approach or attitude.”

___ 31. Suffering is God's judgment for sin, so if someone is suffering, usually it is because someone sinned.

___ Total

Faith Transcending Suffering

___ 6. If people would just focus more on God, they would have more joy and peace during times of suffering.

___ 10. When something bad happens in my life, I try to remember that I can pray, and God will help me rise above it.

___ 14. Jesus came to provide a way for us to transcend our suffering by remembering we have a hope of a better life.

___ 15. We can take control of our suffering by praying and having faith that God will help us.

___ 19. Times of suffering happen to everyone, but people who believe in Jesus can overcome suffering with faith.

___ Total

Faith Equated with Suffering

___ 1. Becoming a believer in Jesus means accepting a life of suffering, because suffering goes along with a life of faith.

___ 11. Having faith in Jesus means we will suffer because of our faith.

___ 13. Jesus' life is an example of how a life of faith is equivalent to a life of suffering.

___ 16. Christian believers experience suffering as a result of following Jesus.

___ 33. When suffering occurs in my life, I accept it because, like Jesus, I must learn obedience.

___ Total

Faith and Suffering in Paradoxical Tension

___ 4. People would not be so distraught during hard times if they could remember that even in sorrow there can be joy.

___ 22. Joy and sorrow are both a part of life at some time. When we suffer, we should just wait for better days.

___ 28. Having faith in Jesus does not exempt us from the joys or the pains of earthly life.

___ 34. Jesus' life shows us that a life of obedience and faith requires suffering.

___ 35. When something bad happens in my life, I try to remember, like Job, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away."

___ Total

Faith Transformed by Suffering

___ 3. God subjected all creation to suffering, and, like us, creation will experience transformation through it.

___ 7. Suffering transforms faith because God uses it to make us more like Jesus.

___ 17. God intends suffering to be a catalyst for growth.

___ 23. Jesus' life shows us that suffering transforms faith.

___ 25. When I suffer, I recall that only through suffering can I be formed into the image of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.

___ Total

Seen through the understanding of development and formation, we would also expect that one's view of suffering would progress on a parallel track to growth and

maturity. From the initial stages of human and moral development, suffering often correlates with punishment and correction for unruly behavior. Faith Averse to Suffering reflects these influences along with more punitive notions of God as lawgiver and judge. From this typical beginning posture, a progressive sequence vis-à-vis lifespan development might move through a growing awareness of suffering in a life of faith—perhaps faith above suffering—followed by a personal experience of suffering that threatens identity or meaning in some way. A period of adaptation might include equating a life of faith with suffering, moving gradually to an awareness of paradoxical tension. Usually, a primary experience of suffering and a transforming idea or insight opens a new posture of relating to Jesus, Man of Sorrows. This new posture is described as faith transformed through suffering, which might also be understood conversely as suffering transformed by faith. An easily imagined and flexible sequence, this developmental view might offer a possible framework for prognoses in caregiving.

Other important influences are also incorporated. Personal behaviors are a factor in many surveys and scales. Each of the postures includes a statement of behavior, such as, “When I suffer, I...” or similarly, “When suffering occurs in my life, I...” In this way, not only convictions are measured but also conduct.

Theological constructs also influence understandings of suffering. Of particular interest in our study are those constructs having to do with Jesus Christ and what formation into his image might mean. Consequently, each posture incorporates a statement of interpretation of the life of Jesus. These usually begin with, “Jesus’ life shows us...,” or equivalently, “Jesus’ suffering shows us” Another variable is tolerance for paradox or supposed antinomy in theologies, as opposed to a preference for

tautologies and simplicity. This variable is reflected in statements regarding joy and sorrow, joy and pain, and Job's statement, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away."³⁴

Two other significant theological continuums are included as subscales. Part of the pre-test will include factorial analyses to look for possible effects of these beliefs on the five postures. The first subscale checks responses to five additional statements regarding God and suffering. The statements represent a continuum between two positions: the impassibility of God, though the word "impassible" is not used; and on the other end, a suffering God, though again words like passibility are not used. The subscale includes five general statements affirming a belief in a suffering God, which would be answered with disagreement for those embracing impassibility. The statements are as follows:

Suffering God vs. Impassible God

- ___ 9. God's primary role when we encounter suffering is to experience it with us.
- ___ 12. Because God loves creation, God suffers when creation suffers.
- ___ 20. Jesus' suffering shows us a loving God who suffers for us and with us.
- ___ 24. When we suffer, God suffers with us.
- ___ 32. God's goodness can be seen during our suffering because, in the midst of pain, God suffers with us.
- ___ Total

A relationship to creation is included here—God suffers with creation or is unaffected by creation's groanings—along with a simple statement regarding the incarnation, namely Jesus revealing a suffering God versus Jesus merely appeasing the wrath of God against

³⁴ Job 1:21. Many believe this statement to be a misunderstanding of God, for which Job repents at the end of the dialogues with God. This verse is also commonly heard at funerals as an attempt at consolation. This passage is used in the POFTSS to represent a resignation from protest and questioning, a posture of more stoic acceptance toward suffering.

sin.³⁵ A preliminary hypothesis proposes that belief in a suffering God will predispose a person to consider that suffering is part of participating in *imago Dei*.

The second subscale checks responses to statements regarding divine providence and foreordination. The statements in this subscale represent a continuum between everything in history being foreordained and planned for, including our suffering, and at the other end, divine limitations. The subscale includes five general statements affirming a belief that God has foreordained and controls every detail of our lives. Disagreeing with these statements constitutes belief in divine limitations, though the words “divine limitations” are not used. Statements include God’s control, planning, and provision. The statements are as follows:

Foreordination vs. Divine Limitations

- ___ 5. God controls everything we experience, so we need not protest against suffering.
- ___ 8. God plans every detail of our lives, including suffering.
- ___ 18. When we suffer, we should remember that God has provided everything we need.
- ___ 21. Jesus’ life shows us how to be submitted to God’s providence, even during times of suffering.
- ___ 26. When we struggle against suffering, we might be resisting what God has planned for our lives.
- ___ Total

Again, one statement includes a perspective on Jesus’ suffering, that he shows us how to submit to God’s providence, even during times of suffering. A similar statement includes believing that we should remember God has provided everything we need even when we are suffering. These reflect some embrace of imitating Christ in our suffering. This section also includes a statement that by resisting suffering we may be resisting God’s plan for our lives. A belief in foreordination and providence, so our hypothesis

³⁵ It is possible to embrace both views without reducing the significance of either view or precluding additional perspectives on the incarnation and atonement theories.

conjectures, is thought to predispose one to be less likely to embrace a posture against suffering.

What is Needed.

While it is assumed in counselor education that good caregiving will always involve attention to the symptoms resulting from suffering—grief responses, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, stress responses to trauma, and so on—what is also asserted is the need for a refined theology of suffering flowing out of a counselor’s primary experience of suffering and formation and supported by academic training. Additionally, this refined theology of suffering involves incorporating spiritual formation into a framework for care. The question we will address next is, “how might we offer caring relationships as crucibles for healing and spiritual formation in the lives of people of faith who are suffering?” What follows represents an answer using the culmination and application of material from prior chapters and material presented so far in this chapter.

Part II: Harnessing Others’ Metaphors and Co-creating a New Assumptive World

In chapter four, trauma psychology and related terms serve as a paradigm for understanding suffering and trajectories of change. Many of these were metaphors like “shattering,” “reconstruction,” and “narratives.” Figure 6.2 illustrates a hypothetical trajectory of growth utilizing basic features and related terms of trauma psychology.

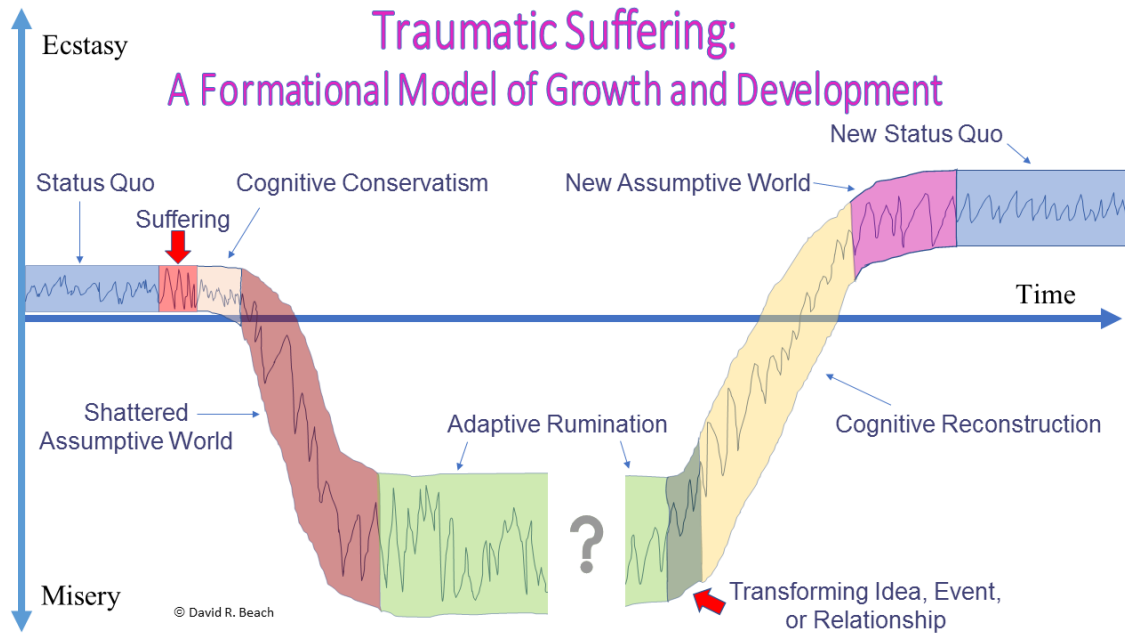


Figure 6.2. Traumatic Suffering: A Formational Model of Change and Development. *Source:* Adapted from Steven Smith's conceptualization³⁶ of Virginia Satir's model of change for family systems³⁷ and utilizing Derek Sivers's reproduction of Kurt Vonnegut's misery-ecstasy axis.³⁸

This conceptualization incorporates the elements of trauma psychology. Marcia Webb's analysis of transformation in the biblical character of Job in chapter four could be mapped using this visual story arc, as could several other biblical characters.

This growth arc also assists in narrating my own story. After the death of my first wife in 1991, I experienced the shattering of my assumptive world. My assumptions about God answering prayers for healing, how Jesus would deliver his own bride, about

³⁶ Steven Smith, "The Satir Change Model," 2000, accessed November 21, 2017, <https://stevenmsmith.com/ar-satir-change-model/>.

³⁷ Virginia Satir, ed., *The Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1991).

³⁸ Derek Sivers, "Kurt Vonnegut Explains Drama" September 1, 2009, accessed November 21, 2017, <https://sivers.org/drama>. Sivers describes Vonnegut's presentation in New York at an unnamed place with an uncertain date. Time goes left to right, happiness goes bottom to top.

the fairness of the world, and the reliability of medical professionals all shattered. These shards needed reconstruction. After about two years of adaptive rumination, which involved many questions, vacillating emotions, and swings between faith and doubt, I experienced a transforming moment in conversation with my pastor and his wife. She shared her observation that Jesus was in heaven while his bride was on earth, and I was on earth while my bride was in heaven. The moment that realization lodged in my heart and mind, I gained a new understanding of being shaped through the dark emotions of grief—the pain of separation—into the image of Jesus, Man of Sorrows.

I believed, for the first time in my life, that formation, not information, gave meaning to suffering. I began to hear the invitation to take up my cross and follow him to the valley and into the dark, all while feeling his lament, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am.”³⁹ This moment birthed a vision for spiritual formation that organized things differently and allowed a cognitive reconstruction to begin.

In the process of cognitive reconstruction, I returned to college to finish a Bible degree, one I had postponed during my first wife’s illness. During my second year back, I met a young professor, Cynthia, who is now my wife. A new assumptive world began to emerge, one in which love could be born again. From the vantage point of this new assumptive world, I learned that in the year of my conversion to Jesus, Cynthia had been praying for her future husband. I learned that as a high school student, she prayed on the shores of Lake Huron for a man with eyes as blue as the lake. And not only are my eyes blue but also, just for grins, my name is “Beach.” My new and larger assumptive world

³⁹ John 17:24.

includes the mysteries of this collaboration with God, of formation into the Man of Sorrows. The story arc of Jesus' life informs the story of my own.

Another way to conceptualize a growth trajectory appears in Figure 6.3 below, which organizes elements of posttraumatic growth in terms of popular story arcs in the literary arts:

3 Act Structure	Hero with 1000 Faces —Joseph Campbell	Stages of the Hero's (Writer's) Journey —Christopher Vogler	Posttraumatic Growth Trajectory	New Story Goes Here
Act 1 Situation Back Story Character Introduction 1 st Turning Point	Departure World of Common Day Call to Adventure Refusal of the Call Belly of the Whale	Ordinary World Ordinary World Call to Adventure Refusal of the Call Meeting with the Mentor Crossing the 1 st Threshold	Beginning Status Quo Suffering Cognitive Conservatism Shattering of the Assumptive World	Beginning
Act 2 Character Development Move Plot Forward Complications Crises 2 nd Turning Point (raising the stakes)	Initiation Road of Trials Meeting with the Goddess Woman as Temptress Atonement with the Father Apotheosis The Ultimate Boon	Special World Tests, Allies, Enemies Approach to the Innermost Cave Supreme Ordeal Reward	Middle Descent into Chaos Adaptive Rumination Transforming Idea, Event, or Relationship	Middle
Act 3 Conflict Leading to Climax Loose Ends Cleared Up Conclusion/Denouement	Return Refusal of the Return The Magic Flight Rescue from Within Crossing the Threshold Return Master of Two Worlds Freedom to Live	Ordinary World The Road Back Resurrection Return with the Elixir	End Schema Change and New Assumptive World Cognitive Reconstruction Integration of Adaptive Trauma Narrative New Status Quo	End

Figure 6.3. Posttraumatic Growth Trajectory and Story Arcs.

Source: adapted from Christopher Vogler's, *The Writer's Journey*, 6-8.⁴⁰

This conceptualization of suffering joins a posttraumatic growth arc to more expansive and universal themes in narrative story arcs.

⁴⁰ Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 3rd ed. (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007), 6-8.

Biblical Parallels for Spiritual Formation

Using either or both of the conceptualizations presented above, we could analyze the Genesis stories of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph; we could also add the narratives of Naomi, Esther, Gideon and Samson. From the Books of Samuel and the Kings, we might include Hannah, David and Elijah; and we could include the major prophets and some of the minor prophets. In a similar light, we could analyze the NT narrative of the apostle Paul. However, the most significant story for analysis would be Jesus and the role of traumatic sufferings in fulfilling his mission. Spiritual formation into the image and likeness of Jesus brings this analysis into the heart and soul of Christian care-giving utilizing a formational theology of suffering.

A final tool also will assist in our conceptualizations; the chart below highlights some of the potential parallels, not only with suffering in the life of Jesus, but also suffering as spiritual formation in the life of the nation of Israel, the disciples, and the church. Themes of suffering are highlighted in color.⁴¹

BIBLICAL PARALLELS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION: THE LIFE OF ISRAEL, JESUS, AND THE CHURCH/DISCIPLES			
EVENTS/THEMES	Israel	Jesus	Church/Disciples
1. BIRTH AND YOUTH			
ANNUNCIATION	Abrahamic Covenant Gen. 12 & 15	To Joseph – Matt. 1:20-21 To Mary – Luke 1:26-38 To Elizabeth – Luke 1:41-45 To the shepherds – Luke 2:9-12 To Simeon – Luke 2:25-32	Prophesied in Hosea 1:10 Joel 2:28-29 et al.
MIRACULOUS BIRTH	Birth of Isaac – Gen. 18:11/21:2 Birth of Jacob – Gen. 25:21 Birth of Joseph – Gen. 30:22-24 Birth of Samuel – 1 Sam.	Luke 2:1-7	John 1:12; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 3:1-2

⁴¹ For a more complete listing of parallels, including the other numbered themes, see Figure 14.1 in Appendix 14.

BIBLICAL PARALLELS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION: THE LIFE OF ISRAEL, JESUS, AND THE CHURCH/DISCIPLES			
EVENTS/THEMES	Israel	Jesus	Church/Disciples
CIRCUMCISION	Gen. 17:1-14	Luke 2:21-39	Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:10-12
ATTEMPTED MURDER BY THE DEVIL	By Pharaoh – Exod. 1:22	By Herod – Matt. 2:16-18	1 Pet. 5:8
CALLED OUT OF EGYPT (SLAVERY) – “MY SON”	The Exodus – Exod. 4:22	Matt. 2:15	Gal. 5:1
ALIEN AND STRANGER	Exod. 6:4; 21:22	2:1-12	1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11
SEED OF ABRAHAM	Isa. 41:8; Gal. 3:16	Gal. 3:16	Gal. 3:7-9, 29; Js. 1:1
2. BAPTISM			
3. WILDERNESS - TEMPTATION			
WILDERNESS	40 YEARS – A year per day of spying Nu. 14:34; Ez. 4:6	40 DAYS – Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13 Led by the Spirit	A promise remains of entering rest – Heb. 4:1-11
FASTING, HUNGER, AND THIRST	Deut. 8:2-3; Deut. 8:15	Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13	Matt. 5:6
TEMPTATION/TESTING/TRIAL	Deut. 4:34; Deut. 8:2; Deut. 13:3	40 DAYS – Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13	John 16:33; Js. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6
4. CALLING			
5. PASSION AND DEATH			
“DRINKING THE CUP” GETHSEMANE/BETRAYAL ABANDONMENT/FORSAKENESS ARREST/DENIAL ACCUSATIONS/MOCKING ABUSE/TRIALS CRUCIFIXION/DEATH	Ps. 22:1; Isa. 2:6; Isa. 54:7; Jer. 12:73 Lam. 1:2, 19; Micah 5:	Matt. 26:36-27:50 Mark 14:26-72; 15:34 Luke 22:39-23:46 John 18:1-23	Trials alluded to in Jesus’ comments in Mark 13:11 & Luke 12:11 Gal. 2:19-20; Fellowship of his sufferings – Phil. 3:10 Col. 1:24
6. BURIAL			
BURIAL	Ezek. – 3 days in the whale – Jon. 1:17	Matt. 12:38-41; Matt. 16:4; Luke 11:29-32	Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:1
EXILE/DIASPORA	Northern Kingdom- Assyria – 2 Kings 17 Southern Kingdom- Babylon – 2 Kings 24 Jeremiah; Ez.; Amos 5 & 7; et al.	Luke 27:57-61; John 23:50-56	1 Pet. 2:11
7. RESURRECTION			
8. ASCENSION			
9. IN THE HEAVENS — AT THE “RIGHT HAND”			
10. SENDING HIS SPIRIT			
11. GLORIOUS RETURN			
12. RULING / REIGNING			

Figure 6.4. Biblical Parallels: The Life of Israel, Jesus, and the Church/Disciples.

Source: Adapted from David R. Beach, “Touchpoints with the Life of Christ,” 2013.⁴²

These ways of framing suffering in our own schemas and assumptive worlds as caregivers can help orient us in caregiving for people of faith. Moreover, by doing so, we may help clients find more adaptive words in describing and co-authoring their new

⁴² David R. Beach, “Touchpoints with the Life of Christ” (Reach Team Training, Impact Church, Lowell, MI, Fall 2013), pt. 1.

assumptive worlds with a richer and deeper faith. In other words, we can also help them integrate an adaptive narrative that follows a growth-oriented path toward a new status quo. We can help them find their way on the path of their suffering.

These models offer another aid: naming the path. As people narrate their situations in caring relationships, they reveal their own names and labels for events, their framework for understanding their stories, their sufferings. One way of utilizing the prior list of biblical parallels is by suggesting a reframing of various types of stories. For example, using parallel stories from the life of Jesus or the nation of Israel might include reframing a story as a “wilderness” story, an “abandonment” story, or an “exile” story. This parallel processing may allow the experiences to be understood and felt as liminal spaces instead of dead-ends.⁴³

Shatterings, Wounded Healers, and the Straits of Messina

Adapting our conceptual frameworks to understand suffering as formational and facilitating the image of Jesus allows us to become wounded healers. We can receive and, therefore, more faithfully incorporate, the comfort with which we are to serve and care for others. Just as Jesus needed to be made “fully human in every way,”⁴⁴ so, too, we need to be made like him in every way. While doing so, no doubt we will experience the same temptations Jesus faced in his vulnerability as the Son of man.

⁴³ Rundel, “Liminal Spaces—A Narrative Spirituality of the Bible.”

⁴⁴ Heb. 2:17.

Many of these temptations involve navigating between twin dangers much like Odysseus sailing the dangerous Strait of Messina in Homeric myth.⁴⁵ Often named as the most potent argument for atheism against faith in the God of salvation, suffering presents a test of faith and endangers it. One major danger in our pain is faith being jettisoned and replaced by a denial of God's goodness and love. The twin danger is faith becoming rigid and dogmatic, and demanding certainty and control, which jeopardizes growth, learning, and most of all relationship. Richard Rohr reminds us of this danger in his recent work on the Trinity, *Divine Dance*:

As long as "received teaching" doesn't become experiential knowledge, we're going to continue creating a high quantity of disillusioned ex-believers. Or on the flip-side, we'll manufacture very rigid believers who simply hold on to doctrine in very dry, dead ways with nothing going on inside.⁴⁶

If we yield to either temptation, we resist formation into the image of Jesus who learned obedience through what he suffered.⁴⁷ Due to these dangers in adaptive rumination, the value is often highest in this process for a well-formed counselor, mentor, or guide in caregiving for a suffering person.

Human experience also involves traveling along other continuums besides that of faith and doubt, like the following:

⁴⁵ Mark Cartwright, "Scylla and Charybdis," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, accessed February 26, 2017, https://www.ancient.eu/443/Scylla_and_Charybdis/. "Scylla and Charybdis were monsters from Greek mythology thought to inhabit the Straits of Messina, the narrow sea between Sicily and the Italian mainland. Preying on passing mariners, Scylla was a terrible creature with six heads and twelve feet, while Charybdis, living on the opposite side of the straits, was another monster who, over time, was transformed in the imagination of the ancients into a more rational, but no less lethal, whirlpool. Odysseus famously had to negotiate a passage through their deadly clutches in Homer's *Odyssey*." para. 1.

⁴⁶ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2016), 124.

⁴⁷ Heb. 5:7-8.

- Praise and lament
- Joy and sorrow
- Hope and despair
- Ecstasy and agony
- Celebration and mourning

In many introductory psychology courses, we learn of “positive” and “negative” emotions. Even the apostle Paul’s list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians includes only “positive” fruit, though as we follow his life, we read of several other emotional experiences and movements of the Spirit.

In chapter five we saw how difficulties in language affect our understanding of suffering. So for many, their assumptive world consists of simple and abbreviated lists of preferred and socially acceptable Christian emotions. Consequently, when the Spirit invites them on the journey of formation through suffering, part of the shattering may involve experiencing emotions, thoughts, and states that previously were understood as unacceptable, wrong, bad, or even sin. So, the agony of Gethsemane, the tears over Lazarus, and Jesus’ spirit being troubled represent significant challenges to formation. These circumscribed lists of acceptable emotions, thoughts, and states can be part of the shattering, and, therefore, part of a necessary cognitive reconstruction and a new assumptive world.

Assumptions about God are primal in formational conversations. As we probe the list of parallels with Jesus’ sufferings in a context of caregiving, God emerges as a Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief, pain, betrayal, and abandonment; we begin to

understand better the Holy Spirit's deep pain,⁴⁸ groaning,⁴⁹ and jealous longings.⁵⁰ This kind of exploration often challenges a person's assumptions about God and what it means to be created in God's image, not to mention what it means to be made Christ-like or "Christ-ian." Cognitive reconstruction in these cases often involves helping a person see God through the suffering Holy Spirit and Jesus, Man of Sorrows, rather than merely seeing God through a conceptual experience of a partial list of God's attributes, a danger in every theology course.⁵¹

Often one shattering in this primal area leads to another. The inclusion of a suffering God during cognitive reconstruction may precipitate a similar shattering in assumptions about the atonement and salvation.

For instance, in a preference for the penal substitutionary theory of atonement, suffering is necessary to appease the wrath of a holy God. Jesus, as the sacrificial lamb of God, sheds his blood as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, thereby meeting the righteous requirements of the law. Seen in this light, the suffering and death of Jesus is unique and often considered irrelevant in conversations of human suffering as formational. Additionally, in some explanations of the Trinity, the dying Christ suffers

⁴⁸ Eph. 4:30.

⁴⁹ Rom. 8:26.

⁵⁰ James 4:5.

⁵¹ Ideas for helping may include using Lament Psalms in a formative way, such as the Copy Change exercise illustrated using Psalm 88 in Appendix 15. Other suggestions include reading authors who artfully weave human story with formational exercises, such as Sharon Garlough Brown's *Sensible Shoes: A Story about the Spiritual Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013) and her sequels.

due to God making him “to be sin for us”;⁵² therefore, he cannot at the same time reveal the image of God. While this view may partially explain certain aspects of Jesus’ suffering and death, as seen in the prophets and the epistles, if it is one’s only view, other aspects of the Trinity are out of focus; consequently, God can often be understood as punitive, wrathful, and transactional. Perhaps these are the elemental things the writer of Hebrews laments.⁵³ And, as that same writer asserts in the introduction, “This Son, radiance of the glory of God, [is the] flawless expression of the nature of God.”⁵⁴

At times, the fragility during shattering and adaptive rumination gets more serious. Not only does faith falter but so, too, can the will to live. This manifestation of such fundamental shattering challenges even the best professional caregiving and requires training and experience in clinical practice with suicide.⁵⁵ In these cases, immediate assessment and appropriate clinical steps should be taken. A no-suicide contract should be negotiated or at least a verbal agreement regarding any self-harm. This kind of intervention takes precedence over all others and may require inpatient care. In these situations, a seasoned veteran of the valley of shadows delivering compassionate care reaches the status of savior, much like Jesus, our comrade of the valley.

⁵² 2 Cor. 5:21.

⁵³ Heb. 5:11-14. In this chapter, the writer laments that her/his readers are still in need of elementary truth, the “milk,” though they should by this time be teachers, eating “meat.”

⁵⁴ Heb. 1:3 (Phillips).

⁵⁵ For more information and resources, caregivers can consult <http://www.suicidology.org/ncpys/resources>, Paul Quinett’s QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer) method. For more detailed assessment, see the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Suicide-Risk-Assessment-C-SSRS-Lifeline-Version-2014.pdf>.

In addition to dangers to faith in God, other shattered assumptions may include blind faith in the justice system and the medical establishment. Here the path between Scylla and Charybdis navigates the twin dangers of anarchy and cynicism on the one hand and naïve trust on the other. Often in criminal cases of felony assault, rape, or murder, victims and their family members need informed support from victim advocacy groups. Formative experiences in the life of a caregiver are valuable in these cases as well.

The shattered assumption of blind faith in medical science often brings disillusionment that hinders informed trust in many other kinds of caregivers, such as pastors, priests, counselors, and other professionals. The previously mentioned deaths by iatrogenic medicine and medical mistakes often complicate caregiving for surviving patients and the grieving process for families of those who do not survive. Cognitive reconstruction in these cases involves helping people move from blind or naïve trust to educated and informed trust.

One final category in our brief list of possible shattered assumptions involves a blind or naïve trust in those in authority, particularly those we depend on as examples of nurturing love and care. This would include parents, pastors, priests, and other professionals. Shatterings in this category are often followed by ambivalence, anger, and anxiety. Wise caregiving during reconstruction in these cases often allows the reestablishment of trust while encouraging proper mourning. Otherwise, those left on their own may be at risk for triangulating and perpetuating a string of broken relationships due to dysregulated emotions and an inability/unwillingness to rebuild trust. Abuse cases in this category also involve mourning a failure to protect on the part of a

trusted caregiver. Again, in these cases, a caregiver with similar formative experiences are like pearls of great value.

Part III: Implications for a Formational Theology of Suffering

“All followers of Christ must embrace suffering before they can embrace glory.”⁵⁶

— Gerald Peterman and Andrew Schmutzer

This dissertation focuses on the implications of bearing the image of a suffering God, and the necessity of being made like Jesus Christ in and through suffering. By implication and necessity, then, it becomes a theological statement—a theology of suffering. Inasmuch as spiritual formation involves a dynamic process rather than a fixed state and engages the mystery of human personhood in its maximal complexity, the term “formational theology of suffering” seems apropos. Efforts to avoid language of exclusion of any of the branches of Christianity—East or West, Catholic or Protestant—seem befitting the maximal complexity of human development. The Spirit’s activity and our participation in the formation of the ultimately non-definable image of Jesus Christ in us, around the world, and in all of history also seem to require it.

Therefore, an endpoint in this tentative closure of the ongoing conversation of suffering as formation will avoid evaluating different understandings of what it means to be made into the image of Jesus Christ. Though such an evaluation may seem relevant to many and interesting to some, it, too, is not necessary. Whether we describe formation as “theosis,” “divinization,” “deification,” “conforming,” or something else, we will acknowledge the familiar saying that all metaphors limp; yet, like names for God, they also live in the experiences they point to, like signs directing our path.

⁵⁶ Peterman and Schmutzer, *Between Pain and Grace*, 292.

Conclusion

We ponder with curiosity and fascination the grand story of God's cosmic economy, and what we ourselves will become. And our conversations about it occur on a continuum revealed in 1 John 3:2. At one end, we exist in, "Dear friends, now we are children of God"; and at the other end, we are tantalized with the promise that "what we will be has not yet been made known." And so we press our faces against the glass, straining to see the future, the promise of glory. May we do so in the unity of blessed faith, living in the hope of the promise of the disciple whom Jesus loved: "We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."⁵⁷

⁵⁷ 1 John 3:2b (NIV).

APPENDIX 1:
WAAIJMAN'S PROGRESSIVE PROCESS DESCRIPTION OF
ESTABLISHED SCHOOLS OF SPIRITUALITY^{1 2}

1. A source experience that gives birth to a spiritual way.
2. An inner circle of pupils takes shape around the spiritual way.
3. The spiritual way is situated within a specific socio-cultural context.
4. The spiritual way opens a new, specific perspective on the future.
5. A second generation structures the spiritual way into an organic whole.
6. The spiritual way is shared with many people.
7. When the source experience, the contextual relevance, and the power to open the future are blocked, a reformation is needed.



¹ Corné J. Bekker, "Prophet and Servant: Locating Robert K. Greenleaf's Counter-Spirituality of Servant Leadership," *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2010): 3–14.

² Corné J. Bekker, "The Turn to Spirituality and Downshifting," in F. Gandolfi and H. Cherrier, eds., *Downshifting: A Theoretical and Practical Approach to Living a Simple Life* (Hyderabad, India: ICFAI Press, 2008), 102–121.

APPENDIX 2:

WAAIJMAN'S (2002) THREE FORMS OF SPIRITUAL COUNTER-MOVEMENTS¹

Primordial spirituality research attempts to locate spiritualities that are not closely connected with any school or way, but imbedded in ordinary human experiences such as birth, marriage, having children, experiencing death, and suffering. Investigations in primordial spiritualities center around descriptions of everyday spirituality developed in the context of community, forms of indigenous spiritualities, and aspects of secular spirituality.

Counter-movements in spirituality describe approaches that offer alternate solutions to existing social and religious power structures and the research in these fields follows descriptions of systems of liminality, inferiority, and marginality.

Types of spiritual counter-movements	Description
Liminal spirituality	Marked by being outside of the social structure in a state of indeterminacy. Developed outside the standard structures of religious traditions and institutions.
“Inferior” spirituality	The transient or permanent position of those who find themselves on the underside of the social order, on the lowest rank of the social strata. Cultivated by those that find themselves on the lowest ranks of society, in positions of severe discrimination, and disadvantage.
Marginal spirituality	A position marked by double loyalty. Constructed by those that stand on the margins of two opposing or differing social/religious/philosophical contexts.

¹ Corné J. Bekker, “Prophet and Servant.”

APPENDIX 3:
THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

Processing Loss using the Life of Christ as a model for suffering

Stage One: Gethsemane – Sufferings

We endure betrayal, false accusations, mocking, abuse, beatings, and abandonment.

Stage Two: Good Friday – Death and Loss

We endure multiple losses.

Stage Three: Holy Saturday – The Darkness

We enter disillusionment, doubts, disorientation, and questions without answers.

Stage Four: Easter Sunday – Resurrection

God quickens and brings life.

Stage Five: The 40 Days – The In-Between

The new has not yet come.

Stage Six: The Ascension – The Returning to God

What we once knew, we offer back to God and wait.

Stage Seven: Pentecost – God Sends the New

We receive the new.

APPENDIX 4:

GUERNICA



An accurate depiction of a cruel, dramatic situation, *Guernica* was created to be part of the Spanish Pavilion at the International Exposition in Paris in 1937. Pablo Picasso's motivation for painting the scene in this great work was the news of the German aerial bombing of the Basque town whose name the piece bears, which the artist had seen in the dramatic photographs published in various periodicals, including the French newspaper *L'Humanité*. Despite that, neither the studies nor the finished picture contain a single allusion to a specific event, constituting instead a generic plea against the barbarity and terror of war. The huge picture is conceived as a giant poster, testimony to the horror that the Spanish Civil War was causing and a forewarning of what was to come in the Second World War. The muted colours, the intensity of each and every one of the motifs and the way they are articulated are all essential to the extreme tragedy of the scene, which would become the emblem for all the devastating tragedies of modern society.

Guernica has attracted a number of controversial interpretations, doubtless due in part to the deliberate use in the painting of only greyish tones. Analysing the iconography in the painting, one *Guernica* scholar, Anthony Blunt, divides the protagonists of the pyramidal composition into two groups, the first of which is made up of three animals: the bull, the wounded horse and the winged bird that can just be made out in the background on the left. The second group is made up of the human beings, consisting of a dead soldier and a number of women: the one on the upper right, holding a lamp and leaning through a window; the mother on the left, wailing as she holds her dead child; the one rushing in

from the right and finally the one who is crying out to the heavens, her arms raised as a house burns down behind her.¹

¹ Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, blue, black, and white oil painting - mural, 3.5' x 7.8', 1937, <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/guernica>.

APPENDIX 5:
TRAUMA RESPONSE PATTERNS¹

- **Emotional Response Patterns**
 - Fear and Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Decreased Self-esteem or Identity Problems
 - Anger
 - Guilt and Shame
- **Cognitive Response Patterns**
 - Perceptual Disturbances
 - Intrusive Thoughts and Memories
 - Re-experiencing Phenomena
 - Dissociation
 - Depersonalization
 - Derealization
- **Biological Response Patterns**
 - Physiological Hyperarousal
 - Somatic Disturbances
- **Behavioral Response Patterns**
 - Aggressive and Antisocial Behaviors
 - Suicidal Behaviors
 - Substance Abuse
 - Impaired Social Functioning
 - Personality Disorders
- **Interpersonal Response Patterns**
 - Sexual Problems
 - Intimate Relationship Problems
 - Revictimization
 - Victim Becomes Victimizer

¹ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 38–46. McCann and Pearlman also discuss the history of the DSM criteria for PTSD, first in DSM-III in 1980, and later revised to include denial symptoms along with re-experiencing. They note that these criteria continue to be controversial due in large part to overlap in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

APPENDIX 6:
EGO RESOURCES AND SELF-CAPACITIES¹

Ego Resources

- Intelligence
- Awareness of psychological needs
- Ability to introspect
- Willpower and initiative
- Ability to strive for growth, to recognize and move toward what is healthy for oneself, with appropriate regard for others
- Ability to view oneself from more than one perspective
- Empathy
- Awareness of boundaries between self and others

Self-Capacities:

- Ability to moderate self-loathing
- Ability to tolerate strong affect
- Ability to be alone without being lonely
- Ability to soothe and calm oneself

¹ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 126–130.

APPENDIX 7:

HOW GROWTH HAPPENS—A MODEL FOR COPING WITH TRAUMA¹

Principles involved in the process of personal growth in the aftermath of trauma:

Principle 1: Growth occurs when schemas are changed by traumatic events.

Principle 2: Certain assumptions are more resistant to disconfirmation by events, and therefore reduce possibilities for schema change and growth.

Principle 3: The reconstrual after trauma must include some positive evaluation for growth to occur.

Principle 4: Different types of events are likely to produce different types of growth.

Principle 5: Personality characteristics are related to possibility for growth.

Principle 6: Growth occurs when the trauma assumes a central place in the life story.

Principle 7: Wisdom is a product of growth.

¹ Tedeschi and Calhoun, *Trauma & Transformation*, 77–91.

APPENDIX 8:
GLOSSARY—DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

1. **Adaptive Rumination:** a feature of making the crisis manageable and comprehensible, as well as giving it meaning.¹
2. **Assumptive World:** the assumptions or beliefs that ground, secure, or orient people, that give a sense of reality, meaning, or purpose to life.²
3. **Attachment:** a biologically based system oriented toward seeking protection and maintaining proximity to the attachment figure in response to real or perceived threat or danger.³
4. **Cognitive Conservatism:** deriving from our need for stability and coherence, a tendency to be heavily biased toward and to preserve already-established beliefs and resistant to change. This is strongest at the deepest levels of our assumptive worlds.⁴
5. **Cognitive Distortions:** a category of automatic thinking usually involving one of several types of distortions, which create dysfunctional or exaggerated positive and/or negative assessments of self, the world, others.⁵
6. **Cognitive Flexibility:** the facility to switch cognitive sets, rather than to remain paralyzed in rigid adherence to a single, limited cognitive set which cannot address the individual's current problem-solving needs.⁶
7. **Cognitive Strategies:** the means by which survivors facilitate the reconstruction process involving reevaluation and appraisal to maximize benevolence in the

¹ Tedeschi and Calhoun, *Trauma & Transformation*, 60.

² Kauffman, *Loss of the Assumptive World*.

³ Robert T. Muller, *Trauma and the Avoidant Client: Attachment-Based Strategies for Healing* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

⁴ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 26–27, 43.

⁵ Fine, *A Mind of Its Own*, 79–104.

⁶ John P. Dennis and Jillon S. Vander Wal, “The Cognitive Flexibility Inventory: Instrument Development and Estimates of Reliability and Validity,” *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 34, no. 3 (2010): 241, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-009-9276-4>.

world, meaning, and self-worth, while minimizing the differences between prior positive assumptions and negative assumptions implied by trauma.⁷

8. **Complexity Theory:** an approach to dynamic mental processes that assumes the brain achieves optimal complexity by balancing the differentiation (specialization) of components with the integration of components. In experiential terms, complexity flows between boredom and anxiety.⁸
9. **Constructivist Thinking:** the constructivist perspective is founded on the idea that humans actively create and construe their personal realities. The basic assertion of constructivism is that each individual creates his or her own representational model of the world.⁹
10. **Dialectic of Trauma:** the conflict between the will to deny and the will to proclaim aloud.¹⁰
11. **Dissociation:** the loss of capacity to integrate the memory of overwhelming life events¹¹ often thought to be a defensive and self-protective response to trauma.¹²
12. **Flashback:** the experience of reliving a moment or part of the past through vivid images and often terrifying emotions; the individual is immersed without awareness that it is the past.¹³
13. **Hyperarousal:** a physiological and psychological response to extreme threat that prepares an organism to respond with fight or flight responses.¹⁴
14. **Information Processing:** a two-mode system within the brain, one higher or more flexible and the other lower and more inflexible. With unresolved trauma, it

⁷ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 117.

⁸ Solomon and Siegel, *Healing Trauma*, 5.

⁹ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 14.

¹⁰ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹² Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 102.

¹³ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 30.

¹⁴ Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions*, 65.

is likely that an individual might be dominated by intense emotions and less capable of regulating them.¹⁵

15. **Self-Organizing Behavior:** an assumption of complexity theory that sees brains as a complex system tending to move toward states of maximum complexity. As they move toward complexity, they travel a trajectory between chaos and rigidity to achieve the most stable, flexible, and adaptive state.¹⁶
16. **Schema:** organized elements of past reactions and experience that form a relatively cohesive and persistent body of knowledge capable of guiding subsequent perceptions and appraisals.¹⁷
17. **Trauma Narratives:** a term coming from multiple approaches denoting an idiographic attribution of meaning, and seen as a place for recovering dignity, processing memories, repair, and reconstruction.¹⁸

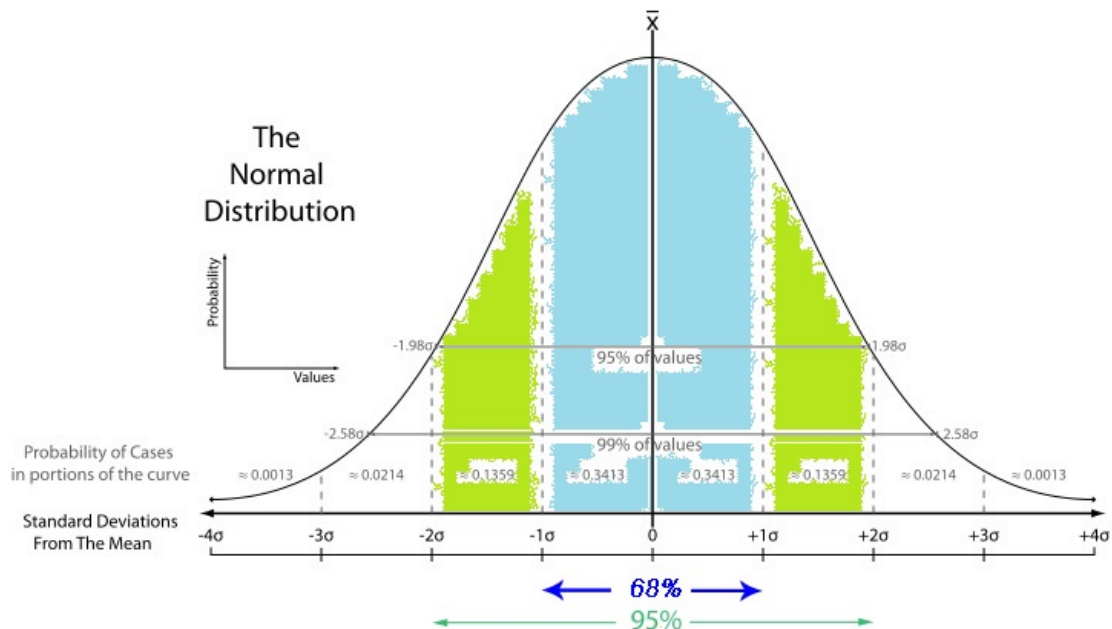
¹⁵ Solomon and Siegel, *Healing Trauma*, 51.

¹⁶ Solomon and Siegel, *Healing Trauma*, 317.

¹⁷ McCann and Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor*, 57.

¹⁸ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 176–181.

APPENDIX 9: NORMAL DISTRIBUTION CURVE



1

Figure 9.1. A Normal Distribution Curve illustrating deviance or what is considered abnormal.

The blue area represents what is normal and includes 68% of cases or occurrences, which will be within one standard deviation from the mean. What is less normal is represented by the green color, which includes 95% of cases or occurrences, which will be within two standard deviations from the mean. Anything outside of these areas is considered deviant or abnormal.

¹ David R. Beach, *The Normal Distribution Curve - 3 W Color*, April 24, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0BymHEJGMYYfWaM04yZjlvaDI6OE0>.

APPENDIX 10:
ARTISTS AND SUFFERING



Figure 10.1. Edvard Munch - *Death in the Sickroom*²



Figure 10.2. Edvard Munch – *By the Death Bed*³

² Edvard Munch, *Death in the Sickroom*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.edvard-munch.com/gallery/death/deathInSickroom.htm>.

³ Edvard Munch, *By the Deathbed*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.edvard-munch.com/gallery/death/deathbed.htm>.



Figure 10.3. Edvard Munch – the *Dead Mother and Child*⁴



Figure 10.4. David R Beach – *Posture #1: Faith Against Suffering*⁵

⁴ Edvard Munch, *The Dead Mother and Child*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.edvard-munch.com/gallery/death/deadMother&child.htm>.

⁵ David R. Beach, "Posture #1: Faith Against Suffering," in "LSF1_Beach_Dave_CannonBeach_2017revised.pptx," accessed April 25, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1x6NJSYpe8vZkJWNHJ5T1E2ZlU>. Adaptation of *Superman Throws Cross*, accessed April 25, 2017, http://www.adherents.com/lit/comics/image/Superman_throws_cross.jpg.

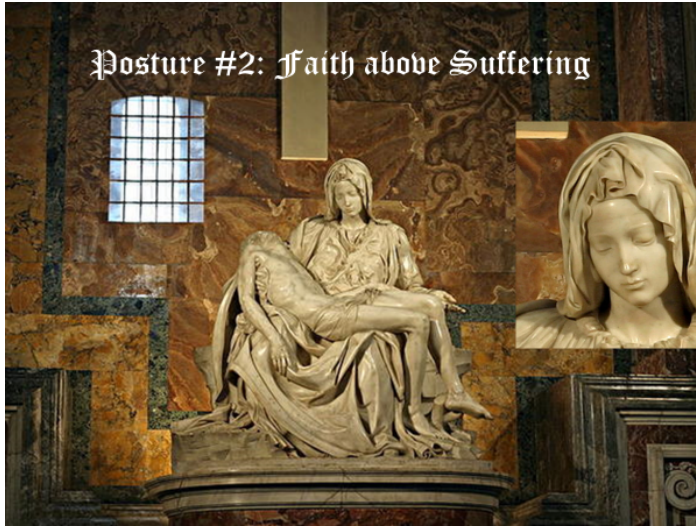


Figure 10.5. David R. Beach – *Posture #2: Faith Above Suffering*⁶

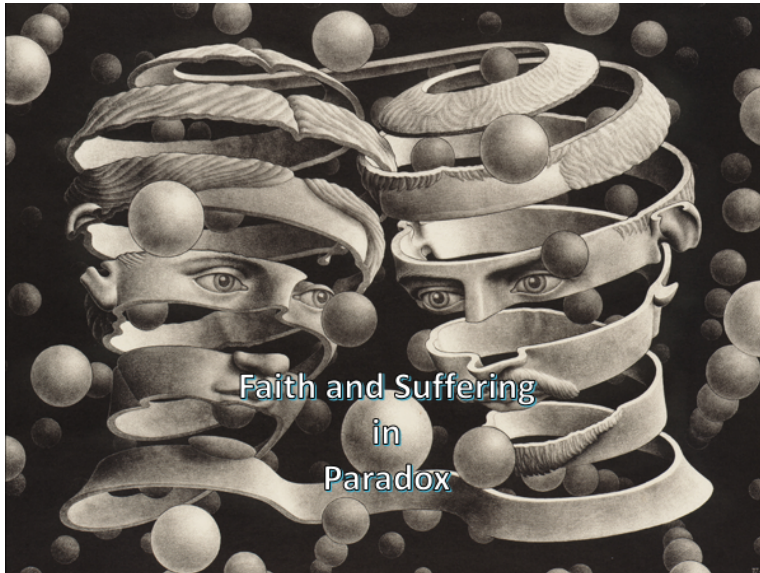


Figure 10.6. David R. Beach – *Posture #3: Faith and Suffering in Paradox*⁷

⁶ David R. Beach, “Posture #2: Faith Above Suffering,” in “LSF1_Beach_Dave_CannonBeach_2017revised.pptx,” accessed April 25, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1x6NJSYpe8vZkJWNHJ5T1E2ZlU>. Adaptation of Michelangelo’s *The Pietà* (1498–1499), accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/how-a-forged-sculpture-boosted-michelangelos-early-career>.

⁷ David R. Beach, “Posture #3: Faith and Suffering in Paradox,” in “LSF1_Beach_Dave_CannonBeach_2017revised.pptx,” accessed April 25, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1x6NJSYpe8vZkJWNHJ5T1E2ZlU>. Adaptation of M. C. Escher’s *Bond of Union*, accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=36291>.



Figure 10.7. David R. Beach – *Posture #4: Faith Equals Suffering*⁸



Figure 10.8. David R. Beach – *Posture #5: Suffering Transforms Faith*⁹

⁸ David R. Beach, "Posture #4: Faith Equals Suffering," in "LSF1_Beach_Dave_CannonBeach_2017revised.pptx," accessed April 25, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1x6NJSYpe8vZkJWNHJ5T1E2ZlU>. Adaptation of Rick Rhay's *Loneliest Pew*, accessed April 25, 2017, <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/loneliest-pew-rick-rhay.html>.

⁹ David R. Beach, "Posture #5: Suffering Transforms Faith," in "LSF1_Beach_Dave_CannonBeach_2017revised.pptx," accessed April 25, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1x6NJSYpe8vZkJWNHJ5T1E2ZlU>. Adaptation of Nicholas of Haguenau's and Matthias Grunewald's - *Isenheim Altarpiece* (1512–1516), accessed April 25, 2017, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/81/Grunewald_Isenheim1-8.jpg.



Figure 10.9. Edvard Munch – *Anxiety*¹⁰

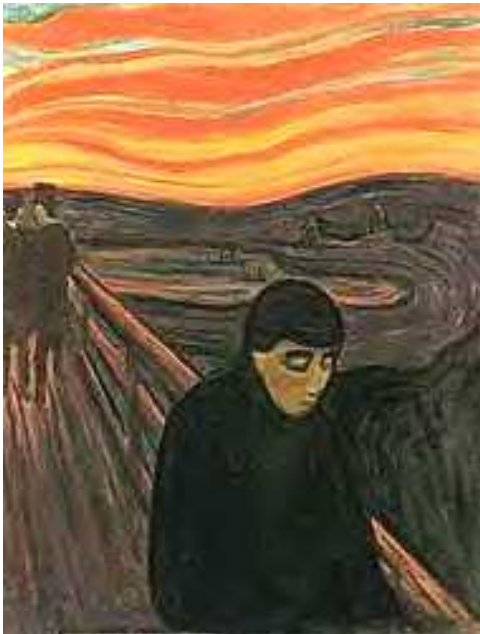


Figure 10.10. Edvard Munch—*Despair*¹¹

¹⁰ Edvard Munch, *Anxiety*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.edvard-munch.com/gallery/anxiety/anxiety.htm>.

¹¹ Edvard Munch, *Despair*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.edvard-munch.com/gallery/anxiety/despair.htm>.



Figure 10.11. Edvard Munch—the *Scream*¹²

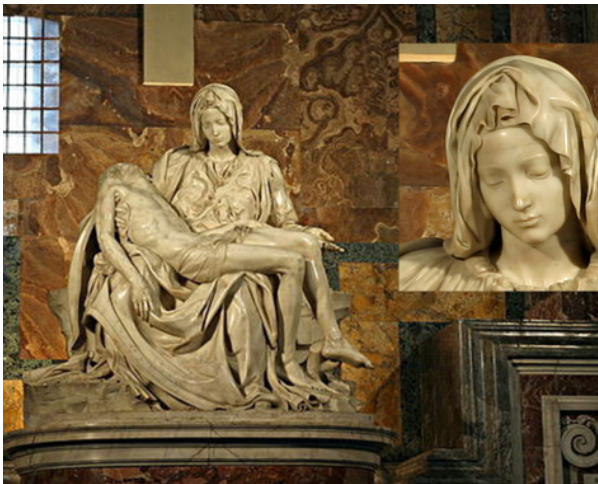


Figure 10.12. Michelangelo—*The Pieta* (1498-1499)¹³

¹² Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.edvard-munch.com/gallery/anxiety/scream.htm>.

¹³ Michelangelo, *Pieta Rondanini* (1552-1562) Adaptation of Michelangelo's *The Pieta* (1498–1499), accessed April 25, 2017,



Figure 10.13. Michelangelo—*Pieta Rondanini* (1552-1564)¹⁴

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3c/Pieta_Rondanini.jpg<http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/how-a-forged-sculpture-boosted-michelangelos-early-career>.

¹⁴ Michelangelo, *Pieta Rondanini* (1552-1562/1562), accessed April 25, 2017, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3c/Pieta_Rondanini.jpg.



Figure 10.14. Michelangelo—*Pieta Rondanini* (1552-1564)¹⁵

¹⁵ Michelangelo, *Pieta Rondanini* (1552-1564), accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.crossingitaly.net/travel/290/the-pieta-rondanini-by-michelangelo-buonarroti-in-milan/>.



Figure 10.15. Rick Beerhorst—*Imitation of Christ*¹⁶

¹⁶ Rick Beerhorst, *Imitation of Christ*, on “Worship,” at Calvin College, accessed April 16, 2017, <http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/faith-formation-what-s-the-trouble-with-moralism-/>.

APPENDIX 11:

REQUIEM

Not under foreign skies
Nor under foreign wings protected -
I shared all this with my own people
There, where misfortune had abandoned us.
[1961]

INSTEAD OF A PREFACE

During the frightening years of the Yezhov terror, I
spent seventeen months waiting in prison queues in
Leningrad. One day, somehow, someone “picked me out.”
On that occasion there was a woman standing behind me,
her lips blue with cold, who, of course, had never in
her life heard my name. Jolted out of the torpor
characteristic of all of us, she said into my ear
(everyone whispered there)—“*Could one ever describe
this?*” And I answered—“*I can.*” *It was then that
something like a smile slid across what had previously
been just a face.* [emphasis added]

[The 1st of April in the year 1957. Leningrad] ¹

—Anna Ahkmatova

¹ Akhmatova, *Selected Poems*, 87. The Yezhov Terror was allegedly the worst of Stalin’s Bloody Purges. Her son was taken during the purge, and she visited nearly every day trying to discover something of his life and condition.

APPENDIX 12:

VIEWS OF SUFFERING SCALE (VOSS)²

Amy Hale-Smith, Crystal L. Park, & Donald E. Edmondson

Instructions: For each of the following statements, circle the choice that best indicates the extent of your belief or disbelief.

(1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *moderately disagree*, 3 = *mildly disagree*, 4 = *mildly agree*, 5 = *moderately agree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Please use “God” however your faith defines God or a higher power.

1. God could prevent evil and/or suffering from happening, but God chooses not to because God isn't entirely good.
2. God is all-good and all-powerful, but God is not obligated to relieve suffering.
3. No one knows why bad things happen to good people; it's all pretty random.
4. The most important thing when we experience hard things is to keep asking God questions, even if we don't understand the answers.
5. The main obstacle to God preventing suffering is that God doesn't know when it will happen.
6. Individuals suffer because of their deeds in the past.
7. By praying and having faith we can take control over suffering.
8. When we suffer, God is suffering along with us.
9. Suffering is intended by God to be a source of personal growth.
10. Everything that we experience – including suffering – is planned in detail by God.
11. God allows suffering because God is not all-loving.
12. Suffering happens randomly, not because of anything people have done wrong.
13. We shouldn't resist suffering because God has planned every detail of our experiences – even the bad ones.
14. God is all-powerful and can change situations to alleviate suffering.
15. We know God is good in the midst of pain because God suffers with us.
16. Karma is the best explanation for individuals' suffering.
17. God will stop our suffering if we pray and have faith.
18. The most important thing to remember about human suffering is that God is above and beyond it all; we might never get answers to our questions.
19. We suffer because God wants us to become a better people through experiencing hard things.
20. There's no need to strive against suffering because God will ultimately control everything we experience.
21. When we suffer, God does God's best within chosen boundaries.
22. God's primary role when we encounter suffering is to experience it with us.
23. Suffering just happens without purpose or underlying reason.
24. We know that God is not all-good because there is suffering in the world.
25. Suffering is a way to encounter a God who is above and beyond human experience and comprehension.
26. God cares about people who are suffering, but can't protect them because God doesn't know in advance what will happen.
27. People can stop or get out of their experiences of suffering by praying.
28. God intends suffering to be a catalyst for growth.
29. The main impediment to God protecting people from suffering is that God doesn't know when or how it will happen.

² Amy Hale-Smith, Crystal L. Park, and Donald Edmondson, “Views of Suffering Scale,” (American Psychological Association, August 13, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1037/t14551-000>.

30. Individuals experience suffering as a result of their past wrongdoing.

VOSS SCORING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Individual subscales should be summed, yielding a total of ten scores that can be examined separately.
- Subscale scores can range from 3 (strong disagreement) to 18 (strong agreement).
- Sums of individual subscales should never be combined to create a single omnibus score.
- All subscales may be used, or individual subscales may be selected if the researcher believes that only certain ones will be relevant to the population of interest.

SUBSCALE LISTING: Below are the individual items with subscale titles indicated in parentheses. Titles (e.g., *Unorthodox*) are for reference only and should not be visible to participants. (Use the version on p. 1 of this document, with the instructions attached).

1. God could prevent evil and/or suffering from happening, but God chooses not to because God isn't entirely good. (*Unorthodox*)
2. God is all-good and all-powerful, but God is not obligated to relieve suffering. (*Divine Responsibility*)
3. No one knows why bad things happen to good people; it's all pretty random. (*Random*)
4. The most important thing when we experience hard things is to keep asking God questions, even if we don't understand the answers. (*Encounter*)
5. The main obstacle to God preventing suffering is that God doesn't know when it will happen. (*Limited Knowledge*)
6. Individuals suffer because of their deeds in the past. (*Retribution*)
7. By praying and having faith we can take control over suffering. (*Overcoming*)
8. When we suffer, God is suffering along with us. (*Suffering God*)
9. Suffering is intended by God to be a source of personal growth. (*Soul-Building*)
10. Everything that we experience – including suffering – is planned in detail by God. (*Providence*)
11. God allows suffering because God is not all-loving. (*Unorthodox*)
12. Suffering happens randomly, not because of anything people have done wrong. (*Random*)
13. We shouldn't resist suffering because God has planned every detail of our experiences – even the bad ones. (*Providence*)
14. God is all-powerful and can change situations to alleviate suffering. (*Divine Responsibility*)
15. We know God is good in the midst of pain because God suffers with us. (*Suffering God*)
16. Karma is the best explanation for individuals' suffering. (*Retribution*)
17. God will stop our suffering if we pray and have faith. (*Overcoming*)
18. The most important thing to remember about human suffering is that God is above and beyond it all; we might never get answers to our questions. (*Encounter*)
19. We suffer because God wants us to become better people through experiencing hard things. (*Soul-Building*)
20. There's no need to strive against suffering because God will ultimately control everything we experience. (*Providence*)
21. When we suffer, God does God's best within chosen boundaries. (*Divine Responsibility*)
22. God's primary role when we encounter suffering is to experience it with us. (*Suffering God*)
23. Suffering just happens without purpose or underlying reason. (*Random*)
24. We know that God is not all-good because there is suffering in the world. (*Unorthodox*)
25. Suffering is a way to encounter a God who is above and beyond human experience and comprehension. (*Encounter*)
26. God cares about people who are suffering, but can't protect them because God doesn't know in advance what will happen. (*Limited Knowledge*)
27. People can stop or get out of their experiences of suffering by praying. (*Overcoming*)
28. God intends suffering to be a catalyst for growth. (*Soul-Building*)
29. The main impediment to God protecting people from suffering is that God doesn't know when or how it will happen. (*Limited Knowledge*)
30. Individuals experience suffering as a result of their past wrongdoing. (*Retribution*)

VOSS ITEMS GROUPED BY SCALE:

****(for reference only, not to be distributed to participants in this format)****

Unorthodox

1. God could prevent evil and/or suffering from happening, but God chooses not to because God isn't entirely good.
2. God allows suffering because God is not all-loving.
3. We know that God is not all-good because there is suffering in the world.

Random

1. No one knows why bad things happen to good people; it's all pretty random.
2. Suffering happens randomly, not because of anything people have done wrong.
3. Suffering just happens without purpose or underlying reason.

Retribution

1. Individuals suffer because of their deeds in the past.
2. Karma is the best explanation for individuals' suffering.
3. Individuals experience suffering as a result of their past wrongdoing.

Limited Knowledge

1. The main obstacle to God preventing suffering is that God doesn't know when it will happen.
2. God cares about people who are suffering, but can't protect them because God doesn't know in advance what will happen.
3. The main impediment to God protecting people from suffering is that God doesn't know when or how it will happen.

Suffering God

1. When we suffer, God is suffering along with us.
2. We know God is good in the midst of pain because God suffers with us.
3. God's primary role when we encounter suffering is to experience it with us.

Providence

1. Everything that we experience – including suffering – is planned in detail by God.
2. We shouldn't resist suffering because God has planned every detail of our experiences – even the bad ones.
3. There's no need to strive against suffering because God will ultimately control everything we experience.

Divine Responsibility

1. God is all-powerful and can change situations to alleviate suffering.
2. When we suffer, God does God's best within chosen boundaries.
3. God is all-good and all-powerful, but God is not obligated to relieve suffering.

Encounter

1. The most important thing when we experience hard things is to keep asking God questions, even if we don't understand the answers.
2. The most important thing to remember about human suffering is that God is above and beyond it all; we might never get answers to our questions.
3. Suffering is a way to encounter a God who is above and beyond human experience and comprehension.

Overcoming

1. By praying and having faith we can take control over suffering.
2. God will stop our suffering if we pray and have faith.

3. People can stop or get out of their experiences of suffering by praying.

Soul-Building

1. Suffering is intended by God to be a source of personal growth.
2. We suffer because God wants us to become a better people through experiencing hard things.
3. God intends suffering to be a catalyst for growth.

APPENDIX 13:

POSTURES OF FAITH TOWARD SUFFERING SCALE (POFTSS)

BY DAVID R. BEACH

For each of the following statements, fill in the blank with the choice that best reflects your belief.

- | | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
|----------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| | <i>strongly disagree</i> | <i>moderately disagree</i> | <i>mildly disagree</i> | <i>neither agree
nor disagree</i> | <i>mildly agree</i> | <i>moderately agree</i> | <i>strongly agree</i> |
| 1. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 2. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 3. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 4. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 5. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 6. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 7. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 8. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 9. ____ | | | | | | | |
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| 12. ____ | | | | | | | |
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| 27. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 28. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 29. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 30. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 31. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 32. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 33. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 34. ____ | | | | | | | |
| 35. ____ | | | | | | | |

Postures and subscales grouped for scoring and reference only.

*******Not to be distributed to participants*******

Faith Averse to Suffering

- ___ 2. If people would do what God requires, they would avoid pain and suffering.
- ___ 27. God will relieve our suffering if we pray and have faith
- ___ 29. Jesus came to provide abundant life, so when we suffer, we are not experiencing the life Jesus came to give us.
- ___ 30. When something bad happens in my life, my first thought is usually, "What did I do wrong to deserve this?"
- ___ 31. Suffering is God's judgment for sin, so if someone is suffering, usually it is because someone sinned.

___ Total

Faith Transcending Suffering

- ___ 6. If people would just focus more on God, they would have more joy and peace during times of suffering.
- ___ 10. When something bad happens in my life, I try to remember that I can pray, and God will help me rise above it.
- ___ 14. Jesus came to provide a way for us to transcend our suffering by remembering we have a hope of a better life.
- ___ 15. We can take control of our suffering by praying and having faith that God will help us.
- ___ 19. Times of suffering happen to everyone, but people who believe in Jesus can overcome suffering with faith.

___ Total

Faith Equated with Suffering

- ___ 1. Becoming a believer in Jesus means accepting a life of suffering, because suffering goes along with a life of faith.
- ___ 11. Having faith in Jesus means we will suffer because of our faith.
- ___ 13. Jesus' life is an example of how a life of faith is equivalent to a life of suffering.
- ___ 16. Christian believers experience suffering as a result of following Jesus.
- ___ 33. When suffering occurs in my life, I accept it because, like Jesus, I must learn obedience.

___ Total

Faith and Suffering in Paradoxical Tension

- ___ 4. People would not be so distraught during hard times if they could remember that even in sorrow there can be joy.
- ___ 22. Joy and sorrow are both a part of life at some time. When we suffer, we should just wait for better days.
- ___ 28. Having faith in Jesus does not exempt us from the joys or the pains of earthly life.
- ___ 34. Jesus' life shows us that a life of obedience and faith requires suffering.
- ___ 35. When something bad happens in my life, I try to remember, like Job, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away."

___ Total

Faith Transformed by Suffering

- ___ 3. God subjected all creation to suffering, and, like us, creation will experience transformation through it.
- ___ 7. Suffering transforms faith because God uses it to make us more like Jesus.
- ___ 17. God intends suffering to be a catalyst for growth.
- ___ 23. Jesus' life shows us that suffering transforms faith.
- ___ 25. When I suffer, I recall that only through suffering can I be formed into the image of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.
- ___ Total

Suffering God vs. Impassible God

- ___ 9. God's primary role when we encounter suffering is to experience it with us.
- ___ 12. Because God loves creation, God suffers when creation suffers.
- ___ 20. Jesus' suffering shows us a loving God who suffers for us and with us.
- ___ 24. When we suffer, God suffers with us.
- ___ 32. God's goodness can be seen during our suffering because, in the midst of pain, God suffers with us.
- ___ Total

Foreordination vs. Divine Limitations

- ___ 5. God controls everything we experience, so we need not protest against suffering.
- ___ 8. God plans every detail of our lives, including suffering.
- ___ 18. When we suffer, we should remember that God has provided everything we need.
- ___ 21. Jesus' life shows us how to be submitted to God's providence, even during times of suffering.
- ___ 26. When we struggle against suffering, we might be resisting what God has planned for our lives.
- ___ Total

APPENDIX 14:

BIBLICAL PARALLELS FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

BIBLICAL PARALLELS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION: THE LIFE OF ISRAEL, JESUS AND THE CHURCH/DISCIPLE(S)			
EVENTS/THEMES	Israel	Jesus	Church/Disciples
1. BIRTH AND YOUTH			
ANNUNCIATION	Abrahamic Covenant Gen. 12 & 15	To Joseph – Matt. 1:20-21 To Mary – Luke 1:26-38 To Elizabeth – Luke 1:41-45 To the shepherds – Luke 2:9-12 To Simeon – Luke 2:25-32	Prophesied in Hosea 1:10 Joel 2:28-29 et al.
MIRACULOUS BIRTH	Birth of Isaac – Gen. 18:11/21:2 Birth of Jacob – Gen. 25:21 Birth of Joseph – Gen. 30:22-24 Birth of Samuel – 1 Sam. 1	Luke 2:1-7	John 1:12; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 3:1-2
CIRCUMCISION	Gen. 17:1-14	Luke 2:21-39	Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:10-12
ATTEMPTED MURDER BY AN ENEMY	Moses by Pharaoh – Exod. 1:22	By Herod – Matt. 2:13-18	1 Pet. 5:8
PROTECTED BY GOD	Moses – Exod. 2:1-10 Israel – 1 Chron. 16:19-22	Matt. 2:13	John 17:12
CALLED OUT OF EGYPT – “MY SON”	The Exodus – Exod. 4:22	Matt. 2:15	Egypt as slavery – Gal. 5:1
ALIEN AND STRANGER	Exod. 6:4; 21:22	2:1-12	1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11
WORK INTRODUCED BY A PROPHET WHO DIES		John the Baptist – John 1:29-34	John 14:12-13
SEED OF ABRAHAM	Isa. 41:8; Gal. 3:16	Gal. 3:16	Gal. 3:7-9, 29; Js. 1:1
2. BAPTISM			
BAPTISM	Baptized unto Moses – Exod. 14:21-31 (1 Cor. 10:2)	Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; 1 Cor. 10:2	Rom. 6:3
HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDS	Isa. 42:1-4; Isa. 44:3; Isa. 59:21 Led by Fire/Cloud	Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:22	Luke 3:16; Luke 11:13; John 20:22; Fire descends at Pentecost – Acts 2:1-3
BELOVED SON/SERVANT	Isa. 42:1-4	Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Mark 9:7; Luke 3:22; Luke 9:35	Luke 17:10; (Servants to Friends) John 15:15; Acts 2:18; Rom. 8:15 1 Cor. 4:1-5; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:5 1 John 3:2
3. WILDERNESS - TEMPTATION			
WILDERNESS	40 YEARS – A year per day of spying Nu. 14:34; Ez. 4:6	40 DAYS – Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13 Led by the Spirit	A promise remains of entering rest – Heb. 4:1-11
FASTING, HUNGER, AND THIRST	Deut. 8:2-3; Deut. 8:15	Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13	Matt. 5:6
FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT OF GOD	Israel Cloud/Fire	40 DAYS – Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13 Led by the Spirit Christ caught up in a cloud; returns in the clouds	Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; Matt. 24:30; 26:64 Mark 13:26; 14:62; 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Thess. 5:19; Rev. 1:7
TEMPTATION/TESTING/TRIAL	Deut. 4:34; Deut. 8:2; Deut. 13:3	40 DAYS – Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13	John 16:33; Js. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6
4. CALLING			
CLEANSING THE TEMPLE	2 Chron. 29:3-17; Isa. 56:7	John 2:13-25 (2 nd time); Matt. 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-46	1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:21
CALL OF THE TWELVE/ COMMISSIONING	Josh. 3:9-4:9	Matt. 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16	Matt. 28:18-20
INAUGURAL SERMONS & EXTENDED DISCOURSE	Giving of the Law at Sinai – Exod. 19-20	Sermon on the Mt. (site unknown) – Matt. 5:1-7:29; Luke 6:17-49 Olivet discourse (Mt. of Olives) –	Peter – Acts 2 Stephen – Acts 7 Paul – Acts 13

BIBLICAL PARALLELS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION: THE LIFE OF ISRAEL, JESUS AND THE CHURCH/DISCIPLE(S)			
EVENTS/THEMES	Israel	Jesus	Church/Disciples
	Blessings & Curses on Mts. Gerizim & Ebal – Deut. 11:29	Matt. 24; Mark 14; Luke 21	
HEALING THE SICK & RAISING THE DEAD	The man of God and Jeroboam's hand – 1 Kings 13:6 Naaman – 2 Kings 5:1-14 Elijah and the Zarephath widow's son – 1 Kings 17:17-24 Elisha and the Shunammite woman's son – 2 Kings 4:32-35	Multiple healings of many diseases – (var.) Raising the dead: Lazarus – John 11:38-44 Jairus' daughter – Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8 Widow's son – Luke 7:12-15	Acts 5:15-16; Acts 19:11-12
TRANSFIGURATION	Moses – Exod. 34:29-35	Matt. 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36	2 Cor. 3:12-18
KINGDOM OF PRIESTS AND HOLY NATION	Exod. 19:6	High Priest – Heb. 4:14-16	1 Pet. 2:9
5. PASSION AND DEATH			
ATTEMPTED MURDER BY AN ENEMY	Abel murdered by Cain – Gen. 4:8 Esau plot to murder Jacob – Gen. 27:41 Joseph by his brothers – Gen. 37:18-20 Saul tries to kill David – 1 Sam. 19 Absalom tries to kill David – 2 Sam. 16 Solomon tries to kill Jeroboam – 1 Kings 11:40 Jezebel tries to kill Elijah – 1 Kings 19:2 Haman plots to kill the Jews – Esther 3 People of Anathoth plot to kill Jeremiah – Jer. 11:21	The Pharisees – Matt. 12:14 Jewish Leaders in Jerusalem – Luke 19:47 Pharisees and Herodians in Galilee – Mark 3:6 Chief priests and teachers of the Law – Matt. 26:4; Mark 11:18; 14:1; John 5:18 Jewish leaders in Judea – John 7:1 Temple leaders-attempted stoning – John 8:37-40 Chief priests and Pharisees of the Sanhedrin – John 11:53	Jesus predicts the death of some he will send – Matt. 23:34; Luke 11:49; John 16:2 Jesus predicts Peter's death – John 21:18 Trials alluded to in Jesus' comments – Mark 13:11 & Luke 12:11 The Sanhedrin stones Stephen – Acts 7:57-60 The Jews in Damascus plot to kill Saul (Paul) – Acts 9:23-24 The Jews in Jerusalem plot to kill Saul (Paul) – Acts 9:29 Rioters in Jerusalem try to kill Paul – Acts 21:31 The chief priests and elders plot along with a conspiracy of over 40 in Jerusalem to kill Paul – Acts 23:12-15 The chief priests and elders plan an ambush to kill Paul – Acts 25:3
“DRINKING THE CUP” GETHSEMANE/BETRAYAL/SOLD FOR SILVER ABANDONMENT/FORSAKENESS ARREST/DENIAL ACCUSATIONS/MOCKING ABUSE/TRIALS CRUCIFIXION/DEATH	Joseph sold – Gen. 37:28 Ps. 22:1; Isa. 2:6; Isa. 54:7; Jer. 12:73 Lam. 1:2, 19; Micah 5:	Jesus sold – Matt. 26:15, 27:9 Matt. 26:36-27:50 Mark 14:26-72; 15:34 Luke 22:39-23:46 John 18:1-23	Gal. 2:19-20 Fellowship of his sufferings – Phil. 3:10 Col. 1:24
6. BURIAL			
BURIAL	Ezek. – 3 days in the whale – Jon. 1:17	Matt. 12:38-41; Matt. 16:4; Luke 11:29-32	Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:1
EXILE/DIASPORA	Northern Kingdom-Assyria – 2 Kings 17 Southern Kingdom-Babylon – 2 Kings 24 Jeremiah; Ez.; Amos 5 & 7; et al.	Luke 27:57-61; John 23:50-56	1 Pet. 2:11
7. RESURRECTION			
RESURRECTION	An unnamed Israelite's dead body touches Elisha's bones and comes to life. – 2 Kings 13:21 The idea of resurrection – Isa. 26:19; Job 19:25-26 Jonah “vomited out” – Jon. 2:1-10	The angel announces (2x) “He is risen” – Matt. 28:5-7; Luke 24:3-8	Gentiles gathered – Isa. 56:8 We are raised with Christ – Rom. 6:4; 8:11; Col. 2:12; 3:1 The dead in Christ will be raised – 1 Cor. 4:14; 6:14 Raised up with Christ – Eph. 2:6

BIBLICAL PARALLELS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION: THE LIFE OF ISRAEL, JESUS AND THE CHURCH/DISCIPLE(S)			
EVENTS/THEMES	Israel	Jesus	Church/Disciples
	Exiles regathered from the four corners – Isa. 11:11-13; Ezekiel 37 & 39; Micah 4; Zephaniah 3 Judah returns from exile – Ezra and Nehemiah; Isa. 11:12; Amos 9 The Son of man raised up by Yahweh – Ps. 80:15-17 Many “holy people” raised at the moment of Jesus’ death – Matt. 27:51-53		
WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION		Jesus appears to witnesses chosen by God – Acts. 10:41 Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary mother of James – Matt. 28:1-10; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-10 Two traveling to Emmaus – Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32 The disciples – Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-48; John 19:20-25; 20:19-29 Stephen – Acts 7:55 Ananias – Acts 9:10 Paul – 1 Cor. 15:8	We are witnesses – Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32
8. ASCENSION			
“TAKEN UP” AND/OR “INTO THE CLOUDS”	Enoch – “God took him away” - Gen. 5:24 Moses – entered the cloud covering on Mt. Sinai - Exod. 24:15-18 Elijah – taken up in a chariot of fire and horses of fire - 2 Kings 2:11	Jesus – Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-12	Believers – 1 Thess. 4:17
9. IN THE HEAVENS – AT THE “RIGHT HAND”			
SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND RAISED UP AND SEATED WITH HIM	Right hand as Blessing – Gen. 48 as Power – Exod. 15:6-12; Ps. 20:6 as Salvation – Ps. 17:7; 18:35; 60:5; var. Asaph serves at Heman’s Right hand – 1 Chron. 6:39 The Son of man raised up by Yahweh – Ps. 80:17 The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” – Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:43-45	In heaven after the Ascension – Mark 16:19 Jesus before the chief priests and elders: “… From now on the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.” – Luke 22:69 Qtd. again by Jesus – Matt. 22:43-45; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42 By Peter – Acts 2:34 Exalted Prince and Savior of Israel – Acts 5:31 In Stephen’s Vision – Acts 7:55-56 (2x) Interceding for us – Rom. 8:34 Above everything – Eph. 1:19-21 Heir of all things/superior to the angels – Heb. 1:2-4, 13 As High Priest done with sacrificing – Heb. 8:1; 10:12 As a competitor finished with the race – Heb. 12:2 All authority and powers submissive to Him – 1 Pet. 3:22	We are raised up and seated with Him – Eph. 2:6
10. SENDING HIS SPIRIT			
	Elijah’s cloak: Elisha clothes himself with it – 2 Kings 2:13-14 Elijah’s spirit “rests on” Elisha –	As a dove at the Jesus’ Baptism	To as many as receive Him – John 1:12-13 Jesus breathes on his disciples – John 20:22 Baptism with the Spirit – Acts 1:5;

BIBLICAL PARALLELS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION: THE LIFE OF ISRAEL, JESUS AND THE CHURCH/DISCIPLE(S)			
EVENTS/THEMES	Israel	Jesus	Church/Disciples
SPIRIT “RESTING ON” AND “IN OUR HEARTS” AS ENABLEMENT/POWER	2 Kings 2:15 The spirit of Moses on the 70 elders for prophesying – Num. 11:25		Power to be witnesses – Acts 1:8 As promised - “tongues of fire” – Acts 2:4-38 We have the mind of Christ – 1 Cor. 2:16 We are to have the affections of Christ – Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8
11. GLORIOUS RETURN			
COMING ON THE CLOUDS	The glory of the LORD appears in a cloud – Exod. 16:10 The cloud covers the tent of meeting – Exod. 40 Cloud over the atonement cover – Lev. 16:2 Cloud over tent of meeting and glory fills the tabernacle – Exod. 40:34-36 “Clouds His chariot” – Ps. 104:3 Solomon’s Temple Dedication: in a cloud, the glory of the LORD fills the temple – 1 Kings 8:1- 12 In Daniel’s vision: “Like a Son of man” – Dan. 17:13	Son of man Prophecy: Power and Glory – Matt. 24:30 Power and Glory, Judgment and Mourning – Mark 13:26 “... all peoples on earth will mourn....” – Rev. 1:7	Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:14
12. RULING/ REIGNING			
RULING “SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND”	Bathsheba sits at the right hand of Solomon – 1 Kings 2:19	“Son of man” prophecy – Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62	Judging Israel – Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30 We will reign with Him – 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6

Figure 14.1. Biblical Parallels for Spiritual Formation.¹¹ Beach, “Touchpoints,” pt. 1.

APPENDIX 15:

COPY CHANGE—PSALM 88¹

The following Psalm is offered as an example of personalizing the Psalms for use in spiritual formation. A full copy of the Psalm is followed by another copy with figures of speech replaced with blanks. By filling in blanks with personalized language, the prayerful Psalm connects people with God in the midst of their suffering. An alternative copy using *The Message* follows this one from the NIV.

Psalm 88 – A Lament for Deep Grief

A maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.

- ¹ LORD, you are the God who saves me;
day and night I cry out to you.
- ² May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry.
- ³ I am overwhelmed with troubles
and my life draws near to death.
- ⁴ I am counted among those who go down to the pit;
I am like one without strength.
- ⁵ I am set apart with the dead,
like the slain who lie in the grave,
whom you remember no more,
who are cut off from your care.
- ⁶ You have put me in the lowest pit,
in the darkest depths.
- ⁷ Your wrath lies heavily on me;
you have overwhelmed me with all your waves.^[d]
- ⁸ You have taken from me my closest friends
and have made me repulsive to them.
I am confined and cannot escape;
- ⁹ my eyes are dim with grief.
I call to you, LORD, every day;
I spread out my hands to you.

¹ More Copy Change exercises using the Lament Psalms are available for download by emailing dave@soulseasons.org.

- ¹⁰ Do you show your wonders to the dead?
Do their spirits rise up and praise you?
- ¹¹ Is your love declared in the grave,
your faithfulness in Destruction^[a]?
- ¹² Are your wonders known in the place of darkness,
or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?
- ¹³ But I cry to you for help, LORD;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
- ¹⁴ Why, LORD, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?
- ¹⁵ From my youth I have suffered and been close to death;
I have borne your terrors and am in despair.
- ¹⁶ Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me.
- ¹⁷ All day long they surround me like a flood;
they have completely engulfed me.
- ¹⁸ You have taken from me friend and neighbor—
darkness is my closest friend.

Psalms 88 – A Lament for Deep Grief

A maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.

- ¹ LORD, you are the God who saves me;
day and night I cry out to you.
- ² May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry.
- ³ I am overwhelmed with _____
and my life _____.
- ⁴ I am counted among those who _____;
I am like one _____.
- ⁵ I am set apart with the dead,
like _____ who lie in the grave,
whom you remember no more,
who are cut off from your care.
- ⁶ You have put me in _____,
in the darkest depths.

- ⁷ Your wrath lies heavily on me;
you have overwhelmed me with _____.
- ⁸ You have taken from me _____
and have made me _____.
- I am confined and cannot escape;
⁹ my eyes are _____ with _____.
- I _____, LORD, every day;
I _____.
- ¹⁰ Do you show your wonders to the dead?
Do their spirits rise up and praise you?
- ¹¹ Is your love declared in _____,
your faithfulness in _____?
- ¹² Are your wonders known in _____,
or your righteous deeds in _____?
- ¹³ But I _____ for help, LORD;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
- ¹⁴ Why, LORD, do you _____ me
and _____ me?
- ¹⁵ From my youth I have _____ and been _____;
I have suffered _____ and am in despair.
- ¹⁶ _____ has swept over me;
_____ have destroyed me.
- ¹⁷ All day long they surround me like _____;
they have completely _____.
- ¹⁸ You have taken from me _____—
_____ is my closest friend.

Psalms 88 – A Lament for Deep Grief

An Alternative from *The Message* (MSG)

A Korah Prayer of Heman

88 ¹⁻⁹ GOD, you're my last chance of the day.
I spend the night on my knees before you.
Put me on your salvation agenda;
take notes on the trouble I'm in.

I've had my fill of trouble;
 I'm camped on the edge of hell.
 I'm written off as a lost cause,
 one more statistic, a hopeless case.
 Abandoned as already dead,
 one more body in a stack of corpses,
 And not so much as a gravestone—
 I'm a black hole in oblivion.
 You've dropped me into a bottomless pit,
 sunk me in a pitch-black abyss.
 I'm battered senseless by your rage,
 relentlessly pounded by your waves of anger.
 You turned my friends against me,
 made me horrible to them.
 I'm caught in a maze and can't find my way out,
 blinded by tears of pain and frustration.
⁹⁻¹² I call to you, GOD; all day I call.
 I wring my hands, I plead for help.
 Are the dead a live audience for your miracles?
 Do ghosts ever join the choirs that praise you?
 Does your love make any difference in a graveyard?
 Is your faithful presence noticed in the corridors of hell?
 Are your marvelous wonders ever seen in the dark,
 your righteous ways noticed in the Land of No Memory?
¹³⁻¹⁸ I'm standing my ground, GOD, shouting for help,
 at my prayers every morning, on my knees each daybreak.
 Why, GOD, do you turn a deaf ear?
 Why do you make yourself scarce?
 For as long as I remember I've been hurting;
 I've taken the worst you can hand out, and I've had it.
 Your wildfire anger has blazed through my life;
 I'm bleeding, black-and-blue.
 You've attacked me fiercely from every side,
 raining down blows till I'm nearly dead.
 You made lover and neighbor alike dump me;
 the only friend I have left is Darkness.

Psalm 88 – A Lament for Deep Grief

An Alternative from *The Message* (MSG)

A Korah Prayer of Heman

88 ¹⁻⁹ GOD, you're my last chance of the day.

I spend the night _____.

Put me on your salvation agenda;

take notes on _____.

I've had my fill of _____;

I'm camped on _____.

I'm written off as _____,

one more statistic, a hopeless case.

Abandoned as already dead,

one more body in a stack of corpses,

And not so much as a gravestone—

I'm a _____.

You've dropped me into _____,

sunk me in a pitch-black abyss.

I'm battered senseless by _____,

relentlessly pounded by _____.

You turned _____ against me,

made me _____ to them.

I'm caught in _____ and can't find my way out,

blinded by _____.

⁹⁻¹² I call to you, GOD; all day I call.

I _____, I plead for help.

Are the dead a live audience for _____?

Do ghosts ever join the choirs that praise you?

Does your love make any difference in _____?

Is your faithful presence noticed in the corridors of hell?

Are your marvelous wonders ever seen in the dark,

your righteous ways noticed in _____?

¹³⁻¹⁸ I'm standing my ground, GOD, shouting for help,
at my prayers every morning, on my knees each daybreak.
Why, GOD, do you _____?
Why do you _____?
For as long as I remember I've been _____;
I've taken the worst you can hand out, and _____.
Your _____ has blazed through my life;
I'm bleeding, _____.
You've attacked me fiercely from every side,
_____ till I'm nearly dead.
You made _____ and _____ alike _____ me;
the only friend I have left is Darkness.

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