

By Virtue of Imagination

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“The discipline of reality is nothing without the grace of imagination.

*—Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*¹*

This essay explores the dynamic links between experiences of impasse—when a government or a congregation or relationship has become stuck and can neither go forward nor retreat—and the imagination as a pastoral resource. When the need for institutional change meets resistance, religious communities experience impasse. When individual transformation is sidetracked by fear, the desired growth through formation and supervision may be thwarted. The biblical resource of lamentation appears as the graceful practice that can rescue believers from impasse and a mood of resentment, opening them to a future they have yet to imagine.

IMPASSE AND LAMENTATION AS A CRUCIBLE FOR IMAGINATION

In 2011, theologian Bradford Hinze published an essay that brilliantly exemplifies a method of pastoral theological reflection that incorporates the resource of imagination as an instance of impasse.² Hinze begins, as theological

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reflection must, by lifting up a specific experience of concern. First he acknowledges the communal experience of disappointment, dismay, and disarray that pervades the Catholic Church today—an experience that has arisen from a variety of sources, including the continuing clergy sexual abuse scandal, the roll-back of Vatican II reforms in liturgy, the intransigent resistance of Roman Catholic bishops to women in leadership roles in the Church, and the demeaning treatment of gay and lesbian members of the faith community.

Hinze names this experience one of impasse—a concept that includes “situations of oppression, prejudice, and ecclesial struggles for reform.”³ Impasse describes a communal experience in which a religious congregation or pastoral relationship is unable to move forward or return to its previous state. As a result, believers become stymied and disoriented. While this is a dreadful experience, it is also one of opportunity when an impasse serves as “a crucible for desire, reason, memory and imagination.”⁴ This is Hinze’s first hint of the role of imagination in theological reflection.

Hinze then identifies this experience at a deeper theological level: the impasse in which the church finds itself today can be viewed through the biblical lens of lamentation. Here Hinze rescues the current experience from isolation, uniting it with the tradition of lament in which the ancient Israelites lifted up their grief-stricken hearts to God, protesting their distress in loud complaint:

At its core, lament expresses the pain of unfulfilled aspirations or intentions. The reasons for pain may be limitations or failings, personal or collective, singular or compound, episodic or chronic; but whatever the cause (named or nameless, known or hidden from consciousness), the result is an ache, tension, rage, dissipation or energy, a numbness, all of which contribute to the state that Walter Brueggemann has aptly described as disorientation.⁵

Hinze acknowledges that the mood of desolation and lament may lead to destructive acts. “Laments can signal disorder and destructive dynamics at work in the Church.”⁶ Yet, he argues that this grieving may be the work of the Spirit, compelling us to examine and release aspects of our life of faith that no longer serve, that have hardened into unhealthy ways of following Christ. A time of impasse when “the social imaginary provided by ecclesial memory can be insufficient to address impasse and the signs of the times,” may become “a crucible of the imagination.”⁷

Impasse and Imagination

Impasse brings us to a halt and defeats our current mode of operation: rational analysis bogs down; planning techniques and corporate strategizing stall. The

mind and heart are forced to turn to the imagination, to the domain of intuition and symbols. Hinze suggests that this may be the ordinary path of finding our way through an impasse. This is part of the transformation that God works in our souls; we move from self-composure and control through the disorientation of losing our way, and then to new hope arising in the imagination.

Hinze turns to the imagination—a human capacity that is witnessed throughout the Scriptures but that has found little legitimacy in ecclesial circles. As a people of faith we have been here before. By joining contemporary distress to Biblical pain, we may be able to see “situations of lamentation as experiences of impasse (that) provide the fertile soil for the power of God to work in the imagination.”⁸ Grieving ways of believing and of organizing the Church that no longer work, a people may “find passage through the intense furnace of laments that will destroy idols and distorted views of the self and community as it transforms our memories and imagination in the work of God.”⁹

Having focused attention on the imagination, Hinze turns to questions of method. How are we “to make room...for individuals and communities to express their own laments about everyday ecclesial and social life?”¹⁰ Hinze writes of the need for “a theology and hermeneutic of lamentation as an indispensable facet in ecclesiological method and in our pastoral practices by means of synodal processes of discernment.”¹¹

Hinze, in his questioning about a method of reflection that might help a community of faith address its laments, phrases his inquiry in terms of “a public sphere.” How can theology “create a public space for the people of God” not just the descendants of the apostles, martyrs, and ascetics, but all the faithful—to speak up for themselves and voice their own laments? Are theologians, preachers, and bishops trained to attend in their pastoral practice to the living voice of the laments of the people of God?” He then rephrases his question: “is there a pastoral communal process for personal and communal laments to be articulated and heard in synods, dioceses, and parishes?”¹² For Hinze the imagination plays a crucial role in theological reflection. Yet questions remain: what is this interior resource and how does it function in a life of faith?

WHAT IS THE IMAGINATION?

We find ourselves with the peculiar capacity to reflect on times and places that do not exist. We can picture a future that is not yet; we are able to for-

give the past—a considerable feat of the imagination. The imagination is a curious capacity that anchors a moral and religious life.

Psychologists are researching the location of this evolved capacity in the brain. Evolutionary psychologist Daniel Gilbert writes: “The greatest achievement of the human brain is its ability to imagine objects and episodes that do not exist in the realm of the real, and it is this ability that allows us to think about the future. If nature has given us a greater gift, no one has named it.”¹³

Theologian Craig Dykstra writes, “The human imagination is the integrating process that provides linkages between ourselves and the world—and, within ourselves, between our bodies, minds and emotions, our very souls and spirits. It is by means of the imagination that we are able to come really to see and understand anything at all—even, in a sense, to see God.”¹⁴

Centuries before psychology appeared as an academic discipline Thomas Aquinas offered his estimation of the importance of imagination: “The image is the principle of our knowledge. It is that from which the intellectual activity begins, not as a passing stimulus, but as an enduring foundation. When the imagination is choked, so also is our theological knowledge.”¹⁵

We leave the last word to Paul Ricoeur. “Imagination can be described as a rule-governed form of invention” and “the power of re-describing reality.” More importantly, “faith is a living out of the figures of hope unleashed by the imagination.”¹⁶

RELIGIOUS FAITH: A WAY OF IMAGINING THE WORLD

Religious faith is a way of imagining the world. Recognizing that our world is sustained by a loving Creator who is present, yet invisible, requires a strong imagination. This is not to suggest that faith is a fantasy or a mere figment of the mind. It is to recognize that religious belief is a God-given ability to see the world in a particular and powerful way.

This has been the case since the beginning. When our religious ancestors, having escaped slavery in Egypt, found themselves lost in the desert some began to dream of “a land flowing with milk and honey.” This ideal existed first only in their imaginations, fevered perhaps by the heat of the desert, but it was a hope that became a reality.

The prophet Isaiah, troubled by the endless violence in his culture, imagined the possibility of another kind of life. He pictured a world where “swords are beaten into plows.” (2:4) This image arose against the evidence—then and now. This picture of a more peaceful world existed first only in his imagina-

tion. But once expressed, this hope has galvanized generations of Jews and Christians. The world we inhabit, with its arms industry and wars, does not support such fantasies. Yet peacemakers everywhere are encouraged by this dream, this hope. This remains a way of imagining a better world.

Perhaps the most dramatic exercise of the religious imagination appears in the gospel account of the two disciples, saddened by the death of Jesus, meeting the stranger as they returned to their home in Emmaus. This stranger reminds them that Jesus' death fit into the larger story of life through death that had always been a part of their religious heritage. Arriving at their destination, the two disciples invite the stranger to share their evening meal. There, in the breaking of the bread, they suddenly see in the stranger the face of the risen Christ. "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight." (Luke 24:31) *He vanished from their sight*. But in the precious, previous instant their imagination had seen a startling truth: the risen Christ appears in the face of every stranger, alien, homeless person. This story is cherished two thousand years later because we too have been blessed, at times, with this extraordinary vision.

Walter Brueggemann defines biblical revelation as "an act of faithful imagination that buoyantly and defiantly mediates a counter-world that is a wondrous demanding alternative to the world immediately and visibly at hand."¹⁷

Looking back at the three biblical stories, we can see considerable differences: the scene shifts from the desert with its deprivations, to warfare and weapons, then to a meal shared with strangers. Yet we see an important similarity: each is a kind of crisis: the danger of the desert; the horrors caused by warfare; the hesitance we have about who belongs at our table. The religious imagination seems to find its place most often in the midst of crisis. In periods of trouble, when our usual procedures of reflection—systematic scrutiny and confident rational analysis—falter, our consciousness turns to other resources in its repertoire. The imagination rises to the challenge, with its hopes and dreams, picturing other ways to live—a life of abundance beyond the desert, a period of peace when the armament industry goes bankrupt, a shared life that does not demand the distrust of outsiders.

The inner resource of imagination is the capacity to see past the ordinary and obvious to other possibilities half-hidden in the world around us. Imagination provides us with the ability to see through the present and the status quo and envision something else, something more, that God is preparing for us. Craig Dykstra's otherwise insightful reflection on the pastoral and ecclesial imagination neglects the subversive side of the imagination: its capacity

to see through structures, cultural and ecclesial, that are no longer graceful. His reflection pays too little attention to the dark side of the imagination and its potential bondage to either cultural or ecclesial idols.¹⁸ Before exploring means of cultivating the imagination as a virtue, we might recall a place in our religious past where this volatile resource played a powerful role.

RESURRECTING THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION

Remember not the former things; nor consider things of old.

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it spring forth, do you not perceive it?

—(Isaiah 43:18)

There is a special link binding prophets and the imagination. The charism of prophecy is to see anew, to see alternative ways to live. Prophets speak often from within the community of faith, challenging patterns of living that have become stagnant or unhealthy. Brueggemann describes this calling: “the vocation of the prophet was to keep alive the ministry of the imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing alternative futures to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one.”¹⁹ Religious faith is the peculiar capacity to imagine—often against the evidence—a world that is more loving and just.

Prophecy often arises in contexts of conflict. Prophets in ancient Israel would challenge the king’s way of doing things, or would rail against the community’s neglect of widows and orphans in their communities. Again Brueggemann: “the task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.”²⁰ Brueggemann speaks of “the royal consciousness” that dominates a society: the authoritative voice that demands how things are to be. The royal consciousness—in a nation or church—insists on orthodox procedures and counsels silence about other topics. The vocation of prophets often begins in resisting this orthodoxy and giving voice to a community’s grief and sorrow.

The prophet seeks to make visible and audible the distress that is simmering in the silence of many hearts. “The task of prophetic imagination and ministry is to bring to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know they are there.”²¹ The challenge here is to turn pain into prayer. This is an exercise in lamentation.

The gift of prophecy, in ancient days and today, is to allow a community of faith to see through the present. The present—with its demands and

duties—naturally absorbs our attention. And yet God is always calling us beyond the here and now. “Behold I am doing a new thing. Now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?” Often, of course, we are so invested in the present and the status quo that we do not perceive the “new thing.”

CULTIVATING THE VIRTUE OF IMAGINATION

If the imagination is so important in a life of faith, it would seem we need to develop this capacity. By cultivating this interior resource we open ourselves to the revelations that abound all around us. We grow in our faith. Yet the early history of the church theologians developed a distinct distrust of imagination. The dualism that dominated so much of traditional theological reflection—the human subject as divided soul from body, reason from emotion—dislodged passion and imagination from any positive place in a life of Christian virtue. This would be changed by Thomas Aquinas’ dramatic redefinition of the relation of virtue and passion. “If by passions we mean inordinate affections, as the Stoics held, then it is clear that perfect virtue is without passions. But if by passions we mean all movements of sense appetite, then it is plain that the moral virtues...cannot be without the passions; virtue produces orderly passions.”²²

Philosopher Roberto Unger, keying into this linkage of virtue and passion, explores the cardinal virtues of faith, hope, and love as “ennobling passions.” These passionate virtues “...appear as uninvited envoys from another world, resolving conflicts that seemed insoluble and breaking through frontiers that looked impassable. They have the force of surprise.”²³ These robust engagements have the power to *ennoble* our lives. Daring to entrust our lives to others, willing to expect blessings and healing, eager to extend our love even to those so different from ourselves—these risky actions render our lives more expansive and more generous.

For Unger, imagination plays a central role in the transforming aspect of these virtuous passions. The virtue of love matures only in “the imagination of otherness”²⁴—the recognition of the other person as a distinct reality and more than an object for my desire or utility. The virtue of hope (neither mere optimism nor escapist fantasy) abides in the imagining of God’s future. Aware of the force of society’s instructions of how we are to live, Unger argues that these pressures do not shape our hearts without remainder. There remains “the visionary imagination” ever ready to remind us of more generous ways to live and contribute to society.

The cultivation of imagination, a resource that is naturally volatile and easily disturbed, is no easy matter. Its healthy development can be defeated in a variety of ways. Depression or a cautiousness too well learned can shut down this interior resource. Routines, mindlessly followed, may numb our imagination until its native energy is squandered.

At the other extreme from a neutered imagination stands the compulsive imagination. When a person becomes obsessed with a concern, an ideal, or a fantasy, these may come to utterly absorb his imagination; the person is unable to think of anything else. Whether it is rage and the desire for revenge, whether it is a sexual fantasy that dominates the heart, whether it is a worry that will not subside, the imagination is made hostage to a repetitive, even addictive rumination. Obsessions and addictions hijack this interior resource so that it no longer serves the common good of the whole person. In our social lives, fundamentalism and racism wound our imagination, freezing it with stereotypes that leave us closed to new information about others. This demonizing of others leads, inevitably, away from compassion toward injustice and even violence.

A Bad Reputation Endures

Many Christians, taught to distrust their own imagination, continue to see it as a rogue faculty in the repertoire of human capacities. The bad reputation of the imagination has arisen from three convictions: imagination inflames passions (sex and violence); imagination distorts reality (fantasy and illusion); and imagination unsettles orthodox religious beliefs.

Erotic dreams, waking and sleeping, have their source in this domain of the psyche; it is here that a person conjures up unholy and unhealthy pictures of sinful behavior. It is also in the imagination that people play out fantasies of violence—striking back at an enemy or cruelly punishing an adversary. Thus did this interior resource gain a reputation as the devil's workshop.

Quite apart from moral considerations of sex and violence, the imagination seems to play a dangerous game: from this interior theater spring fantastic images of unicorns and ghosts and dragons; this part of our mind seems to relish fabricating and even distorting reality. Such play might be allowed in the make-believe world of the child, but with adult maturity we surely should set aside such irresponsible play and bind ourselves to the dictates of reason and duty. How could the fruits of imagination—so often false or frivolous or even dangerous—contribute to a virtuous life?

Thirdly, imagination has often been seen as a trouble-maker in the realm of religious belief. A hard-won orthodoxy is unsettled by metaphors and im-

ages that suggest alternate ways of perceiving the presence and power of God. As theologians gathered at the early church councils, they struggled to clarify and stabilize the beliefs circulating in their communities of faith. The goal was to consolidate orthodox belief. Believing that revelation has been fully given in the life of Jesus, these early church leaders experienced little need for the ministry of prophecy with its unsettling suggestions. With the demise of prophecy as a vital ministry in the church, imagination as a trustworthy resource began to wither. Increasingly, church leaders called for obedience to a revelation fully and clearly provided; novel suggestions and prophetic interpretations were no longer welcome.

LITERAL MINDS; SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Perhaps it was this bad reputation that led many Christians to approach Scripture in a literal fashion, convinced that in these sacred stories, *what you see is what you get*. If every word of Scripture is literally true, there can be no harboring of other meanings than what (we have learned) it says. *The Bible* is in no way open to further revelation. This is, of course, quite the reverse of Scripture's testimony: offering stories of suffering, rescue, paradox that seethe with new meanings. We read of the exile that was long ago in a foreign land; then, suddenly, we are thinking about the exile that has recently descended on our own life. Ricoeur remarks, "faith is the attitude of one who accepts being interpreted at the same time that he or she interprets the world of the text."²⁵

The imagination is welcomed back into religious life as we realize how language itself works: symbols by their very nature, contain new meanings. "To mean something other than what was said—that is the symbolic function."²⁶ Ricoeur famously called this the "surplus of meaning" that inhabits every symbol. The cross that Christians venerate was first of all an instrument of torture; it was then reimagined as *a lifting up* of an entirely different sort: a sign of God's power to raise Jesus from death to eternal life; it was yet again reimagined—this same wood no longer dead and lethal but as the tree of life from which new branches and fruit constantly appear. Symbols function as portals to transcendence, but it is the imagination that goes through the door. Commenting on the role of Scripture as "a storehouse of inexhaustible potentialities," Ricoeur pictures the endless possibilities of God's revelation: "this initial surplus of meaning that, so to speak, lies dreaming in the traditional narrative."²⁷

THE BIBLE TUTORS THE IMAGINATION

Moral theologian William Spohn has explored the main moral effect of scripture on the imagination. The bible, he argues, does not simply tell us what to do in each instance. Instead its stories and symbols “encourage certain scenarios.” These stories—Jesus repeatedly conversing with sinners, or asking his disciples to forgive seventy times seven, or healing the sick—“become scenarios for action by evoking affective energies in distinctive ways.” Faith is an energy that ignites affective energies of compassion and hope, just as faith stirs the imagination to see the world a certain way. When we return to these stories again and again we are bathing our imaginations in a specific vision of reality. The role of the bible, with its dramatic parables and compelling images, is to “tutor the imagination.”²⁸

For Jews and Christians, the bible tutors the imagination with images of the other. The Jews retained searing memories of slavery in Egypt and exile in Babylon. In the bible, their God reminds them, “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 22:21). Despite these injunctions to respect and care for others who are suffering the displacement they had once endured, the Israelites were also struggling to preserve their religious identity among a host of tribes with different gods and practices. Threats and hostilities among these tribes led to the sometimes violent feelings toward the religiously other. The hostility endures today in the violence among ethnic groups in the lands of Israel and Palestine.

The bible turns repeatedly to the themes of the other, the alien, and the stranger. If spirituality may be defined as a struggle against forgetfulness, these biblical stories remind us of a truth we are inclined to forget. One of the most poignant stories of otherness occurs in the short book of Ruth. Ruth is a triple outsider: she is not a Jew; she is a woman; and she is a childless widow. By the alchemy of God’s graciousness, Ruth, the complete outsider is included in surprising ways in the Jewish/Christian story of salvation. Ruth finds favor with a landowner who becomes, in a lovely, erotic scene, the father of her child. The story ends with the revelation that this child, born in odd circumstances to a non-Jew, becomes the grandfather of David in the lineage that would lead to Jesus Christ.

Strangers appear throughout the bible as vehicles of revelation. The crucial revelation to Abraham that will ignite the history of salvation for Jews and Christians takes place through the appearance of “three strangers.” (Genesis 18) Later in this same book, Jacob wrestles in the dark with an

anonymous force that, by daylight, he will recognize as his God. (Genesis 32) The message is repeated and clear: God comes to us through strangers.

RE-IMAGINING OUR GRIEF: LAMENTATION VERSUS RESENTMENT

"This is the cause of my grief—that the ways of the Most High have changed."

—Psalm 77

A reflection rooted in practical theology should conclude with the practical: returning to the distress that circulates through our churches and culture in 2012. Bradford Hinze traces the links between present day ecclesial distress and Scriptural memories of lamentation in early Israel. This linking, in turn, awakens the religious imagination to ancient strategies of lament: turning private pain into public expression; transforming pain into prayer. With this tactic the inhabitants of ancient Israel avoided the double distress of either allowing the distress to gnaw away within private hearts or burst outward in vindictive abuse of others. The belief at the core of this approach to impasse and sorrow is that God will hear our prayers of lament and bring us through, scalded but cleansed, to a better life.

Kathleen O'Connor, in her study of the biblical *Book of Lamentation*, describes the mysterious work of grief in Scripture and in our lives. "Lamentation can shred the heart and spawn despair, but, paradoxically, by mirroring pain it can also comfort the afflicted and open the way toward healing. It can affirm the dignity of those who suffer, release their tears, and overcome their experience of abandonment."²⁹

Institutional leaders often prefer to foreclose on communal lament by keeping pain private. This woman's desire to serve the community as an ordained priest is simply the (misguided) experience of an individual. The sexual abuse perpetrated by priests is only a matter of individual guilt, saying nothing about traditional structures of leadership. The gay couple's desire for a public ceremony to celebrate their commitment is, likewise, only an individual problem. Isolating such movements of desire and regret keeps a community from recognizing the widespread nature of these laments.

Philosopher William Connelly reflects on the distress circulating through American society today and names this widespread response to disappointment "existential resentment."³⁰ This toxic reaction to distress appears to be more than a temporary pain. Connelly refers to this disturbance as "a dangerous temptation built into the human condition itself,"³¹ a toxic mood that is "always simmering as a possibility in mortals who must come

to terms with the issues of mortality, economic inequality, suffering, sickness, exploitation, and fundamental misfortune."³²

Connelly acknowledges how this resentment begins in specific distress: the loss of a job or one's house or both. This grief may escalate into a wider disappointment: the polls that show a growing number of citizens unhappy with the direction of the country. This expanding agitation, encouraged by talk shows and fundamentalist preaching, then mushrooms into a corrosive anger.

Connelly describes "a spirituality of resentment" that is likely to "translate this resentment into tactics of revenge against vulnerable constituencies whose very existence poses a threat to your self-confidence and self-assurance."³³ Unlike the lamentation that the ancient Israelites managed to turn into prayer, this contemporary unrest, "infused with existential resentment...fosters a spirit of punitiveness toward diversity and a refusal to give a degree of priority to the future over the present."³⁴

Charles Taylor, in *A Secular Age*, turns to this same emotion which he describes as "a bellicose spirituality" that fuels "the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine" in the US these days: evangelicals and free marketers joining forces in their ever-amplifying resentment of the world. Taylor argues that this is a "resentment of the world for not possessing either providence or ready susceptibility to human mastery."³⁵ Such a toxic emotion, spreading contagiously through a culture, displaces both gratitude and healthy lamentation.

THE DREAM OF THE REIGN OF GOD

Jesus, continuing in the line of prophets, began his ministry with the declaration: "the time is fulfilled; and the reign of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). Later he insisted to his listeners, "the reign of God is already among you" (Luke 17:21). When they wondered where such a world of justice and peace might be, he pointed to signs: the blind see, the lame walk. Yet they had to wonder: where was this reign, this kingdom of God? It did exist, if at first only in their hopeful imaginations.

This enduring hope anchors every effort of justice and mercy. The reign of God, alive in our imaginations, is both already and not yet. We see this vividly in our everyday life. Every time a person acts with compassion and mercy, the reign of God crosses from hopeful imagination into ordinary life; it becomes visible and more believable. Each time a person acts with violence or injustice, this hope recedes from view, appearing more like an im-

practical fantasy. So it arises and recedes—we are able to glimpse its appearance and then we lose sight of it. This reminds us that although our best efforts in justice and mercy are essential to the realization of this dream, the coming of the reign of God will finally be God’s work.

When imagination becomes a virtuous resource in our spiritual life we are able to draw together the disparate events of our past into a plot with direction and purpose. Through the prism of inspired imagination, deserts and exiles are refashioned into graceful way-stations on a miraculous journey.

With imagination we also make sense of present distress—the impasses that mark the journey today. Through the prism of imagination our sorrow is reframed into graceful grieving rather than toxic resentment.

And with imagination we even envision an extraordinary future, a time reshaped by justice and compassion, a season when we begin to detect flickering indications of the coming reign of God.

NOTES

1. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, Denis Savage, trans. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 551.
2. Bradford Hinze, “Ecclesial Impasse: What Can We Learn From Our Laments?” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011): 470–495.
3. *Ibid.*, 486.
4. *Ibid.*, 487.
5. *Ibid.*, 477.
6. *Ibid.*, 494.
7. *Ibid.*, 488.
8. *Ibid.*, 489.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 485.
11. *Ibid.*, 491.
12. *Ibid.*, 486.
13. Daniel Gilbert’s observation is quoted in Susan Neiman, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown Up Idealists* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2008), 219.
14. Craig Dykstra, “Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination,” in *For Life Abundant*, Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdsman, 2008), 49.
15. See Thomas Aquinas, *Opusculum*, 16 *De Trinitate*. 6.2 ad 5.

16. Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1995), 144, 8.
17. Walter Brueggemann defines biblical faith in his book, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978), 45, and “Imaginative Remembering” in his *Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 21.
18. Craig Dykstra, *For Life Abundant*, 49.
19. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 45.
20. *Ibid.*, 13.
21. *Ibid.*, 67.
22. See question 59, I-II, in the *Summa Theologiae* on the relation of moral virtue to passion; *St. Thomas Aquinas, Treatise on the Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 89ff.
23. Roberto Unger, *Passion: An Essay on Personality* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 220.
24. *Ibid.*, 38, 145.
25. Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 46.
26. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 12.
27. Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 176.
28. Bill Spohn, “Jesus and Christian Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 104.
29. Kathleen O’Connor, *Lamentation and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 96.
30. William Connelly’s essay, “Shock Therapy, Dramatization, and Practical Wisdom,” in *The Joy of Secularism*, George Levine, ed. (Princeton University Press, 2011), 95–114. Connelly links his discussion of resentment with Nietzsche’s famous accusation of Christianity as rooted in this toxic mood, and with sociologist Max Scheler’s exploration of this emotion. The writer Malachi McCourt has given perhaps the most succinct definition of resentment: “taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”
31. *Ibid.*, 113.
32. William Connelly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). 61.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Connelly, “Shock Therapy,” 108.
35. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2007), 135, 143. Susan Neiman, in her excellent book *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 36, re-frames the source of our distress—“Assuming the world is made to suit our purposes, we are outraged and miserable when it doesn’t.”