Collective Memory in Homiletics Example

Chapter Six

Theological markers for the use of collective memory in homiletics

6.1 The Bible and remembering.

The debate about memory in contemporary theological disciplines has yet to reach the level of intensity evident within history and sociology and their associated applied studies, but there is nevertheless evidence of a growing interest in the topic. Scholars well known for their work on social approaches to memory are increasingly cited by theologians, or are themselves offering ways into a theological extension of their works. In biblical studies, for example, the American Sociologist, Barry Schartz, presented a keynote address at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2003 (published in Kirk and Thatcher, 2005); and from this side of the Atlantic, Jan Assmann's work on cultural memory provides a way into mnemonic devices in a ground-breaking study of Mark's Gospel from the perspective of the performative oral culture in which it arose (Horsley, Draper and Foley, 2006). Such publications are the beginnings of what is likely to become a major area of interest and debate in theology

and biblical studies. As exciting as that prospect is, this chapter concerns itself with one small and closely delineated area where social memory theory and theology in practice are, it is argued, closely related, namely collective memory and preaching. If, as it is being argued in this thesis, the practice of Christian preaching in contemporary European society must consciously address the mechanisms of collective memory and the issues raised by the decay of that memory, what are the theological resources available to support that task? This chapter seeks to answer that question within a theological discourse that views use of the Bible as the primary step in such ongoing resourcing. Just as Christian preaching in order to be Christian preaching cannot be seen in isolation from the biblical text, so this chapter will argue that a theological understanding of Christian tradition as memory cannot be isolated from an understanding of social memory work present in those same biblical texts.

Consequently, this chapter seeks to establish that memory and remembrance, understood as fundamental components of a life-creating faith, are evidenced in the biblical texts themselves. It will be argued that our forebears in the continuing tradition of Abraham's faith were conscious users of the social dimensions of memory. Establishing this point is key to the whole thesis, since it indicates that the homiletic theory advocated here is more than a knee-jerk response to the social amnesia indentified as being so destructive of Christian social memory. In straightforward terms, memory work will be established as a core component of Scripture and, therefore, a core component of preaching that seeks to use those same Scriptures for the remembering of Christ. That theological resourcing of the tasks of Christian collective memory will be established through an examination of some key concepts developed in the work of the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann. Brueggemann's work is a good place to begin because he writes as a Christian preacher as well as a biblical scholar. The fact that he has also addressed memory issues very directly in his recent work adds a third justification for the focus of the analysis that follows. After the examination of some of Brueggemann's ideas, consideration will be given to the mechanisms of collective memory with particular regard to issues of boundary and development, and how these things are evidenced in Scripture.

From New Testament evidence the focus will shift to worship and God as the ultimate referent of Christian memory.

6.2 Imagination as interpretative tool in the works of Walter Brueggemann.

The American Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann delivered the 1988-9 Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching with the title Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation. The somewhat enigmatic quality of the title is typical of Brueggemann's style, and his published papers have included many similar aphorisms (for example At Risk with the Text, An Imaginative 'Or,' The Shrill Voice of the Wounded Party, all in The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word (2007); and Together in the Spirit–Beyond Seductive Quarrels, Reading as Wounded and as Haunted, and Texts That Linger, Not Yet Overcome in Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World (2000)) but arguably this particular title signifies more than presentational style. Finally Comes the Poet is Brueggemann's echo of a line from a poem entitled Passage to India in the Walt Whitman collection Leaves of Grass (1871): After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,) After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their work, After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist, the geologist, ethnologist, Finally shall come the poet worthy that name, The true son of God shall come singing his songs. The poem has its origin in reflections on the grand technological achievements of Whitman's era, exemplified in the Suez canal and the American transcontinental railway. Its reference to great and new achievements as 'but a growth out of the past' indeed fits well with Brueggemann's insistence that the 'old' texts of Scripture when imaginatively interpreted are productive of 'new' ways of seeing and living in the present (2000: 6): but there is, perhaps, a more playful and a yet more profound echo at work than simple topical reiteration. Whitman began Leaves of Grass as a conscious response to Ralph Waldo Emerson's call in 1845 for the United States to have its own indigenous and unique poetry.

The poems, despite being full of traditional biblical cadences, were to prove controversial since they used an innovative verse form with frequent colloquial language and some of them exalted the body and sexual love. Whitman worked on the volume throughout his life; the first edition of 1855 contained just 12 poems, but that grew to nearer 300 by the so-called 'deathbed edition' of 1891-2. In other words, Whitman's work represents an ongoing creative enterprise that in its imaginative expansion and re-working sought to offer a new perspective on experience in an authentically American idiom of English. In that sense the poet comes last, as it were, to take

imagination to shores far beyond those to be reached by rail or sea. As the poem concludes: For we are bound where mariner has not yet dare to go, And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all. O my brave soul! O farther farther sail! O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God? O farther, farther, farther sail! Imagination that goes beyond the immediately obvious; creativity that constructs alternative ways of giving an account of reality and interpretive language that profoundly resonates with the contemporary are themes that figure prominently in Brueggemann's work. In his Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination, he writes: The tradition that became Scripture … is not merely descriptive of a commonsense world; it dares, by artistic sensibility and risk-taking rhetoric, to posit, characterize, and vouch for a world beyond the 'common sense'. (2003a: 9) This interpretive imagination that enables ancient texts to speak with forceful authority to the contemporary believer is at the heart of Brueggemann's hermeneutic. His conviction is that engagement with the biblical texts can be creative of real alternatives to the prevailing and destructive dominant worldviews. His insistence on 'not what the text "meant" but what it "means"' (2007: 83) presents a striking challenge to biblical methodologies that dwell on historical understandings of the text. In Brueggemann's work, both historical and redactive analysis are but steps towards this more fundamentally purposeful interpretation. His work is, therefore, of particular importance to this study since it so clearly demonstrates ways in which the biblical text can be interpreted anew so as to offer a fresh and challenging voice amidst the clamour of contemporary society. It is hardly surprising then that Whitman's poetic 'fresh voice' provides Brueggemann with the teasing frontispiece to his lectures on preaching 'as a poetic construal of an alternative world' (1989: 6). Nor is it surprising that in the years since his Lyman Beecher lectures, beyond his major studies (for example, First and Second Samuel (1990); Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy (1997); and Deuteronomy (2001)) Brueggemann has written extensively about the preaching task (for example, in works such as Cadences of Home: Preaching among Exiles (1997); Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World (2000); The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word (2007)). His is an approach to Scripture that is essentially homiletical since, whilst remaining academically rigorous, it always looks to how the text resonates with contemporary existence.

Indeed, Brueggemann asserts that 'the key hermeneutical event in contemporary interpretation is the event of preaching' (2007: 92).

6.3 Imaginative remembering as a way into the text.

In his use of tradition Brueggemann's method is presentist in just the way that collective memory theory suggests. He writes that remembering 'is itself shot through with imaginative freedom to extrapolate and move beyond whatever there may have been of "happening"' (2003a: 7). Accordingly, his determination is to 'make the interface of ancient text and contemporary community more poignant and palpable' (2003a: xi). In this he is following an understanding of how classic texts work in the life of faith that has an ancient pedigree and is exemplified in contemporary scholarship by David Tracy: I will understand not merely something that was of interest back then, as a period piece, whose use, although valid then, is now spent. Rather I will grasp something of genuine here and now, in this time and place. I will then recognize that all interpretation of classic texts heightens my consciousness of my own finitude, my own radically historical reality. I can never repeat the classics to understand them. I must interpret them. Only then, as Kierkegaard insisted, do I really 'repeat' them. (Tracy, 1981: 103) In this understanding, interpretation, even when it appears novel (as long as that novelty is in an appropriate measure consistent with the tradition), is a legitimate extension of the tradition as represented by the text.

Hence, for Brueggemann, what he terms 'imaginative remembering' (2003a: 8) is both a way of understanding the formation of the text and an essential way into the text now. He writes of the Old Testament: What parents have related to their children as normative tradition (that became canonized by long usage and has long been regarded as normative) is a world of meaning that has as its key character YHWH, the God of Israel, who operates in the narratives and songs of Israel that are taken as reliable renderings of reality. Given all kinds of critical restraints and awarenesses, one can only allow that such retellings are a disciplined, emancipated act of imagination. (2003a: 8) This retelling is, in Brueggemann's methodology, a necessary extension of the memory work evident in the Old Testament texts with which he works, since those texts are themselves … a sustained memory that has been filtered through many generations of the interpretative process, with many interpreters imposing certain theological intentionalities on the memory that continues to be reformulated. (2003a: 4) Brueggemann is at pains to assert the force of this continuity right up to the present time. The preacher, in his understanding, does not stand as a remote and objective commentator on the text, nor as a skill-laden technician who applies ancient

wisdom to contemporary life, but is rather in her or his labours at one with and contributing to the ongoing flow of a living stream of tradition: All the forces of imaginative articulation and ideological passion and the hiddenness of divine inspiration have continued to operate in the ongoing interpretive task of synagogue and church until the present day. (2003a: 12) This ongoing process of memory work that makes faith possible for the next generation Brueggemann terms 'traditioning' (2003a: 9). Although he does not use the language of collective memory theory in his writings, it is clear that he is alert to the mechanisms it suggests. For example, he points out that each version of retelling has as its intention the notion that it should be the final retelling that presents the newly interpreted or understood correct version. As that retelling comes to prominence and wide use, however, it is itself subject to further retelling that will eventually be productive of a fresher version that will displace the earlier version, partly or wholly (2003a: 9). It is not hard to see in this process what Halbwachs described as new memories created by the pressure of current needs and relationships and the forgetting of other memories that no longer have a supporting social framework. For Brueggemann, this process of retelling and discarding works to reinforce his demand that an exegetical and homiletical use of the text that is creative and imaginative is both legitimate and advantageous.

The exegete or the homiletician can use the traces of earlier memories in the ongoing task of traditioning. Brueggemann writes: The complexity of the text evident on any careful reading is due to the happy reality that as new acts of traditioning overcome and partly displace older materials, the older material is retained alongside newer tradition.

That retention is a happy one, because it very often happens that a still later traditionalist returns to and finds useful older, 'discarded' material thought to be beyond use. (2003a: 9) Brueggemann's usage also echoes Halbwachs' contention (see section 3.3) that changes in religious collective memory are often strengthened by an appeal to the recovery of ancient memory that has somehow been forgotten. What marks the difference between the two approaches is that Brueggemann sees this reclamation as necessary for a creative and imaginative handling of tradition rather than simply a way of socially legitimizing what might otherwise seem to be corrosive of the tradition. In collective memory theory as delineated by Halbwachs, change and development in Christian

religious memory is seen as inimical to faith, whereas Brueggemann believes that variations over time are not only conducive to faith but are required if the text is to retain its power to change perceptions in every age. In acknowledging this process, Brueggemann also acknowledges that the memory held is far from being a straightforward and simple storage of information, or, as he terms it, 'an innocent act of reportage' (2003a: 9). Far from seeing the social construction of memory as a denial of faith, Brueggemann uses that constructionism as a way to advance a socially responsible close engagement with the biblical text. This bears on the subject of this study in two very direct ways.

6.4 Living tradition as a field of artistic endeavour.

First, it is important to acknowledge that although Brueggemann's hermeneutical method is an expression of impatience with biblical scholarship that dwells on historical, redactional and textual issues to the exclusion of social concerns; it is also more than that. His conviction is that the logic of modernity with its passion for linear, objective, and systematized thinking, and its insistence on only working with the 'given facts', has too often effectively silenced the Bible even in the churches (2003a: 28). He writes: Our technical way of thinking reduces mystery to problem, transforms assurance into certitude, revises quality into quantity, and so takes the categories of biblical faith and represents them in manageable shapes. (1989: 2) His is a style of engagement with the biblical text that goes beyond historical and technical categories (though readily employing those tools when needed) to imaginative and rhetorical aspects embedded in the text so as to focus … not on the 'cognitive outcomes' of the text (though there finally are cognitive outcomes) but on the artistic processes that operate in the text and generate an imagined 'world' within the text. Such artistic attentiveness takes seriously the exact placement and performance of words and phrases, of sounds and repetitions that give rise to an alternate sense of reality. (2007: 76) In terms of homiletic theory this emphasis on 'artistic attentiveness' calls to mind the work of R.E.C. Browne (1976) (see sections 2.3 and 5.2.3 above) and the suggestion he first voiced in the 1950s that preaching is an artistic activity requiring similar processes of social understanding and interaction as those necessary to the production of music, poetry or painting (Browne, 1976: 18). Indeed Brueggemann is arguably more in sympathy with the approach of Browne than with his American New Homiletic colleagues.

The inductive methodology of New Homiletics beginnings all too easily with human experience, and, according to Brueggemann, its effort to induce from understandings of human experience connections to the biblical text is the wrong starting point. He cites what he perceives to be an increasing inclination amongst seminarians … who prefer for preaching some idea, some cause, some experience, some anything rather than the text. A community without its appropriate text clearly will have no power or energy or courage for mission; it will be endlessly quarrelsome because it depends on ideology and has no agreed-upon arena where it adjudicates its conflicts. (2007: 42) With the New Homileticians Brueggemann is determined to connect the text and the world, but since his homiletic conceives the text as always challenging and critiquing commonplace understandings of experience and reality, those commonplace understandings cannot be the interpreter's beginning. Interestingly, the word 'relevance' is a term he studiously avoids in his consideration of how preaching properly works. Indeed, in a recent article he asserts 'the text is not directly addressed to us, and we should not work too hard at making it immediately relevant' (2007: 39). As an alternative he uses the term 'resonates' as a way of indicating that the preacher's task is to enable a word to be heard that comes 'from outside our closed system of reality' (2007: 4). Preaching, he insists, must always be subversive (2000: 6) and he means that literally: it offers a version of faith lived in reality that gets under the dominant versions and opens new ways of existing. He writes: My theme is alternative, sub-version to version, the sermon a moment of alternative imagination, the preacher exposed as point man, point woman, to make up out of nothing more than our memory and our hope and our faith a radical option to the normalcy of deathliness. (2000: 9) So, far from being a simple preservation mechanism, traditioning, in Brueggemann's methodology, becomes a creative activity in which each generation of faith reworks the tradition so as to maintain its liveliness: We now know (or we think we know) that human transformation (the way people change) does not happen through didacticism or through excessive certitude but through the playful entertainment of another scripting of reality that may subvert the old given text and its interpretation and lead to the embrace of an alternative text and its redescription of reality. (2007: 26) This is a radical understanding of faith's collective memory in that it lays the emphasis on tradition's continuity being found in the telling and retelling which is properly productive of changes and shifts in tradition's content. Here, the maintenance of a living tradition is clearly paramount; but processes of that maintenance are acknowledged as continually bringing to birth new ways of understanding how that tradition is experienced as living. The ways collective memories

change are an aspect of how tradition functions effectively rather than being seen as a threat to the preservation of tradition. Brueggemann's traditioning works towards the creation of world-views in the anthropological sense; it is an insistence on an epistemology that shuns a too strident and dominating objectivism. As he puts it: Reality is not fixed and settled … it cannot be described objectively. We do not simply respond to a world that is here, but we engage in constituting that world by our participation, or action, and our speech. As participants in the constitutive act, we do not describe what is there, but we evoke what is not fully there until we act or speak. (1988: 12) In this Brueggemann offers an understanding of the preacher's task that is akin to David Buttrick's phenomenological approach (Buttrick, 1987) in that it calls forth a sermonic language that can construe the world in new ways.

Thus Brueggemann's definition of imagination is: The God-given, emancipated capacity to picture (or image) reality — God, world, self — in alternative ways outside conventional, commonly accepted givens. Imagination is attentiveness to what is 'otherwise,' other than our taken-for-granted world. (2001: 27) This imaginative ability allows new insights and understandings to develop from within tradition.

Processes of displacement and forgetting may indeed be at work in this, as collective memory theory suggests; but that does not necessarily mean that previous memories are just abandoned. Rather, imagination enables a reviewing incorporation of new perspectives that are beyond the easy conventions previously assumed.

6.5 Preaching as contested production.

Preaching is at heart, according to Bruggemann, about the construel of alternatives. This assertion discloses a second point about how his work has a direct bearing on this study; and that shifts the focus from the nature of tradition to the practice of preaching. If traditioning is fundamentally about epistemology then preaching, as a mechanism of memory maintenance, must itself be productive of this shift in knowing. Consequently, preaching is, in Brueggemann's estimation, always a dangerous, indeed hazardous, activity since it is essentially a process of production understood in its widest creative sense.

Like any productive process there is much that can prospectively go wrong in the process itself, let alone in its ultimate 'consumption' as a product whose characteristics are potentially suspect or unwelcome. The dominant worldview in which both preacher and hearer exists is one in which reductionism with its relentless crude simplification of complexities and subtleties holds sway most of the time (1987: 13). In such circumstances preaching that is a creative weaving of the tradition into fresh resonant patterns can come as an unwelcome shock; it appears to put a question mark against more usual didactic, doctrinal or moralizing homiletical styles (2007: 29). That, of course, is precisely Brueggemann's purpose: Preaching is a peculiar, freighted, risky act each time we do it: entrusted with an irascible, elusive, polyvalent subject and flying low under the dominant version with a subversive offer of another version to be embraced by subversives. (2000: 6, italics original) Brueggemann situates preaching in precisely that area of contestation and change related to operative social frameworks that is familiar to collective memory theorists. That Brueggemann applies notions of production and consumption to the text and its exposition might seem strange in that kindred concepts such as commodification and consumerism are things he frequently criticises severely. In doing so he is, perhaps, making the point that the tendency of the dominating economic model to corrupt and distort underscores its seriousness and makes using its terms all the more resonant when applied to preaching. Preaching is to be taken with the utmost seriousness precisely because the world it aims to create offers a profound alternative to the dominating economic worldview. Preaching presents a new choice which challenges the hegemony of the usual way of viewing production and consumption, but the resonance of that choice is such that terms themselves are appropriately used: When the community has thus produced a text, it is the task of the community to consume the text, that is, to take, use, heed, respond, and act upon the text. The entire process of the text, then, is an act of production and consumption whereby a new world is chosen or an old world is defended, or there is transformation of old world to new world.

The purpose of using the categories of production and consumption is to suggest that the textual process, especially the interpretative act of preaching, is never a benign, innocent, or straightforward act. Anyone who imagines that he or she is a benign or innocent preacher of the text is engaged in self-deception.

Preaching as interpretation is always a daring, dangerous act, in which the interpreter, together with the receivers of the interpretation, is consuming a text and producing a world. (2007: 87) In other words, to facilitate this consumptive production, it is essential that the text 'be kept in conversation with what the congregation already knows and believes' (2007: 100). This conversation is at its most effective when it is clearly opposed to both 'a false kind of objectivity that assumes the world is a closed, fixed, fated, given' and 'a kind of subjectivity that assumes we are free or able to conjure up private worlds that may exist in a domesticated sphere without accountability to or impingement from the larger public world' (2007: 100). Preaching has to keep the conversation going—an inevitable conclusion, given Brueggemann's dynamic understanding of tradition. It is intended that this analysis of Brueggemann's writings will have made plain the numerous points at which his thought provides fruitful links to the subject of this study. However, before moving to an examination of continuity and community in relation to collective memory it is worth reiterating some of the keys issues at a little length. In particular, the relationship between tradition, as represented by the Scriptural texts and contemporary concerns, will be examined further. That in turn will allow some extended discussion of the way in which this tradition is able to generate more than a straightforward replication of itself out of those contemporary concerns. Tradition is seen here as an environment within which the preacher is empowered towards an imaginative and artistic creativity that both sustains and develops that environment.

That discussion will provide a conceptual bridge into the consideration of a brief but significant essay contributed by Anthony Thiselton to the 1981 Doctrine Commission of the Church of England's report Believing in the Church. Through Thiselton's work, issues of continuity and transmission will be directly addressed.

6.6 The presentist use of tradition.

Brueggemann's perspective on the preaching task fits well with collective memory theory in that it is essentially presentist in its nature. Indeed, Brueggemann's insistence on what the text means now provides a positive theological and ministerial undergirding of the processes of collective memory. His understanding of imaginative remembering as the core tool of the preacher's interpretation re-positions those collective memory processes as

purposeful rather than simply inevitable.

The preacher as hermeneutikos enters the stream of the ongoing flow of a living tradition and strives to be part of that lively continuity through homiletic activity; what Brueggemann understands as a continuing process of 'traditioning'. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Brueggemann places this dynamic understanding of tradition at the very centre of faithful living. If so fundamental to the practice of faith, then that traditioning must also be essential to Christian mission. As Rowan Williams puts it: The Christian is at once possessed by an authoritative urgency to communicate the good news, and constrained by the awareness of how easily the words of proclamation become godless, powerless to transform. The urgency must often be channelled into listening and waiting, and into the expansion of the Christian imagination itself into something that can cope with the seriousness of the world. It is certainly true that, for any of this to be possible, here must be a real immersion in the Christian tradition itself. (2000: 40) In Brueggemann's thought, preaching becomes a key component of contemporary biblical interpretation in that it makes explicit in a demonstrable way just how tradition works. The essential rootedness of homiletics in a faith tradition becomes its greatest strength. This point needs to be underlined because it is not to be taken as special pleading for preaching as an exceptional kind of communication that must by its nature be allowed an ideological position inappropriate elsewhere. Instead, this is a declaration that the explicit rootedness of preaching exposes the reality of similar, but frequently denied rootedness, in other areas of discourse. Furthermore, that that very rootedness provides a platform for a sometimes radical re-evaluation of realities previously simply assumed—what Brueggemann understands as a construal of alternatives. In terms of collective memory, the recasting of memories becomes not the rather defensive mechanism Halbwachs described in his consideration of religion, but a creative and imaginative weaving of new possibilities out of the warp and weft of what has been inherited. This allows an adjustment of Halbwachs' rather positivistic functionalism towards a more phenomenological perspective that is alert to the dynamism inherent in the tradition itself.

Some words from Peter Ochs' study of Peircean pragmatism in relation to Scripture seem apposite: For the Christian community, the Bible is thus not a sign of some external reality, but a reality itself whose meanings

display the doubly dialogic relationships between a particular text and its context within the Bible as a whole, and between the Bible as a whole and the conduct of the community of interpreters. (1998: 309) The denial of an objectivizing distance between the preacher and the text may be justly assumed in the ministry of preaching, but Ochs' study and Brueggemann's practice are suggestive of more than that: they point to a kind of knowing and learning only available through tradition. What is being challenged here is the easy assumption that a tradition-free, abstract, universal rationality is superior to such tradition-embedded thinking.

Indeed, 'traditioning' considered in the widest terms must put a question mark against the very idea of tradition-free knowing. In considering the influential works of Michael Polanyi (1891-1976), Alasdair MacIntyre (born 1929), and Charles Taylor (born 1931) Bruggemann makes the point that the imagination so crucial to development and change is generated from within tradition (2001: 31).

6.7 The generative nature of Scripture as tradition.

Although, as acknowledged earlier, the relationship of tradition and rationality raises large epistemological issues beyond the direct scope of this thesis the subject needs to be broached here since it draws attention to an important aspect of tradition, namely its ability to seed fresh, creative understandings that are generative of new developments whilst retaining congruity with the tradition from which they arose. Colloquial usage of the term 'tradition' makes it synonymous with preservation, but that fails to acknowledge this generative ability. Brueggemann sees generative traditioning at work throughout the Scriptural text itself in that it is never solely a description of the commonsense world but always points to what is beyond the commonsense (2003a: 9). The contemporary user of the text merely does what the formulators of the extant text did, who themselves did what those who used these stories and words before them did.

Again a passage from Peter Ochs is worth quoting at length because it provides a complementary philosophical insight to the usage suggested by Brueggemann: The world of experience is served by a finite set of common-sense beliefs, and there are terrible occasions when this world breaks down and common sense is confounded.

There is more than this world, however: for scriptural pragmatists, there are resources out of this world for correcting the inadequacies of this world. The source of this correction is of this world in the sense that it is written in the language of this world, but it is not only from this world. It is written in texts whose plain sense belongs to everyday language and respects the rules of common sense but which, to the attentive reader, also displays certain errors and vaguenesses that cannot be resolved within the rules of common sense and the terms of everyday language. Discomforted by what appears to be the text's burdens, the attentive reader is stimulated into a process of corrective rereading that, at some point, may disclose two surprising features of the discomfort. For one, the discomfort appears, after all, to have been of the reader as well as about the text: the text's ailments appear to mirror the reader's own, and these appear, on reflection, to concern the reader not as individual, but as a member of a community of readers – and of a society and culture or, in other words, a common-sense world.

The discomfort is thus an attribute of the relation between text and common-sense world. For two, this discomfort does not bring with it the kind of epistemological distress that accompanies other uncertainties of comparable gravity. To the contrary, as the process of rereading continues, the very text that gave rise to the discomfort also gives rise to an unexpected sense that, while as yet inapparent, a solution is also available. (1998: 319) Although Brueggemann does not directly use the language of formal pragmatism, his impatience with a static understanding of tradition and the metaphysical preoccupations that go with it (2007: 30), coupled with his demand that preaching must enable the text to resonate with contemporary concerns, suggests a sympathy towards a philosophy so clearly associated with the particularities and specificities of everyday practice. It is not fanciful to suggest that Brueggemann's insistence on the 'evangelical imagination' would lead him to offer a sturdy 'Amen' to the Jewish Ochs' definition of Scripture: A text of this world that delivers a corrective to this world as guided by rules that are not only of this world.

These rules and the scriptural text are called 'holy' as a sign both of their ultimate worth as ultimate sources of corrective rules ('holy' as 'praiseworthy' in contemporary English) and of their otherness, or being not only of this world ('holy' as in the Old English term weird, and in the Hebrew term, kadosh, whose etymological root refers to 'separateness' or 'removal'). (1998: 320) That the 'not of this world' quality of Scripture means that its exposition is

often productive of surprising insights is a fact that will be readily substantiated by any serious imaginative preacher. Indeed, bringing that 'not of this world' character of the text to the forefront of the preacher's work allows the text to have a proper strangeness that is especially conducive to the generative task. Familiarity and repetition all too easily degenerates into a stultifying lack of imagination that works to silence the text. As Brueggemann asserts, recognition that the text is not directly addressed to us who are the contemporary church is crucial to freeing the text to voice, in his terms, 'God's otherwise' (2007: 39). Consequently, he says, the preacher should not pursue a method of exposition that strives too eagerly at immediate relevance (2007: 39). What seems at first sight a wholly counter-intuitive insight is in fact a tactic essential to a proper appreciation of the text's authority. Rowan Williams makes a similar point in his postscript to his study Arius (1987) when he writes: Scripture and tradition require to be read in a way that brings out their strangeness, their not-obvious and non-contemporary qualities, in order that they may be read both freshly and truthfully from one generation to another. (1987: 236) Homileticians, and the congregations that homileticians serve, are 'outside' the text in this sense and are therefore required to give it that heightened attention and seriousness of consideration demanded of people traversing 'a strange land'. Travellers makes things difficult for themsleves by the very fact of travelling, but the exhilaration of new possibilities, discoveries and achievements are not available without that risky venture.

Similarly, working with Scripture and tradition requires a 'making things difficult' in order that their essential beauty and simplicity can be discovered anew. Otherwise, as Williams puts it: … we read with eyes not our own and think them through with minds not our own; the 'deposit of faith' does not really come into contact with ourselves. And this 'making difficult', this confession that what the gospel says in Scripture and tradition does not instantly and effortlessly make sense, is perhaps one of the most fundamental tasks for theology. (1987: 236) However, like the traveller, those engaged in the homiletic task also seek, as it were, the advice of earlier travellers, follow paths new to them although they have been travelled by others in the past, and aim to appreciate the sights others have found impressive. Inevitably, the elements of surprise, discovery and reclamation inherent in this approach to working in and from tradition mean that that exposition will always have about it a certain provisionality. The preacher is always in the middle of things, often quite literally, in that most

preachers are also engaged in multifarious other activities alongside homiletical endeavour, but also in terms of the living tradition from which and in which he or she speaks. The generative nature of tradition, as described, is such that it is productive of inexhaustible discussion.

The preacher dares—again an idea frequently used by Brueggemann—to pin-down that discussion in sermons directed towards the purposes of God for these particular people in this particular time. In terms of Brueggemann's thought, something is being produced and consumed in and for the present time out of the canon of inherited scripts. That new scripting, if authentic to the tradition from which it is seeded, confronts the scripts people live by that are provided by common-sense and the status quo. Preaching is not to be a generalized, abstract truth that is easily avoided but a particularized interpretation that offers an empowering and often contested alternative in real and present circumstances. Brueggemann writes: All parties to this act of interpretation need to understand that the text is not a contextless absolute, not is it a historical description, but it is itself a responsive, assertive, imaginative act that stands as proposal of reality to the community. As the preacher and the congregation handle the text, the text becomes a new act that makes available one mediation of reality.

That new mediation of reality is characteristically an act of fidelity, an act of inventiveness, and an act in which vested interest operates. Moreover, the preacher and the congregation do this in the midst of many other acts of mediation in which they also participate, as they attend to civil religion, propaganda, ideology, and mass media. (2007: 93) Such particularity is of the essence of the preaching task. The tradition is reworked and reframed so as to resonate now. Inevitably, that particularity will mean that changes of time and circumstance require further reworkings and reframings. Framing, or reframing, is a key part of how the individual relates to collective memory according to Halbwachs (1980: 76). It is the structure provided by shared experience—the framework, in Halbwachs' terms—which enables the individual to remember and relate those memories to the wider group's shared memories. The theological insistence on the particularities of preaching underscores collective memory theory's disclosure that shared, pertinent experience is vital to the maintenance of social memory.

Without the shared experience, however mediated, memory dies (82). The preacher, in the exposition of what this text means in the particularity of here and now, aims to address directly the current experience, both of the corporate body as well as of individuals. In so doing, the preacher acts effectively as a maintainer of the collective memory of the church, or as Brueggemann would put it, the preacher is engaged in traditioning. The theological point about the generative nature of the Scriptural tradition, and the issue of how the developments born of that generative quality remain authentically Christian, make the sociological identification of the fact that social memories change with experience all the more challenging. Of course, the church has always been in the business of passing-on the gospel inheritance.

What has changed is that the value of that passing-on is less appreciated in society as a whole than previously, and there has been a significant decline in the numbers of people who are familiar with the living stream(s) of the Christian tradition. Simply put, if speaking from the tradition is so vital to living faith, inarticulacy in the tradition, for whatever reason, poses a real threat to the tradition itself. A theology that adds weight, as it were, to the significance of telling and retelling the tradition in the imaginative construal of alternatives embedded in human experience, only serves to emphasize all the more strongly the urgent challenges to Christian social continuity discussed in earlier chapters.

6.8 The problem of continuity.

In addressing continuity, Anthony Thiselton's essay 'Knowledge, Myth and Corporate Memory' in the Anglican report Believing in the Church (1981) presents some potentially very fruitful ideas about the transmission of corporate knowledge and memory. It is to that essay this discussion now turns, with the aim of delineating something of a theological and philosophical corporatism that might undergird the application of collective memory to homiletic practice in contemporary Britain. In his criticism of Enlightenment rationalism that has an 'obsessive suspicion of tradition' (1981: 50), Thiselton shares the concerns of both Brueggemann and Ochs about an overweening rationalism in many areas of public discourse. There is no need to repeat those concerns, save to say that Thiselton is emphatic about the 'corporate foundation of all human knowledge' (47) since a shared public

world always pre-exists any individual's thinking and it is, therefore, impossible for knowledge to begin de novo. In other words, the characterization of tradition presented here is not to be seen as a valorizing of a process unique to religion. Because religion is readily indentified by its propensity for handing down a 'deposit' of faith does not mean that very similar processes are not at work in all other areas of human knowledge; although the deposits and the handing down mechanisms may be hidden or obscured by other things.

Knowing and understanding, he suggests, no less than believing, 'depends on some kind of sharing and on some kind of expression of continuity' (49). With Karl Mannheim (1936) in his work on the sociology of cross-generational knowledge, Thiselton insists that all human thought is essentially a 'thinking further' of what other people have thought before us. He writes: Tradition transcends the scope of immediate individual knowledge and experience, and provides a framework within which one's own thought develops and becomes critically sharpened. (1981: 52) The relationship of such 'thinking further' to memory hardly needs any further emphasis. Although epistemological concerns are paramount in Thiselton's account, it is not hard to discern his underlying sympathy with the more sociological analysis of continuity exemplified by Hervieu-L©ger and her use of Halbwachs. Indeed, although he mentions neither writer, he is explicit about 'corporate memory', as he terms it, providing a frame of reference in the light of which knowledge is assessed and interpreted and procedures determined in the present (1981: 53). He amplifies his understanding of corporate memory, and the mechanisms necessary to its functioning, as follows: If the corporate memory of a community constitutes an important source of its knowledge, and if the biography of the individual thinker represents no more than an episode in its transmission and critical control, it follows that the community which wishes to preserve its knowledge, experience and cultural identity will employ instruments for the transmission and institutionalization of its corporate knowledge. What is recollected in corporate memory will be transmitted in proverb, story, sermon, myth or, equally, in (for the scientific sub-community) the pages of a modern technical journal. What is believed to be of value for the community, or on which its cultural identity is thought to depend, will be reiterated in formulae such as laws, ethical maxims, creeds, rites, songs and so on. In the context of religious or specifically Christian belief, the reiteration of shared knowledge on the basis of corporate memory finds expression in creeds, sacraments, sermons and the reading of narratives of the foundation-events out of which the community was

born. (1981: 53) At first sight such a strong emphasis on the social might seem an unlikely place to seek support for the individualized expression that preaching is by nature. A proper estimation, however, of the relationship between the individual and the corporate memory quickly dispels any such worry. Thiselton's strong emphasis on the significance of the corporate does not mean that he thinks the individual's contribution is insignificant. It is, rather, that he sees corporate remembering and knowing as fundamental aspects of the individual's resources for both critical thinking and authentic faithfulness. He insists that there must be dialectic between the communal and the individual, and that neither part should ever be underestimated (1981: 60). Moreover, neither of those aspects of knowing should be thought of as denials of the possibility of insights born of an unmediated (or apparently unmediated) experience of God (60). He is eager that his understanding of the corporate dimension of faith should not be an excuse for an uncritical traditionalism, nor a reduction of faith to 'a mere acceptance of "orthodoxy"' (1981: 60), and he appeals to exemplars of faith in order to declare that: A faith that merely takes up the routines prescribed by a tradition is for Kierkegaard (and for Paul and for Jesus) not 'true' faith.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that this contradicts the notion of a corporate framework of knowledge within which the individual may reach authentic faith. Jesus, Paul, Luther and Kierkegaard were all conscious of the limitations and seductions of tradition; but all lay down their calls to faith within a framework of knowledge and experience which transcended individual autobiography. (1981:61) Questions of authenticity and boundary immediately come to the fore: how does the individual's expression of faith remain authentic to the inherited corporate memory? How are developments of that memory to be judged as conducive and appropriate? And are the reiterative mechanisms of corporate memory sufficient of themselves to maintain the identity of the believing community so that it remains this community and not another? It is to these types of issues that Thiselton brings specific and illuminating ideas that can move the argument of this study forward, since, as he avers, continuity is necessary for identity (1981: 64) and collective memory is rooted in identity. He writes: Corporate memory (especially as this is articulated and preserved in the biblical writings) represents much more than a mere 'source' for knowledge of the past.

Corporate memory is the frame of reference which gives meaning to the present, and even guides present action.

… The possession and 'effective history' of corporate memory is what makes a society (or a nation, or a church) this society, and not some other. (1981: 66) Here, Thiselton provides a much needed corrective to a Halbwachsian tendency to down-play the importance of actual traditions and memories in favour of social constructions adopted solely on the basis of their utility in meeting current felt needs. Continuity is more than an internalization of what is useful to current belonging. It has to be a genuine expression of the inheritance that is the incorporating body.

6.9 Habituation as providing role standards for the believer.

At heart, the memory process Thiselton describes is intense, but simple: the present community of faith utilizes corporate memory to reflect on the founding events of the faith, and out of that reflection pledges itself anew to the contemporary significance of those events and their practical effectiveness here and now. As has been said, the vehicles of the reiteration at the centre of that reflection are formulae which have a direct connection to the founding events of the faith, and which usually have a liturgical or mantra-like quality to them, that is, they are patterned words or actions that can bear frequent repetition without becoming tedious or unmeaningful. According to Thiselton, it is that quality of pattern that allows what is done or said to be recognized as part of the tradition and community that is Christian (1981: 64). Through repetition and habituation the believer adopts the role 'expected' of the Christian believer. The authoritative nature of the tradition provides the relative stability necessary to enable that habituation to take place. At first sight, this habituation within tradition might seem profoundly backward-looking, conservative and a long way from Brueggemann's imaginative and creative use of traditioning; but closer examination discloses that not to be the case.

The key lies in a proper estimation of the word 'role'. A role requires a pre-existing pattern, or body of knowledge, that determines what the role actually is. What pre-exists provides an objective standard, as it were, against which the role is measured as it is enacted—just as an actor in a drama follows a script in developing and acting out an assigned role. In that sense, the tradition of faith, and the collective memories that go with it provide the script, the patterned body of knowledge, from which the believer acts. As is the case for an actor in a drama, the believer

performs the role rather than just repeating what has been received 'parrot fashion'. Performance always involves interpretation, and interpretation always involves artistry, creativity and imagination. The metaphor that Thiselton uses is that of the musician playing from a score; the good musician provides an interpretation of the music, but it also remains a faithful rendition of that particular work (1981: 74). Habituation related to role performance now looks much more like Brueggemann's traditioning. Thiselton's thought provides a practical, yet intellectually rigorous additional way of understanding how the preacher can use Christian tradition as more than a means of incorporation. In summary, the concept of faithful role-performance provides a way of tempering the imaginative construals of alternatives seeded by the generative quality of the Christian tradition. It offers a way of maintaining identity without curbing creativity—a kind of standard to act as a guide. Thiselton writes: To be able to speak of standard role-performance, it is certainly not necessary that every individual who claims to be part of the Christian community should actually perform every role prescribed as standard to Christian belief. What matters, from this standpoint, is whether, when deviation or eccentricities occur, they are indentified as permitted deviations or eccentricities. (1981: 67 italics in original) In these terms the preacher is a model of role-performance. The concept of role-performance also brings with it other congruities with Brueggemann's concept of reimagination: both emphasize that living faithfully in the tradition involves more than intellectual conformity; both are alert to truth communicated through analogy, modelling, metaphor and symbol as much as rational argumentation; and both are concerned that tradition be expressed in ways that draw people into an experience of lived tradition in the present.

6.10 Eschatology as an essential linkage between event and action in sermons.

Despite the assertion that tradition-based thinking is productive of radical social challenge, the discussion in this chapter so far has been essentially presentist. This prompts the concern that the presentist assumptions of collective memory theory, so closely echoed in those determined on a missiological exposition of the tradition, may in fact be a dampener on the very engagement those expositors seek to pursue. If, as collective memory theory suggests, present experience and relationships are determinative of what is remembered, how does remembering facilitate change? Part of the answer to that question lies in the nature of a Christian remembering

that is never simply recollection in either an intellectual or experiential sense. The bounds of Christian memory, although firmly anchored in the here and now, have their outer perimeter, as it were, neither in human cognition nor human action, but in God. The inter-play of Christian memory work is not just between the present and the past, but between those things within the overarching purposes of God. Halbwachs recognized the reality of this in his observation that Christian collective memory fulfilled the requirements of present imperatives by the expedient, in his terms, of re-describing Christ as the ever-present Lord rather than the dead martyr. By this mechanism the Christian collective memory can be constantly reinvigorated by the present needs and experiences of believers as they become aware of the yet more authentic call of Christ, however mediated. Halbwachs, as a sociologist, necessarily sees this process wholly in terms of providing those changing social frameworks that facilitate the shifts of collective memory.

The Christian believer, however, must look beyond categories of memory theory towards the theological realities that support a faith-based approach to historiography. This should not be understood as either naïve determinism or imperialistic ideology: but rather as a powerful, yet humble certainty that human history has a purpose hidden in the heart of a loving God and, consequently, human hopelessness is not the last word in any circumstance. As Johann Baptist Metz puts it: It is because we believe in a definite eschatological meaning of history that we can face the negativities, the catastrophes, without irrationally dividing or denying our responsibilities, without developing excuse-mechanisms. (Metz, 1987: 42) It is the ultimately eschatological character of Christian social memory that enables it to be productive of change instead of merely an outworking of what is. Accordingly, this final section of the chapter looks at the relationship between memory and action, or tradition and behaviour, in order to examine how the preacher's construal of alternatives, as Brueggemann puts it, is necessarily linked to activity in the world as well as the construction of the sermon as an event within the worshipping congregation. The linkage suggested here between the sermon as purposeful in itself (a production in Brueggemann's terms) and Christian action beyond the confines of the worshipping congregation is the essential point. Without that linkage, homiletics is always in danger of being reduced to the purposeless chatter its critics so often suggest it is. What prevents the sermon degenerating into stereotypical platitudinous advice, inane moralizing, socially disconnected biblical commentary, overtly authoritarian personal opinion, or any of the

other denigrating characterizations of its form and presentation, is this crucial link. As collective memory theory suggests, it is the linkages that keep memories alive. The sermon, in this analysis, is a mechanism by which links are maintained and created. The preacher works to let the texts of Scripture speak with renewed power by forging (the metaphor is deliberate) links between that tradition, present experience, and God's purposes.

That forging is of itself productive activity, since, like any memory work, it provides the group which is part of it with resources of identity, location, purpose and exposition essential to its well-being and continuance. What prevents that memory work from becoming self-absorbed and inward looking is that the Christian tradition, or memory, always has God as its referent. Or to make the same point in more theological terms, the eschatological nature of the Christian tradition exerts the irresistible pressure of eternity in the here and now, and that pressure inevitably prompts a radical calling into question of current social arrangements and purposes. As part of this proleptic pressure, preaching, to be Christian preaching, has to be itself both a purposeful event and a motivator of action beyond the homiletic arena.

What follows is an examination of ideas expressed in three very different theological traditions that serve to support that conviction: namely from the political theology of the German Roman Catholic theologian Johann Baptist Metz (born 1928), the biblical studies of the Norwegian Lutheran scholar Nils Alstrup Dahl (1911-2001), and the liturgical studies of the Estonian born Russian Orthodox Church historian Alexander Schmemann (1921-1983).

6.11 Johann Baptist Metz on Christ as dangerous memory.

Metz, like others mentioned earlier who offer social commentary from a wide range of perspectives (for example, Hervieu-L©ger, Davie, and Brueggemann, to cite but three amongst many) regards contemporary society as widely forgetful. Also, like others he regards the dominant power of the market—with its short-term goals and instrumental logic—as being at the heart of this corrosive forgetfulness. Indeed, he believes the style of thinking generated from the dominance of the market is so pervasive that other ways of thinking are relegated to little

more that superstition. He writes: Everything in our consciousness that is determined by memory, everything outside the calculations of our techno-pragmatic reason, will be equated with superstition and left to the private whim of the individual.

But this does not necessarily mean that we are freer and more enlightened. We merely fall prey to the dominant illusions all the more easily. (1980: 110) For Metz the only way out of those illusions is what he terms 'the dangerous memory of the freedom of Jesus Christ' (1980: 88). Here, he must be quoted at some length because this concept is so clearly of importance to the idea of the sermon as both event and action: The Church must understand and justify itself as the public witness and bearer of the tradition of a dangerous memory of freedom in the 'systems' of our emancipative society. This thesis is based on memory as the fundamental form of the expression of Christian faith and on the central and special importance of freedom in that faith. In faith, Christians accomplish the memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesus Christi. In faith, they remember the testament of Christ's love, in which the kingdom of God appeared among men [sic] by initially establishing that kingdom between men, by Jesus' confession of himself as the one who was on the side of the oppressed and rejected and by his proclamation of the coming kingdom of God as the liberating power of unconditional love. This memoria Jesus Christi in not a memory which deceptively dispenses Christians from the risks involved in the future. It is not a middle-class counter-figure to hope. On the contrary, it anticipates the future as a future of those who are oppressed, without hope and doomed to fail. It is therefore a dangerous and at the same time liberating memory that oppresses and questions the present because it reminds us not of some open future, but precisely this future and because it compels Christians constantly to change themselves so that they are able to take this future into account. (1980: 90) The insistence that the future that is anticipated is not any possible future but the future as disclosed in Jesus Christ is telling. This future is the horizon to which faith looks and towards which the sermon must spur its hearers. This is memory work because it is rooted firmly in the reality of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the church's continual reframing of those realities in its collective memory.

Brueggemann's concepts of 'traditioning' and 'reimagination' immediately come to mind. Like Breuggemann, Metz sees this memory work as subversive and he writes of the memoria Jesus Christi: This definite memory breaks

through the magic circle of the prevailing consciousness. It regards history as something more than a screen for contemporary interests. It mobilizes tradition as a dangerous tradition and therefore as a liberating force in respect of the one-dimensional character and certainty of the one whose hour is always there (John 7.6). It gives rise again and again to the suspicion that the plausibility structures of a society may be relationships aimed to delude. It also refuses to measure the relevance of its criticism in accordance with what 'an elderly, rather sleepy business man' would regard unquestioningly as relevant 'after lunch' and what often functions as a secret criterion for rationality and a sense of reality. Christian faith can and must, in my opinion, be seen in this way as a subversive memory. (1980: 90) Again, the issues of the radicalizing and challenging aspects of Christian collective memory come to the fore.

These are issues that must be recognized and given full significance if memory work is not to be constrained by the status quo.

6.12 Dangerous memory as subversive.

Metz contrasts this subversive dangerous memory to comforting reminiscences, or a nostalgia that censors the harshness of the past (1980: 109). Instead, he allies this Christian memory with memories that we find difficult because they make demands on us now and challenge what is otherwise simply assumed in our structures of what is plausible. Such memories, he insists, have 'a future content', because they require to be taken into account and cannot be dispassionate recollection. Above all, it is the memory of human suffering that makes such demands and forces a radical reappraisal of history, tradition, and practice. He puts it thus: The memory of human suffering forces us to look at the public theatrum mundi not merely from the standpoint of the successful and established, but from that of the conquered and the victims.

This recalls the function of the court fool in the past: he represented an alternative (reject, vanquished or oppressed) to his master's policy; his function was strictly political and in no way 'purely aesthetic'. His politics was, so to speak, a politics of the memory of the suffering—as against the traditional political principle of 'woe to

the conquered', and against the Machiavellian ruler. (1980: 105) Although Metz does not use the reference himself, the passage above presents a tantalizing echo of the thought expressed by Saint Paul: For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. We are fools for the sake of Christ. (1 Corinthians 4.9-10 NRSV) The image of a foolish spectacle, whether of the court jester or the captive destined for death in the victor's triumphal procession, is one of the powerlessness to effect change. Nevertheless, the fool in both circumstances remains a spectacle—a signification of the possibility of something other than the status quo, and even by weakness a question mark against overweening power. Both spectacles are kindred in some small way to the spectacle of the Son of God crucified. As Paul writes earlier in 1 Corinthians: 'the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God' (1 Corinthians 1.18). The profundities of the theology of Christ's death are beyond the immediate concerns of this study, but the issue must be raised here because of the prominence it receives in Metz's understanding of memory. The 'foolishness of the cross' is the very thing, according to Metz, that allows the possibility that power does not always triumph and that suffering may be redeemed or changed. This is a kind of anti-history in which those of no-account are taken into account. As he puts it: Christian faith declares itself as the memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi. At the midpoint of this faith is a specific memoria passionis, on which is grounded the promise of future freedom for all. We remember the future of our freedom in the memory of his suffering—this is an eschatological statement that cannot be made more plausible through any subsequent accommodation, and cannot be generally verifiable.

This statement remains controversial and controvertible: the power to scandalize is part of its communicable content. (1980: 111) According to Metz, the memory of Christ's death has constantly to be associated with memories of human suffering if the inevitable hopelessness of that suffering is to be challenged. Without that association, the necessities of history become an endless cycle of despair and human anguish.

The linkages of collective memory have, accordingly, the most profound of theological consequences: Memory has a fundamental theological importance as what may be termed anamnestic solidarity or solidarity in memory with the dead and the conquered which breaks the grip of history as a history of triumph and conquest

interpreted dialectically or as evolution. (1980:184) In this view, the collective Christian memory literally takes the inevitability out of history in that it opens a way out of the determinisms we too easily believe hold humanity entirely in their thrall. Metz adds: The eschatological truth of the memoria passionis cannot be derived from our historical, social and psychological compulsions. This is what makes it a liberating truth in the first place. (1980: 111) And again: This memory breaks through the grip of the prevailing consciousness. It claims unresolved conflicts that have been thrust into the background and unfulfilled hopes. It maintains earlier experiences in contrast to the prevailing insights and in this way makes the present unsafe. (1980: 200) Here is an understanding of memory serving faith that puts a profound question mark against the straightforward, and apparently easy presentism so often assumed in collective memory theory.

6.13 Social memory as a means to personal appropriation.

Although the terminology is different, Metz, like Brueggemann, presents memory work in the church as an absolutely core part of faithful living. Both are concerned to make plain that the tradition the believer lives within and from has about it an essential 'otherness'. This 'out of this world' quality at one and the same time both profoundly challenges everyday certainties and dismays, and also incorporates the believer in an eschatological context that constantly exerts a pressure towards the fulfilment of all things in God. Both would agree that the purpose of memory work in the church is the transformation of communicative salience, what I have termed 'sermon as event', and of practical engagement, the aspect that I have called 'contextual pertinence' (see sections 5.3 and 5.4.2). Both also agreed that the content of Scripture has a unique authority within the tradition, although the focus of that authority is drawn rather differently: for Metz, it is located in the story of Jesus, and particularly his passion; for Brueggemann, it is more diffuse, in that the content and the method of use of tradition in the whole of Scripture is pertinent. That is not to say that Brueggemann disagrees about the cross of Christ being of primary significance, but that he approaches that event from the conviction that the whole of Scripture discloses something of that radical alternative that the cross presents.

This differing locus is clearly an outworking of the different traditions from which the two authors come. For Metz,

the dangerous memory of Christ presents a radical critique of conventional wisdom that requires of the would-be disciple a life lived in the pattern of Christ. His theology becomes a restatement of what could appropriately be called 'classical' Roman Catholic imitatio Christi spirituality—but with a political edge directed to the issues of contemporary society. Though political in consequence, Metz's conception of Christian memory is both doctrinal and mystical. Brueggemann also believes the inherited Christian memory brings a sharp critique to bear on conventional wisdom and social practice, but for him this radical edge is expressed most cogently when Scripture is given its proper authority as 'another voice'. His is a perspective born of a tradition that puts the Bible in pole position as arbiter of faithful living.

Brueggemann undoubtedly connects readily with the task of the preacher, but that easy application should not divert attention entirely from Metz's complementary insights. His insistence on the power of the memoria passionis, doctrinally understood, as a way that eschatological hope breaks into current practices offers a dogmatic tool that can serve to enhance the preacher's 'construal of alternatives'. Since it draws explicitly on the church's development of doctrine, it serves to underscore the collective nature of the enterprise. As Metz writes: The process by which a memory is made present and the present is overcome, cannot exclusively or even primarily take place in the individual. As formulations of the collective memory, dogmas may therefore have an entirely new part to play here.

They can, as it were, compel me to recollect in the present something that I cannot grasp or realize on the basis of my own personal knowledge. (1980: 202) In Metz, as in Brueggemann, the social dimension of Christian memory extends far beyond the confines of the believing community. He writes: Christianity does not introduce God subsequently as a kind of 'stop-gap' into this conflict about the future; instead, it tries to keep alive the memory of the crucified Lord, this specific memoria passionis, as a dangerous memory of freedom in the social systems of our technological civilization. (Metz, 1980: 109) It is the recognition of the memory as dangerous that is the very quality that renders it salvific and of universal consequence. In summary, Metz reinforces the argument presented here that memory has an essential role in Christianity and that consequently preaching should strive to support and maintain that memory. Metz places eschatology at the heart of Christian social memory, and

suggests that this is the aspect that makes it especially productive of a powerful critique of accepted social conventions of thought and action. In particular, that eschatological imperative keeps in memory the vanquished and oppressed, and parts of human experience otherwise consigned to oblivion. From a focus on the cross, both doctrinally and as an historical fact, Metz directs attention to discipleship as the means of following the way of the cross and seeking to live in the pattern of Christ. As such, he sees Christian memory as transformative of both people's perspectives and actions. In terms of Halbwachs' understanding of collective memory, Metz's theology shifts the insistence on memory serving present needs towards memory serving present needs mediated by the proleptic force of an eschatological understanding of Christ's death. This chapter began with a consideration of Brueggemann's understanding of tradition and the generative possibilities inherent in that understanding. From his ideas of imaginative remembering and the sermon as creative production, the discussion turned to Thiselton's ideas on frameworks of knowledge, and his conception of performance as a way of habituating thinking.

Habituation led the argument into a discussion of the eschatological element of memory through consideration of the work of Johann Baptist Metz. As Metz is particularly concerned that his theology should serve Christian praxis, the argument now shifts to memory and action in the work of Nils Alstrup Dahl. Dahl offers a way of adding a decidedly New Testament aspect to the discussion, and that will be augmented by the addition of a liturgical dimension via the work of Alexander Schmemann, before the whole is concluded with a resum© that will connect all of these elements to Brueggemann's notion of the sermon as hazardous production.

6.14 Dahl on remembering in the New Testament: memory as performative.

Dahl observes that, unlike philosophers such as Aristotle, the writers of the New Testament nowhere elaborate on the idea and function of memory itself and that 'to remember' in the Christian Scriptures is consequently used in an imprecise way similar to ordinary everyday usage (1976: 12). The term and its analogous phrases are used not only of something in the past, but also of things in the present (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 1.2 or Colossians 4.18) or the future (e.g. Hebrews 11.22—here Joseph literally remembered his own burial). As in ordinary usage, 'remembering' is used not only of recollection but also of thinking of someone or something, or thinking about in

prayer, or keeping in mind (in the sense of providing aid). Even when the object refers to the past, the principal concern is often more than just recalling an event. For example, in John 16.21 the woman who has given birth no longer remembers her anguish because of the joy of bringing a child into the world; and similarly Paul in Philippians 3.13 forgets the past, in the sense that it no longer shapes his life, although he still remembers it. From these and numerous other examples Dahl draws the conclusion that 'to remember' in the New Testament 'signifies almost always to recall something or to think about it in such a way that it is expressed in speech or is formative for attitude and action' (1976: 13). In other words, memory is here intimately connected with the actualities of human endeavour and expression. Such an understanding closely parallels Halbwachs' observation that collective memory 'truly rests not on learned history but on lived history' (1980:57). Halbwachs was insistent on a clear distinction between history and collective memory.

Accordingly, he asserts in The Collective Memory that 'history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up' (1980:78). This distinction has been extensively debated in historiography (see for example, Le Goff (1992), and Climo and Cattell (2002)) and will not be repeated here; but alongside that debate a more theologically orientated analysis of the relationship between memory and history has disclosed just how profound the connection is between an historical awareness and an understanding of God as active within it. The highly influential Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (first published 1982, with further editions in 1989 and 1996), as one exemplar of that analysis, will serve as reinforcement of Dahl's insistence that social memory understood in terms of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures always has a performative aspect to it. Yerushalmi makes the point that unlike other nearby religious systems, ancient Israel shifted the encounter between humanity and the divine away from nature and the cosmos towards the more mundane realm of social human activity. He writes: The pagan conflict of the gods with the forces of chaos, or with one another, was replaced by a drama of a different and poignant order: the paradoxical struggle between the divine will of an omnipotent Creator and the free will of his creature, man, in the course of history; a tense dialectic of obedience and rebellion. (1996: 8) Through this understanding of history, the Hebrew peoples' actions in remembering become a religious imperative. Man in Hebrew thought comes to affirm his historical existence despite the suffering it entails, and gradually, ploddingly, he discovers that God reveals himself in the course of it. Rituals and

festivals in ancient Israel are themselves no longer primarily repetitions of mythic archetypes meant to annihilate historical time. Where they evoke the past, it is not the primeval but the historical past, in which great and critical moments of Israel's history were fulfilled. Far from attempting a flight from history, biblical religion allows itself to be saturated by it and is inconceivable apart from it. … … Ancient Israel knows what God is from what he has done in history. And if that is so, then memory has become crucial to its faith and, ultimately, to its very existence. (1996: 9) Yerushalmi echoes something of Halbwachs distinction between memory and history, in that the remembering of what God has done in history that he notes as being so crucial to Jewish identity is not achieved primarily by systematic written history, but by ritualistic and liturgical commemoration. Accordingly, these actions are more effective as vehicles of memory over many generations than any written history could ever be. Dahl provides an insightful analysis of these processes detailed in Scripture.

6.15 God's remembering and the maintenance of human remembering.

The linkage between memory and action is made very clear in biblical passages in which God is the subject. For example, when God hearing the cries of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt remembers his covenant, he determines to act to free them (Exodus 6.5); or again, when God receives his people's confession of disobedience he remembers the covenant, and that moves him to remember the land for good (Leviticus 26.40-45); and similarly, Zechariah's prophecy after the birth of his son John says that the raising up of a Saviour is the consequence of God remembering 'his holy covenant' (Luke 1.67-79). Likewise, when God no more remembers his people's sins he pardons them—an association of the act of mercy with forgetting that occurs, for example, in Hebrews 8.12 and 10.17; Jeremiah 31.34; and Isaiah 43.25. In the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures God's remembering and forgetting has a direct consequence for human lives. It is not an exaggeration to say that salvation is a consequence of God's remembering—a thought expressed by Alexander Schmemann: Salvation consists in this: that in Christ—perfect God and perfect man—memory comes to reign and is restored as a lifecreating power, and, in remembering, man [sic] partakes not of the experience of the fall, mortality and death, but of overcoming this fall through "life everlasting." For Christ himself is the incarnation and the gift to mankind of God's memory in all its fullness—as love directed towards each man and toward all humanity, toward the world and all creation. He

is the Saviour because in his memory he “remembers” all, and through this memory he receives all as his own life, and he gives his own life to all as their life. But being the incarnation of the memory of God, Christ is likewise the manifestation and fulfilment of man’s perfect remembrance of God, for in this memory—love, self-sacrifice and communion with the Father—is his entire life, the entire perfection of his humanity. (1987: 128) According to Dahl (1976: 14) the close association of memory and action meant that the great festivals of the Jewish faith and the ritual actions that were part of them operated as mnemonic signs. In these actions Israel ‘remembered’ Yahweh and caused Yahweh ‘to remember’ his people anew, and ‘past salvation became once again an actual and present reality’ (14). Although in the earliest days of the church memory work was not as formalized as it was becoming in rabbinic Judaism, nevertheless rooted in the same tradition there was a strong emphasis on remembering as an essential component of community faithfulness.

Dahl writes: The initial acceptance of the gospel puts the whole of life under obligation. A community of baptized Christians which has come to share in the gospel and which has received basic catechetical instructions already knows what must be done. They have received the Holy Spirit and are on the right road. They need to preserve what they have received and to remind themselves of it in order to live out the reality into which they have been introduced. The first obligation of the apostle vis-a-vis a community is to make the faithful remember what they have received and already know or should know. (1976: 15) Dahl cites Paul’s repeated use of the formula ‘just as you know …’ in 1 Thessalonians (1:5; 2:1,4,11; 3:3,4; 4:2; 5:1f); Jude’s use of the expression ‘the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’ (verse 3); and 2 Peter’s ‘I intend to keep on reminding you of these things, though you already know them’ (1:12) as typical of this kind of thinking in the earliest Christian communities (1976: 15). This analysis leads Dahl to the bold assertion that for the early Christians, knowledge was anamnesis, a recollection of the gnosis [sic] given to all those who have believed in the gospel, received baptism, and been incorporated into the church. … Clearly, there always remains a possibility of growing in knowledge; but this essentially signifies an ever growing assimilation and an ever more perfect application of what has been once for all received. (1976: 16) Based on that assertion, Dahl makes a distinction between preaching as missionary proclamation to those who do not yet know Christ—properly encompassed by the term kerygma—and preaching that takes place within the body of believers. Although both types of preaching share the same essential core in

terms of content, the style and purpose of each is quite different.

Dahl writes: The faithful already knew the message; they had been made participants, they had been made part of the divine work of which the kerygma was a proclamation. That is why, precisely when it is a question of the very core of the gospel, the preaching to the communities was more recollection than proclamation.

Thus what we understand generally by 'to preach'—namely, to deliver a sermon in the church—no longer corresponds to the keryssein of the New Testament, but rather closely to hypomimeskein, to restore memory. (1976: 19) Dahl justifies that distinction by reference to New Testament passages that support the idea of preaching within the church as memory work (for example, 2 Timothy 2:14; Titus 3:10; Jude 5; 2 Peter 1:12; and 1 Corinthians 4:17). That the purpose and style of preaching changes in relationship to the social composition and religious experience of those hearing the preaching is an idea akin to Halbwachs' observation that collective memories are closely associated with the epochs of an individual's or a community's life. Dahl indentifies three types of preaching: evangelistic public heralding, catechetical instruction and incorporation, and ongoing encouragement in the communal life of a believing community (1976: 19). It is only the last category, that of leaders striving to maintain the communal life of faith, that Dahl understands to be concerned with the restoration of memory. The idea of restoration suggests that even in the earliest years of the church's existence the Christian social memory was under threat as adherents forgot essentials of the faith, or laboured under misapprehensions about what its content was, or simply had experiences that put faith in question. Considered in the light of this forgetfulness, contemporary worries about the corrosion of Christian memory are perhaps not quite as daunting as they at first appear to be.

6.16 Memory work as more than recollection.

Dahl's analysis adds weight to this study's contention that preaching within Christian congregations is memory work. His identification of the link between remembering and action in Scripture also supports the argument, presented earlier, that being part of an ongoing tradition is more dynamic and purposeful than mere recollection.

Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that Dahl's analysis establishes memory work as the very motor that sustained the burgeoning life of the earliest Christian communities; an understanding of tradition's significance that has more recently been developed at length in the work of the British theologian David Brown (1999 and 2000). As Dahl puts it, 'To "remember Jesus Christ" does not mean to preserve in memory an image of him but to let this memory form our thoughts and actions' (1976: 20). Although Dahl's analysis cannot answer the sociological issue of how that remembering can be sustained in contemporary society, his approach does at the least demonstrate that similar concerns have been part of the Christian experience from the very earliest times.

Saint Paul's avowal in his letter to the Roman Christians that 'I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder' (Romans 15.15) is, accordingly, but an exemplar of a determination to keep memories alive voiced frequently elsewhere in the New Testament. Again and again the young churches were exhorted to keep in mind the founding truths that had been delivered to them and on which their faith was grounded (e.g. 1 Corinthians 3.10ff.; Colossians 2.6-7; Hebrews 2.3f.; Revelation 1.3): and the authors of the epistles often feel it necessary to be explicit about the task of 'reminding' as a prime reason for their writings and actions (1 Corinthians 4.17; 2 Thessalonians 2.5; 2 Timothy 2.14; Jude 5; 2 Peter 1.12-13). In Dahl's understanding, memory is a core aspect of the gospel. As he readily acknowledges, not everything in the New Testament is concerned with tradition and memory (1976: 17), but, nevertheless, the prominence of that concern is sufficient to support the contention that remembering, in social as well as personal terms, was understood as a fundamental aspect of maintaining the faith in apostolic times. The angel's words to the Christians of Sardis, 'Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent' (Revelation 3.3) disclose a concern that is both perennial and immediate within the church.

6.17 Worship as participation in God's memory: the liturgical theology of Alexander Schmemann.

Dahl appeals to Semitic ideas to support his close association of memory with action, Schmemann does likewise, but develops them differently in that he insists that the fundamental category is what God remembers before any estimation of what humanity does or should do. He writes: In the biblical Old Testament teaching on God, the

term memory refers to the attentiveness of God to his creation, the power of divine providential love, through which God "holds" the world and gives it life, so that life itself can be termed abiding in the memory of God, and death the falling out of this memory. In other words, memory, like everything else in God, is real, it is that life that he grants, that God 'remembers'; it is the eternal overcoming of the 'nothing' out of which God called us into 'his wonderful light'. (1988: 125, italics original) And again: 'Remember, O Lord …' Without any exaggeration one can say that the commemoration, i.e., the referral of everything to the memory of God, the prayer that God would 'remember', constitutes the heartbeat of all Christian worship, her entire life. (1988: 123, italics original) Given that he was an Orthodox scholar, the point should be made that this insistence on the absolute and primary nature of God's remembering is prior to any consideration of the Eucharist. In other words, Schmemann sees everything, including the church's eucharistic life, as grounded in the pre-eminent memory of God. Starting from this position is of crucial significance to Schmemann in that it allows him to challenge sharply what he sees as the false reduction of worship to psychological and subjective categories. He is keen to resist the suggestion that symbols can be reduced to illustrative tools that disclose the meanings of past events, or that worship should be understood in terms of its psychological utility. By his emphasis first on God's memory, actualized particularly in Christ, Schmemann is eager to avoid any sense of memory as a nostalgic looking back to Christ, or as the garnering of historical knowledge about Christ. Instead, he asserts that Christian memory work is participation in salvation. As he puts it: From the very first day of Christianity, to believe in Christ meant to remember him and keep him always in mind. It is not simply to "know" about him and his doctrine, but to know him—living and abiding among those who love him. From the very beginning the faith of Christians was memory and remembrance, but memory restored to its lifecreating essence—for, as opposed to our 'natural', 'fallen' memory, with its illusory 'resurrection of the past', this new memory is a joyous recognition of the one who was resurrected, who lives and therefore is present and abides, and not only recognition but also encounter and the living experience of communion with him. … … It is no longer the 'past' that we remember, but Christ himself, and this remembrance becomes our entry into his victory, over its collapse into 'past', 'present' and 'future'. It is an entry not into some abstract and motionless 'eternity' but into 'life everlasting', in which all is alive, everything lives through the lifecreating memory of God, and everything is ours. (1988: 129, italics in original) For Schmemann as an Orthodox Christian, the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist, is the pre-eminent site of this effective remembering, but

it is so only as a sign of what that commemoration says of the whole of existence. He writes elsewhere: The church is the sacrament of the Kingdom—not because she possesses divinely instituted acts called 'sacraments', but because first of all she is the possibility given to man to see in and through this world the 'world to come', to see and to 'live' it in Christ. It is only when in the darkness of this world we discern that Christ has already 'filled all things with Himself' that the things whatever they may be, are revealed and given to us full of meaning and beauty. A Christian is the one who, wherever he looks, finds Christ and rejoices in Him. And this joy transforms all his human plans and programs, decisions and actions, making all his mission the sacrament of the world's return to Him who is the life of the world. (1973: 113, italics in original) It would not be an exaggeration to say that for Schmemann participation in the Eucharist is a firsthand experience of the parousia, such is his insistence on the actualized memory of God. In this sense, the purpose of the whole worshipping and witnessing life of the church is to make all time eschatologically transparent. To live within the memory of God is to live in reality itself and, from that perspective, all human memory must essentially be a memory of loss. From his profoundly sacramental theology Schmemann arrives at an understanding of Christian social memory with precisely the character of perpetual Christly presence that Halbwachs identified: After his death and resurrection Christ did not lose contact with humankind, but rather remains perpetually within the bosom of his Church.

There is no ceremony of the cult from which he is absent; there is no prayer and act of adoration which does not reach up to him. (Halbwachs, 1992: 90) No doubt in Halbwachs' terminology that sense of abiding presence is associated with the mnemonic power of actions and words, rather than theological conviction per se. Nevertheless, those mechanisms are fundamental components of the practice of the anamnestic theology being advocated here. For Schmemann, knowing oneself to be alive in Christ is the essence of living the faith. Remembrance cannot, therefore, be about retaining or reinvigorating knowledge about Christ; it can only be participation in Christ. Morrill's comment on Schmemann is apposite: The definite content of faith is not merely an idea but a reality in which believers participate, a knowledge that transforms their view of the world and their roles within it. (Morrill, 2000: 154) Just how profoundly costly that participation may be is well illustrated by William Cavanaugh's discomfiting study Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ (1998) detailing the way the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church unwittingly ceded authority to the brutal Pinochet

regime in Chile. Out of a close examination of the realities of church experience in circumstances of despair and horror, Cavanaugh writes of Christ's abiding presence in the Eucharist in terms that are highly reminiscent of Schmemann: This gathering is eschatological.

The body of Christ is never guaranteed by the past or by any formal institution, but only comes epicletically, in the constantly renewed pleading of the faithful that the Holy Spirit enact the Kingdom in their midst. Historical continuity never determines the presence of Christ; the eschaton rules history, but is also enacted in history.

The Eucharist is therefore an "event" in the sense of an eschatological performance in time which is not institutionally guaranteed, but it is an event which is ontologically determinative. (Cavanaugh, 1998: 270 italics original) And again: Because the church lives from the future, it is a thing that is not. The church inhabits a space and time which is never guaranteed by coercion or institutional weight, but must be constantly asked for, as gift of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist is the imagination of the church, but it is not our imagination in the sense that Christians build the church. The Eucharist is God's imagination of the church; we participate in that imagination insofar as we are imagined by God, incorporated into the body of Christ through grace. (1998: 272) For Cavanaugh, as for Schmemann, the work of the Holy Spirit mediated through the sacrament raises the believer into salvation and the new life God has created.

The participation experienced is first and foremost an ascent into what God has already accomplished and continues to accomplish. It is a space in which categories of recollection and anticipation give way to the experience itself, and secular, commonplace estimations of time and space are challenged by the reality that is life everlasting. That experience is then lived by the church, by believers active in everyday realities, until the next time the church is gathered together at the Eucharist. In that living, this participation is not held like some kind of bank deposit over which the believer retains control, but is rather given away as a gift, as it were, as the memory of it motivates and inspires action until the next time that memory is eucharistically renewed. Given the proleptic and epicletic emphasis of Schmemann, it is surprising that Morrill in his close reading of him is highly critical of his analysis of the outworking of participation (Morrill, 2000: 131). The criticism is worth examining in a little detail in

that it is indicative of a concern often cited that the kind of anamnestic theological work advocated here tends towards an amorphous and principle-less kind of theology. Morrill sees an unhelpful abstraction in Schmemann's thought in that the participation he describes is too often framed by the category 'man', used in the sense of abstract humanity, which Morrill believes obscures the ethical and moral obligations of worship and thereby threatens to reduce it to merely cultic activity (154). Such criticism fails to appreciate the weight and power of the generalizing terms Schmemann uses. It is not necessary to share completely his Orthodox understanding of the Eucharist to appreciate the way his exposition of it discloses its power to transcend past, present and future. Far from being an almost amoral abstraction, his sense of entering into the memory of Christ sees that anamnestic action as of universal relevance and as the ultimate antidote to hyper-individualism. He writes: The Church is a union of love … … not only in the sense that her members are united by love, but above all in that through this love of all for each other, through love as life itself, she manifests Christ and his love to the world, she witnesses to him and loves and saves the world through the love of Christ. In the fallen world, the mission of the Church, as salvation, is to manifest the world as regenerated by Christ. (1987: 136) Assembling as the church brings with it action outside the assembly as a necessary and inevitable consequence. Participation both recalls believers to their place in God's memory and enables them to locate that memory as the ground and goal of all living.

What Morrill criticizes is in fact an indicator of the profundity of Schmemann's account of memory in the church rather than a circumventing of its ethical requirements, a fact supported by Cavanaugh's account in very similar terms working from the hard realities of Chile in the 1970s and 80s. It is not that memory work in the church requires ethical social decision making and action as an applied consequence, but that living in the memory of God inevitably creates a new quality of existence which is shaped by God's life-creating memory. A similar point about presence which 'transcends comprehension' yet is nonetheless concretely apprehended is made from the perspective of aesthetics by Douglas Hedley in his Living Forms of the Imagination (2008: 244); so Schmemann cannot be dismissed as suspect on the grounds of the particularity of his own faith tradition. The objectivizing and subjectivizing 'decision for action' advocated by Morrill (2000: 189) may be a useful tool in prompting behaviour, but in terms of participation in godly memory it systematizes something that goes beyond such an objective category. Schmemann writes: Out of all creation it is given to man [sic] alone to remember God and through this

remembrance to truly live. If everything in the world witnesses to God, declares his glory and renders him praise, then only man 'remembers' him and , through this memory, through this living knowledge of God, comprehends the world as God's world, receives it from God and raises it up to God. To God's remembrance of him, man answers with his remembrance of God. If God's remembrance of man is the gift of life, then man's remembrance of God is the reception of this lifecreating gift, the constant acquisition of and increase in life. (1987: 125 italics in original) In other words, such a memory is something we inhabit, not something we direct or chose to apply. It is, as it were, the vision with which we see, the air with which we breathe, the language with which we speak, or the metaphor with which we think. In Halbwachs' terms, such a memory provides a current of social thought which ordinarily is 'as invisible as the atmosphere we breathe' (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). No doubt such terminology would not have appealed to Schmemann. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Halbwachs believed such currents of social thought are generally only recognized when change prompts resistance to them; a thought that is not far from Schmemann's identification of the psychologizing and subjectivizing tendencies of contemporary social discourse as profoundly destructive of inherited Christian traditions.

6.18 Conclusion.

David Brown in his study Tradition and Imagination observes that most contemporary Christians, just like their forebears in the faith, are heavily conditioned in their understanding of any passage of Scripture by what they have already learnt from worship and sermons (1999: 122). The appropriation of understandings and the creation of meanings are always related to previous understandings and meanings, and the intellectual processes involved cannot be entirely separated from the bodily and spatial context in which they take place. Worship and preaching take place in a gathering of people in a particular place where particular relationships are sustained and certain codes of action pertain. In terms of collective memory, the form of presentation, the content offered, the relationships established and the place in which it all happens provide rich resources for the frameworks necessary for social remembering. It is surely not accidental that this is the case. The argument presented here has offered plenty of evidence of these processes stretching back in time to the earliest days of the church, and beyond that to the faith of ancient Israel.

The works of Metz, Dahl and Schmemann, from their varied perspectives, support Brueggemann's contention that memory work that is more than recollection—in his terms 'traditioning'—is essential to the maintenance of faith. As Halbwachs insisted, the individual does the constructing of memory, but does so using guidelines laid down by other remembrances and by the remembrances of others (1980: 76). 'Chains of memory' understood in this dynamic way are an essential component of what Christianity is. In striving to be part of the chain of memory, contemporary believers are doing what earlier believers did, but that does not mean such memory work is confined to simple incorporation, repetition and mimicry. Social remembering means more than a replication of what went before. Brueggemann, as was detailed earlier, understands that 'more than' as being at work within the Scriptural texts themselves since they are always more than a straightforward account of the commonsense world (2000: 9). That 'more than' offers a re-imagination of the world with God as the ground of its existence and as its purpose. That is a subversive reality which challenges the status quo and our everyday assumptions of reality and power. What Brueggemann identifies is the immensely generative and creative power of the tradition. At first sight this might appear as a potentially destructive mechanism conducive to an anarchic and relativistic developmentalism, but the generative process is controlled by the fact that it is memory work. The collective memory of the church, seen as tradition in use, is able to generate imaginative developments whilst retaining congruity with the originating tradition.

Here Thiselton's ideas on frameworks of knowledge and performance as a way of habituating thinking provide insights into the mechanisms that ensure continuity. The inherited tradition as collective memory provides a communally authenticated and authorized script from which is improvised new variations on the 'old, old story'. An apposite metaphor is that of tradition as a musical score from which the performer interprets faithfully that particular work and not some other (Thiselton, 1981: 74). In this understanding of tradition the preacher is empowered to work with the collective memory with imaginative and artistic creativity that not only sustains corporate memory but also develops it. That tradition as social memory is so creatively generative is a consequence of its eschatological and epicletic nature.

Following Metz, this study suggests that placing eschatology at the heart of Christian social memory makes it a

source of powerful critiques of all social conventions of thought and action. It is the eschatological character of Christian social memory that enables it to be productive of change instead of merely an outworking of what is. That power can only be enhanced by Schmemann's description of the Eucharist as the site at which participants enter life everlasting in a proleptic encounter with the complete fulfilment of God's purposes. That prolepticism is, in its turn, an outworking of the effective memory of God. Thus remembering becomes not a recollection of the past but a remembering that we are remembered by God, whose memory is reality and everlasting life. That the Christian tradition or memory always has God as its referent is the crucial factor that prevents our remembering becoming self-absorbed and subjectivized. The practical realization of God's memory as the referent is the work of the Holy Spirit, who directs our lived remembering not only as a gathered people but also in our lives beyond the confines of the sanctuary. This memory is transformative of both perspectives and actions.

Indeed the eschatological imperative of the Christian collective memory keeps in remembrance parts of human experience otherwise consigned to oblivion. In Metz's terms, this dangerous memory keeps in mind the vanquished, the suffering and the oppressed, and calls us into a discipleship that follows the way of the cross and seeks to live by the pattern of Christ. This keeping in mind means that Christian memory work is always committed to the story of human history understood in the widest terms. The application of such an anamnestic theology to an Halbwachsian understanding of collective memory shifts the focus from the serving of present social needs towards those same needs mediated by the proleptic force of an eschatological understanding of Christ's death. Spurred by the force of this prolepticism, remembering and acting are inseparably linked. As Dahl demonstrates, this is an understanding of memory's use that is clearly evident in the New Testament itself. This study argues that making that memory-action linkage operative is a crucial part of the preaching task. At one and the same time, a sermon needs to be purposeful in itself, a genuine performance of aspects of the collective memory in its own right and a mechanism that offers resources for making that memory an effective memory in the world beyond the worship gathering. What collective memory theory brings to homiletics is a forceful insistence that such linkages are vital to the maintenance of memory itself. It is linkages that keep memories alive.

Without the linkages provided by social frameworks memory die. This is the hard social fact that the work of

scholars such as Hervieu-L©ger and Davie demonstrates. If Christian faith is at heart a remembering of the fact that we are remembered by God, then sustaining that memory becomes the principal task of the church. This requires that all believers, and preachers as their ministers, be concerned with the processes that sustain collective memory. Homiletic methodology that simply assumes that it speaks within an overarching Christian collective memory finds itself more and more diminished in social impact, and may even be destructive of the very memory it assumes it operates within.

This study advocates, instead, homiletic practice that is intentionally anamnestic in content and consciously productive in presentation. The preacher must work to let the texts of Scripture speak with renewed power by forging (that is, producing with the materials of the social, psychological, performative and traditional resources that are to hand) links between the inherited and would be continued tradition, present experience, and God's ultimate purposes. This in itself is productive, since, like any memory work, it provides the group with those things of identity, location, belonging and purpose that are essential to its well-being and continuance. In a society that is amnesic of the Christian tradition, Christian preaching has to be both a motivator of efforts to live the Christian memory in the world and itself a purposeful celebration of that collective memory. Having examined in this chapter some key theological components of Christian memory work in relation both to the use of Scripture and to Halbwachs' ideas, attention must now turn very directly to homiletics. The next chapter will draw together the theological and sociological aspects of the argument.