THE SUFFERING GOD IN THE THEOLOGIES OF CHOAN-SENG SONG AND JÜRGEN MOLTMANN: AN ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Thesis

This thesis will explore the concept of the suffering God in the work of two theologians: God portrayed as 'the crucified God' in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann,[1] and 'the compassionate God' in the theology of Choan-Seng Song.[2] It will first examine the historical development of the doctrine of divine impassibility, survey the paradoxical approach to a suffering God, explore the global context regarding the suffering God as a backdrop and a framework for a clear understanding of the contemporary rediscovery of a suffering God. By examining and comparing the concepts of the suffering God in the work of Song and Moltmann in terms of the commonalities and divergences in their approaches, this study will identify their specific contributions to a deepened Christian theology of the suffering God.

As an Asian student, I am in pursuit of a contextual theology for Asian people, especially East Asia. Song's theology is intentionally a "Christian theology with Asian resources." I have incorporated Moltmann's theology into this study not only because his

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[1] Jürgen Moltmann, born in 1926, is professor emeritus of systematic theology at the University of Tübingen in Germany. Among his works relevant to this dissertation are *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1974), and *God in Creation* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), and *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (San Francisco: Harper Press, 1989), and *Jesus Christ for Today's World* (London: SCM Press, 1994).

[2] Choan-Seng Song (b. 1929), a native of Taiwan, is professor of theology at the Pacific School of Religion in California. Amongst his many books, his *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, (NY: Orbis Books, 1979), and *The Compassionate God*, (NY: Orbis Books, 1982), and *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, Maryknoll (NY: Orbis, 1986), and *Jesus, The Crucified People* (NY: Orbis Books, 1990) particularly focus on the suffering God.

ideas on the suffering God are important and profound, but also because his theology serves as a point of comparison and clarification for Song's theology. Through an analysis of the theological ideas that influenced their conceptions of the suffering God, some important theological works concerning the divine nature in contemporary theology will be briefly surveyed. Among the contemporary theologians who deal with the concept of the suffering God, Song and Moltmann are particularly important in terms of their distinctive works on the suffering God and the question of its relationship to the problem of creaturely suffering. A special concern here is to assess how these theologians manage to approach and interpret the reality of the cross. According to Moltmann and Song, does God the Father participate actively or passively in the suffering of Christ and how does the doctrine of the Trinity relate to this question? According to these two theologians, how does God relate to human suffering? How do Moltmann and Song apply a concept of the suffering God to the human existential situation of suffering? These questions will be addressed in the following chapters of the study.

2. Status Quaestionis

Many scholars have recognized Moltmann's and Song's special emphasis on the idea of a suffering God in their theologieas. Elizabeth A. Johnson, for example, remarks: "The theological stance that argues for the suffering of God has been given its most eloquent articulation by Jürgen Moltmann. In his book *The Crucified God*, he depicts a God who literally suffers on the cross, thereby identifying with the suffering of the whole

world."[3] Likewise, Alister E. McGrath acknowledges that "Moltmann is one of the most important contemporary exponents of a 'theology of the cross.' This is especially evident in his major work *The Crucified God*, which sets out an understanding of the doctrine of God which takes the cross of Christ as foundational to an authentically Christian understanding of God."[4] Letty M. Russell acknowledges that Song's theology emphasizes the suffering of people together with the suffering of God and all living things. Chai-Yong Choo, a Korean theologian, observes: "Song is one of the most creative and important theologians of our time. Song claims the compassion of God is expressed strongly in Asian spirituality and shows how the story of God's compassion in Jesus and the many heartrending stories and poems of the Asian people come together. Song discovers God's heartache, God's pain-love, through the Asian history of suffering and formulates his third-eye theology which advances the new hope that goes beyond the horizon of the suffering."[5]

The concept of divine suffering-love is, I suggest, at the core of our Christian faith. Nevertheless, it has been denied by most traditional theologians, and almost completely ignored in important theological works until recently. In 1924, J. K. Mozley pointed out how completely the issue of divine suffering was ignored in many theological

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[3] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (Crossroad, New York, 1996), pp. 119-120.

[4] Alister E. McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* (Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995), p. 117.

[5] I quoted and translated this statement from Chai-Yong Choo's afterwords in his Korean translation of C. S. *Song's Third-Eye Theology*. Choo's work was published under the title [Korean] of *Asian Suffering and Theology* (The Christian Literature Society, Seoul, Korea, 1982) and his afterwords is found in pp. 387-8.

works, where one might have expected at least some mention of the word "impassibility."[6] He was disillusioned that responsible theologians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries kept silent on the problem of divine pathos, while they had devoted much attention to the question of divine will and purpose for the world.[7]

The early church generally adopted the Greek philosophical concept of the 'God incapable of suffering.' The apathetic God became the God of the Christians, although this idea was not in harmony with the biblical God who is depicted as emotional and suffering.[8] However, the notion that God is incapable of suffering became more and more acceptable, even an axiom of theology, although the contradiction between the biblical witness and traditional theology remained untenable and unsatisfactory. Moltmann observes that the apathy axiom has left a deeper impression on the fundamental concepts of the doctrine of God than has the history of Christ's passion.[9] But such an understanding of a loving, yet non-suffering God is difficult to maintain in the face of so much suffering today, especially in the Third World, where people experience constant and terrible suffering in their daily lives. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive systematic treatment of the question of divine passibility in our time.

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[6] J. K. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 128.

[7] Ibid.

[8] See Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 42.

[9] Jürgen Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today's World* (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 43.

Some significant works have been published on the concept of the suffering of God in order to fill this gap in the past quarter of a century. These works have been so impressive that, in the late twentieth century, it has become "the new orthodoxy"[10] to speak of a suffering God. Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God* (1972 German; 1974 English) is widely regarded as the most significant and influential work to have expounded this idea, and has been the subject of intense discussion. Choan-Seng Song's *Third-Eye Theology* (1979) is also regarded as a landmark which expresses the idea of the compassionate God, as Song unearths and exemplifies the possibilities of a new kind of Christian theology that draws upon diverse cultures and religions. The critical reader will observe that suffering is one of the fundamental themes of Song's thought. Song presents a view of the rhythm of life in which suffering is the most fundamental experience. According to Song, suffering determines the nature of both being and action. Song's concern is to do theology that reflects the reality of Asian people's lives.

This thesis argues, as do Song and Moltmann in their works, that the suffering of God should be central to the Christian conception of God. In this study, I aim to make the following points: (1) God's response to suffering is the most important consideration in determining our own response.[11] (2) Compassion (suffering-with) is a way of

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[10] So widespread is this attempt to integrate suffering into the idea of God, that one author has likened it to the rise of a new orthodoxy; see Ronald Goetz, "The Rise of a New Orthodoxy," *Christian Century* 103/13 (Apirl 16, 1986), pp. 385-389.

[11] For the person of faith, the experience of suffering leads to critical questions about God, oneself, oneself in relation to God and others. As noted by Richard Sparks, for the believer, reflection on suffering "... involves one's concept of human nature (anthropology) as well as one's image of God (theology). For Christians, one also incorporates the message and person of Jesus (christology) and one's notion of redemption (soteriology). A primary task of theology, then, is to reflect responsibily on

interpreting God's relationship to the world. (3) The concept of divine compassion (suffering-love) is not only at the core of our Christian faith but also the most productive and critical language for the future, for it cannot be uttered without human beings hearing the challenge to solidarity and hope. (4) The compassionate God approach provides us with pastoral, practical resources in our pastoral ministry.

In this study, the question of suffering and the question of God are inseparable. Thinking and speaking about the suffering God is directly connected to the question of how the suffering God relates to the suffering that exists in the world. Furthermore, our identification with the suffering God is directly connected to the question of how we are related to each other. This study is based on the conviction that since God loves the world, God suffers where creatures suffer. The participation of divine pathos in our creaturely life becomes a foundation for our understanding of divine passibility. Thus, the primary aim of this study is not to build up arguments by which divine passibility or impassibility could be proved or disproved. Rather, this study will consider the significance and implications of the conception of the suffering God. A shift of emphasis in the approach to this question affects almost every other issue in the doctrine of God, as well as christology and soteriology. This study will clarify the renewed affirmation of divine suffering and its emphasis on God's solidarity with humanity as a paradigm shift in the Christian doctrine of God.[12] Such a shift is particularly welcome to Third world

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the meaning of suffering in light of "the good news" proclaimed by Jesus and spoken of in the Gospels." See Richard Sparks, "Suffering," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 950.

[12] The tendency to see the issue of divine suffering as a sort of paradigm shift in theology is evident in the title of a symposium which took place in the Katholische

theologies, especially in Asia. Hence this thesis is written out of an "Asian perspective." I stand in particular support of Song's intention to "do Christian theology with Asian resources."[13] As an Asian student I approach these questions with Asian (specifically Korean) experiences, predispositions and biases. Therefore, I am favourably disposed toward Song's use of Buddhist, Confucianist, Shamanist and Taoist sources, as well as his positive relationship to Korean minjung theology.

Finally, this study is significant because it presents two theological views in juxtaposition. Although many theologians have written secondary works on these two theologians, especially Moltmann, there is no published work to date that brings the works of Song and Moltmann together in a comparative study. This thesis will be the first to compare the works of both Song and Moltmann, exploring their ideas as they pertain to contemporary Christianity.

3. Limitations

The limitation of this study is that its focus is confined to the notion of the suffering God and its application. Consequently, Moltmann's work as a whole is not discussed. For the purpose of this thesis, only Moltmann's *The Crucified God* and *The Way of Jesus Christ*, along with some references to other works, are explored. Similarly with Song, I have limited the focus to his ideas found in *Third-Eye Theology, The*

Akademie Rabanus Maurus - Wiesbaden (Germany) from 9th to 11th March 1992: "*Das Leiden Gottes. Ein neues Paradigma der Theologie?*"

[13] See Song's Introduction to the revised edition of his *Third-Eye Theology* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1991), pp.1-16 and pp.17-29.

Compassionate God, and *Jesus the Crucified People*. Also, the study does not deal exhaustively with the theology of the impassibility or passibility of God, nor does it explore in depth the Asian resources used by Song, or the literary or theological sources from which Moltmann draws his inspiration. The thesis will focus sharply on the theologies of the suffering of God with respect to these two authors.

4. Thesis Statement

I shall show that Choan-Seng Song and Jürgen Moltmann offer specific and unique perspectives for a contemporary theology of the suffering God, which serve to deepen and broaden the theologies of God's suffering which have appeared in the latter part of twentieth century. Moltmann's specific contribution is to articulate the concept of the suffering God within a trinitarian/eschatological framework, drawing out its ethical and political implications. Song's specific contribution is in developing a Christian theology of the compassionate God using the resources of Asian non-Christian religions and cultures. As a Korean, writing from an East Asian perspective, I shall explore appreciatively here Song's inclusive manner of doing Christian theology with non-Christian resources as an important contribution to the enrichment of global theology. I shall also point out how these similar, contemporary, but differing theologies reflect and grow out of their differing (Asian and European) contexts of suffering, and I aim to critically reflect upon how these theologies complement each other. Finally, in the conclusion I will reflect on practical, pastoral implications arising out of a theology of the suffering God.

5. Method of the Thesis

In order to explore the unique contributions that Song and Moltmann have made to the theology of the suffering God, I shall first briefly explore the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility in order to provide a contextual point of reference for their ideas. I would like to clarify why the ancient church affirmed this doctrine and how this idea led to difficulties in christology, which only more recent theologies have set out to overcome. By briefly exploring the prevalent theologies and church tradition of divine (im)passibility, I hope to show that the effort to predicate suffering and emotion to God as a mysterious and paradoxical possibility has not been totally absent from major traditional theologies. Tracing the protests against the developments of the notion of the divine impassibility in history, I will clarify what pressures led to the rediscovery of the idea of a suffering God. I shall offer a brief survey of important writings on the question of divine passibility in the twentieth century, focusing special attention on the period immediately after World War I, a time of widespread skepticism concerning traditional ideas about the impassibility of God. The initial part of the thesis will be historical, analytical and comparative.

My exploration of the suffering God is mainly a comparative study of Song and Moltmann, to present an Asian and a Western perspective. I will approach this study by analyzing the intellectual roots of their ideas of the suffering God and considering three of the most significant influences for each theologian. For the formation of Moltmann's doctrine of the crucified God, I shall note the following: 1) an understanding of the cross according to the Martin Luther's *theologia crucis*, which sees God as hidden in the suffering and humiliation of the cross of Christ; 2) the dialectical thought of Hegel,

which influenced Moltmann's trinitarian thinking about the cross; and 3) theological insight from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, especially his understanding of the suffering God as the center of Christian theology. To provide the background for the formation of Song's idea of the compassionate God, I shall consider three of the most significant influences. They are important in terms of its Asian uniqueness, and they include the following: 1) Kazoh Kitamori's understanding of God in his *Theology of the Pain of God*; 2) the concepts of God and suffering, *han*, from the minjung theological perspective-- e.g., Kim Chi-Ha's critical portrait of the false Jesus in *The Gold-Crowned Jesus*; and 3) the "Asian Awakening" and its search for an "Asian face of God." Behind and within the work of these authors and movements that have influenced Song, one must also acknowledge the "Asian resources" of the Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist traditions, to which Song often refers.

I shall then go on to present Moltmann's theology of the crucified God and Song's theology of the compassionate God respectively and attempt to clarify their contributions. By comparing them in terms of the commonalities and divergences in their approaches, I shall assess how they approach and interpret the question of the cross and the suffering God in relation to the liberation of humanity.

The reader is directed to abbreviations of the titles of major works in section A of the Bibliography.

CHAPTER I

THE THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT REGARDING THE SUFFERING GOD

In this chapter, I will examine the traditional ways in which Christians have understood God and suffering. I believe that the way we understand God's response to suffering is the most important consideration in determining our own response to pain and suffering in the world. I will consider the following factors regarding suffering and God in the Christian tradition: (1) a traditional Christian doctrine of divine impassibility, (2) the paradoxical approach to a suffering God, (3) a traditional Christian interpretation of suffering, and (4) the rediscovery of a suffering God.

1. An Examination of the Traditional Doctrine of Divine Impassibility

To claim that God is suffering and compassionate is to call into question the long accepted principle of divine impassibility. This section examines the validity of a traditional doctrine of divine impassibility, which had its roots in the thinking of antiquity that saw God as without suffering, namely that God cannot and does not suffer. This doctrine originated in the Greek philosophical tradition and was adopted by the early Church. This section begins with an analysis of the basic assumptions which underlie the doctrine of divine impassibility. It then clarifies why the early Church affirmed this doctrine.

The Christian world has inherited two apparently conflicting ideas of God. On the one hand, the image of Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament Jews, who, by virtue of his activities in history, is known as a "pathetic" and sympathetic lover of his people.

Yahweh can be angry, jealous, sorrowful, and regretful when his love is not reciprocated. On the other hand, Christianity has also adopted a notion of God from the philosophers and theologians of Greek antiquity. Unlike the God of the Bible, the "God of the philosophers" is, among other things, impassible, that is to say, beyond the influence of any external force or agent.

Moltmann makes the same comparison by distinguishing Christian theology with its *apathetic theology* of Greek antiquity and the *pathetic theology* of later Jewish philosophy of religion. Moltmann observes: "Christian theology cannot but learn from this new Jewish exegesis of the history of God in the Old Testament and in the present suffering of the Jewish people."[1] P. Kuhn, in his *Gottes Selbsterniedrigung in der Theologie der Rabbinen*, makes the same point by referring to the self-renunciation of God in rabbinical theology. Joachim Jeremias in *Die Reue Gottes* concludes that God's passionate care for his people effects a change of will (*Willenswandel*) and self-limitation in God.[2] Abraham J. Heschel in *The Prophets* makes a plea for the recognition of God's pathos in the theology of the prophets.[3] Terence E. Fretheim in *The Suffering of God* contends that the God of the Bible is revealed, "not as one who remains coolly unaffected

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[1] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, pp. 267-8. See also J. Scharbert, *Der Schmerz im Alten Testament*, esp. pp. 216-225.

[2] Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Die Reue Gottes: Aspekte alttestamentlicher Gottesvorstellung*, Neukirchener-Vluyn, 1975; *The Parables of Jesus*, (New York: Schribner's, 1963).

[3] Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Haper & Row 1962).

by the rejection of his people, but as one who is deeply wounded by the broken relationship."[4]

By simple negation, the root meaning of *apatheia* (impassibilitas) can be perceived in its opposite concept *pathos* (passibilitas). Both concepts are derived from the root of the Greek verb *paschein*. The dictionary meaning of *paschein* is "to suffer, endure, undergo, experience."[5] While in its limited and earliest sense, *paschein* means merely having a negative feeling (pain, suffering), in its later and more general usage, it stands for any sort of influence on a personal being caused by an external force. Common to all the various applications of the term *paschein* in Greek antiquity is the connotation of an external influence on a personal subject. Since its first noted usage by Homer (*Iliad*), Greeks have used *paschein* to express various feelings or movements of the soul, mind, spirit or heart, whose occurrence were induced by an external agent. In sum, the terms "passibility" and "impassibility" are used to designate the capacity or incapacity of God to experience suffering.[6]

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[4] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 123.

[5] See *A Concise Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* prepared by B. M. Newman, Jr. (United Bible Societies, 1971).

[6] For an excellent historical survey of the terms "passibility" and "impassibility," see J. K. Mozely's *The Impassibility of God* (1926), and somewhat later O. C. Quick's discussion of the question of divine impassibility in his widely read *Doctrines of the Creed*. According to Quick, there are three ways in which "passibility" can be distinguished. Firstly, external passibility refers to the relations of one being towards another, that is the capacity to be acted upon from without – the capacity for passivity. Secondly, internal passibility refers to relations within a conscious being, wherein emotions and moods change, other than those under the control of their reason or will. Lastly, there is sensational passibility which denotes one's capacity to experience the sensations of feelings of pleasure and pain, in so far as a conscious subject is 'passive' in

For the purpose of ascertaining the basic assumptions for the assertion of divine impassibility, we may begin by questioning what were the fundamental issues in the ancient church which led to the affirmation of the doctrine of divine impassibility. Greek philosophy became the background of theological thinking in the ancient and medieval church fathers in general. The two significant contributions of Greek philosophy to the formulation of the doctrine of divine impassibility might be summarized as the concept of apathy as the supreme moral task, and the concept of ontological immutability. In addition, one of the basic issues which brought about the problem of divine passibility was the question of the Trinity. The trinitarian issue was directly related to the affirmation of the doctrine of divine impassibility by the early church. In the words of Jung Young Lee, the basic assumptions for the assertion of the doctrine of divine impassibility are primarily three: (1) the Greek idea of divine apathy, (2) the static notion of divine sufficiency, and (3) the distinctions of "persons" in the Trinity.[7] Even though it is not my intention to survey the historical development of the doctrine of divine impassibility in great depth, we must consider the historical significance of this doctrine.[8]

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respect of these feelings or can be said to suffer them. The notion of sensational passibility refers in particular to the experience of pain or sorrow. We do not normally speak of 'suffering' pleasure or joy, and indeed the noun 'suffering' is often used as a synonym for 'pain.'

[7] I borrowed this idea of the fundamental issues in the early Church to affirm the doctrine of divine impassibility in the work of Jung Young Lee, *God Suffers For Us: A Systematic Inquiry Into A Concept of Divine Impassibility* (Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, Netherlands, 1974).

[8] Cf. J. K. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1926).

1.1. Divine *Apatheia* in Greek Philosophy

Since Christianity grew up in the world of Hellenistic culture, it was predominately Greek philosophy which became the background of religious thinking. There were two specific aspects of the Greek way of thinking, namely the concept of divine *apatheia* and *autarkeia*, which nourished the idea of divine impassibility.

The traditional notion of divine *apatheia* or divine impassibility, the idea that God is incapable of suffering, was based on the dualistic and static views of Greek philosophy. Divine *apatheia* means simply that there is an absence of feeling or passion in the divine nature. It implies, in other words, that God is free of any emotional life.[9] According to the Greek way of thinking in general, the divine is regarded as the perfection of the Good, which can only be contemplated by the rational faculty and not by passion or feeling. Marcel Sarot demonstrates that the doctrine of *apatheia* is

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[9] Most of the traditional theodicies conceive of God as impassible, that is, not directly affected by the pain and suffering of humanity. God, being the immutable source and ground of all being, is totally separate from creation, all-sufficient and cannot (and, for some, should not) be affected in God's self by the suffering of humanity. This position is summarized by Elizabeth A. Johnson:

> Both theologically and philosophically, language about the apathetic God, from the Greek *a-patheia* meaning no pathos or suffering, seeks to preserve divine freedom from a dependency on creatures that would in fact render God finite. Incapable of being affected by outside influences, the classical apathic God acts not out of need or compulsion but from serene self-sufficiency. Negating passion and vulnerability as divine qualities enables God's universal goodness to operate without fear or favor.... Independent of the world, God can act to save with sheer gratuitous love (Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Suffering God: Compassion Poured Out," in *She Who Is: The Mistery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* [New York: Crossroad, 1992], p. 247).

For an extensive contemporary discussion, see Richard E. Creel, *Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Cf. Michael J. Dodds, "Thomas Aquinas, Human Suffering, and the Unchanging God of Love," *Theological Studies* 52 (1991), pp. 330-344.

developed in Greek antiquity as a philosophical requirement for the description of divine and human perfection.[10] It is used more in the predication of God than in the description of human morality. One of the characteristics of Greek philosophy is the degradation of passion. Thus God, who is the Good, cannot be considered to possess the element of passion or feeling in His own nature. Greek philosophy in general comes to believe that passion belongs to a lower part of humanity and is, in this sense, unworthy to be claimed by the divine nature. Since passion or feeling has been understood as that which bonds us to misery, servitude, and imperfection, the concept of divine apathy is eventually accepted by most Greek thinkers to defend the goodness of the divine nature.[11] As Robinson describes it, "one of these Greek ways was to conceive God as impassible, removed from any capacity to suffer, indeed to feel as a human being does."[12] God is, then, incapable of suffering or even feeling as would a human being.[13] This idea of

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[10] Cf. Marcel Sarot, *God, Passibility and Corporeality* (Kok Pharos Publishing, 1992).

[11] Cf. T. E. Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," in: *Scottish Journal of Theology*, No. 8, 1955, pp. 353-364.

[12] H. Wheeler Robinson, *Suffering, Human and Divine* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 144. It seems, then, reasonable for us to agree with the assertion of Robert Franks that the patripassian movement of the second and third centuries was an attempt to carry through the religious idea of God in opposition to all Greek philosophy. See Robert Franks, "Passibility and Impassibility," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IX, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 658.

[13] See Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 260 & 272. According to Heschel: "It is perhaps more proper to describe a prophetic passion as theomorphic than to regard the divine pathos as anthropomorphic" (260). C. T. Fritsch, *The Anti-anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*, (Princeton N. J. 1943), p. 64; T. E. Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," in: *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 8 (1955) p. 355. For, following the creation of man in the likeness of God (Lev. 19.2), a Jew owes his "soul, thought, feeling, even

divine apathy can be traced back to the teaching of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Neoplatonists.

1.2. The Static Notion of Divine *Autarkeia*

The concept of *apatheia* is closely related to the Greek idea of *autarkeia*, which literally means "sufficiency" or "contentment."[14] As already stated, the indignity of passion was looked down upon by the Greek thinkers because of its irrationality and its ability to be affected from outside. The divine has always been thought to be necessarily perfect and self-sufficient, which suggested to the Greeks that he cannot be affected or moved by any human desire or emotion. To be affected means for them to be insufficient and discontented. As Aristotle taught, "the final good is thought to be self-sufficient" and "the end of action."[15] Thus, God, who represents the final good, is not only sufficient but also immovable. To be self-sufficient means to be in cessation of movement. In this respect, the Aristotelian concept of divine *autarkeia* is based on a static ontology. This changeless and eternal form as the basis of reality, similar to the notion of divine nature in Plato's thinking, has introduced the static notion of divine

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passion" to God. To them, human qualities, including passions, belong originally to God himself. Thus, the use of human language to describe "God's unconditional concern for justice is not an anthropomorphism. Rather, man's concern for justice is a theomorphism" (272).

[14] Jung Young Lee, *God Suffers for Us*, p. 30.

[15] Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, edited by W. D. Ross (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), 1097b.

autarkeia.[16] The Greek idea of divine *autarkeia* as the absolutely immovable and self-sufficient God was further elaborated by Thomas Aquinas, who defended the doctrine of divine impassibility among the scholastics of the Middle Ages.[17]

1.3. The Distinctions of "Persons" in the Trinity

A fundamental motive for the assertion of divine impassibility was the struggle to safeguard the distinctions of "persons" in the Trinity against Patripassian Monarchianism in the early Church.[18] The origin of the patripassian heresy, which was the most pronounced name in the early Church for the passibility of God, was closely connected with the problem of the Trinity. In other words, "Patripassianism comes directly from the trinitarian issue, of Sabellianism, from which patripassianism is logically deduced, since there is only a difference in name."[19] Thus, those who rejected the distinctions of

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[16] In *The Republic*, Plato discusses whether or not gods appear in various shapes and pass into a number of different forms. In this discourse, he concludes that gods, who are perfect and self-sufficient in every way, cannot change. "Being perfect as he can be, every god, it seems, remains simply and forever in his own form" (Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. by F. M. Cornford [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941], p. 71).

[17] Aquinas' concept of immovable God can be traced back to the Aristotelian understanding of God as the "immovable First Mover." The divine *autarkeia* simply signifies the nature of God who is so wholly complete that He wants nothing. On the other hand, *passio* is regarded as a principle for the animal nature of the human body which is always accompanied with bodily change. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book XI, Chapter 7; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices and Glossaries*, Vol. I (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1964), Ia. 9, 3; 25, 1; 20, 1.

[18] On this issue, see J. K. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1926), p. 127.

[19] John L. Murphy, *The General Councils of the Church* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1960), p. 19.

"persons" in the Trinity were called "Patripassians" in the West and "Sabellians" in the East.[20] "Patripassian" has its origin in the combination of two Latin words: *Pater* (father) and *passio* (suffering). It means that God the Father Himself suffered. This idea was based on the christological and trinitarian thinking that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one. Thus Modalistic Monarchianism, which insisted upon the unity of the Godhead through the identification of the Son with the Father, was first called by Tertullian "Patripassianism."[21] Since, in their desire to maintain the ontic unity of the Godhead against the dangers of tritheism, they refused to distinguish between the *personae* of the Trinity, their doctrine ended in the insistence that "the Father" (*Pater*) suffered (*passion-em*) in and as "the Son."

The rejection of this position by trinitarian orthodoxy left Christianity with an ambiguous conception of God. "Patripassianism" was, then, a nickname for "Modalistic Monarchianism," which was commonly associated with "Sabellianism." Thus these three terms were often used synonymously to designate the same movement. Patripassian monarchianism was associated especially with the names of Praxeas and Noetus in the early stage of its development, and Zephrinus and Callistus of Rome in the later stage. This was the theological issue which was directly associated with the

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[20] Marshall Randles, *The Blessed God, Impassibility* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1900), p. 16; quoted in Jung Young Lee, *God Suffers for Us*, p. 24.

[21] See Reinhold Seeberg, *The Textbook of the History of Christian Doctrines*, trans. by Charles E. Hay, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 166.

formation of the doctrine of divine impassibility. Consequently, the apathetic theology of antiquity was accepted as a preparation for the trinitarian theology by the early church.[22]

To sum up, the basic assumptions for the ascription of divine impassibility by the early Church were the emphasis on the Greek ideas of divine *apatheia* and of divine *autarkeia*, and the distinctions of "persons" in the Trinity. The adoption of this concept had disastrous consequences for Christian theology, for it is incompatible with the biblical perception of God's love, wrath, and empathy for the human situation.

2. The Paradoxical Approach to a Suffering God

Apatheia in the sense explained above is totally absent in the biblical and Semitic conception of God. The Jewish communities of antiquity predicate God with anthropomorphic language and symbols, speaking even about his changes of mind and emotional suffering.[23] They recognize God's immutability and transcendence, albeit in a

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[22] Moltmann arrived at the same conclusion after his examination of the notion of the *apatheia* of God. See Moltmann, CG, p. 270.

[23] In contrast to the Hellenistic philosophical writings, according to Jeremias, the Old Testament and the Rabbinical literature attribute pathos to God and also testify to God's repentance (regretting or having remorse). God's repentance is understood as his remorse over his past performance which did not bring the expected result (cf. Gen 6:6,7; 1 Sam 15:1, 35). Divine repentance also denotes God's emotional withdrawal from a planned line of action. He stops short, for instance, at the execution of the threat of human perdition. Here it is about God's change of mind (cf. Ex 32:14; 2 Sam 24:16). In other words, God's compassion for His people motivates His repentance. Instead of acting out His indignation in a due punishment, God turns to self-limitation: He withholds His anger. Divine repentance encompasses all the anthropopatheic expressions like compassion, love, hate, jealousy, vengeance, and the wrath of God as well as the issue of divine immutability. This makes it perhaps more theologically significant than the wrath of God. See J. Jeremias, *Die Reue Gottes. Aspekte alttestamentlicher Gottesvorstellung*, Neukirchener-Vluyn 1975, pp. 12-18; Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*.

sense different from the Greek version of it. The concept of the divine immutability occurs in the Bible only as an expression of Yahweh's resolute commitment to his promise. It is not an abstract immutability: of course, Yahweh needed to change his mind a couple of times, though only in order to remain faithful (immutable) to his promise, thereby showing that change is possible in him despite his "immutability."

Similarly, God's transcendence is taken to mean ultimately his overwhelming presence and indwelling (immanence) among his people. At the background of the Jewish conception of God, therefore, is a paradoxical approach to reality, different from the Greek way of negation, and more subtle than the Aristotelian analogy.[24] Unlike the Greeks,[25] the Jews emphasized the human likeness to and relation with God. Thus, it

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[24] Aristotle declared that "change would be change for the worse," and thus excluded God's divine being from change and suffering. Divine immutability is thus identical with divine impassibility in Aristotle's metaphysics. For Aristotelian philosophy, God is the thinking process which thinks about itself, but is totally apathetic with respect to human history. God cannot intervene in the misery of people on earth.

[25] The Greek fathers brought into their interpretation of the incarnational paradox a concept of God that was clearly not of biblical origin. For the Greeks, God was immutable. While the monotheism of the Bible is dynamic and personalistic, covenantal and dialogical, that of Greek thought is static and abstract. Greek thought posited a fundamental distinction between the eternal and unchanging world of becoming and the world of being. If God changes at all God only changes for the worse, since we cannot suppose God to be deficient either in virtue or beauty. It is impossible that God should ever be willing to change, being, as is supposed, the fairest and best that is conceivable. Because God is pure act, God exists forever beyond change or passion. God is the unmoved mover. See Plato, *Dialogues*, cited by R. B. Edwards, "The Pagan Dogma of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God," *Religious Studies* 14 (1978), p. 309.

was possible for them to speak of their theomorphic view of themselves rather than their anthropomorphic conception of God.[26]

Reconciling these two contrary conceptions of God -- of a pathetic and an apathetic God -- has been a consistent preoccupation of theology since the Hellenization of Judaism and Christianity. The most significant attempt to harmonize the Greek and Semitic conceptions of God is to be found in the Hellenistic Judaism which Philo of Alexandria represents, although Philo ultimately failed to achieve a workable integration of the two cultural views.[27] His allegorical method, with which he explains away the biblical anthropomorphic expression, does not seem applicable to every anthropomorphic expression or symbol found in the Bible. Consequently, his method blurs the boundary between what is real and what is metaphorical.[28] Consequently,

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[26] Cf. T. E. Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p. 355. See also Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp. 260 & 272.

[27] The Apologists, in turn, had been influenced by Philo. Philo's formulation of the Logos involved the blending of Old Testament, Middle-Platonic, and Stoic ideas. He believed that the Logos had three stages of existence: two before the creation of the world and one after creation. The Logos existed from eternity as the thought of God. Before the creation of the world, God created the logos as an instrument and as a plan in the creation of the world. After the creation of the world, the Logos was inserted in the world to be an instrument of God's providence. The Apologists adopted and changed Philo's concept, but they did not change the basic understanding behind Philo's development and use of the Logos: the absolute transcendence of God. God the Father is to be understood as having such an absolute transcendence that he could not possibly deal actively with his creation. Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. II; R. M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1966).

[28] In his classic treatise on Philo, H. A. Wolfson rightly maintains that, "in a strictly logical sense," such a non-reciprocal relation, is "not a true relation." Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. II, p. 138.

Hellenistic Judaism passes the unsolved theological dilemma of divine impassibility onto Christianity.[29]

The major features of the issue of divine impassibility in the tradition and theologies from the onset of Christianity to the Reformation period tend to avoid the use of negatively judged emotions in the predication of God. This tendency also characterizes the New Testament approach to the issue of divine emotions. Yet there is no definite denial of divine emotions in the New Testament. In fact, not only positive, but also negative emotions are attributable to God. Both types of emotions are attributable as long as the ability to initiate such occurrences is reserved for him, that is to say, as long as his sovereignty in either case is not endangered. This fact is best exemplified in the New Testament writers' understanding of the divine wrath as a reality with kenotic and eschatological dimensions. For if it is true that God restrains the expression of his anger by means of a kenotic self-restraint, it then follows that he is still in control of the situation even when he suffers. Suffering does not befall him. Rather, he retains the freedom and the initiative to take suffering upon himself. Thus, while his sovereignty over suffering is emphasized in the biblical writings, the affirmation of divine impassibility is implicit.

The paradoxical approach is continued in the theologies of the Apostolic fathers, especially St. Ignatius, who, despite his exposure to Hellenistic thought, affirms both the

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[29] For a long time the apathetic God became a fundamental principle for Jewish theology too. See Moltmann, CG, p. 271.

passibility and impassibility of God.[30] Similarly, the Apologists also settle for a paradoxical expression of the divine nature. But since they see impassibility and immutability as that which constitutes the difference between the Christian God and the mythological gods, they tend to characterize God more in terms of his impassibility, thereby distancing themselves from the Semitic and paradoxical approach. This tendency is fully realized in the Gnostic way of thinking, where an outright denial of the divine passibility takes the place of a paradoxical approach.[31] Perceiving impassibility as a distinguishing characteristic of the divine nature, just like the Apologists, the Christian Gnostics go further to see it as that which differentiates the humanity of Christ from his divinity. To them, therefore, apatheia is the principle for the affirmation of divine transcendence.[32]

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[30] According to Corwin, Ignatius' paradox anticipates the tendency in the later centuries to use the kenotic motif to illuminate the mystery of God's paradoxical nature. Thus, despite his accepting the Greek concept of *apatheia*, Ignatius admits that God suffered in Jesus Christ. The biblical idea of a God whose nature is paradoxical must have led him to affirm that God is paradoxically passible and impassible at the same time. See V. Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, New Haven: Paulist Press, 1960, pp. 52-57; J. B. Lighfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* vol. II/1 1885, p. 373ff.

[31] Davies points out that the adoption of the Greek philosophical concept of *apatheia* in the early church contributed immensely to the emergence of Docetism and to the spread of Gnosticism. See J. G. Davies, "The Origin of Doceticism," in: F. L. Cross (Hrsg.), *Studia Patristica* VI, (Oxford 1959), pp. 13ff. & 35; M. Slusser, "Docetism: A Historical Definition," in: *The Second Century* 1 (1981), pp. 163-172.

[32] On the view of other Apologists on this see Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, pp. 9-15.

The paradoxical approach regains its popularity in the theology of Irenaeus.[33] Generally, however, the paradoxical assertion of divine impassibility in third century theologies is sporadic. While in some theologies of the time univocal affirmation of divine impassibility exists, in others an outright denial of divine suffering is more common. Even in the Modalist christology, where the heresy of Patripassianism is committed, a one-sided affirmation of the impassibility of God is implicit. However, Origen and Gregorios Thaumaturgos make a serious attempt to conceive the passibility and impassibility of God paradoxically.[34] In the context of their Alexandrian theology, both authors make significant contributions toward the development of divine suffering: Origen does it by interpreting divine passibility from the point of view of divine love, and Thaumaturgos does it by pointing out the significance of the issues of divine will, freedom, and self-limitation for a theology of divine suffering. Their contemporaries,

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[33] According to Mozely, Irenaeus of Lyon upholds and applies the axiom of divine *apatheia* to his Logos-Christology in a manner different from the way the Apologists and Gnostics use it. Holding tight to the unity of the divinity and humanity in Christ, he emphasizes -- in direct opposition to the Docetist tendencies in Gnosticism -- the reality of the incarnation. Cf. Mozley, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-24.

[34] Cf. R. M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 1966), p. 31. On the Impassibility of God, Gregory Thaumaturgos wrestled with the notion of suffering and crucifixion as it relates to God. His basic conclusion was that, since "God was free to decide to come to us as Jesus in order to come in glory in his second coming, he is free to suffer in order to defeat death." What matters to Gregory is that "any apparent and temporary suffering is a mere episode in God's victorious activity, and therefore cannot in any sense be construed as divine weakness. God remained impassible in suffering, unchangeable like a blacksmith's anvil when assailed by iron and fire." See H. Chadwick, "Freedom and Necessity in Early Christian Thought about God," in *Concilium*, 166 (1983).

Clement of Alexandria[35] and to some extent the Latin theologian Tertullian, deny the possibility of divine suffering. Such a denial is not entirely typical of the Latin theologians, because Lactantius, writing much later than Tertullian, preserves the paradoxical approach in his description of divine anger and emotions.

In fourth and fifth century christologies divine impassibility is a basic axiom. All theologies, both the orthodox and the heretical, produced during the christological controversies, unanimously refused the predication of passibility to God. Thus, while discussing the issue of the hypostatic union, the Arians and the Apollinarists, the Alexandrian and the Antiochian schools, the Cappadocian theologians, and practically all theologies of the time, make a univocal affirmation of the impassibility of God, rather than maintaining the paradoxical tension. It must also be observed that there is no assertion of divine suffering in the decisions of the Councils (from the fourth to the seventh century).[36] However, the effort of the Council fathers to avoid a one-dimensional affirmation of the nature of Christ while settling the issue of the hypostatic union in this period indicates a favourable disposition toward the paradoxical approach to the God-

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[35] For Clement, divine impassibility denotes the freedom of God from all emotions and the denial of God's relationship with the world except "one of transcendent causality." Unlike the Stoics, he pays more attention to the divine than human *apatheia*. He even denied that Christ really digested and eliminated food! Cf. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*.

[36] According to Hall, on the one hand, Christians are counseled by the guardians of trinitarian orthodoxy against regarding "Almighty God" as being capable of suffering. On the other hand, they are assured that Jesus, the crucified, fully and supremely reveals God: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). "This ambiguity is hardly clarified," says Hall, "by the theological sophistry which argues that while Jesus 'suffered,' as the Creeds declare, God the Father *had compassion*; for, as Tertullian observed long ago, what is compassion if it is not suffering-with?" See Douglas J. Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, pp. 214-5.

question. St. Augustine (354-430) adopted a relatively different approach to the problem, which secured the paradoxical tension. Unlike the rest of the patristic approaches,[37] he proposed that the passibility or impassibility of God depend on divine volition. Besides, his conception of the "relationality" of the Trinitarian Persons opens a new and fruitful dimension for the theology of divine suffering.[38] In the eleventh century, Anselm of Canterbury recognized the dilemma this engenders when he questioned:

> But how art thou compassionate, and at the same time passionless? For if thou art passionless, thou dost not feel sympathy; and if thou dost not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from a sympathy with the wretched; but this it is to be compassionate. But if thou art not compassionate, whence cometh so great consolation to the wretched?[39]

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[37] Alister E. McGrath points out that, "in the patristic period, there was an attempt to carry through Christ's impassability as thoroughly as possible." According to McGrath, The patristic period identified two unacceptable views relating to the suffering of God -- *patripassianism* and *theopaschitism*. The former was regarded as a heresy, and the latter as a potentially misleading doctrine. *Theopaschitism* arose during the sixth century, and was linked with writers such as John Maxentius. The basic slogan associated with the movement was "one of the Trinity was crucified." The formula can be interpreted in a perfectly orthodox sense (it reappears as Martin Luther's formula "the crucified God"), and was defended as such by Leontius of Byzantium. However, it was regarded as potentially misleading and confusing by more cautious writers, including Pope Hormisdas, and the formula gradually fell into disuse. The doctrine of a suffering God rehabilitates theopaschitism, and interprets the relation of the suffering of God and of Christ in such a way that it avoids the patripassian difficulty. (Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 2nd Edition, [Blackwell Publishers, 1997], pp. 253-4).

[38] Augustine speaks of the relationality of the Persons of the Trinity, as equal in deity, on the Trinity, Book VI & VIII, in *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. P. Schaff, Vol III (Buffalo: Christian Literature Co., 1987).

[39] Anselm, Proslogion, chapter 8, in *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, trans. S. N. Deane (Lasalle, I11: Open Court, 1974) 13, quoted in Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 248.

In the Medieval-Scholastic approach, especially in that of St. Thomas Aquinas (1226/27-1274), the topic in question receives an in-depth analysis, but not a new vision. Holding firmly to the impassibility of God, Aquinas maintains that an incorporeal being cannot suffer, but can love conceptually.[40] He makes significant contributions, nonetheless, by questioning whether there can be love without suffering, and whether there can be emotions without corporeality. As for the Reformation period, Luther at least offers a vivid affirmation of the suffering of God and God's active involvement in the suffering of Christ. I shall return to Luther's theology of the cross later in the thesis.

Thus, in general, it can be observed that, although the affirmation of divine impassibility predominates in Church theologies and tradition, the effort to predicate suffering and emotion to God as a mysterious and paradoxical possibility has not been absent. The major issue has been how to think this paradox through successfully.[41]

3. Critique of a Traditional Interpretation of Suffering

The answer that I have attempted to unfold in these pages responds to the question: Is God's impassibility really the fundamental theological doctrine? According

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[40] Thomas Aquinas develops this approach, especially when reflecting on the love of God for sinners. Love implies vulnerability and the idea that God could be affected by our sorrows, or moved by our misery. According to Hankey, Aquinas dismissed this possibility: "Mercy is especially to be attributed to God, provided that it is considered as an effect, not as a feeling of suffering.... It does not belong to God to sorrow over the misery of others." See Wayne Hankey, "Aquinas and the Passion of God," in: *Being and Truth, Essays in Honour of John Macquarrie*, edited by A. Kee and E. Lang (London, 1986).

[41] I owe the recognition of this paradoxical approach of a suffering God to Amuluche Gregory Nnamani who investigates the various views on the issue of divine suffering. His book is entitled, *The Paradox of a Suffering God* (Peter Lang, 1995).

to Douglas John Hall, if we are rooted in the faith of Israel then--as Abraham J. Heschel has demonstrated in his classical study of *The Prophets*--then the truly fundamental teaching about God is not the divine impassibility or aseity but the divine pathos: God is concerned about the world, and shares its fate. Indeed, this is the essence of God's moral nature: His willingness to be intimately involved in the history of man.[42] The same conclusion must surely be the outcome of all serious christological reflection. Hall perceives: "If it is really God who is revealed in and through the crucified one, then how can we continue to speak about the divine "impassibility" at all, or at least without subjecting it to a thorough christological overhaul!"[43]

Pannenberg attributes the dogmatic problem of early Christian theology to the adoption of a philosophical concept of God, and shows the merits of such an adoption in the ancient Hellenistic context.[44] For T. E. Pollard, "the doctrine of God in particular, has suffered because of the lack of caution which theologians in every age have shown in their too ready acceptance of the gifts which the Greeks have brought."[45]

This brief survey confirms that a fundamental issue in the early Church was the question of the doctrine of divine impassibility. This doctrine had its roots in the thinking of antiquity which saw God as without suffering. The apathetic God became the God of the Christians, although this idea was not in harmony with the biblical God found

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[42] Heschel, *The Prophets*, Vol II, Chapter 3.

[43] Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, pp. 214 -5.

[44] W. Pannenberg, *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie*, pp. 296-346.

[45] Pollard, *The Impassibility of God*, p. 1.

in the Bible who is depicted as emotional and suffering. This God is one whose omnipotence is presupposed, though he is relieved of any accountability for affliction and distress; rather this is put to the account of individual people or humankind as a whole.[46] This apathetic God cannot lead us to an authentic understanding of suffering. In addition, the research confirms that traditional theology cannot successfully picture passibility or compassion as a divine mode of being, because this would imply a contradiction of God's omnipotence. In doing this, however, they simply add together Greek philosophy's "apathy" axiom and the central statement of God's compassion in the scripture. Most of the traditional theodicies conceive of God as impassible, that is, not

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[46] I borrowed the idea of the traditional Christian interpretation of suffering from the work of Sölle. Sölle states: "Suffering is there to break our pride, demonstrate our powerlessness, exploit our dependency. Affliction has the intention of bringing us back to a God who only becomes great when he makes us small. In that case affliction is seen as unavoidable, as with the wife whose marriage was destroyed, and turned into a fate, thus rendering any change through suffering an impossibility. Suffering is understood to be a test, sent by God, that we are required to pass" (Sölle, *Suffering*, p. 19). She points out a tendency that appears in Christian literature, which she calls a universal Christian attitude. She explains: "one is vindication of divine power through human powerlessness. Affliction is regarded as human weakness that serves to demonstrate divine strength. Sickness and suffering are used for a religious purpose." (Ibid., p. 17) Sölle states that "affliction comes from God's hand... Sin is the deepest and most essential root of sickness... Don't you feel how God is at work in you precisely while you are sick?... Affliction is a means of training used by God's salutary love." (Ibid.) In this sense, suffering is "willed by God." Sigmund Freud stated that "if the believer finally sees himself obliged to speak of God's 'inscrutable decrees,' he is admitting that all that is left to him as a last possible consolation and source of pleasure in his suffering is an unconditional submission" (Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. and ed., James Strachey, College Edition [New York: Norton, 1962], pp. 31f. [Section 2]), Sölle also affirms, "submission as a source of pleasure - that is Christian masochism." (Sölle, *Suffering*, p. 22).

directly affected by the pain and suffering of humanity.[47] Therefore, the contradiction in the Western tradition remains unsatisfactory. As Moltmann claims, the adoption of the Greek philosophical concept of the 'God incapable of suffering' by the early church led to difficulties in christology which only more recent theology has set out to overcome.[48]

God, as the immutable source and ground of all being, is totally separate from creation, all-sufficient and cannot be affected in God's self by the suffering of humanity. Coupled with this doctrine of the impassible God is also the classical attribute of God's omnipotence. Divine power, in this view, is interpreted to mean that nothing occurs apart from divine will and control. Thus, since God can do whatever God wants, and since destructive events are not prevented, God must permit them to happen for some purpose. This "purpose" can be to punish wrongdoing, to test character, to educate or form personality, or to bring forth a greater good. No matter the extent of personal or global devastation, classical theodicy contends that God's glory is being served. Furthermore, although classical theism contends that in Jesus God has identified with the depths of human suffering in order to save, it also maintains that Jesus' anguish affects only his finite human nature -- thus protecting the image of God as remote and impassible.[49]

An obvious difficulty arises here. Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross.

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[47] This position is summarized by Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, p. 247-8.

[48] Moltmann, CG, p. 267.

[49] Johnson, A. *She Who Is*, pp. 247-8.

Traditional Christian theology declared that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. It therefore seems to follow that God suffered in Christ. Not so, declared most of the patristic writers, deeply influenced by the pagan idea of the impassibility of God. Christ suffered in his human nature, not in his divine nature. God thus did not experience human suffering and he remained unaffected by this aspect of the world. According to this teaching, Christ assumed the form of suffering humanity only for a short time. There is no treatment of the "pain of God" in such a theology. Here the apathetic God has won out over the suffering God. Ethically, that means that the stoic concept of suffering triumphs over a Christian concept.[50] For a God who would undergo suffering could not be a true God, and the apathetic God cannot possibly come closer to the suffering people in history. The apathetic God is not the God of the little people and their pain because an apathetic God is an immovable God who is a stranger to suffering.[51] Therefore, traditional theologians who were influenced by the idea of the apathetic God are, for the most part, incapable of perceiving the compassion of God. Dorothee Sölle explains that this is because the idea of God as movable and able to experience suffering denies the

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[50] According to Sölle, a compromise between the stoic and Christian-mystical concepts of suffering is actually impossible. The stoic denies suffering, and by focusing on tranquillity, he does not allow suffering to enter his soul. What is decisive for Christian mysticism is, for Sölle, first of all the knowledge that one who suffers wrong is also stronger (not just morally better) than the one who does wrong. That "God is always with the one who is suffering" entails not only consolation but also strengthening. See Sölle, *Suffering*, pp. 99-103.

[51] The apathetic God of theism is described by Jürgen Moltmann in his book, *The Experiment of Hope*, ed. and trans. by M. D. Meeks (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 73-74.

very essence of the divine that Western theology has long espoused.[52] Faith in the compassionate God is also a contradiction of the traditional idea of God that the Western world has long affirmed.[53] Feminist analysis also perceives how deeply the idea of the apathetic God is shaped by the patriarchal ideal.[54] One area that is now receiving greater attention by women writers is how traditional views of God, atonement and suffering have affected those who have experienced physical and sexual abuse or assault.[55]

On the basis of her work as the director of the Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, Marie Fortune notes that women who have been raped, battered, and/or sexually abused as children often attempt to understand their suffering in light of their religious beliefs.[56] They repeatedly raise the now-familiar questions of their suffering: Why do I suffer in this way? Where is God in my suffering? And Why is there suffering at all? Such questions entail not only the cause and source, but also the meaning or purpose of their suffering.[57] What Fortune and others have also found, is that

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[52] See Dorothee Sölle, "A Critique of Post-Christian Apathy" in *Suffering*, pp. 33-59.

[53] See Moltmann's self-criticism of the European tradition in this aspect. *The Crucified God*, pp. 267-90; *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, pp. 21-60.

[54] On this issue, see Sölle's *Suffering* and *Thinking about God*, and also see Johnson's *Consider Jesus* and her *She Who Is*.

[55] Cf. R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash, *Violence against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 72-4.

[56] Marie F. Fortune, "The Transformation of Suffering: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989).

[57] Ibid., p. 139.

the traditional theological responses to suffering are highly unsatisfactory and even deadly for women who are afflicted by pervasive and prolonged physical and sexual abuse. That God "permits" evil and suffering and "chooses" not to intervene in order to preserve humanity's free will is a highly untenable resolution to the violence these women experience repeatedly to their person or that the children in their care experience. Rather than provide these women with understanding and resolution to their situation, the utilization of traditional views of the meaning of suffering has often led many women to further and more pronounced trauma. Owing in part to the traditional theological viewpoints on suffering, sin, and women, that search most often results in blaming God or themselves, rather than the actual assailant. "She understands the situation to reflect God's acting to bring out her suffering for a justifiable reason; she blames herself and accepts her battering as God's will for her."[58] Fortune has also repeatedly found that battered women often believe their current rape, beatings, and/or devaluation are due to some previous "sin" or act on their part, and that God is punishing them in the present as a form of judgment for an act of the (often distant) past.[59] Writers such as Joy Bussert,

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[58] Ibid., p. 140.

[59] Ibid. As an alternative, Fortune suggests that a reinterpretation of God as "righteous anger" at the actual persons and circumstances causing the suffering in cases of domestic violence and sexual assault, and as a "source of compassion" in the midst of acts of violence might prove more healthy and life-enhancing than seeing God as the author of the violence (for whatever good reason) that afflicts these women. See Fortune, p. 141. Cf. Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable," in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 156. Carter Heyward also advocates such a stance, and grounds her view with a discussion of Jesus' most characteristic expression of pain as irony, indignation, and rage as

Marie Fortune, and Mary Potter Engle, who work in direct ministries with abused women, all vehemently critique the tradition within Christianity that glorifies self-sacrifice and obedience for women, that emphasizes the mind-body dualism inherited from Greek philosophy, and that views women as inherently evil and inferior to men.[60]

To say that God does not suffer is to make of God an unfeeling monster in the face of so much suffering today. It can effect serious problems in particular for the people who experience suffering in their daily lives. The affirmation of divine suffering can be the only clue for the very structure of the Third World theologies which experiences massive suffering due to injustice.

To think of God as separate from suffering would be just as erroneous as to think of Christ without the cross. It would be a suffering-free Christianity. What apathetic people often lack is an awareness of their own suffering and the suffering of others.[61] According to Robert Lifton and Eric Olson, "The whole age in which we live is one of

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alternatives to self-doubt, depression, and impotence, and links this anger with his prophetic courage and love of community:

> Jesus' anger [except in Mark 15:34] was not at God, or "reality," or "life," or "the world," or "the way things are." The anger was not diffuse or unfocused. Jesus' anger had a specific target: non-relation, broken relation, violated relation, the destruction of God in the world: injustice, misuse, and abuse of humanity by humanity. (Isabel Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation* [Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982], p. 56).

[60] Joy M. K. Bussert, *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment* (New York: Lutheran Church in America, Division for Mission in North America, 1986), pp. 6-8.

[61] Sölle points out that apathetic people experience suffering, but they "put up with it." In their case, suffering does not change them. She says: "They have no language or gestures with which to battle suffering. Nothing is changed; they learn nothing from it." (Sölle, *Suffering*, p. 37).

vast numbing and desensitization....'"[62] Every culture has its own specific pathology; ours has been described as narcissism. The narcissistic personality is characterized by its inability to recognize how others feel; pathological narcissists suffer from apathy.[63] To desire freedom from pain means to desire death. The consequences of the suffering-free state of well-being is that people's lives become frozen solid.[64] But more importantly, as Sölle rightly observes, apathy results in the desensitization that freedom from suffering brings; it results in the inability to perceive reality.[65] A social condition in which people

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[62] Robert Lifton and Eric Olson, *Living and Dying* (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 137. This "psychic numbing," as it is often called, is characterized by an "overwhelming attempt to eliminate negativity... marked by the repression of pain and the consequent incapacity to suffer... incapacity to confront and appropriate the reality of suffering" (Lucien Richard, *What Are They Saying about the Theology of Suffering?* [New York Mahwah, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1992], p. 10). David Morris, studying from a cultural, historical, and psychological perspective, and Eric Cassell, conducting research in pain from a bioethics viewpoint, also both note the connection between this numbing and its reinforcement to the unprecedented development and use of a cornucopia of drugs and treatments to cope with pain, as well as the denial and separation of the experience of death from the everyday lives of most people in these times. See David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 48-51; 261-6. Cf. Eric Cassell, *The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[63] Christopher Lash, *The Culture of Narcissism* (London: Abacus, 1980), pp. 36-41.

[64] Douglas J. Hall points out three consequences of the incapacity to suffer: first is the difficulty one faces in accepting or articulating one's own suffering; second is the inability to enter imaginatively into the suffering of others; third is the search for an enemy. Hall indicates that the incapacity to suffer -- including the incapacity to acknowledge, accept, and articulate suffering -- may be the most terrifying social reality, the thing that determines the fate of the earth. See Hall. *God and Human Suffering*, pp. 41-46.

[65] Sölle denotes that an inability to perceive suffering involves the inability to perceive one's own suffering as well as the suffering of others. The apathy that exists over against the Third World is to be seen as part of middle class apathy, which also debilitates it from perceiving its own pains. See Sölle, *Suffering*, pp. 37-8.

are so dominated by the goal of avoiding suffering that it becomes a goal to avoid human relationships and contacts altogether.[66] Freedom from suffering is nothing other than a blindness that does not perceive suffering. It involves turning one's attention away from suffering. With such a diminished capacity to understand each other's pain, human relationships lose the depth that characterized them in former cultures. When an individual or a whole collective avoid suffering, there is a corresponding lack of vitality, passion, and intensity, as well as a lack of awareness of one's own suffering and that of others. This leads not only to political apathy, cynicism, and alienation but also to an uncontrolled consumerism and a value system of self-indulgence, as noted by both Richard and Sölle.[67] In order to get back in touch with one's connectedness with others, at least a secondary or an indirect relationship to the events in the Third World must be cultivated. Elie Wiesel described his experience of God in Auschwitz in *Night*: "God is not in heaven; he is hanging on the cross."[68] No heaven can rectify Auschwitz. But God is sharing the suffering, in sharing death on the cross.

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[66] Sölle, *Suffering*, p. 36. Cf. Sölle, *Strength of the Weak*, pp. 24-30.

[67] Lucien Richard, *What Are They Saying about the Theology of Suffering?* p. 22. Cf. Sölle, *Strength of the Weak*, pp. 11-19; Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973).

[68] The most compelling, artistic treatments of the *theologia crucis* come from Roman Catholic and Jewish authors. Among these are Chi-Ha Kim's *The Gold Crowned Jesus*, Endo Shusaku's *Silence*, and the works of Elie Wiesel, especially *Night* and *The Town beyond the Wall*. The Jewish author Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz, has dedicated most of his life to keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust and describes it in his book *Night*:

> The SS hung two Jewish men and a boy before the assembled inhabitants of the camp. The men died quickly but the death struggle of the boy lasted half an hour. "Where is God? Where is he?" A man behind me asked. As the boy, after a long

4. The Rediscovery of a Suffering God

In this century, religious thinkers from diverse and even opposing viewpoints have proposed a poignant counter to the impassible God -- the image and concept of the God who suffers passionately what the world suffers. Such thinkers as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Kazoh Kitamori, Reinhold Niebuhr, Wolhart Pannenberg, Hans Küng, Jürgen Moltmann, Choan-Seng Song, Karl Rahner, Dorothe Sölle, William Temple, and James Cone, as well as process, liberation, black, feminist, and minjung theologians generally have expressed various versions of theology of the cross, or more generally the notion that God suffers with us.[69] The question becomes: "What pressures led to the rediscovery of the idea of a suffering God?" Besides the rediscovery of Luther, two can be identified, both focusing on the period immediately after World War I. These two factors, taken together, gave rise to widespread skepticism concerning traditional ideas about the impassibility of God: the rise of protest atheism and the history of dogma movement.

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time, was still in agony on the rope, I heard the man cry again, "Where is God now?" And I heard a voice within me answer, "Here he is -- he is hanging here on this gallows...." (Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. by Stella Rodway [NY: Hill and Wang, 1960], p. 70f).

[69] Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Philgrim Press, 1989), p. 14. E.g., see Hans Küng, *The Incarnation of God*, trans. J. R. Stephens (New York: Crossroad, 1987) excursus 2, "Can God Suffer?" pp. 518-525, and Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), pp. 105-120. Cf. Marc Steen, "The Theme of the Suffering God: An Exploration," in *God and Human Suffering*, ed. Jan Lambrecht and Raymond Collins (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990), pp. 69-93, as well as the extensive bibliography in this volume.

We have seen how the idea of an impassible God considerably influenced the dominant historical theologies and church tradition. Nevertheless, protests against the idea of an impassible God remained.[70] Perhaps the most celebrated of these is Martin Luther's "theology of the cross," which emerged during the period 1518-19. Luther contrasted two rival ways of thinking about God. A *theologia gloriae* ("theology of glory") perceives God's glory, power, and wisdom in creation. A *theologia crucis* ("theology of the cross") sees God as hidden in the suffering and humiliation of the cross of Christ. Luther deliberately uses the phrase *Deus crucifixus*, "a crucified God," to refer to the manner in which God shares in the suffering of the crucified Christ. In 1883 -- the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Luther's birth -- the Weimar edition of Luther's works was launched. The resulting availability of Luther's works (many of which were previously unpublished) led to a resurgence in Luther scholarship, especially in German theological circles. Scholars such as Karl Holl opened the way for a new interest in the reformer during the 1920s.[71] The result was a perceptible rise of public interest in Luther, especially his "theology of the cross." Luther's ideas about the "God who is

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[70] For a selection of primary sources of relevance to this section, see Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Wycliffe/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), pp. 239-291. According to Roland Goetz, the rejection of divine impassibility today can be attributed to the following three major factors: a) the rise of democratic aspirations, which makes people resist the image of an immutable and impassible God in the name of human freedom; b) divine passibility as a workable solution to the problem of theodicy; c) the need to make our belief reflect the image of God in the Bible, which has led to an increased scholarly reappraisal of the Bible. See Roland Goetz, "The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy," in *The Christian Century*, 16 (1986), pp. 385-389.

[71] Cf. Alister E. McGrath, *Modern Christian Thought* (Blackwell, 1993), p. 357.

hidden in suffering" became available at almost exactly the moment when they were needed.[72]

The sheer horror of World War I made a deep impact upon Western theological reflection. The suffering of the period led to a widespread perception that liberal Protestantism was fatally compromised by its optimistic view of human nature. It is no accident that the dialectical theology of Karl Barth, etc. arose in the aftermath of this trauma. Another significant response was the movement known as "protest atheism" which raised a serious moral protest against belief in God. How could anyone believe in a God who was above such suffering and pain in the world?

Traces of such ideas can be found in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's nineteenth-century novel *The Brothers Karamazov*.[73] The ideas were developed more fully in the twentieth century, using Dostoyevsky's character Ivan Karamazov as a model. Karamazov's rebellion against God (or, perhaps more accurately, against the idea of God) has its origins in his refusal to accept that the suffering of an innocent child could possibly be justified. Writers such as Jürgen Moltmann saw in this protest against an invulnerable

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[72] For studies on Luther, see Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Blackwell, 1985) and Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schulth (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) and Walter Von Lowenich, *Luther's Theologia Crucis*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augusberg, 1976).

[73] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, the translation by Constance Garnett revised, with an introduction by Avrahm Yarmolinsky (New York: Heritage Press, 1961).

God "the only serious atheism."[74] This intensely moral form of atheism demanded a credible theological response -- a theology of a suffering God.

The other factor is the "history of dogma" movement which reached its climax in the closing days of the nineteenth century, though it took a while for the implications of its program to percolate into Christian theology as a whole. By the time World War I ended, there was a general awareness that numerous Greek ideas (such as the impassibility of God) had found their way into Christian theology. Sustained attention was given to eliminating these ideas. Protest atheism created a climate in which it was apologetically necessary to speak of a suffering God. The "history of dogma" movement declared that Christian thinking had taken a wrong turn in the patristic period, and that this could be successfully reversed.[75] Christian declarations that God was above suffering, or invulnerable, were now realized to be inauthentic from a biblical standpoint. It was time to recover the authentically Christian idea of the suffering God in Christ.

5. Christian Idea of the Suffering of God in Christ

Some additional considerations may also be noted. First, the rise of process thought[76] gave new impetus to speaking of God as "a fellow sufferer who understands"

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[74] Just as the theology of the cross finds the theistic concept of God not suitable, the theology of the cross also finds atheism and its arguments against God lacking. See Moltmann's argument on "protest atheism" under the title "The Theology of the Cross and Atheism," in *The Crucified God*, pp. 219-227.

[75] Cf. McGrath, *Modern Christian Thought*, pp. 112-119.

[76] Process theology, formulated by Charles Hartshorne and exemplified by John Cobb and David Griffin, has become popular in recent years. On this issue of "God in Process Thought," see: Eulalio R. Baltazar, *God Within Process* (Paramus, NJ: Newman,

(A. N. Whitehead).[77] Yet many who welcomed this insight were hesitant over the theological framework which engendered it. Process thought's emphasis upon the primacy of creativity seemed inconsistent with much traditional Christian thought concerning the transcendence of God. Its view with respect to suffering is often articulated as one in which God "cannot control finite beings but can only set them goals which this God then has to persuade them to actualize."[78] God is persuasive (vs. coercive) and benevolent, powerful and just, but also depends upon humans to effect the course or shape of divine action in the world.[79] What is surrendered in this approach to an understanding of suffering, then, is God's omnipotence, and with that go many

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1970); John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1976); Paul Fiddes, "Process Theology," in A. E. McGrath (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Thought* (Oxford / Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 472-6; David Griffin, *God, Power and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); Kenneth Surin, "The Sign That Something Else Is Always Possible: Hearing and Saying 'Jesus Is Risen' and Hearing the Voices of Those Who Suffer: Some Texual/Political Reflections," *Literature and Theology* 4 (1990), pp. 263-77.

[77] Cf. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933); *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, edited by D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne, (NY: The Free Press, 1978).

[78] Kenneth Surin, "Evil, Problem of," in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Oxford, England/Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 194.

[79] Cobb and Griffin demonstrate this view in the following: "God seeks to persuade each occasion towards that possibility for its own existence which would be best for it; but God cannot control the finite occasion's self-actualization. Accordingly, the divine creative activity involves risk. The obvious point is that, since God is not in complete control of the events of the world, the occurrence of genuine evil is not incompatible with God's beneficence towards all his creatures." (John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* [Belfast: Christian Journals, 1976], p. 53, quoted in Surin, p. 194).

sufferers' hopes and expectations that God will eradicate suffering and put an end to evil once-and-for-all. An acceptable alternative for process theology was to ground the notion of God as a fellow-sufferer in the self-limitation of God.

Second, fresh studies of the Old Testament-- such as Abraham Heschel's *The Prophets* [80]and T. E. Fretheim's *The Suffering of God*[81] -- drew attention to the manner in which the Old Testament often portrayed God as one who shares in the *pathos* of Israel. God is hurt and moved by the suffering of God's people. If classical theism could not accommodate that insight, it was argued, then something was wrong.

Third, the notion of "love" itself has been the subject of considerable discussion in the twentieth century. Theologians rooted in the classical tradition -- such as Anselm and Aquinas -- defined love in terms of expressions and demonstrations of care and good-will toward others. It is thus possible to speak of God as "loving impassibility"-- that is, He loves the person without being emotionally affected by that person's situation. Yet the new interest in the problem has raised questions over this notion of love. Can one really speak of love, unless there is some mutual sharing of suffering involved? Surely love implies the lover's intense awareness of the suffering of the beloved, and thus some form of empathetic sharing in the beloved person's distress. Such considerations have undermined the intuitive plausibility of an impassible God.

Fourth, liberation theologies take seriously the suffering experiences of marginalized individuals and groups in the world, and locate theology in a praxis-

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[80] Heschel, *The Prophets* (N.Y.: Harper & Row 1962).

[81] T. E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

oriented approach. Gustavo Gutiérrez does his theology from the perspective of those who suffered. "Human suffering, involvement with it, and the question it raises about God are in fact one point of departure and one central theme in the theology of liberation."[82] For most of these theologies, whether from Africa, Asia, Latin America, or North America and Europe, the context in which the theologian is situated is critical in addressing concrete experiences of suffering. Consequently, for most liberation theologies, suffering results, in major part, from political, economic, and social exploitation and oppression. Suffering is caused by injustice and poverty, which leads to the destruction of human dignity and solidarity. As noted by Jon Sobrino, "for liberation theology the major form of suffering in today's world is historical suffering -- suffering unjustly inflicted on some by others."[83] An outgrowth of distorted social and personal values, this historical suffering afflicts the majority of people and restricts them from leading lives of purpose and self-direction.

The idea of a suffering God is perhaps more central in Third World liberation theologies than in other theologies. The meaning of God's option for the poor, the awareness of God's presence in the midst of people's concrete suffering, which are recurrent themes in all Third World theologies of liberation, are all clear indications of God's boundless identification with the human situation of the oppressed. There are

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[82] Gustavo Gutiérrez, On Job, *God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), xiv-xv.

[83] Jon Sobrino, "Theology in a Suffering World: Theology as Intellectus Amoris," in *Pluralism and Oppression, Theology in World Perspective*, ed. Paul Knitter. The Annual Publications of the College Theology Society, vol. 34 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), p. 156.

hardly any liberationist theological statements that do not suggest God's real experience of suffering: rather, Third World liberation theologies pay attention to God's active involvement in the struggle for the liberation of the poor and the oppressed.

Last, it suffices here to mention that in feminist theology, the issue of divine suffering is being discussed in the context of a new conception of God. While many Asian and African women incorporate suffering directly into their theological discourse,[84] much of the North American writing has not addressed suffering specifically from within systematic theology, except as a portion of a larger work on a broader theological theme (e.g., Carter Heyward's dissertation on a theology of mutual relation,[85] Nel Noddings book on women and evil,[86]or Elizabeth Johnson's recent work on God in feminist discourse[87]). Three very notable exceptions to this are Dorothee Sölle's 1975 study of suffering;[88] the work of womanist theologians such as Delores Williams,[89] who look at suffering through an emphasis on survival; and, more recently, the work of

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[84] E.g., see Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990) and Ursula King, ed., *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994).

[85] Isabel Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of the God: A Theology of Mutual Relation* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

[86] Nel Noddings, *Women and Evil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[87] Johnson, "Suffering God: Compassion Poured Out," in *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, pp. 246-72.

[88] Sölle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

[89] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Marknoll, N. Y. Orbis Books, 1993).

Wendy Farley.[90] Sölle argues for the importance of the belief in the passibility of God in the context of a feminist attack on the patriarchal conception of God. She also criticizes Mary Daly particularly for not recognizing the significance of divine passibility for feminist theology.[91]

As can be seen in this brief and albeit limited overview of the contributions of process theology, the "suffering God" approach, liberation theology, and feminist theology to the question raised by suffering, theological responses to human pain need to take into consideration not only how God acts in history to alleviate anguish and distress, but also how humans work with God to overcome sin and evil that cause suffering.

Of the major contributors to the discussion of the theological implications of a "suffering God" mentioned in this chapter, two theologians are singled out because of their special importance: Jürgen Moltmann and Choan-Seng Song. These two theologians have shaped their view of the suffering God in relation to the existential world. This study attempts now to answer the questions: (1) What influences led Moltmann and Song to the formulation of the idea of a suffering God? (2) What is the

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[90] Wendy Farley, "Resistance as a Theological category: The Cunning of History Revisited." *Bridges* 3 (1991), pp. 115-27; *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).

[91] See Sölle, "A Critique of Christian Masochism," in *Suffering*, pp. 9-28.

meaning of the cross for Moltmann and Song? (3) What does the suffering God have to do with human suffering in terms of the liberation of humanity in general and, in particular, for the minjung, in these theologians' work?

CHAPTER II

THE CRUCIFIED GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF JÜRGEN MOLTMANN

Moltmann's *The Crucified God* (1974) is surely one of the most significant and influential works ever to have expounded on the idea of the suffering God.[1] Consequently, in order to consider this aspect of his theology in detail, the influences which led to his formation of the idea of a crucified God need to be examined. Three major influences in Moltmann's doctrine of God will be explored here. First is Martin Luther's *theologia crucis*, which sees God as hidden in the suffering and humiliation of the cross of Christ. Second is the dialectical thought of Hegel, which helped to shape Moltmann's trinitarian thinking about the cross. And finally, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's understanding of the suffering God as the center of Christian theology plays a prominent role in Moltmann's thought. Since Moltmann's theology of the suffering God is not limited to the event of the crucifixion on the cross but includes the suffering of all creatures in creation as well, the above influences need to be examined in terms of the trinitarian theology of the cross and God in creation.

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[1] Miroslav Volf describes Moltmann as the "grandfather of liberation theology," and "a major figure in European political theology." See M. Volf (ed.) Essays in Honour of J. Moltmann. These are the major volumes: *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Criticism of Christian theology* (1964), *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (1972), *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (1975), *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (1980), *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (1985), *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (1989), *The Spirit of Life: An Universial Affirmation* (1992), *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (1996).

1. Theological Influences on Moltmann's Idea of the Crucified God

1.1. *Theologia Crucis*: Martin Luther

Especially in its unsurpassed focus on the death and resurrection of Christ, Luther's theology of the cross deeply influenced Moltmann's theology of divine suffering. On 26 April 1518 Luther presided over the opening disputation of the chapter of the Augustinian Order at Heidelberg.[2] The disputation concerned a series of theses which Luther had drawn up for the occasion at the invitation of Johannes von Staupitz. In the course of these theses, the main elements of Luther's emerging *theologia crucis* become clear.[3] The most significant statement relating to this theology are to be found in Theses 19 and 20:

> 19. The person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20].
> 20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.[4]

Luther supported Paul's understanding of the cross (e.g., II Cor. 13: 4),[5] and described the essence of "true theology" as the theology of the cross or the *theologia*

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[2] See K. Bauer, 'Die Heidelberger Disputation Luthers,' *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 21(1900), pp. 233-68; 299-329.

[3] For a study of *theologia crucis*, see W. von Lowenich, *Luthers Theologia Crucis* (München, 4th edn, 1954), pp. 11-20.

[4] D. M. *Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1883-), hereafter abbreviated as WA 1. 354. 17-21; *Luther's Works*, ed. H. T. Lehmann, Vol. 31. (Philadelphia Muhlenberg Press, 1957, hereafter abbreviated as LW), p. 52.

[5] In the context of a discussion about Nietzsche's rejection of Paul's theology, Eberhard Jungel makes the important point that it is only in connection with love that power and weakness are not antithetical. "For Paul, the Crucified One is weak, subject to

crucis, which seeks to understand God from the sufferings of Jesus and the pain of God's Son on the cross. It radically rejects human wisdom, in keeping with Luther's central emphasis on justification by grace alone, through faith alone. The opposite of this theology is the theology of glory, or the *theologia gloriae*, which attempts to understand God from the works of God. For Luther, the sole authentic locus of humanity's knowledge of God is the cross of Christ, in which God is to be found revealed, and yet paradoxically hidden. Luther's reference to the *posteriora Dei* serves to emphasise that God is revealed in the *passiones et crucem* – and yet he is hidden in this very revelation. In the very things which human wisdom regards as the antithesis of deity - such as weakness, foolishness and humanity - God stands revealed in the "humility and shame of the cross."[6]

In his major treatise on the doctrine of God and christology, *The Crucified God*, Moltmann points to Luther's *theologia crucis* as the guiding lens through which one examines all theological statements in Christianity: "*Theologia crucis* is not a single

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death. But Paul does not celebrate this with melancholy, but rather thinks of it as the gospel, as a source of joy. What is joyful about the weakness of the Crucified One? The weakness of the Crucified One is for Paul the way in which God's power of life is perfected (II Cor. 13:4). Weakness is then not understood as a contradiction of God's power. There is, however, only one phenomenon in which power and weakness do not contradict each other, in which rather power can perfect itself as weakness. This phenomenon is the event of love. Love does not see power and weakness as alternatives. It is the unity of power and weakness, and such is certainly the most radical opposite of the will to power which cannot affirm weakness. Pauline 'theology of the cross' (*theologia crucis*) is, accordingly, the most stringent rejection of all deification of self-willing power" (Eberhard Jungel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*, trans. Darrell L. Guder [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], p. 206).

[6] WA 1. 362. 12-13.

chapter in theology, but the key signature for all Christian theology.... It is the point from which all theological statements which seek to be Christian are viewed."[7]

In his *Table-Talk*, Luther rejected the argument that because God can neither suffer nor die, only his human nature suffers in Christ. Luther argued that the divine nature of God, as well as the human nature of God, suffers and dies for us on the cross. For Luther, "true theology and knowledge of God are found in Christ crucified."[8] The concept of Isaiah's *dictum* : "Truly you are a hidden God!"(Isaiah 45,15) lies at the centre of the theology of the cross.[9] Luther furthermore affirmed in the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* that "To be born, to suffer, to die, are characteristics of the human nature, of which characteristics the divine nature also becomes sharer in this Person."[10] Consequently, Luther believed that humanity cannot know God except through the cross.[11] The knowledge of God is not theoretical knowledge but involves the entirety of human existence. It is impossible for us to view the cross as an objective reality in Christ without knowing ourselves as crucified with Christ. The cross signifies God's meeting us in the death of Jesus Christ only when we experience Jesus' death as

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[7] Moltmann, CG, p. 72.

[8] WA 1. 362. 30-31: 'Per crucem destruuntur opera et crucifigitur Adam, qui per opera potius aedificatur.' Cf. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, pp. 28-52.

[9] WA 1. 357. 3-4.

[10] Ibid., p. 122; LW 31:55.

[11] LW 14: 305, 309. Cf. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, p. 122.

our own.[12] According to Douglas John Hall, in referring to the cross, Luther certainly does not mean the presence of crosses, jeweled or roughhewn, with or without the *Christus* figure, but some real evidence of Christian participation in the suffering of Christ in this world.[13] In his *theologia crucis*, Luther demonstrates his intuitive and disciplined grasp of the Scriptures. He understood that it is impossible to have any genuine impression of the biblical picture of "the people of God," whether of Israel or of the Christian community, without coming to terms with the recurrent theme of human suffering.

The lineage of the *theologia crucis* is derived primarily from the apostle Paul, and can be found in some of the medieval mystics who influenced Luther deeply, together with a considerable impetus along the way from the christological deliberations of the ancient school of Antioch and certain aspects of Augustine of Hippo. Its deepest roots are found in the prophetic tradition of ancient Israel. Therefore, according to Douglas Hall, "the rediscovery of this minority Christian tradition necessitates the reexamination of the Old Testament and the living community of Israel - a community of people who have lived the theology of the cross and have had to do so, because Christians lived in

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[12] See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 28.

[13] Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, pp. 123-124. Hall attempted to speak specifically to the Canadian situation out of this same tradition in a work entitled *The Canada Crisis* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1980). Also refer to his book entitled *Thinking The Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), p. 23; Douglas J. Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness: Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976).

accordance with a very different conception of the calling of the people of God."[14] The *theologia crucis* acknowledges that Christ suffered more, was weaker, and was more deeply in despair while on the cross than we as humans will ever be in life. The *theologia gloriae*, by contrast, begins with faith in the ability of humanity to attain knowledge and think reasonably about God.

Luther dared to write about the "crucified God," and it was, of course, from him, that Moltmann named his second major volume. It did not seem to threaten or diminish his understanding of God's true dignity and other-ness. If God's "glory is lowliness, and ...his power ...love," Luther's God of the cross proved to be more consistent with the divinity of the Patripassians.[15] With his general understanding of the relation of grace and nature (and his sacramental theology), Luther brought together two orientations that so easily fly apart, and he suggested that the human *Beruf* is an expression of and participation in divine providence. If Martin Luther had not been compelled to experience first hand the terrible anxiety that gripped his age, the anxiety of an almost inescapable judgment by an almost implacable God,[16] he would never have discovered the gospel of "justification by grace through faith." Nevertheless, as we know from Luther's biography, he suffered a great deal of personal anguish because of his discovery,

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[14] See Hall, *Thinking The Faith*, p.24.

[15] Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness*, p.185.

[16] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p.15.

and not just at the outset of his career. The *Anfechtungen* (times of utter abandonment) remained permanent for Luther, and they were periodic features of his Christian life.[17]

One of Luther's most profound insights was that God made himself small for us in Christ, and thereby left us our freedom and our humanity.[18] God showed us his heart, so that our hearts could be won. We do not know what we shall be, but we know already something of the courage to become. "We should be human and not God. That is the summation [of Christian belief]. It will never change."[19] The cross, according to Luther, signifies God's meeting us in the death of Jesus Christ only when we experience Jesus' death as our own.[20]

Luther's theology of the cross has been criticized even by thinkers who otherwise appreciate it. For Douglas Hall, the most disappointing aspect of Luther's thought and life is his failure to apply his *theologia crucis*, the antithesis of *theologia gloriae*, to social structures in general and in particular to the church. When theology of the cross does not lead to social ethics, it leads, if only by default, to social quietism.[21] Hall contends, "when it is combined with the affirmation that these principalities and powers

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[17] Hall, *Thinking The Faith*, p.82.

[18] Cf. Luther, WA 23, 141, 28, quoted in E. Wolf, 'Die Christusverkündigung bei Luther' in *Peregrinatio* I. *Studien zur reformatorischen Theologie, zum Kirchenrecht und zur Sozialethik*, Munich 1954, p. 56.

[19] See Luther, *Letters*, 1530, Selections, LW. 49. 337; Eberhard Jungel, *The Freedom of a Christian: Luther's Significance for Contemporary Theology*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1988).

[20] Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, p.28.

[21] Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness*, pp. 129-130.

are ordained by God himself, and must be obeyed largely without question, this theology becomes a fearful thing. Yet even today, after the fearful thing ought to have made itself obvious to all concerned, many of those most committed to the way of Luther are suspicious of any attempt to draw radical social consequences from the gospel."[22] A similar point is made by Harold Wells: "Luther's radical rejection of human wisdom is a corollary of his understanding of justification by faith alone.... But Luther did not realize the sociopolitical implications which some have found in it for church and mission."[23]

As Andrew Sung Park points out, there is a problem in Luther's approach to divine knowledge: "He [Luther] overemphasized the cross of Jesus Christ as the only way to the knowledge of God. In reality, not only through Christ's death, but also through Christ's life do we come to know God... The divine helplessness is shown throughout the life of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to separate Jesus' life from his cross. They are interpenetrated in suffering. Our knowledge of God must derive from a balance between the life and the cross of Jesus Christ. "[24]

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[22] Ibid., p. 130. Moltmann discussed Luther critically, as well as appreciatively in his articles "Luther and Two Kingdoms," in *On Human Dignity* and "The Theology of the Cross Today " in *Future of Creation.*

[23] Harold G. Wells, "Holy Spirit and Theology of the Cross," *Theological Studies*, No. 53 (1992), pp. 479-80.

[24] Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 116. Joy Bussert points out that Luther's writing is used to buttress the view that, because of the Fall, woman must accept her assigned subordinate role in life, as it is commanded by God, and obey her husband absolutely. In the words of Luther: "The woman bears subordination just as unwillingly as she bears those pains and inconveniences that have been placed upon her flesh. The rule remains with the husband and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state.... The woman, on the other hand, is like a nail driven into the wall. She sits at home and for this reason Paul... calls her a

At any rate, it is obvious that Moltmann's theology of the cross, and so his theology of the suffering God, is profoundly dependent upon Luther, though Moltmann attempted to draw out its liberative, political dimensions.

1.2. A Dialectical Hermeneutics: G. W. F. Hegel

A distinct flavour of the philosophy of Hegel can be discerned throughout the thought of Moltmann. From Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, Moltmann learned not only the use of dialectics to understand the trinitarian implications of the cross, but also its application to the "history of God."[25] Indeed Moltmann explicitly refers to Hegel. He says, "It remains for us to note that at the end of this section of the *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel expressly acknowleges the doctrine of the Trinity, because only this makes it possible to understand the cross as the 'history of God.'"[26] He also comments, "We have to thank Hegel, the philosopher of the Trinity."[27] Moltmann's thesis that the eschatological consummation of the trinitarian relations will only follow when the redemption of the world is completed[28] is derived from Hegel's philosophy of history,

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domestic." (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955] vol. 1. 1, *Lectures on Genesis*, pp. 68-9, quoted in Joy M. K. Bussert, *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment* [New York: Lutheran Church in America, Division for Mission in North America, 1986], p. 11).

[25] Cf. CG, pp. 253-254.

[26] CG, p. 254.

[27] FC, p. 82.

[28] Cf. J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. 74f. According to Frank Meesen, this should be termed one of Moltmann's most important thoughts. Cf. F.

though this does not mean the content is entirely Hegelian. Moltmann bases his understanding of the history of God upon a pattern of thinking associated with dialectical philosophy as worked out by Hegel, namely, the idea that history proceeds according to the dynamic of thesis, antithesis, synthesis.[29] The thesis is that there is suffering on the cross and in the world. The antithesis is that this suffering affects God and even appears to overcome him (Jesus dies). The resulting synthesis is that God transforms the suffering into life (the resurrection in the Spirit). This theology of the trinitarian transaction in the event of the cross works itself out as a divine dialectic grappling with the history of the world. Richard Bauckham supports this point: "The Trinity is therefore a dialectical historical process, inaugurated by the Son's identification with the world in all its negativity on the cross, and taking, through the work of the Spirit, all human history into itself in order to open it to the eschatological future."[30]

Like Hegel, speaking of the life of God within the Trinity as the "history of God," Moltmann states:

> The concrete "history of God" in the death of Jesus on the cross on Golgotha therefore contains within itself all the depths and abysses of human history and therefore can be understood as the history of history. All human history, however much it may be determined by guilt and death, is taken up into this "history of God," i.e., into the Trinity, and integrated into the future of the "history of God." There is no suffering which in this history of God is not God's suffering, no death which has not been God's death in the history of Golgotha. Therefore there is no

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Meesen, *Unveranderlichkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes. Eine theologigeschichtlich-systematische Untersuchung*, Freiburg I. Br. 1989. p. 35.

[29] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (NY: Crossroad, 1996), pp. 121-2.

[30] Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (T&T Clark Ltd., 1995), pp. 154-155.

> life, no fortune and no joy which have not been integrated by his history into eternal life, the eternal joy of God.[31]

Moltmann's panentheism (God in all things, all things in God) resembles that of Hegel. According to Moltmann, not only is God in history, but history, with all of its uproars, is in God. Precisely in this sense, Moltmann speaks of a "theology after Auschwitz" and maintains that "like the cross of Christ, even Auschwitz is in God himself. Even Auschwitz is taken up into the grief of the Father, the surrender of the Son and the power of the Spirit."[32] Through the dialectic of being and nonbeing in God, the negativity of history is brought to a new and just reconciliation. In fact, only if all disaster is within God can God affect salvation. Otherwise, it is still apart from divine power and is not changed.

1.3. A Kenotic Approach to Christology: Dietrich Bonhoeffer

It is impossible to imagine the appearance of Moltmann's theology of the suffuring God without the influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer(1906-1945).[33] It is well established in contemporary theological circles that christology has always been at the forefront of Bonhoeffer's theology. Luther's theology deeply influenced that of Bonhoeffer, especially its christological focus. It is clear that Bonhoeffer's thought is distinct from liberal theology in terms of its christological concentration, even though

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[31] CG, p. 246.

[32] CG, p. 278.

[33] In order to see Moltmann's treatment of Bonhoeffer and how dependent on him, see CG, p. 16, 28, 47, 55, 63, 77, 146, 158, 290, 339 and WJC, pp. 200-203; p. 264.

Bonhoeffer gained insight into the world from liberal theology. Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth shared the same starting point, a criticism of religion, based on the revelation of God in Christ. However, Bonhoeffer's theology is distinct from Barth's because his theology is built up in terms of its concrete concern about the world. It is a holistic theology which inherits Luther's *theologia crucis* faithfully. The uniqueness of Bonhoeffer's theology in its time lay perhaps in its interaction between the theory and praxis of theology, and contemporary Christianity.[34] Christology is the point of departure for Bonhoeffer's understanding of the world and redemption. In *Ethics*, Christology is the basis for ethical social responsibility. Sitting in a Nazi prison cell, Bonhoeffer made the following statement to Eberhard Bethge (b.1909): "What is bothering me incessantly is the question of what Christianity really is, or indeed who Christ really is, for us today."[35]

The cohesive, underlying element in Bonhoeffer's Christology is precisely *a theologia crucis*.[36] "The one who is present in Word, sacrament and community is in the

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[34] See Robert E. Willis, "Bonhoeffer and Barth on Jewish Suffering: Reflections on the Relationship between Theology and Moral Sensibility," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 24, 4 (1987), p. 604; E. Bethge, "Bonhoeffer's Christology and His Religionless Christianity," *Bonhoeffer in a World Come of Age*, ed. by Peter Vorkink II, p. 47; Paul Lehmann, "The Concreteness of Theology: Reflections on the Conversation Between Barth and Bonhoeffer," *Footnote To A Theology: The Karl Barth Colloquium of 1972*, ed. by H. Martin Rumscheidt (The Corporation for the Publication of Academic Studies in Religion in Canada, 1974), pp. 65, 67; John Godsey, "Barth and Bonhoeffer," *Quarterly Review*, vol. 7, No. 1 (1987), pp. 17-18.

[35] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM, 1971), p.280.

[36] This is certainly the case in his lectures on Christology from 1933. In these lectures, reconstructed from his Universität-of-Berlin-students' notes, published in the U.S. under the title *Christ the Center* (1966) and in England under the title *Christology* (1964), Bonhoeffer places Jesus at the center of humanity, nature, and history.

center of human existence, history and nature. It is the structure of his person that stands in the center."[37] The center in this schema is specifically the Jesus of the cross. One of the last statements Bonhoeffer makes on this issue determines the direction of his theology of the cross, and sums up the direction of theologies of the cross through the present: "The only thing that is common to all these is their sharing in the suffering of God in Christ."[38]

> The Bible directs humanity to God's powerlessness and suffering: only a suffering God can help... Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering... To be a Christian... is to be a human - not a type of human, but the human that Christ creates in us. It is not the religious act that makes the Christian but participation in the suffering of God in the secular life.[39]

The crucified Jesus is presented by Paul within the framework of a kenotic christology. Kenotic christology, present in the gospel of Mark and developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is a christology centered on the cross, and the mystery of the suffering humanity of Jesus. Its characteristics are well expressed by Karl Barth, whose thought was a major influence on both Bonhoeffer and Moltmann:

> We are confronted with the revelation of what is and will always be to all other ways of looking and thinking a mystery, and indeed a mystery which offends. The mystery reveals to us that for God it is just as natural to be lowly as it is to be high, to be near as it is to be far, to be little as it is to be great, to be abroad as to be home. Thus that when in the presence and action of Jesus Christ in the world created by Him and characterized *in malam partem* by the sin of man He chooses to go into the far country, to conceal His form of lordship in the form of this

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[37] Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, p. 62.

[38] Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*, p. 362; Edwin Robertson, *Bonhoeffer's Legacy: The Christian Way in a World without Religion* (Collier Books, Macmillab Publishing Company, 1989), p. 63.

[39] Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, pp. 188, 190.

> world and therefore in the form of a servant, He is not untrue to Himself but genuinely true to Himself, to the freedom which is that of His love.[40]

The trend towards seeking *kenosis*[41] as a revelation of the divine nature reaches its climax in the war-time theology of Bonhoeffer. Conceiving the kenotic motif more radically than Barth, Bonhoeffer not only perceives the ultimate meaning of Jesus' personality in his human self-emptying, but also contends that the presence of the divine is best expressed to us in God's weakness and powerlessness. He writes,

> God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without Him... Before God and with God we live without God. God lets Himself be pushed out of the world on to the Cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which He is with us and helps us. Matt. 8,17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering... Only a suffering God can help... That is a reversal of what the religious man expects from God. Man is summoned to share in God's sufferings at the hands of godless world.[42]

Here exists the real paradox: God demonstrates his omnipotence in his weakness and suffering, and his presence in his absence. He is immanent in the world even when he "lets himself be pushed out of the world." And it is precisely in this self-limitation, in this immanence in the world, that he clearly demonstrates his transcendence, which is epitomized in the life of Jesus - a life lived only for others. According to Bonhoeffer, "His [Jesus] 'being there for others' is precisely his transcendence. It is not only this

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[40] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 4/1: pp. 192-193.

[41] "Kenosis is actually a plerosis, which means that the human limitations of Jesus are seen as a positive expression of his divinity rather than as a curtailment of it" (C. F. D. Moule, "The Manhood of Jesus in the New Testament," S. W. Sykes, *Christ, Faith and History* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], pp. 95-111).

[42] Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*, p. 360f.

'being there for others,' maintained till death, that is the ground of his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence."[43]

Hence, for Bonhoeffer, *kenosis* is not foreign to a transcendent God. It would seem so only if we were conceiving God as an abstract, metaphysical idol, a working hypothesis posited to serve as the boundary of human knowledge. Bonhoeffer's main concern here is to correct our image of God, to show that the God of the Bible is not a mere "problem-solver," *a deus ex machina*, whose significance appears only when there is success. It amounts to power-worship when Christians seek their God only in the superlatives.

Moltmann addresses this problem in his trinitarian conception of the kenotic motif. Moltmann prefers to speak of death in God as opposed to the "death of God." He favors kenoticism as a better way of conceiving God's relation to the world. Moltmann argues that the attribution of the direct experience of dying to God is to be avoided, and prefers to say that the death of Jesus occurs in God.[44]

The contemporary Christian must recognize the suffering of Jesus and in some way participate in this suffering. And instead of looking for opportunities of inward participation, one must look outwardly to the world to all of its dispossessed, forgotten, oppressed, weak, and poor. After Bonhoeffer, the theology of the cross exists no longer as a "theology of _____," as is so common today.[45] Rather, contemporary theologies of

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[43] Ibid., p. 381.

[44] CG, p. 207.

[45] Cf. Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, p.25.

the cross transcend the demarcated theological world and move into the areas of justice in the social, the political, and anthropological arenas of life.[46]

Bonhoeffer not only believed that participation in the suffering of God is the distinctive mark of a Christian, but also lived with the idea that God, Godself shared this suffering in the hours of grieving. He said, "It is not some religious act which makes a Christian what he is, but participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world."[47]

It is constantly evident, when we read the post-Auschwitz, post-war theology of Moltmann, that Bonhoeffer's political and worldly version of *theologia crucis* has formed a champion and a true heir.

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[46] I would say that Korean Minjung theology has applied and developed Bonhoeffer's theology faithfully and radically in the situation of Korea. Bonhoeffer's theology includes and proceeds from theological concern about the situation of the suffering people. Minjung theology starts with the suffering situation of minjung itself. It is clear that many common points exist between these two theologies. Bonhoeffer spoke about God's suffering in the world by understanding God in terms of the cross of Christ, and he was martyred because he was so engaged in the suffering of his time. Minjung theologians understood Christ in light of the suffering servant, saw God and Christ through the minjung's suffering, and applied the theology of suffering by participating in the minjung's suffering. Bonhoeffer's theology and minjung theology have a meeting point in the theology of suffering in having Christology as their basis, i.e., they believe that others are to be healed and saved by Christ' suffering. Cf. Jae-Soon, Park, *Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Korean Minjung Theology* [Korean].

[47] See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Prison for God: Letters and Papers from Prison, trans. R.H. Fuller* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 166. See also Jung Young Lee, *God Suffers for Us*, p. 82.

2. The Crucified God

2.1. Suffering and the Question about God

The two basic themes of Moltmann's theology - God as the power of hope, and God as the suffering God present in human suffering - can be traced to the years of 1945-1948 when he was a prisoner of war. Moltmann fought in World War II and was captured by the British in Belgium in 1945. He was held as a prisoner of war until 1948. As Moltmann himself confessed, these events drastically shaped his life:

> In the camps in Belgium and Scotland I experienced both the collapse of those things that had been certainties for me and a new hope to live by, provided by the Christian faith. I probably owe to this hope, not only my mental and moral but physical survival as well, for it was that which saved me from despairing and giving up. I came back a Christian, with a new 'personal goal' of studying theology, so that I might understand the power of hope to which I owed my life.[48]

Moltmann writes, "The 'question of God' first came to me during the fire-storm which, in July 1943, reduced my home town of Hamburg to rubble and ashes: Why have I survived this? And then with the uncovering of the German crimes at Auschwitz and Maidanel: How can one live with this?"[49] Deeply influential in Moltmann's understanding of theology was his sense of involvement in the suffering and guilt of the German nation. This experience led him to see theology from an ethical and political perspective. Moltmann has become, since the publication of his *Theology of Hope* in 1964, one of the most important of the post-war German theologians who helped the German people to face their guilt, and still to find hope in God.

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[48] "An Autobiographical Note" in A. J. Conyers, *God, Hope, and History: Jürgen Moltmann and the Christian Hope and History*,1988, p.203.

[49] Jürgen Moltmann, Forward to Richard Baukham, *Messianic Theology in the Making* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1987), viii.

In this respect, Moltmann must be seen as an acutely European, or more specifically, a German contextual theologian, whose construal of the Christian faith addresses the needs and concerns of his own people. This has been a people burdened with guilt, in need of forgiveness and hope, and a people intensely aware of evil and suffering, and so in need of theodicy. That God is a suffering God has been absolutely central to these concerns, and for his whole theological project.

In his book *The Crucified God*, he depicts a God who literally suffers on the cross, thereby identifying with the suffering of the whole world. He begins by rejecting two options as deficient. The first option is to say that God does not suffer; however, this only makes God an unfeeling monster in the face of so much suffering today. Right down to the present day, Moltmann rightly puts it, the apathy axiom has left a deeper impress on the fundamental concepts of the doctrine of God than has the history of Christ's passion.[50] Moltmann, in *The Crucified God*, asserts that the adoption of the Greek philosophical concept[51] of the 'God incapable of suffering' by the early church led to difficulties in christology which only more recent theology has set out to overcome.[52]

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[50] Jürgen Molmann, *Jesus Christ for Today's World* (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 43.

[51] Cf. Dorothee Sölle, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 29-30.

[52] Moltmann, CG, p. 267. Moltmann says: "The center of rethinking about God is no longer the distinction between God and the world. The center is the recognition of the presence of God in the world and the world in God" (Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation* [Harper & Row Publishers, 1985], p. 13). Dorothee Sölle supports Moltmann's point: and confirms that the basic motif of the concept of the apathetic God is to stress God's separateness from creation in order to elevate God's absolute transcendence. Sölle says:

Moltmann criticizes the metaphysical and ethical perfection of God, that has been described as *apatheia*, in terms of the relationship between God and human beings, and all creatures: "If this concept of God is applied to Christ's death on the cross, the cross must be evacuated of deity, for by definition God cannot suffer and die. He is pure causality.... The God who was the subject of suffering could not be truly God."[53] Moltmann says: "Friendship occurs where love is offered in return. But in friendship with God there is no room for love." As that which is perfect, the Godhead needs nothing. God, according to classical theism, does not need the services or the emotions of humanity for his own life. Because he is perfect, he needs no friends nor will he save any. The Godhead is self-sufficient. As the perfect being, he is without emotions, nothing can happen to God for him to suffer. Anger, hate and envy are alien to him. According to apathetic theism, Moltmann claims, equally alien to him are love, compassion and mercy. As immovable, impassible, united, and self-sufficient, God confronts a moving, passible, divided, and dependent world. As the founder and sustainer of the transient world, God abides eternally without being subjected to this

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> "There is a masculine theology that imagines God as commander in chief, as omnipotence, and as emperor. I call this theology *divine imperialism*, since it functions in the sphere of theology as imperialism acts in the economic and political sphere, namely, to subjugate people. The basic motif of divine imperialism for the relationship of God to people is dominion or superiority in power" (Dorothee Sölle, *On Earth as in Heaven: A Liberation Spirituality of Sharing* [Westmister/John Knox Press, 1993], p. 70).

Douglas J. Hall also supports this point: "every responsible attempt to rethink the question of "God and human suffering" must involve in a primary sense a radical reinterpretation of divine omnipotence" (Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* [Augusburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1986], p. 155). See Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, pp. 95-96.

[53] Moltmann, CG, p. 214.

world's destiny.[54] Moltmann points out that ancient Judaism, above all in the person of Philo, and ancient Christianity, took up this ideal of *apatheia* in theology and ethics and sought to fulfill it and go beyond it and to regard *apatheia* as the goal of perfection.[55] In short, *apatheia* is entering into the higher divine sphere of the Logos; it denotes the freedom of humanity and superiority to the world in correspondence to the perfect, all-sufficient freedom of the Godhead. Conversely, the other option would be to say that God suffers without any choice in the matter, which would make God subservient to pain. It is not right either to say that God suffers without any choice in the matter. This is the human, finite way of suffering-- it overtakes us and holds us in its grip. It is part of our creatureliness that we cannot escape, but such a condition would not do justice to God who is supreme over all the earth. Rejecting both these options, Moltmann argues that a God who cannot suffer is a deficient God:

> A God who cannot suffer is poorer than any human. For a God who is incapable of suffering is a being that cannot be involved. Suffering and injustice do not affect him. And because he is so completely insensitive, he cannot be affected or shaken by anything. He cannot weep, for he has no tears. But the one who cannot suffer cannot love either. So he is also a loveless being.[56]

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[54] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p.21.

[55] Moltmann says: "Philo strives to become free and without needs in the service of God who alone gives the power to achieve *apatheia*. Because Philo is in the area influenced by the Old Testament understanding of God, his doctrine of *apatheia* differs from that of the Stoics, although he has taken over their form of it. For him the *apatheia* strived for is indeed meant to lead to similarity with God, but in essence it leads to a different 'situation of God.' Moltmann, CG, p. 269.

[56] CG, p. 222.

Moltmann here brings together a number of the considerations we noted earlier, including the idea that love involves the lover participating in the sufferings of the beloved.

Moltmann presents a third option, which states that out of love God freely chooses to be affected by what affects others, so that when people sin and suffer this influences the divine being. According to Moltmann, such a God suffers not out of a deficiency or weakness in the divine nature, but out of the fullness of the divine love. Moltmann argues very strongly that if God could not suffer in this way, then God would not be love. For it is of the essence of love to be affected by what is happening to the object of love, and to suffer or rejoice as a result.

It is interesting to note the relationship between theology as "God-talk" and a theologian's own experience of the reality of God. For Moltmann, ever since he experienced a very different 'dark night' in his soul,[57] the question about God has been identical with the cry of the victims for justice and the hunger of the perpetrators for a way back from the path of death. Moltmann described his experience of the pictures of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and his horror over the crimes in Auschwitz which have weighed on him ever since 1945.[58]

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[57] Cf. CG, p. xi.

[58] Ibid.

2.2. The Passion of the Crucified Christ

For Moltmann, the reality of suffering is regarded as an argument for the suffering of God.[59] He began from the essential passion of God, because he believes that the passion of the passionate Christ is at the centre of the Christian faith.[60] Moltmann addresses the question about God from the perspective of Christ, especially in his dying cry: 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'[61]

> Jesus' death cry on the cross is 'the open wound' of every Christian theology, for consciously or unconsciously every Christian theology is a reply to the 'Why?' with which Jesus dies, a reply that attempts to give theological meaning to his death. But when Christian theologians do not accept what Jesus suffered from God, they are like Job's friends, not like Job himself. The contradiction between the Sonship of God and forsakenness by God is a contradiction that cannot be resolved, either by reducing the divine Sonship or by failing to take the forsakenness seriously. Even the words of Psalm 22 on Jesus' lips do not solve the conflict, for the psalm ends with a prayer of thanksgiving for rescue from deadly peril. There was no such rescue on Golgotha; and with the psalm Jesus no longer speaks to God as his 'Father'; he addresses him as the God of Israel.'

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[59] Richard Baukham points out that there are three elements in Moltmann's single reason for requiring Christian theology to speak of God's suffering. They are closely interconnected: (a) The passion of Christ, (b) the nature of love, and (c) the problem of human suffering. Bauckham believes that these three elements are probably the three major reasons why many other Christian theologians since the mid-nineteenth century have questioned the doctrine of divine impassibility. See the survey in Richard Baukham, " 'Only the suffering God can help': Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," *Themelios* 9/3 (1984), pp. 6-12. Bauckham indicates that Paul Fiddes' recent book on divine suffering identifies these as three major reasons why recent theology has come to speak of divine suffering, and adds a fourth; "the world-picture today," by which he means the picture of the world as process and therefore of God as involved in the process and interacting with its freedom. See P. S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) chapter 2. This idea of God's suffering the freedom he grants the non-human creation does appear in Moltmann's doctrine of creation (GC 69, pp. 210-211).

[60] It would be much better for theology "if we ceased to make God's apathy our starting point, and started from the axiom of God's passion" (TKG, p. 22).

[61] Cf. CG, p. x.

> Early manuscripts of Mark's Gospel intensify the cry into: 'Why have you exposed me to shame?' and 'Why have you cursed me?'"[62]

Jesus' cry of dereliction is central to Moltmann's understanding of the suffering God. This cry of abandonment is either the end of a truly Christian theology and every religion, according to Moltmann, or it is the beginning of a truly Christian theology--and that means a liberation theology.[63] Moltmann is convinced that a truly Christian theology has to make Jesus' experience of God on the cross the center of all ideas about God.[64] For Moltmann, the paradox of the theology of the cross consists in conceiving the "God in God-forsakenness" of Jesus as an event of love. This, he believes, is a "revolution in the concept of God:"[65]

> Within the Christian message of the cross of Christ, something new and strange has entered the metaphysical world. For this faith must understand the deity of God from the event of the suffering and death of the Son of God and thus bring about a fundamental change in the orders of being of metaphysical thought and the value tables of religious feeling.[66]

Moltmann argues that the early church had a christology which did not account for the forsaken-ness of Jesus. As a result, the church followed a doctrine similar to Docetism – an early christological heresy, which treated Christ as a purely divine being who only had the "appearance" of being human. As a consequence, the church found it

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[62] WJC, pp. 166-167.

[63] Ibid.

[64] See Moltmann, *The Future of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 75.

[65] CG, p. 4, 204.

[66] CG, p. 215.

difficult to reconcile the notion of God as incorruptible, unchangeable, invisible, incapable of suffering, and immortal, with the fact that humanity is transitory, changeable, divisible, capable of suffering, and mortal. This was later reconciled by the doctrine of the two natures in Christ, which joined God with humanity. With Jesus' forsaken-ness on the cross, however, the union of the two natures came into question once again. The early church asked whether or not it is really possible to ascribe Christ's suffering to God. Was it really necessary to dissolve the personal union of the two natures in Christ in his forsaken-ness?

Moltmann addresses these issues with three arguments based on historical crises. First, Moltmann states, "Nicaea rightly said against Arius: God is not changeable. But that statement is not absolute; it is only a simile. God is not changeable as creatures are changeable. However, the conclusion should not be drawn from this that God is under no constraint from that which is not of God."[67] In this respect, God does not change as humans do. Second, the early church maintained that it was impossible for God to suffer. Reacting against the Monophysites, the church came to the conclusion that only the human nature suffered on the cross. Moltmann maintains that this view of suffering is too narrowly defined. There is physical suffering, but there is also suffering brought about when one voluntarily opens oneself up to another in love. With such openness comes vulnerability, the possibility of being affected by the other. Love necessarily affects the other. Thus, if one were to abandon the concept of a suffering deity, then one would also have to abandon the notion that God loves, which would only leave humanity

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[67] CG, p. 229.

with a philosophical, Aristotelian concept of God. Third, Moltmann attempts to break the traditional understanding that redemption is founded upon the *via negativa*, i.e. negative concepts such as unchangeableness, immortality, and incorruptibility. Since these terms are only negations of negatives, they lead humanity to question whether such things exist. Humanity cannot experience these negations. Humanity must go beyond the general distinction between God and the world, or God and humanity, and penetrate the special relationships between God and the world and God and humanity.[68]

The failure of theology to understand the cross of Christ as the unique revelation of the suffering God inevitably leads the church to "a double crisis" which Moltmann identifies as "the crisis of identity and the crisis of relevance."[69] Since these two crises are closely tied to one another, Moltmann describes them as the identity-involvement dilemma.[70] In the face of this danger, the God-forsaken death of Jesus is for us "either the end of every theology, or else the beginning of a theology that is specifically Christian."[71] Concerning the identity and relevance of faith, Moltmann contends that a theology of the cross gives a new identity to Christian theology, one that includes the crucified Christ as well as an identification with the godless through praxis.[72] Christian identity, then, reflects two related things. It is "an act of identification with the crucified

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[68] Cf. CG, p. 231.

[69] Cf. CG, p. 7.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Moltmann, FC, p. 60.

[72] Cf. CG, p. 19.

Christ, to the extent to which one has accepted the proclamation that in him God has identified himself with the godless," and an identification with "those abandoned by God, to whom one belongs oneself."[73] Moltmann holds that "there is an inner criterion of all theology, and of every church which claims to be Christian, and this criterion goes far beyond all political, ideological and psychological criticism from outside. It is the crucified Christ himself."[74] On the other hand, with the inclusion of the poor and oppressed churches, there is a new sociological characteristic tied to this theology, one that has not necessarily been present in other times. Addressing this new factor, Moltmann holds that a contemporary theology of the cross must be one that moves beyond a concern for personal salvation. Instead, contemporary theology of the cross must focus on the liberation of humanity and its new relationship to the reality of the demon in society. This new application may take several forms, but more often than not, what is involved is a "radical orientation of theology and the church on Christ."[75] This orientation is not that of "an abstract theology of the cross and of suffering, but of a theology of the crucified Christ."[76] Moltmann writes:

> Christian theology must be theology of the cross, if it is to be identified as Christian theology through Christ. But the theology of the cross is a critical and liberating theology of God and man. Christian life is a form of practice which consists in following the crucified Christ, and it changes both humanity itself and

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[73] Ibid.

[74] CG, p. 2.

[75] CG, p.4.

[76] Ibid.

> the circumstances in which they live. To this extent, a theology of the cross is a practical theory.[77]

Moltmann believes that the doctrine of two natures as traditionally stated, assuming an impassible God, made it impossible to grasp the meaning of Jesus as God, who at the same time was forsaken by God.[78] He points out that "If one considers the event on the cross between Jesus and his God in the framework of the doctrine of the two natures, then the Platonic axiom of the essential apatheia of God sets up an intellectual barrier against the recognition of the suffering of Christ, for a God who is subject to suffering like all other creatures cannot be 'God'."[79] The early church's doctrine of two natures makes impossible the thinking of the cross as an event relevant to God himself. For as long as the division between the human and divine natures is maintained, the cross cannot be conceived as touching the being of God, who supposedly lives self-sufficiently, "untouched by evil and death."[80]

Moltmann began with an interpretation of the *theologia crucis* of Luther and found God in the God forsaken-ness of Christ on the cross.[81] However, in his *theologia crucis*, according to Moltmann, Luther never arrived at a developed christological doctrine of the Trinity, because his christology remained within the framework of the

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[77] CG, p. 25.

[78] TKG, p. 22.

[79] CG, p. 228.

[80] Cf. Moltmann, FC, p. 62f.

[81] CG, p. 234.

doctrine of two natures.[82] Luther's christology was formed in terms of incarnation and the theology of the cross, but not always in trinitarian terms.[83] Moltmann criticizes Luther for his inadequate understanding of the triune God. Though Luther distinguished between the divine nature *in genere* and the second person of the Trinity *in concreto*, he left out of account the relationship in which this suffering and dying person of the Son is involved with the persons of the Father and the Spirit.[84]

Therefore, Moltmann refocused the question. Instead of asking what God means for us in the cross, Moltmann asked what the cross means for God: "What does the cross of Christ mean for God? Does an impassible God keep silent in heaven untouched by the suffering and death of his child on Golgotha, or does God himself suffer these pains and this death?"[85] In *The Crucified God*, Moltmann develops a theology of the cross in the sense of Luther's *theologia crucis*, but does so in an explicitly trinitarian way.[86] That is, Moltmann raised the question not only of what happened on the cross in relation to our salvation, but also, of what happened between Christ and God.[87] Moltmann found that

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[82] CG, p. 235.

[83] Cf. CG, p. 235.

[84] Ibid.

[85] See Jürgen Moltmann ed., *How I Have Changed: Reflections on Thirty Years of Theology* (Trinity Press International, 1997), pp. 18-19. The theological traditions, according to Moltmann, have always considered the cross and resurrection of Jesus within the context of a search for the 'ground of salvation.' This is by no means false, but it is not radical enough.

[86] CG, p. 7.

[87] CG, p. 241.

what is manifested in the cross is God's suffering, a passionate love for his lost creatures, a suffering prepared to sacrifice.[88] This sacrifice must be interpreted in trinitarian terms, "as an event concerned with a relationship between persons in which these persons constitute themselves in their relationship with each other."[89] Moltmann strongly emphasizes the necessity of the trinitarian understanding of God as the proper way to understand the significance of the death of Jesus for God.

2.3. Trinitarian Theology of the Cross and Eschatology

Moltmann formulates what Luther did not: a developed christological doctrine of the Trinity. The crucified Jesus' abandonment by God his Father is the deepest theological reality of the event of the cross and dictates the terms in which a theology of the cross must speak of God's suffering in the trinitarian act of Christ's death. According to Moltmann, the idea of God as Trinity takes shape in the crucifixion. The humiliated, crucified Jesus is referred to as the "image of the invisible God." Thus, at the lowest point of human existence and the high point of human suffering, God's greatness is most evident. Moltmann states, "God is not more glorious than he is in this self-surrender. God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he is in this humanity."[90] In this way, Jesus and God are bound together on the cross.[91] The

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[88] Cf. CG, pp. 275-277.

[89] CG, p. 245.

[90] CG, p. 205.

[91] See CG, pp. 205-6 for Moltmann's discussion concerning kenoticism. He discusses this briefly to refute some death of God theologies.

cross also makes it possible for humanity to be liberated by "the movements of the Spirit from the Father to us."[92] On the cross, then, the Father is distinct in relationship to the Son; the Son is distinct in relationship to the Spirit; and the three are conjoined in these distinctions.

> One would have to say: what happened on the cross was an event between God and God. It was a deep division in God himself, insofar as God abandoned God and contradicted himself, and at the same time a unity in God, insofar as God was at one with God and corresponded to himself. In that case one would have to put the formula in a paradoxical way: God died the death of the godless on the cross and did not die. God is dead and yet is not dead. If one can only use the simple concept of God from the doctrine of two natures, one will always be inclined to restrict it to the person of the Father who abandoned and accepts Jesus, delivers him and raises him up, and in so doing will "evacuate" the cross of deity.[93]

With this in mind, Moltmann posits that "Jesus' death cannot be understood 'as the death of God,' but only as death in God. The 'death of God' cannot be designated the origin of Christian theology, even if the phrase has an element of truth in it; the origin of Christian theology is only the death of the cross in God and God in Jesus' death."[94]

Therefore, in order to understand or even talk about the "human" and the "crucified God," according to Moltmann, one must think of God in trinitarian terms with

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[92] CG, p. 207.

[93] CG, pp. 244-245.

[94] Ibid. Perhaps more vivid pictures of the trinitarian understanding of death have been offered by Dinsmore and Kitamori. Dinsmore calls the eternal cross "a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside Jerusalem." See Donald M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 194; quoted originally from Charles Allen Dinsmore, *Atonement in Literature and Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), p. 232. Kitamori also describes the trinitarian act of death as follows: "It is impossible for us to understand the logic of Paul completely unless the death of Christ means the death of God Himself." See Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1965), p. 45.

the event of the cross in mind: "To understand what happened between Jesus and his God and Father on the cross, it is necessary to talk in trinitarian terms."[95] He says: "The theological concept for the perception of the crucified Christ is the doctrine of the Trinity. The material principle of the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross of Christ ... the theology of the cross must be the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Trinity must be the theology of the cross, because otherwise the human, crucified God cannot be fully perceived."[96] On the cross, the Son suffers death; but the Father suffers the death of his Son.

> In the forsakenness of the Son the Father also forsakes himself. In the surrender of the Son the Father also surrenders himself, though not in the same way ... The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son. The fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has constituted himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son.[97]

The insistence on the cry of dereliction as having an inner-trinitarian significance which points to suffering in God is immensely important for understanding Moltmann's view of divine suffering. Distinct from all philosophical and consequently monotheistic views of God, a Trinitarian theology of the cross does not interpret the cross in the framework or in the name of a metaphysical or moral concept of God. Rather, one who speaks of God in such terms must tell of the history of Jesus as a history between the Son and the Father. Furthermore, Moltmann emphasizes the deep community of will between Jesus and his

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[95] Ibid.

[96] CG, pp. 240-241.

[97] CG, p. 243.

God, which is expressed even in their deepest separation. Moltmann holds that it is through the Spirit that such community and separation between Jesus and his God can go together:

> In the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender. What proceeds from this event between Father and Son is the Spirit which justifies the Godless, fills the forsaken with love and even brings the dead to life, since even the fact that they are dead cannot exclude them from this event of the cross; the death in God also includes them.[98]

Because Moltmann takes very seriously the 'personal' character of the 'persons' of the triune God, he sometimes speaks of the 'Social Trinity.' God is conceived as an eternal communion of love. He believes that such a vision of God as communal legitimizes and supports human community, cooperation and equality. Other major theologians, especially some liberationists and feminists, have followed him in this.[99] "In this case," Moltmann writes, "God is not another nature or a heavenly person or a moral authority, but in fact an 'event.'"[100] Even our prayer must be done in this event, through the Son to the Father in the Spirit.[101]

Yet Moltmann's theology is thoroughly eschatological. He claims that "for eschatological faith, the trinitarian God-event on the cross becomes the history of God,

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[98] CG, p. 244.

[99] Cf. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (Crossroad: NY, 1995); Leonard Boff, *Trinity and Society*.

[100] CG, p. 247.

[101] Ibid.

which is open to the future and which opens up the future."[102] In this, Moltmann sees the Trinity, through a theology of the cross, as essentially "the history of God, which in human terms is the history of love and liberation."[103] Forsaken humanity, then, is taken up into this divine history. Humanity participates actively and passively in the suffering of God and also in joy and hope. Humanity participates in this history in prayer, hope, and action. Moltmann continues: "if we understand God in this way, we can understand our own history, the history of suffering and the history of hope, in the history of God. Beyond theistic submissiveness and atheistic protest, this is the history of life, because it is the history of love."[104] Moltmann concludes his argument with an eschatological interpretation of the Trinity:

> If one conceives of the Trinity as an event of love in the suffering and the death of Jesus - and that is something which faith must do - then the Trinity is no self-contained group in heaven, but an eschatological process open for men on earth, which stems from the cross of Christ. By the secular cross on Golgotha, understood as open vulnerability and as the love of God for loveless and unloved, dehumanized men, God's being and God's life is open to true man.[105]

For Moltmann, "life in communion with Christ is full life in the Trinitarian situation of God."[106] Referring to Romans 6:8, Moltmann holds that in Christ, the dead will be and are raised to new life. Thus, humans live in God and from God. At this point, Moltmann makes a rather explosive theological statement:

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[102] CG, p. 255.

[103] Ibid.

[104] CG, p. 256.

[105] CG, p. 249.

[106] CG, p. 277.

> Understood in pantheistic terms, that would be a dream that would have to ignore the negative element in the world. But a trinitarian theology of the cross perceives God in the negative element and therefore the negative element in God, and in this dialectical way is panentheistic. For in the hidden mode of humiliation to the point of the cross, all being and all that annihilates has already been taken up in God and God begins to become "all in all." To recognize God in the cross of Christ, conversely, means to recognize the cross, inextricable suffering, death and hopeless rejection in God.[107]

According to Moltmann, it is only through such an interpretation that an event such as Auschwitz can be reconciled with faith in God. For if there had been no theology in Auschwitz, there could not have been "theology after Auschwitz."[108] Panentheism is important for an understanding of Moltmann's concept of God.[109] Indeed, panentheism

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[107] Ibid. The term panentheism was first proposed by Karl Christian Frederick Krause (1781-1832), who was fascinated by the divine splendor of the universe. Cf. J. B. McDaniel, *With Roots and Wings: Christianity in an Age of Ecology and Dialogue* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 97-112; Leonard Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, trans. by Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997), 152-154. "Panentheism understands itself as a form of theism, but it criticizes traditional theism for depicting the world as external to God." See John Cobb, Panentheism, in: *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. by E. Richardson & J. Bowden, (London, 1983). Process theologians are major advocates of this tradition in the twentieth-century. For seeing the world in God, this tradition also appeals to Moltmann, but he criticizes process theology's unrestrained "will towards synthesis" which weakens its capacity to make distinctions.

[108] Cf. CG, p. 278.

[109] Marcus J. Borg made a useful clarification about pan*en*theism as a way of thinking about God and how it differs from pantheism, with which it is sometimes confused. According to Borg, whereas pantheism affirms only God's immanence and essentially denies God's transcendence, this panentheism affirms both the transcendence of God and the immanence of God. Borg believes that this panentheism is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and he suggests that we need to take panentheism seriously as an alternative Christian root concept for thinking about God, in accordance with our religious experience. See Marcus J. Borg, *The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a More Authentic Contemporary Faith* (Harper San Francisco, 1997), p. 32. For panentheism, according to Borg, God is not a being "out there." The Greek roots of the word point to its meaning: *pan* means "everything," *en* means "in," and *theos* means

made it possible for Moltmann to say "God in Auschwitz," "Auschwitz in God." Panentheism means "everything is in God." God is more than everything (and thus transcendent) yet everything is in God (hence God is immanent). It is what John Macquarrie calls "dialectical theism": "the affirmation of two apparent opposites, God as "beyond" and God as "right here." God is more than the world. Yet God is present in the world. Thinking about God panentheistically affirms God's presence: God is not somewhere else, but right here.

For Moltmann, in order to refute the claims of 'theism' and 'atheism,' and in order to reconcile Jesus as both human and divine, theology must utilize "a trinitarian theology of the cross."[110] With such nomenclature, one places God not only in an other-worldly sphere, but also in a this-worldly sphere. God is not only God, but also

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"God." Pan*en*theism thus means "everything is *in* God." Pantheism lacks the extra syllable *en*, which makes all the difference. Pantheism (without the en) identifies the universe with God: God and the universe are coextensive (literally, "everything is God"). As Borg observes, some theologians use other terms for panentheism, though the concept is similar. For example, John Macquarrie, in *In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), calls it "dialectical theism"; David Griffin, in *God and Religion in the Postmodern World* ([Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989], pp. 3, 90), calls it "naturalistic theism" (which he distinguishes from both "supernaturalistic theism" and "nontheistic naturalism"). Several refer to it as "dipolar theism." Among recent writers who call it panentheism are Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, and Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) and *The Body of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) and Marcus J. Borg, *The God We Never Knew*. Note that these various forms of 'panentheism' can differ significantly from Moltmann's trinitarian panentheism. It is quite different from the process panentheism of John Cobb or McFague. See Harold Wells, "The Flesh of God: Christological Implications for an Ecological Vision of the World," in *Toronto Journal of Theology*, Vol. 15/1, Spring 1999.

[110] Moltmann states, "With a trinitarian theology of the cross faith escapes the dispute between and the alternative of theism and athesim: God is not only other-worldly but also this-worldly; he is not only God, but also man; he is not only rule, authority and law but the event of suffering, liberating love." See CG, p. 252.

humanity. God does not only rule, but also suffers. Moreover, the death of Jesus, the Son, is not the death of God, "but the beginning of that God event in which the life-giving spirit of love emerges from the death of the Son and the grief of the Father."[111] Through a historical process which gave God the attributes of a king, Caesar for example, the concept of God gradually became idolatrous. Three main lines emerged from this process, all of which go to the origin of theistic philosophy and theology and led to Islam: (1) God in the image of the imperial ruler; (2) God in the image of the personification of moral energy; (3) God in the image of the final principle of philosophy. The result is a God who does not have relationship with humanity. Theism moves humanity away from God and alienates God from the possibility of loving, caring, and experiencing joy--let alone the negations of these. Thus, any so-called Christianity which focuses solely on the princely idea of God and removes the suffering of God, abandons Jesus on the cross. "It is indispensable for the liberated believer to dispense with the inhuman God, a God without Jesus, for the sake of the cross. Here 'Christian atheism' is in the right."[112] But at the same time God is creator. With God as Creator, humanity cannot posture itself as God, since humanity will always have a "power" above it. In Moltmann's view this is positive, because such a posture, if deeply understood, will diminish our proud anthropocentric understanding of God and the world.[113]

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[111] Cf. CG, p. 252.

[112] CG. p. 251.

[113] Cf. CG, p. 252.

3. God in Creation

Moltmann's theology of the suffering of God is not found only in his christology and theology of the Trinity. God's suffering is not exclusively the suffering of Jesus Christ, but includes the suffering of all creatures. In this section I cannot summarize or discuss the whole of Moltmann's massive volume on creation, but briefly point out its significance for the suffering of God.

His trinitarian doctrine of creation does not start from an antithesis between God and the world.[114] According to Moltmann, if a doctrine of creation is to be ecological, it must try to get away from analytical thinking with its distinctions between subject and object, and must strive to learn a new, communicative and integrating way of thought.[115] Moltmann made this point as follows: "according to the anthropocentric world view, heaven and earth were made for the sake of human beings, and the human being is the crown of creation; and this is certainly what is claimed by both its supporters and its critics as 'biblical tradition.'"[116] But he has argued that it is unbiblical and emphasized that if Christian theology wants to find wisdom in dealing with creation, it must free itself from the modern anthropocentric view of the world.[117] An ecological doctrine of creation implies a new kind of thinking about God. Moltmann says: "The center of this thinking is no longer the distinction between God and the world. The center is the

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[114] See GC, p. 14.

[115] Cf. GC, p.2.

[116] GC, p. 31.

[117] Ibid.

recognition of the presence of God in the world and the world in God."[118] This theology proceeds differently, starting from an immanent tension in God himself. God creates the world, and at the same time enters into it. The world lives from God's creative power and yet God lives in it. God is outside himself in his creation, yet he is at the same time in himself, in his Sabbath. Moltmann believes that in order to overcome divine imperialism and promote an ecological doctrine of creation, one must recognize that God the Creator of heaven and earth is present in each of God's creatures, and that he resides in the fellowship of creation:[119] "God is not merely the Creator of the world. He is also the Spirit of the universe. Through the powers and potentialities of the Spirit, the Creator dwells in the creatures he has made, animates them, holds them in life, and leads them into the future of his kingdom."[120] Creation is certainly not the world which human beings are supposed to subdue. As a network and interplay of relationship is built up, a symbiotic life comes into being. Moltmann suggested two concepts that can be used to help us to comprehend God's self-differentiation and tension in his creation: the rabbinic and kabbalistic doctrine of the *shekinah*, and the doctrine of the Trinity.

The *shekinah*, the descent of God to dwell with human beings, is conceived as a division that takes place in God himself.[121] God gives himself away to his people. God

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[118] GC, p. 13.

[119] Cf. GC, p. 14.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Fr. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlosung*, Heidelberg, 1954, Pt., IV, Book 3, p. 192; Moltmann, GC, p. 15.

suffers with them. God walks with them through the misery of the foreign land.[122] The God who is Spirit, dwelling in his creation, is present with every one of his creatures and remains bound to each of them in joy and sorrow. This self-differentiation of God is important for Moltmann's theology of Trinity. He sees in the Jewish Shekinah a precursor of trinitarian thought.[123]

The Son becomes flesh and enters into the world in order to redeem it. He suffers the self-destruction of creation in order through his suffering to heal it. Through the Son, God creates, reconciles, and redeems his creation and in the power of the Spirit, God himself is present in it.[124] Moltmann believes that this trinitarian life is an interpenetration or *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling) of God and creation. Moltmann thus cuts loose the theological doctrine of creation from the age of subjectivity and the mechanistic domination of the world, and urges Christians to look to a future of ecological world-community.[125]

For Moltmann, as for Christian tradition, the Spirit is not one of the powers of God. The Spirit is God. If God is committed to God's limited creation, and if God dwells and suffers in it as 'the giver of life,' this presupposes a self-limitation, a self-humiliation, and a self-surrender of the Spirit.

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[122] GC, p. 30.

[123] *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, and *The Spirit of Life* discuss this concept substantially.

[124] GC, pp. 15-16.

[125] See Fr. Capra, *Wendezeit, Bausteine fur ein neues Weltbild*, Bern, 1983; Moltmann, GC, p. 12.

> God's self-humiliation does not begin merely with creation: it begins beforehand, and is the presupposition that makes creation possible. God's creative love is grounded in his humble, self-humiliating love. This self-restricting love is the beginning of that self-emptying of God which Phillippians 2 sees as the divine mystery of the Messiah. Even in order to create heaven and earth, God emptied himself of his all-plenishing omnipotence, and as Creator took upon himself the form of a servant.[126]

The history of suffering creation brings with it a history of suffering by the Spirit who dwells in creation, but the Spirit who dwells in creation turns creation's history of suffering into a history of hope. The Spirit of creation generates the hope of creation in the difference between life and suffering.[127] Moltmann emphasizes that a detailed doctrine of the *creatio continua* must see God's historical activity as the preservation of the world that God has created and the preparation of its completion and perfecting.[128] We therefore have to see God's inexhaustible patience and God's creative activity in history.[129] By entitling his book, *God in Creation* he meant God the Holy Spirit. God is 'the lover of life' and his Spirit is in all created beings. His doctrine of creation takes as its starting point the indwelling divine Spirit of creation. He described his doctrine of creation as an 'ecological doctrine.' This is of course intended first of all to point to the ecological crisis of our time, and the ecological thinking we have to learn. But it is also a reference to the symbolism of 'home' and 'dwelling' which he has employed in his book. Moltmann notes the Greek derivation of the word 'ecology' which means 'the doctrine of

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[126] GC, p. 88.

[127] K. Stock, '*Creatio nova-creatio ex nihilo*' Ev. Th. 36, 1976, pp. 220 ff., 215; Cf. Moltmann, GC, p. 102.

[128] GC, p.209.

[129] See GC, xii, pp. 209-210.

the house' (*Oikos*). What does the Christian doctrine of creation have to do with 'a doctrine of the house?' According to Moltmann, if we see only a Creator and God's work, there is no connection. But if we understand the Creator, God's creation, and the goal of that creation in a trinitarian sense, then the Creator, through God's Spirit, dwells in God's creation as a whole, and in every individual created being, by virtue of God's Spirit holding them together and keeping them in life.[130]

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The basic insight of Moltmann's trinitarian theology of the cross is his understanding of God as the one who suffers out of his unconditional love for his creatures. Moltmann believes that it is possible to overcome the traditional contradiction of theism and atheism when one conceives the trinitarian event of God on the cross of Jesus, as well as the concept of the suffering God who is able to participate in the deep suffering in his creaturely world. By conceiving the Trinity as an event of love in the suffering and death of Christ, Moltmann holds Trinity as an eschatological process open for creatures.

I have already mentioned the contextual relevance of Moltmann's theology of the suffering God for his own German/European/North Atlantic context, a post-Auschuwitz, post-war context, a time of hope, and a time of intense suffering. His acute contextuality is visible again in his later work, with its awareness of ecological crisis, and the need for

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[130] Ibid. The inner secret of creation is this indwelling of God, just as the inner secret of the Sabbath of creation is God's rest.

theology to address not only human suffering, but also the suffering of all creatures. It cannot be denied that his theology has found resonance in other contexts as well, e.g., he is much appreciated in Korea, and many other parts of the Third World. However, from an Asian perspective, much remains unsaid. That is why it is appropriate now to turn to an Asian American theologian whose contributions to our thought about the suffering God make use of "Asian resources." Critical comment on Jürgen Moltmann's work will await our juxtaposition of his thought with that of Choan-Seng Song.

CHAPTER III

THE COMPASSIONATE GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF C. S. SONG

Since Christian mission in Asia was intimately bound up with Western imperialism, the imported portrait of Jesus was what has been called the "colonial Christ," that is, Jesus as the white, male, all-powerful lord, conquering souls and empires for God and implanting his own church. In this century, however, a distinctly Asian theology began to emerge as Asian theologians attempted to articulate their Christian faith in the context and in terms of their own cultures and sociopolitical conditions. Asia, as a Sri Lankan theologian, Aloysius Pieris rightly points out, is characterized by its overwhelming poverty (Third Worldness) and its multifaceted religiousness (its Asian character). It is important to note therefore, that Asian theology must confront these two poles of Asian reality together and these two elements must be coupled in both interreligious dialogue and inculturation. Among the non-Christian religions, Buddhism represents the greatest challenge to Christian theology in Asia because, according to Pieris, it is the one soteriology that is truly pan-Asian in cultural integration, numerical strength, geographical extension, and political maturity, and not limited to any one language or national group.[1]

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[1] See Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 69.

Choan-Seng Song (b. 1929) strives to speak of the suffering God in an Asian context, particularly in relation to East Asian spirituality and liberation theology.[2] His concept of "the compassionate God," presents a God who participates in human suffering directly, experiences it as God's own suffering, and saves human beings from suffering. Other theological influences, especially biblical studies,[3] led to the formation of Song's idea of the compassionate God. One could also mention the influence of Dietrich

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[2] Obviously, because there is religious homogeneity in Latin America, the element of interreligious dialogue is absent from Latin American liberation theology. However, there is a parallel between the method of Asian theology and that of Latin American liberation theology. Clodovis Boff describes the method of liberation theology as composed of three mediations: socio-analytic mediation, hermeneutical mediation, and practical mediation. These three mediations are preceded by praxis in favor of justice and liberation (Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, trans. Robert R. Barr [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987]). Among Asian theologians, M. M. Thomas uses social analysis consistently throughout his works; see Thomas, *The Christian Response to the Asian Revolution* (London: SCM, 1964); *Salvation and Humanization* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1971); and *Towards a Theology of Contemporary Ecumenism* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1978). A Sri Lankan theologian, Aloysius Pieris argues, "a 'liberation-theopraxis' in Asia that uses only the Marxist tools of social analysis will remain un-Asian and ineffective until it integrates the psychological tools of introspection which our sages have discovered" (Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988] p. 80). It is important to note that for Pieris "inculturation" of Christianity in Asia should not be undertaken on the models of Latin and Greek Christianity, by taking up non-Christian culture and philosophy respectively, simply because in Asia it is impossible to separate non-Christian religions from their cultures and philosophies. Indeed, inculturation and liberation are but two names for the same process. For a succinct presentation of the sociopolitical and religiocultural challenges of Asia to theology, see K. C. Abraham, ed., *Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990).

[3] Song considers that the most important theological source for him is the Bible, which had a profound influence upon him during his studies at Union, New York and Edinburgh, Scotland. He recalls how he was fascinated with Old Testament studies; in particular, by the love and pain of Hosea in the Old Testament and the compassion of Jesus shown in the New Testament. This was part of my interview with Song at Pacific School of Religion on 19th of November 1997. Song says, "the Bible is our best guide." (Choan-Seng Song, "A New Journey of Faith: The Ecumenical Task of Reformed Theology," *Reformed World*, 1984, 38, p. 116).

Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth[4], and even Jürgen Moltmann (even though he is very critical of the latter).[5] I would highlight three significant Asian influences upon Song's theological understanding. First, Kazoh Kitamori's concept of God in his *Theology of the Pain of God*; second, concepts of God and suffering from the Korean Minjung theological perspective, e.g., Kim Chi-Ha's critical portrait of the false Jesus in *The Gold-Crowned Jesus*; and lastly, the "Asian face of God" of the "Asian Awakening." Song's idea of the suffering God can be examined under the following four categories: the compassionate God, God's heartache (God's pain-love), the cross and the lotus, and the suffering of God in creation.

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[4] In an interview with Yong Bock Kim, a Korean theologian, Song says, "I respect Karl Barth. If I choose just one theologian whose writings are essential references for theology, Karl Barth is the one." (Yong Bock Kim, "A Dialogue with C. S. Song: For a Construction of Asian Theology," *The Christian Thought* 270 [1983 April], [Korean], p. 19). Song likes Barth's christological centrism related to the creation. (Ibid.) However, Song criticizes Barth, saying: "Unfortunately, Barth as a theologian within the western theologians turns back, letting pass this golden opportunity to fathom the mystery of God's love outside the Christian tradition." (Song, TET, 1991, p. 90).

[5] The two western Christian theologians most cited by Song are Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. He learned scientific methodology from them and it is evident in his thesis, *The Relation of Divine Revelation and Man's Religion in the Theologies of Karl Barth and Paul Tillich*, presented as Ph.D. dissertation to Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1964. Besides Barth and Tillich, Song quotes in various places– either to agree or disagree – western theologians Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Walbert Buhlman, Oscar Cullmann, Mircea Eliade, Walter Eichrodt, Joachim Jeremias, J. B. Metz, and J. Moltmann. Also quoted are John Mbiti in Africa; Gustavo Gutiérrez and others in Latin America; James Cone, a Black American; Kazoh Kitamori, Kosuke Koyama, and Korean Minjung theologians in Asia. Song ran through these theological models seeking to develop his theology.

1. Theological Influences on Song's Theology of the Compassionate God

Traditional European language for the divine is rapidly losing its privileged position among Asian theologians.[6] Because most of the basic foundations for Christian faith come from Western theological traditions, Asian theologians are still dependent on them. This does not mean that Western theological traditions should set the criteria for Asia. For Asia, the images of God must include aspects of Asian culture. Of course, ideas of God must be drawn from the Bible as fundamental source, but they should be complemented with Asian resources.

1.1. Theology of the Pain of God: Kazoh Kitamori

Kazoh Kitamori, a Japanese pastor and theologian, was a Lutheran thinker who spoke about the suffering God. In 1946, after the painful defeat of Japan in World War II, he articulated the essence of God as pain in his book *Theology of the Pain of God.*[7] As one of the pioneers who derived his work from East Asian spirituality, Kitamori deeply influenced Song's understanding of God with his provocative insights into the compassionate nature of God. His *The Theology of the Pain of God* reflects both a biblical faith and Buddhist spirituality. Kitamori compares the mind of a Bodhisattva,

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[6] See Kosuke Koyama, *Three-Mile-an-Hour God* (New York: Orbis Books, 1980); Kosuke Koyama, "The Asian Approach to Christ," *Missiology: An International Review* 12 (October 1984); C. S. Song, "The Possibility of an Analogical Discourse on God," *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 7 (1965): 55-76; Chung-Choon Kim, "God's Suffering in Man's Struggle," *Reformed World* 36 (1980): 14-19; Raimmundo Panikkar, "The God in Silence," *Indian Journal of Theology* 12 (1972): 11-24; Mariadas Ruthnaswamy, *India After God* (Ranchi: Catholic Press, 1965).

[7] Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1965).

who suffers with sentient beings, with the pain of the biblical God. He saw suffering not as a recompensation for moral behaviour, but as a principle of life. Such a theology of suffering is an indigenous theology coming out of the East Asian *Sitz im Leben*.[8] Song believes that Kitamori's emphasis on pain brings depth to our understanding of God and God's relation to the world.[9] Kitamori affirmed that suffering is not only the destiny of humanity but also the destiny of God. He was critical of Western Christianity's preservation of the idea of divine impassibility. He decisively opposes the idea of a ruling, apathetic God. Kitamori sees God as one who always entails "suffering." One of his theological tasks was to "win over the theology which advocates a God who has no pain."[10] He criticizes the blindness to pain that prevails in most theology, and sketches a picture of discipleship in which people "serve the pain of God by their own pain."[11]

According to Kitamori, the God of Jesus refused to be identified in terms of his power and glory; rather, God revealed Himself in the suffering of Jesus. In Jesus' death as the forsaken Son of God, God revealed himself as passionately affected by suffering. The cross reveals "the pain of God."[12] Therefore, pain is a mode of being that belongs to

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[8] Cf. Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*; Kyoung-Jae Kim, *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions*, pp. 155-164.

[9] TET, p. 75.

[10] Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, p. 22.

[11] Ibid., p. 50.

[12] Kitamori's major treatments on the pain of God are: *Kyusai No Ronri* [The Logic of Salvation] (Tokyo: Sogensha, 1953); "The Theology of the Pain of God," *Japan Christian Quarterly* (Autumn 1953).

God. The distress and trouble of Jesus on the cross (Mk. 15:33), the "loud cries and tears" that, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 5:7), accompanied his death, and his desperate quotation of Psalm 22:2, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk. 15:34), were not simply expressions of Jesus' passion, but of God's own suffering.[13]

"The heart of the gospel," says Kitamori, "was revealed to me as the pain of God." Kitamori even goes so far as to define pain as "the essence of God." Pain acquires an ontological nature in Kitamori's understanding of God. According to Song, this is the most prominent problem with Kitamori's theology. When pain is made into the essence of being and becomes an ontological reality, pain becomes eternal. Song comments,

> [In Kitamori's theology] pain will leave neither God nor the whole created universe. Pain reigns supreme! "What is the essence of the gospel?" Kitamori asks himself. His answer: "It is the cross of Christ, the pain of God, or it is God's tribulation." His theology of the pain of God is *theologia crucis* through and through. It stops at the cross. It does not go beyond. The cross is the final station of God's journey... It cannot in fact accommodate resurrection; it does not have room for it... But if the pain and suffering of God are not seen in the perspective of resurrection, theology stops at the painful cross and the wrathful God.[14]

When Kitamori turns the pain of God into an ontological idea, it becomes unrelated to the concrete historical sufferings of the people of earth. We are indeed afraid that this view of Kitamori may be misused by the "oppressors" to continue oppression by creating a sense of patience and resignation among the oppressed, giving them the "assurance" that in spite of their current miseries, they will finally be saved, in the future, in the

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[13] Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, p. 46.

[14] Song, TET, 1991, PP. 78-9. Cf. Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, p. 46.

eschaton. This view would legitimate the old accusation that Christianity is the opiate of the masses.[15] We can only know God's nature in his relation to the world, or more particularly in his solidarity with the people who suffer. The suffering of God becomes a meaningful statement only when related to the actual groaning of the oppressed. We cannot speak of the pain of God until we speak of the real pain in the real context of people.

Song believes that although Kitamori's work on the pain of God has been provocative for our theological imagination, as was Luther's work distinguishing the difference between the "theology of glory" and the "theology of the cross," it does not encourage concrete praxis.[16] In his theology, Kitamori tells us that our witness to God is accompanied by our pain and suffering, because the essence of God is pain. We are in fact encouraged to seek pain, but seeking pain as a means of witnessing to God leads us to a peculiar indifference toward solving the real problems that cause the pain and suffering around us. Kitamori's approach does not encourage us to do anything about suffering. Yoshio Noro, a Japanese theologian, protests that "Kitamori does not give us in his theology the power to fight evils in our political and social life. His theology gives us the impression that we should rather stay in the pain caused by these evils."[17] Tsutomu Shoji, another Japanese theologian, also criticizes Kitamori's theology as

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[15] For Song's critique about Kitamori's concept of God, See TET, pp. 75-79.

[16] Song, *Doing Theology Today* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1976), p. 58.

[17] Yoshio Noro, *Impassibilitas Dei* (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1955), p. 99.

confined to "the psychological and personal level" and does not encourage "the social praxis."[18] Because it does not acknowledge our power to overcome suffering, Kitamori's theology offers little in terms of liberation. Kitamori does not support the convincing proclamation of the gospel that God will deliver the people from suffering and pain. Therefore, Kitamori's *Theology of the Pain of God* captures one profound element, the compassionate nature of God revealed in His pain. Nevertheless, Song believes that there is another equally profound element, which Kitamori neglects in his work, namely, God's liberating power.

1.2. The Concepts of "Han" and the Suffering God from Minjung Theology

The concept of *han* and the concept of the suffering God from Korean Minjung theological perspective[19] have also influenced Song's understanding of the compassionate

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[18] Tsutomu Shoji, "The Church's Struggle for Freedom of Belief-- An Aspect of Christian Mission," in *Living Theology in Asia*, Edited by John C. England (New York: Orbis Books, 1982), p. 56.

[19] According to Kyoung-Jae Kim, a Korean theologian, the theology of suffering of Suk-Hun Ham, a Korean scholar who was a forerunner of minjung theology on the meaning of suffering for minjung, is deeper than Kitamori's pain of God. Ham proposes that suffering is the principle of life. Suffering is not God's judgment on the world, nor God's wisdom educating his people. For Ham, history looks like the eternal return, but in fact it advances suffering step by step through a spiral movement. Thus the horizon of life is ever more expanded and deepened. To Ham, it is the minjung, *ssial (*seeds) who are the subjects who bear the suffering in this present life reality. Ham's concept of *ssial* (seed) is a pure form of human being. *Ssial* is an expression of the authentic human being. *Han* is a Korean term used to describe the depths of human suffering - in ontological terms rather than a symbolic word for proletariat in social-science terms. *Ssial* do not know why they are suffering. *Ssial* are the sacrificial lambs who bear the historical sin and evil of their people. Ham Suk-Hun, in his book *Korean History of Life* expands and deepens this concept. See also Ham Suk-Hun, "Korean History viewed from

God. Because of the great importance of minjung theology[20] for Song, and for the "Asian Perspective" of this thesis, I shall deal with this at somewhat greater length than the other "influences" on Song.

Han is a Korean term used to describe the depths of human suffering. The Korean poet Eun Ko says, "We Koreans were born from the womb of *han* and brought up in the womb of *han*."[21] The common ethos that unites the Korean people is the experience of suffering. A Korean American theologian Jung Young Lee articulates it well:

> ... historically, we Koreans suffered collectively and individually for many generations under the domination of our neighboring countries, China and Japan. The Second World War left Korea free of dominance by Japan but internally divided between North and South. The scar of our civil war in the early 1950s reminds us that our suffering is not over. After a persistent struggle for justice and democracy, which has lasted for decades, Korea still suffers the division that

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the Biblical Perspective," in *Journal Bible Chosun*, 1933, First edition. 1950, Revised edition, 1965, p. 21; Kyoung-Jae Kim, *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions: Method of Correlation, Fusion of Horizons, and Paradigm Shifts in the Korean Grafting Process* (Uitgeverij Bokencentrum, Zoetermeer, 1994), pp. 159-160.

[20] Two terms are most important to study in Korean Minjung theology: *han* and *minjung*. Dictionary definitions of these terms, however, are not useful here, as it is difficult to translate them; rather, they must be understood in their socio-historical context. We can perhaps understand their approximate meaning. Even among Korean theologians, there still is no clear consensus on the meanings of these terms. For the definition of *han* and *minjung*, see Andrew Sung Park, "Han-Talk" in *Racial Conflict & Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996], pp. 9-12). On this issue see also Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); Jung Young Lee, *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology* (Twenty-Third Publications, 1988); CTC-CCA, (ed.) *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983); David Kwang-Sun, Suh, "Called to Witness to the Gospel Today: The Priesthood of Han," in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 3 - Vol. 6, No. 1, (December 1984 - April 1985), 57-65; David kwang-Sun, Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ* (Hong Kong: CTC/CCA, 1991).

[21] *Minjung Theology*, edited by CTC-CCA, p. 58.

> has already lasted half a century. Koreans, therefore, believe themselves to be a *han*-ridden people, a people whose deep psychological wound has become their collective unconscious. It is natural, therefore, that the suffering of Christ draws and sustains Korean Christians. Christianity, for Korean Christians, is the religion of suffering that overcomes our suffering; it is the power of Christ's suffering that heals our wound. This healing power of Christ's suffering is the central message of Korean Christianity. Christianity provides Korean Christians with the concept of dynamic and participatory suffering, which gives them meaning and hope that they can transcend suffering through the suffering of Christ. Identifying our suffering with the suffering of Christ and overcoming our suffering through our fellowship with Christ are important concepts that Korean preaching has developed.[22]

According to Nam-Dong Suh, the initiator of the theology of *han*, the most important element in the political consciousness of the minjung which appears in the social biography of the oppressed people of Korea is "*han*." Suh says, "If one does not hear the sighs of the *han* of the minjung, he or she cannot hear the voice of Christ knocking on our doors."[23] Another Korean theologian Andrew Sung Park tells us, "*han* was originally a shamanistic term used to describe the unresolved entanglement of the dead, the bereft, and the down-and-out. Shamanism was the religion of the downtrodden, and its goal was to resolve their *han*."[24] The term was revived by minjung theologians in the 1970s. David Kwang –sun Suh, a representative minjung theologian, says:

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[22] See Jung Young Lee, "Reflection on the Korean Context: Suffering and Nationalism," in *Korean preaching: An Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), pp. 77-80. The importance of preaching on the suffering of Christ is quite evident in the remark of the Korean American woman who "identified with themes of Jesus' self-sacrifice, suffering and the cross as meaningful portrayals and explanations of [her life] in the U.S." See Jung Ha Kim, "Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers: A Case Study of Churched Korean-American Women" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation at Georgia State University, 1992), p. 251.

[23] *Minjung Theology*, p. 68.

[24] Park, "Han-Talk" in *Racial Conflict & Healing*, pp. 9-12.

> The minjung are *han*-ridden people. *Han* can be described as the feeling of anger of the people brought about by injustice inflicted upon them. However, it is not merely a psychological state, but also political and economic realities interacting and bringing themselves to bear on the mind and body of the minjung. Thus the minjung live with *han*, they accumulate *han*, and they die with *han*.[25]

Under institutional suppression, countless Koreans were arrested, tortured, imprisoned and even disappeared because of their resistance to the oppression of their rights, values, and dignity. However, most Korean churches kept silent about the Korean socio-political situation at that time except for a few minjung theologians and other Christians who suffered due to their participation in the struggle for restoration of democracy. How to resolve *han* has been a major issue of Korean sociology, anthropology, history, literature, arts, and theology in particular. Nam-Dong Suh says: "The church ought to be the comforter to resolve the *han* of the minjung, to cut the vicious circle of violence, and to change it into a progressive movement." [26]

For the study of the suffering God, it is significant to acknowledge that *han* has both active and passive dimensions. In order to understand the reality of *han*, according to Park, we need to know its structure, something which is however sufficiently complex to make it difficult to unfold its meaning to the full extent. *Han* must be seen as a whole; it cannot simply be reduced to isolated levels. Yet if one is to grasp the meaning of *han*, one must first gain perspective on its constituent elements. The main division of *han* is between individual and collective dimensions. In addition, *han* exists in conscious vs.

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[25] David Kwang-sun Suh, "Shamanism and Minjung Liberation," in *Asian Christian Spirituality*, eds. Virginia Fabella, Peter K. H. Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), pp. 31-36.

[26] *Minjung Theology*, p. 65. Also see David Kwang-Sun Suh, "Called to Witness to the Gospel Today: The Priesthood of Han," in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. 5 No. 3 - Vol. 6 No. 1, December 1984 -April 1985, pp. 57-65.

between individual and collective dimensions. In addition, *han* exists in conscious vs. unconscious and active vs. passive expressions, both in individuals and groups.[27] Young-Hak Hyun, Korean Minjung theologian, describes the passive aspect of *han* as follows:

> *Han* is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against oneself, a feeling of the total abandonment (Why hast thou forsaken me?), a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong - all these combined.[28]

Describing the active aspect of *han*, another Korean theologian, Hyun-Kyung Chung, states, "*Han* is the raw energy for struggle for liberation."[29] Active *han* is closer to aggressive emotion, according to Park, while passive *han* is similar to an acquiescent spirit.[30]

Considering the ways in which the concept of *han* has been understood in Korean tradition can contribute to the study of suffering. First of all, the concept of *han* is more helpful than the concept of sin in understanding suffering victims. Relating the Asian

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[27] See Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, p. 31; Park, "Han-Talk" in *Racial Conflict & Healing*, pp. 9-12.

[28] Young-Hak Hyun, "Minjung the Suffering Servant and Hope," unpublished paper presented at Union Theological Seminary in New York, 13 April 1982.

[29] Hyun-Kyung Chung, "Welcome the Spirit; Hear Her Cries," in *Christianity and Crisis*, July 15, 1991, pp. 220-223. Martin Luther King, Jr. saw it as the responsibility of his followers to accept suffering as a way of transforming the situation of oppression: "Suffering can be a most creative and powerful social force.... The nonviolent say that suffering becomes a powerful social force when you willingly accept that violence on yourself, so that self-suffering stands at the center of the nonviolent movement, and the individuals involved are able to suffer in a creative manner, feeling that unearned suffering is redemptive, and that suffering may serve to transform the social situation." (Martin Luther King, Jr., quoted in *A Testament of Hope*, ed. James Washington [New York: Harper & Row, 1986], p. 47).

[30] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, p. 15.

concept of *han* and the Christian concept of sin, Park observes that Christianity's traditional doctrine of sin and salvation has developed only in regard to the sinner, without considering the victims of sin. While this focus adequately describes the responsibility of individuals for their sinful attitudes and actions, according to Park, it fails to deal adequately with the pervasive reality of the suffering of the victims of sin.[31] One cannot grasp the full meaning of the sin and guilt of sinners, as Park rightly puts it, until one has looked at the *han* and shame of their victims.[32] Secondly, *han*, which can be likened to the pain of victims, can be a focal point of inter-religious dialogue for all major religions. According to Park,

> Sin is a uniquely Christian concept which has been a major way of understanding the troubles of the world in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions. One does not find such a notion of sin in Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shamanism. But the notion of *han* can be found in every major religion, even though it is implicit and expressed in modified forms.[33]

Echoing a similar sentiment, Song evaluates the Korean theology of *han*, i.e., Minjung theology, as a forceful theology in tune with the rhythms of Asian passion. Song says, "*Han* is the rhythm of passion welling out of restless souls in the world of the

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[31] Byung-mu Ahn, a Korean Minjung theologian, reminds us the importance of the recognition of the victims when we speak of "sin." Ahn says, "the crucial question of who becomes the victim of corresponding concepts of sin is more important than the concept of sin itself" (Byung-mu Ahn, "Minjung According to the Gospel of Mark," in Jung Young Lee, *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, p. 206).

[32] Regarding *han* as the suffering of victims in relation to sin, see Nam-Dong Suh, *A Study of Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Hankilsa, 1983), in Korean; Hyun-Kyung Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (NY: Orbis Books, 1990).

[33] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, p. 129.

dead, the wrongs done to them unrequited. *Han* is the rhythm of passion crying from the hearts of those who have fallen victim to social and political injustices."[34] He holds that the experience of *han* is not unique to the Korean people, but the experience is universal for souls experiencing suppression. Song says: "In Asian culture, where dominance-subordination has persisted for centuries, such an experience of *han* is particularly evident. It appears in folktale, folk songs, folk music, and folk plays, releasing people's sorrow, frustration, and anger."[35] The universality of *han* is also confirmed by most Korean scholars. According to Andrew Sung Park, the term *han* exists in other Asian countries. However, the expressions of *han* in different Asian countries have different emphases. The Korean notion of *han* stresses the more sad, melancholy, and passive aspect of *han* in its meaning and perception of human suffering. It is significant to recognize that each country's concept of *han* reflects its own geographical, sociocultural, economic, and historical background.[36] Consequently, when Song heard the sound of *han*, he identified it with his own *han*, and began to wrestle with it in relation to his theological work. Song describes Christ's forsaken-ness as God's *han*. He believes God's *han* also should be resolved.[37] Therefore some people prefer to call Korean

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[34] Song, "Theology of *han*" in *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, p. 70.

[35] Song, TWA, p. 71.

[36] See Park, "Han-Talk" in *Racial Conflict & Healing*, pp. 9-12.

[37] Cf. Song, *Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1984), p. 101.

Minjung theology a theology of *han* because of its primary focus on the relationship between God's *han* and the liberation of Minjung's *han*.[38]

Chi-Ha Kim's play *The Gold-Crowned Jesus* is helpful in providing the reader with a better understanding of the idea behind Minjung theology.[39] Kim was imprisoned and tortured again and again, tried again and again, always charged with the same crimes -- crimes of the tongue, misuse of the pen in his fight for human rights and democracy in Korea. He wrote most of his works in jail. Kim is important for having paved the way for the development of minjung theology in Korea. His writings echo the voices of minjung and *han*. Kim's work in its entirety is a protest against the false, alien image of a non-suffering, non-political Jesus, which most Korean churches remained silent about in the 1970's during the Korean people's struggle for their justice and basic rights. Kim's idea of *han* provided significant insight into the understanding of suffering in minjung theology. Nam-Dong Suh introduces the poet Chi-Ha Kim as a priest of *han*, speaking for the *han* of the miserable victims of the third world. The idea of *han* is clearly expressed in Chi-Ha Kim's story of "Rainy Season" or "The Story of Sound." *Han* is a key to understanding the essence of *Chungsankyo*, a new religion in Korea.

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[38] Song also uses these two names (*minjung* theology and theology of *han*) interchangeably. Regarding the reference on the concept of *han* in Song's works, see Song, "Theology of *han*" in *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, pp. 70-74; Song, "The Suffering Messiah," in *The Compassionate God*, pp. 108-116.

[39] See Chi-Ha Kim, *The Gold-Crowned Jesus and Other Writings* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978).

Minjung theology seems to be much influenced by this religious outlook.[40] According to Kim, "*Han* is the Minjung's angry and sad sentiment turned inward, hardened and stuck to their hearts."[41] Kim describes well how Christianity has been confronted by Asian spirituality. For the study of the suffering God toward the liberation of minjung, there is no expression which so eloquently expresses the mystery of Christ's priestly act of solidarity with suffering humanity than *The Gold-Crowned Jesus*. Song often refers to portions of this play in his writings.[42]

In *The Gold-Crowned Jesus*, three main characters, a Leper, a Beggar, and a Prostitute, encounter a concrete statue of Jesus adorned with a gold crown. They begin to talk to each other and to the statue: A concrete statue of Jesus with a gold crown was constructed by a company president who in the play prays, "Jesus, the gold crown on your head, it really suits you. It's perfect. You are truly the king of this world, when you wear that crown. You are the king of kings. You are handsome, you are really handsome in that crown. Dear Jesus, never forget that your gold crown was made from the cash contributed by yours truly last Christmas.... Please, Jesus, help me make more money. And if you do that for me, Jesus, next Christmas I will cast your whole body in gold."[43] The Leper sees and feels something very different. He seeks Jesus from his troubled

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[40] See Jung- Young Lee, ed. *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*; Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, pp. 70-71.

[41] Cf. Chi-Ha Kim, *Cry of the People and Other Poems* (Japan: Autumn Press, 1974).

[42] On Song's book *Jesus, the Crucified People*, he introduced most of Kim's play.

[43] Kim, *The Gold-Crowned Jesus*, pp. 109-110.

humanity. He does not have in the question "Who is Jesus?" a theological axe to grind. When he turns to the question, it is his stomach, his empty stomach! He feels in his own person the broken world of injustice and not a heavenly kingdom of peace and harmony. He shivers in the cold winter where the ethical idealism of a Christian community does not apply. He knows something is wrong, terribly wrong.[44] What Jesus reveals when he begins to speak is that the only one who can rescue Jesus is the Leper. Who is the real Jesus? Beggar and leper want to know. If that cement Jesus with a gold crown is not the real Jesus, then who is? The search for the real Jesus then takes an astonishing turn. A dramatic moment arrives when the cement Jesus at long last opens his mouth and speaks to Leper:

> I have been closed up in this stone for a long, long time... entombed in this dark, lonely, suffocating prison. I have longed to talk to you, the kind and poor people like yourself, and share your suffering. I can't begin to tell you how long I have waited for this day.... this day when I would be free from my prison, this day of liberation when I would live and burn again as a flame inside you, inside the very depths of your misery. But now you have finally come. And because you have come close to me I can speak now. You are my rescuer.[45]

"You are my rescuer," Jesus says to Leper. Why has Jesus said such a thing? What does he really mean? Leper must be dumbfounded. Why am I important to him? Why does he count on me to live and burn again as a flame? In *The Gold-Crowned Jesus*, Kim vigorously protests the captivity of Jesus in the institutionalized church. He objects that Jesus' image has been identified with the titles and names of the powerful in the world. Kim is not concerned with the identity or the message of Jesus, rather, he wants to know

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[44] Cf. JCP, pp. 3-4.

[45] Song, JCP, pp. 11.

where Jesus can be found and whom He comes to save and redeem.[46] The "gold-crowned Jesus" is decorated by colonialism, capitalism, militarism, and authoritarian rule, but Kim maintains that the real Jesus is not separated from the people by doctrine, theology, institution, or technology. For Song, the implication of this play is that "the church has alienated Jesus from the people, dressed him up in golden splendor, hoisted him high above the altar in that awe-inspiring chancel, and sealed his mouth with solemn liturgies and eloquent sermons. He has been the captive savior of the captive church."[47] Song finds a significant insight in Kim's critical portrait of the false image of Jesus:

> Of course, that cement Jesus with a gold crown is not the real Jesus. That is the false Jesus who is venerated through pompous liturgy and that is the doctrinaire Jesus encased in a system of rigid doctrines. That Jesus has no heart for the people. That Jesus is an unmoved, indifferent, unfeeling entity and cannot understand the Asian spirituality that lives in hope in the midst of suffering. That Jesus cannot make sense of Asian history filled with human tragedies and aspirations. In short, that Jesus stands aloof from history as people, culture as men, women, and children, and religious as human persons."[48]

Even though it is strange to those who have known Jesus in traditional theology as a metaphysical concept difficult to grasp in a historical sense, this is a hermeneutical clue to Christology for Song. He says, "People are now clues to who the real Jesus is - especially for the people who are poor, outcast, and socially and politically oppressed. The life and work of Jesus grow out of the close relationships developed between him

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[46] For Pieris too, the christological question that "epitomizes the Asian quest is not "Who is he?" or "What is he?" but "Where is he?" See Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, p. 128.

[47] TCG, p. 112.

[48] JCP, p. 11.

work of Jesus grow out of the close relationships developed between him and minjung. 'Because you have come close to me,' Jesus said to the Leper, 'I can speak now.'"[49]

Later in the play, the Leper takes the crown off of Jesus' head and Jesus finds release from his concrete prison. For Song, this is the Christological hermeneutics by which a theology of the crowns needs to find Jesus anew and to recover him for the minjung. Song writes:

> Here a decisive change has taken place--the gold-crown has vanished from his head--the gold-crown that has separated from the real world, made him inaccessible to the people, and created a terrible distortion of God's ways with suffering humanity. The change from the cold, muted, gold-crowned Jesus to the Jesus of passion who speaks. The real Jesus who has spoken wears now a crown of thorns. His emaciated face seems no longer able to hold back the passion of his pain. And his words are those of the dying Jesus on the cross, mustering the last drop of his strength, beseeching God for help: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [50]

Song adopts this powerful voice of *The Gold-Crowned Jesus* into his christology of the suffering God, in particular, to develop his ideas about the liberation of the suffering people.

The cross of Jesus is not only the symbol of God's intention to save humanity, but also the symbol of God's need for salvation. Life is a partnership between God and humanity; God yearns for salvation because God relates to human beings.[51] Because salvation is relational, God cannot save Himself apart from the salvation of humanity. God needs human beings if God's salvific history, initiated with creation, is to be

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[49] Ibid., p. 12.

[50] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[51] Cf. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence* (N.Y.: Schocken, 1959), p. 160.

fulfilled. God's participation in history connotes that God is in a vulnerable relationship with humans. The ultimate symbol of God's need for salvation is manifest in the incarnation and the cross of Jesus. The image of the gold-crowned Jesus is contrasted to the image of the thorn-crowned Jesus. The image of Jesus with the crown of thorns is treated as the most significant metaphor for Asian outcasts by Japanese theologian Teruo Kuribayashi in his book *A Theology of the Crown of Thorns: the Liberation of the Asian Outcasts*. I believe this study is strongly influenced by both Kim's *The Gold-Crowned Jesus* in terms of its critical portrait on the false image of Jesus and Korean minjung theology. This study is regarded as the first liberation theological work in Japan following after Kitamori's theology of the pain of God. As Kuribayashi himself confesses, this study seems like a Japanese version of minjung theology.[52]

With the insights from Kim's play and the minjung theological perspective, Song claims theology is "the hermeneutics of love between God and human beings active in the human community."[53] He suggests that theology must begin not with abstract and universal doctrines, rather it must begin with the particular sociopolitical and cultural situations of the people in which God's "pain-love" is manifested and actively working for their liberation. The theological tasks implied in Kim's *The Gold-Crowned Jesus* and minjung theology involve removing the gold-crown from the head of Jesus and breaking down the cement which suppresses him. This means eliminating the obstacles with

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[52] See Teruo Kuribayashi, *A Theology of the Crown of Thorns: Towards the Liberation of the Asian Outcasts*, Ph.D. Dissertation (NY: Union Theological Seminary, 1986).

which the church has alienated Jesus from the suffering of the world. It also means closing the gap between Christianity and Asian spirituality. Kim's play suggests that Christianity must retain Jesus' true self who now wears a crown of thorns. If Jesus is to have any meaning for the Asian minjung, he must take off the gold crown for the simple crown of thorns to join the oppressed in their suffering and joy.

Song writes, "People touch Jesus' heart. Jesus' heart is vulnerable to people's touching. In this touching we touch the heart of God - the source, the power, and the hope of life. Jesus cannot be Jesus apart from such people. Jesus is not real unless he is with them in their daily struggle. This is the meaning of what Jesus said to the Leper, 'You are my rescuer.'"[54] For Song, this is a clue to the question of the real Jesus and the secret of the historical Jesus. Song asks, "Is this not a most exciting discovery in the quest for the real Jesus?"[55] He calls this a "people hermeneutic." He says, "God is the story of Jesus, and Jesus is the story of the people."[56] It is an entry into the mystery of the "suffering messiah" who enables people to have faith in the God of love and compassion.

1.3. The Asian Awakening: The Asian Face of God

Song believes that "in recent years it has become increasingly obvious that the theology constructed on the marriage between Christianity and Western civilization cannot serve the spirituality that grows, develops, and creates outside the framework of

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[54] JCP, p. 12.

[55] Ibid., p. 11.

[56] Ibid., p. 13.

Constantinian Christianity."[57] Song points out that "there is one particular factor that played a significant role in prolonging the marriage between Christianity and Western civilization, namely, the Western mission with Western cultural accretions to Africa, Asia, and Latin America." Song believes that through this mission, "Constantinian Christianity regained its militant spirit and it was essentially a recapitulation of the church of the early "Fathers" on the continent of Europe. There was one notable exception, however. The Christianization of indigenous cultures, in most cases, did not take place as it did in Europe."[58] According to Song, Confucius has not become a part of theological thinking for the Chinese church as Aristotle became dominant in the formation of Roman Catholic theology, especially that of Thomas Aquinas. It was still Western missionary Christianity. This in turn means that it is mostly a direct extension of Western traditions and practices.[59] A similar concern is found in Asian theology in

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[57] Song, TET, p. 21. As J. B. Metz points out, we are at the end of the Eurocentric era of Christianity, and the Catholic church is changing from a culturally monocentric church (Europe and North America) to a culturally polycentric world church. See J. B. Metz, "Standing at the End of the Eurocentric Era of Christianity: A Catholic View," in *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, eds. Virginia Fabella & Sergio Torres (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), pp. 85-90. Third World theologians refuse simply to translate Western theology into their own language or adapt it to their own cultural forms. They prefer to "drink from their own wells," to paraphrase the title of one of Gustavo Gutiérrez's books. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink From Our Own Wells, The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984). For a discussion of the three models of developing a local theology, i.e., translation, adaptation, and contexualization, see Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), pp. 6-16.

[58] Song, TET, p. 20.

[59] TET, pp. 20-21. In this sense, D. T. Niles, an Indian theologian, supports Song: "When the missionaries came to our lands they brought not only the seed of the Gospel, but their own plant of Christianity, flowered included!" (Emilio A. Nuez and W. D.

general with its accent on "contextualization" and the biblical motif of creation. The history of missions in Japan spans over four hundred years. However, Christian believers make up less than three percent of the current population in Japan. A novel, entitled *Silence*, by the Japanese catholic writer Shusaku Endo says:

> This country of Japan is not suited to the preaching of Christianity. Christianity simply cannot put down roots here.... Father, you were not defeated by me... you were defeated by this swamp of Japan.[60]

Song argues that a failure of the Christian mission in Asia was caused by a lack of theological reflection on the mission field.[61] Many theologians, whether Western or Asian, are affirming aspects of their cultural or contemporary experience as an indispensable resource for doing theology. Song recognizes that only an Asian theology, which is a reflection of Asian spirituality, can help to witness Jesus Christ to Asian peoples. Spurred on by these theological challenges and insights, Song proposes the importance of "doing theology with a third-eye."

The term "third-eye" is very symbolic. In Zen Buddhism, to reach an

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Taylor, *Crisis in Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective* [Chicago: Moddy Press, 1989], p. 312).

[60] Shusaku Endo, *Silence*, trans. William Johnston (Rutland, Vt. And Tokyo: Sophia University, 1969), p. 272. This novel is a historical work about the severe persecution of Catholic Christianity by the feudal government of the Tokugawas in the seventeenth century.

[61] In the case of India, Song cites an observation of Walbert Bulman, a Swiss Roman Catholic missiologist,

> Like the Greeks, Huns and Mongolis, Europeans have occupied India (and other parts of Asia) but these political events have passed over – like hurricanes or like the changes of seasons, mere phenomena in the physical order – without leaving a scratch on the spiritual integrity of Hindu culture. (TET, 1991, p. 6)

understanding, one overcomes the dichotomy between subject and object. They call this epistemological and hermeneutical perspective the "third eye."[62] According to Song, theologians need a "third eye," namely, a power of perception and insight that enables them to grasp the meaning under the surface of things and phenomena.[63] In his book, *Third-Eye Theology* (1979), Song presents a way to escape from the so-called Western-Latin captivity of the church. Song explains this term, the "Latin captivity of the church" referring to the statement of R. H. S. Boyd, "The tradition which the English-speaking Churches of the West have inherited is inevitably Greco-Roman, and more especially Latin, and it is difficult for an Anglo-Saxon or Celtic Christian to look at his or her faith and practice except through Latin spectacles."[64] The churches in Asia, as well as those in Third World countries, have largely been the extension and continuation of this captive church.[65] Boyd points out that the two thousand years of church history are colored strongly by Western thought forms and lifestyles, and still strongly influence Asia and other Third World regions. Song's third-eye theology refuses to live under this Western-Latin captivity of the church and its theology. Symbolically speaking, Western-Latin

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[62] Song derives the term "third eye" from Zen Buddhism:
> Zen... wants to us open a "third eye," as Buddhists call it, to the hitherto unherad-of region shut away from us through our own ignorance. When the cloud of ignorance disappears, the infinity of heavens is manifested where we see for the first time into the nature of our own being. (TET, 1991, pp. 26-7).

[63] Ibid., p. xiii.

[64] Ibid., p. 23.; R. H. S. Boyd, *India and the Latin Captivity of the Church* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. xiii. The term "Western-Latin captivity of the church" is from Boyd.

[65] TET, p. 23.

theology is a first or a second-eye theology; because of its two dimensionality, it is a flat theology that is not capable of a third-dimensional insight.[66] It must be said that such a theology does not vibrate to the rhythm of Asian people's lives. The need for the de-westernization of Christianity in Asia by the effort of Asian liberation theologies led Song to recognize that only an Asian theology, which is a reflection of Asian spirituality, can help witness Jesus Christ to Asian people. This is Song's theological motive for proposing a "third-eye theology" that is a Christian theology from an Asian perspective. Theology is necessarily contextualized, inculturated, local, indigenized.

"Doing theology with a third eye," says Song, is seeing Christ through Asian eyes, African eyes, Latin American eyes.[67] In his *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions*, Kyoung-Jae Kim describes how Christ and the face of God appear to East Asian eyes. Using a different analogy, Kim explains that the primitive Christian community had the first eye, the Greco-Roman perspective had the second eye, and the Asian perspective is the third-eye.[68] Song's theological intention is to create an Asian theology which goes beyond mimicking Western styles of scholarship. Song believes that seeing Christ through an Asian perspective will enable Asians to discover fresh insights into how God works in their own country.[69] Furthermore, such an understanding

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[66] Ibid., p. 27.

[67] Ibid. There are two books which are similar to Song's idea. One is *Images of Jesus: How Jesus is Perceived and Portrayed in Non-European Cultures* (1990) written by Dutch theologian Anton Wessels. The other is *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (1991) edited by R. J. Schreiter.

[68] Kim, *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions*, pp. 156-157.

[69] TET, pp. 26-27.

will open the eyes of Western people to see something new in the Gospel and enrich the churches within the Western cultural tradition as well.

For Song, "doing theology in Asia with the perspective of the third eye" also entails exposing the mystery of God incarnate in Asia through Christ. "This is what I call doing theology with a third-eye. It is a theology open to the mysterious ways of the God who in Christ becomes human flesh in Asia. Third-eye theology is therefore an incarnational theology. Such theology allows no barriers to be set up around it to obstruct its view."[70]

The task of third-eye theology is to overcome the double darkness: "the darkness surrounding the heart of being and the darkness separating Christian spirituality from other Asian spiritualities."[71] Song continues, "only when the darkness that surrounds different spiritualities is lifted can we begin to see the love and compassion of God for the world in a fuller and richer light."[72] A heart-to-heart communication cannot take place between Christians and others without overcoming this darkness.

Song presents a folk-tale to explain the necessity of a heart-to-heart-dialogue. There was a bride who married a man having four brothers. During the four days of brideship, she cooked and went to bring the food to her brothers-in-law. Her brothers-in-law said to her, "If we eat this gruel, tell us our names." But she did not know. They

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[70] Ibid., pp. 37-38. I will explore Song's theology of incarnation later in this thesis.

[71] TET, 1991, p. 38. The idea of darkness comes from Taoism in China. Song uses this term as of a veil, a cover, a gap, a deep secret, or ignorance.

[72] Ibid.

said, "If you do not know our names, take away the gruel."[73] With the above story, Song shows that the Christian mission is not a name-giving power or imperialistic one-sidedness, but a name-knowing power that understands and experiences people's inner needs. Song repudiates a common western missionary attitude as follows:

> If the young bride disappointed her brother-in-law, Christian mission too has disappointed many with its answer: "I don't know your names." Your Confucius, I know him not. Your history, I don't see why it should be my interest. Your suffering and hope, I do not understand them. All I know is we have the good news you have to hear.... We do not need to know your names. They sound clumsy, strange, and not a bit Christian. We have better names for you – Christian names.[74]

Where there is no theologizing with an Asian name there will be no successful Christian mission to Asia. Confronted with the challenge, "Tell us our names," there should be the will and courage to break away from this bondage of Western missionary theology transplanted in the East.[75] Song says:

> In short, we have embarked on a journey toward "Christian Theology – an Asian way." We consider it our theological vocation to find our own authentic theological voice, to recover the message and witness of Jesus in our own cultural and historical settings, and to reconstitute the role of the Christian church in the world of Asia in which Christians make up only three percent of the total population.[76]

Believing that God acts in history, Song attempts to reconstruct God's action in an Asian context in light of its culture, religion, and history in such a way as to articulate

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[73] TUO, pp. 89-90.

[74] TUO, p. 95.

[75] Cf. Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction – An Asian Attempt* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1975).

[76] TET, p. 2.

meaningfully a Christian theology that has relevance for the Asian context. Song's theology provides a portrait of Jesus for Asian people and shows how the story of God's compassion in Jesus and the many heartrending stories and poems of the Asian people converge.

2. The Compassionate God

In *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, Song defines "compassion" as "the power to love others and suffer with them."[77] Song prefers to use the term "compassion" to describe God's passibility, and "God's pain-love." Therefore, it is necessary to examine the concept of "compassion" and the other concepts that are used to ascribe passibility to God if we are to understand the context in which Song's theology of the compassionate God is written. In the following section Song is one of many contributors to our clarification of these concepts.

2.1. "Compassion" and the Other Concepts that are used to ascribe Passibility to God

Many of the specific terms that are used to describe the experiences of a passible God make much clearer which human experiences are viewed as metaphors for the experiences of a passible God. Though it will be necessary to make some remarks on the theory of religious language or 'God-talk' in general and to examine the terms that are

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[77] TWA, p. 165.

used to ascribe passibility to God,[78] I will concentrate on some of the significant terms to clarify the term "compassion" for its application to God.

What does "compassion" mean, especially when it applies to God? This is a difficult question, if not impossible, to answer in terms of a simple definition. I will attempt to specify the meaning of the term "compassion" in comparison with other important terms which are frequently used to ascribe passibility to God, such as passion, pathos, sympathy and empathy. A Christian theology of compassion obviously draws upon, and yet wishes to distinguish itself in significant ways, from each of these.

In the words of Marcel Sarot, "[compassion] is sometimes viewed as one of the emotions, whereas [passion] is sometimes taken to be synonymous with "emotion." The term *emotion*, though more specific than "*passibility*," is itself again an umbrella term, covering many specific emotions, only some of which are frequently ascribed to God: emotions like *anger*, *wrath*, *sorrow* and *love*. Some other emotions are less frequently brought in connection with God, like, for instance, *hate* and *repentance*.[79]

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[78] I owe these distinctions among the terms which are used to ascribe *passibility* to God, to Marcel Sarot. These are useful distinctions, particularly in a language which is used to describe God's passible character. Sarot insists that these terms can be classified in two ways. Firstly, some of them (passibility, sensitivity, vulnerability) signify one's susceptibility to certain experiences, while others (e.g., emotion, passion, sympathy) signify these experiences themselves. And secondly, one can classify these terms according to the degree of specificity of the experiences they cover. On such a classification, "passibility" is the most general term, while term like "vulnerability" - which regards unpleasant and noxious experiences only - and sympathy are more specific. According to Sarot, "passibility" does not refer to experiences, but to the ability to undergo certain experiences. And with respect to the nature of these experiences, the term "passibility" is not very informative. Marcel Sarot, *God, Passibility and Corporeality* (Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1992), pp. 133-6.

[79] The term "*emotion*" is used by, for example: John K. Mozley, *Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought*, p. 52; Bertrand R. Brasnett, *The Suffering of the*

Introduced into theology by Abraham J. Heschel,[80] "pathos" has become one of the terms that is most frequently used by theologians in connection with the alleged passibility of God.[81] As Heschel uses it, "pathos" denotes God's involvement in history, God's participation in the human predicament.[82] It means that "God is never neutral, never beyond good and evil."[83] Human sin is "a frustration to God."[84] Human beings are

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Impassible God (London 1928), p. 22; Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, Vol II, Chapter 3 (NY: Harper & Row, 1962); Janine M. Idziak, "God and Emotions" (diss. Michigan 1975; unpublished); Richard E. Creel, *Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge 1986), p. 116; Murdoch Dahl, *Daughters of Love* (Worthing 1989), p.268. For the term "*sorrow*" as applied to God, see Gerald Vann, "The Sorrow of God," in: *The Pain of Christ and The Sorrow of God* (Oxford 1947), pp.59-75; Robert Wild, *Who I Will Be: Is There Joy and Suffering in God?* (Denville 1976); Charles Taliaferro, "The Passibility of God," *Religious Studies* 25 (1989), pp. 217-24. For the terms "*anger*" and "*wrath*" as used in connection with God see, for example, Gen. 18:30, Ps. 79:5, 85:4, 6; J. I. Packer, "The Wrath of God," in *Knowing God* (London 1973), pp. 134-42; Robert Oakes, "Wrath of God," in *Philosophy of Religion* 27 (1990) pp. 129-40. For the ascription of "*love*" to God, see, for example, 1Jn 4:16; Geddes MacGregor, *He Who Lets Us Be: A Theology of Love* (New York 1975). For the term "*hate*" as used in connection with God, see, for example, Isa. 61:8, Am. 5:21. For the ascription of "*repentance*" to God, see Gen. 6:6, Exod. 32:14, 1Sam. 15:11; Lester J. Kuyper, "Suffering and Repentance of God," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 22 (1969) pp. 257-77; Terrence E. Fretheim, "Repentance of God: A Study of Jeremiah 18:7-10," *Hebrew Annual Review* 11 (1987), pp. 81-92.

[80] See Heschel, *The Prophets*. Cf. John C. Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Divine Pathos," *Louvain Studies* 10 (1984) pp. 151-6; Lawrence Perlman, *Abraham Heschel's Idea of Revelation* (Atlanta, Ga. 1989), pp. 91-101.

[81] Heschel borrowed this term "pathos" from the Greeks and gave it an entirely new interpretation. Abraham Goldberg observes that in Heschel's interpretation "pathos is almost a technical term..." is an understatement. See Abraham Goldberg's review of *The Prophets, Bibliotheca Orientails* 22 (1965), p. 51.

[82] Heschel, *The Prophets*. p. 226.

[83] Ibid., p. 231.

[84] Ibid., p. 226.

relevant to God, and this finds its deepest expression in the fact that God in God's pathos can actually suffer.[85]

Of the terms, "sympathy" and "empathy," "sympathy" is closer to the Jewish and Christian traditions' meaning of compassion. Etymologically, the roots of "sympathy" are the Greek equivalent of the Latin *com* [with] + *pati* [suffer]: *syn* [with, together] + *pathos* [suffer].[86] This term derives from the Greek compound "sun-paschein," "to suffer with." In an article in the authoritative *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Lauren G. Wispe defines "sympathy"[87]as "the capacity to apprehend the pain,

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[85] Sarot concludes that Heschel's theological concept of the pathos of God does not provide us with a way to talk more concretely about the "feeling" of God, a way to specify with regard to what God could be passible. It is also important to remark that on this interpretation "pathos" is so comprehensive a term that it includes all that is meant by passibility and more than that. When Heschel wants to spell out the passibility of God more concretely, he uses concepts like "emotion," "feeling," "pain," "suffering" and "to be effected by." Cf. Goldberg, "Review," p. 51, who speaks of "the wide interpretation Heschel has given" of "pathos." See also Sarot, Ibid., pp. 171-4; Heschel, Ibid., p. 259.

[86] See F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), pp. 152-155.

[87] On sympathy, see, e.g., S. Bryant, "Sympathy," in: James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* XII (Edinburgh 1934), pp. 152-5; Christopher Cherry, "Knowing, Imagination and Sympathizing," *Ratio* 22 (1980), pp. 133-44; Arnold P. Goldstein and Gerald Y. Michaels, *Empathy* (London 1985), pp. 7-8; Robert L. Katz, *Empathy* (London 1963), pp. 8-11; Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (London 1979); Naomi Scheman, "On Sympathy," *The Monist* 62 (1979), pp. 320-30; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Oxford 1976); Edith Wyschogrod, "Empathy and Sympathy as Tactile Encounter," *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 6 (1981), pp. 25-43. Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, edited by D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (Oxford 1976), p. 10: "Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever." Cf. pp. 43-50 and Marshall Randles, *The Blessed God: Impassibility* (London 1990), p. 109; Wyschogrod, "Empathy and Sympathy," p. 28.

suffering[88] or signs of negative emotions in human beings or animals and to respond to these with appropriate negative feelings."[89]

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[88] According to Marcel Sarot, "the word "suffering" is not used of God in the Bible, but the thing is emphatically present. Moreover, in many contemporary discussions of divine passibility the lion's share of attention goes to divine suffering. Nevertheless, the term "suffering" seems too restricted for our present purpose: it applies to negative experiences only, and even of these it covers only some. The term "emotion" on the other hand, is a rather general term; though it does not cover all the terms that are used to refer to the experiences of a passible God, for instance, of "pain" - it covers a wide range of positive and negative experiences." It has been examined by Marcel Sarot, *God, Passibility and Corporeality* (Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1992), pp. 169-71. It is significant to recognize that pain and suffering, although closely related, are not identical. As David Boeyink writes, "pain can be present in one's body without suffering as a simple pin-prick in the finger. Conversely, one can suffer from anxiety in the absence of pain." David E. Boeyink, "Pain and Suffering," *Journal of Religion and Ethics 2* (1974), p.85. The degree of suffering is determined not by the intensity of the pain only, but by the complete personal, social and psychological situation of a person. In sum, we can define suffering as a state of severe anguish or distress occasioned by events that are a threat to our composure, our integrity, and the fulfillment of our intentions. Bodily pain and illness are among the events which most frequently cause suffering, but in principle anything that threatens a person can become a source of suffering. On this analysis, suffering is an emotional response to threatening circumstances. However, Nicholas Wolterstoff, "Suffering Love," in: Thomas V. Moris (ed.), *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Notre Dame, Ind. 1988), pp. 215-6, asserts that suffering is not always emotional in character. He does not give any reason, however, why he holds this.

Additional insights regarding suffering come also from a discussion of another term that is often associated with it -- "affliction." Simone Weil, French philosopher and spiritual writer, distinguishes between "affliction" and "suffering" in a short chapter of her work *Attende de Dieu*. See Simone Weil, "The Love of God and Affliction," in *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Crauford (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), pp. 117-136. We are not only unable to fulfill our aims and purposes, but those damaged by affliction are also in no state to help others, according to Weil. Another potential effect of affliction's slavery, then, is the loss of one's ability to show compassion for others in concrete ways. Cf. Weil, Ibid., p. 120. What is an enigma for her is "that God should have given affliction the power to seize the very souls of the innocent and to take possession of them" in such a way (Ibid., pp. 119-120). With this Weil enters into the questions of religion and suffering.

[89] Lauren G. Wispe, "Sympathy and Empathy," in: Silles (ed.), *International Encyclopedia* XV, p. 441.

Empathy[90] is the self-conscious act whereby a person imaginatively shares and accurately comprehends the consciousness of another person, including especially his/her feelings and emotions. Unlike sympathy, empathy requires a conscious effort; someone who empathizes is always active, whereas a sympathizing person might be passive. In sympathy the resulting feelings and emotions are one's own, whereas in empathy one shares the other's feelings or emotions.[91]

Though the etymology of "compassion"[92]-- the Latin "com[with]-pati[to suffer]" means "suffering with"-- suggests that this term is a synonym of "sympathy," the meaning of both terms in contemporary English differ in two respects. First, we use the term "compassion" only for the sympathetic response to negative emotions, and not for the response to neutral or positive emotion.[93] In this respect the meaning of "compassion" is narrower than that of "sympathy." In a second respect, however, the meaning of "compassion" is broader than that of "sympathy": "compassion" does not

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[90] On empathy, see, e.g., Michael F. Basch, "Empathetic Understanding," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 31 (1983), pp. 101-26; Golstein and Michaels, *Empathy*; Katz, *Empathy*; Joseph Lichtenberch, Melvin Bornstein and Donald Siver (eds.), *Empathy* I (Hillsdale, NJ 1984); Chris R. Schlauch, "Empathy as the Essence of Pastoral Psychotherapy," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 44 (1990), pp. 3-17; Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy* (Den Haag 1964); Ezra Stotland, "Empathy," in: Raymond J. Corsini, *Encyclopedia of Psychology* I (New York 1984), pp. 428-9; Ezra Stotland , *Empathy, Fantasy and Helping* (London 1978); Mary Bittner Wiseman, "Empathetic Identification," American *Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1978) pp. 107-13.

[91] Wispe, "Sympathy and Empathy," p. 441. Cf. Goldstein and Michaels, *Empathy*, pp. 7-8; Katz, *Empathy*, pp. 8-11.

[92] On compassion, see Lawrence Blum, "Compassion," in: Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Explaining Emotions* (London 1980), pp. 507-17; Dodds, *Unchanging God*, pp. 292-309.

[93] Blum, "Compassion," pp. 507-9; Dodds, *Unchanging God*, pp. 292-3.

only mean an emotional response to someone else's negative emotions, but also the actions intended to relieve these emotions. According to Michael Dodds, "Compassion is that twofold movement of the soul in which we both share the suffering of our friend and seek to relieve that suffering."[94] We can even be said to act compassionately when we try to relieve the suffering of someone else without co-suffering.

The compassionate nature of God in the Hebrew scriptures is repeatedly described by the phrase "Yahweh merciful [rahum] and gracious." The word *rahum* witnesses to God as compassionate, merciful, and loving; it is a word whose meaning to some extent depends on its context.[95] In the New Testament, however, the Greek word *splangchnizomai* is used to declare the compassionate nature of God. It is specific, and it is used exclusively in this sense. It always means "to be moved with passion." The components tell us of its deep and powerful meaning. The *splangchna* are the entrails of the body, or, as we might say today, the guts.[96] McNeil argues that the Greek word *splangchnizomai* corresponds to the Hebrew word *rachamin* which means mercy and refers to the womb of Yahweh. It is the place where our most intimate and intense

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[94] Dodds, *Unchanging God*, pp. 292-3. This duality in the notion of "compassion" is also recognized by Thevenot, "Compassion," pp. 80-2 and Blum, "Compassion," pp. 513-6. "Compassio" did not have this duality when it was introduced as a neologism into Christian language. At that time it was the meaning of the term "misericordia" that was dual: it connoted both (1) the emotion of compassion and (2) compassionate acts. When the second meaning tended to supersede the first, the term "compassio" was introduced to refer to the emotion.

[95] Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 39.

[96] Donald P. McNeil, *Compassion* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), p. 16.

emotions are located. It is the center from which both intense loving and hate grow. Indeed, the word *splangchnizomai* connotes such a deep, central, and powerful emotion that it can only be described as a movement of the womb of God. As has been proposed by Song: "This theology of the womb must be the foundation of all theology -- theology of politics, theology of history, theology of cultures -- theology of God's saving love for all human beings, all created in God's own image."[97]

In the New Testament, God's compassion becomes visible through Jesus in the various healing stories. When Jesus saw the crowd harassed and lost like sheep without a shepherd, he felt "compassion" in the center of his being (Mt. 9:36). When he saw the blind, the paralyzed, and the deaf -- all of whom were outcasts at that time -- being brought to him from all directions, Jesus trembled with pain (Mt. 14:14). When he saw that the thousands of people who had been following him for days were exhausted and hungry, he said, "I am moved with compassion" (Mk. 8:2). And so it was with the two blind men who called after him (Mt. 9:27), the leper who fell to his knees in front of him (Mk 1:41), and the widow of Nain who was burying her only son (Lk. 7:13). They moved Jesus and made him feel the depth of their sorrow and anguish. Jesus became lost with the lost, hungry with the hungry, and sick with the sick.

> The great mystery revealed to us is that Jesus, the Son of God, chose freely to take on our pains and thus to let us discover the true nature of God. In Jesus, we see and touch the God that truly is. God lives our broken humanity not as a curse (Gn. 3:14-19), but as a blessing. God's divine compassion makes it possible for us to

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[97] C. S. Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1986), pp. 110-9.

face our condition once more, because it can transform our broken human context from a cause of despair into a source of hope.[98]

2.2. An Asian Theology of God and Suffering

The Christian theology of East Asians is in large measure a 'theology of the pain of God,' and Song is pre-eminent among its exponents, explicitly utilizing Asian resources. This theology emphasizes the suffering of God together with the suffering of people and all living beings. East Asian Christians understand this aspect of God from the scriptures but find it meaningful especially because they have experienced much suffering in their own history. Song writes,

> To be human is to suffer, and God knows that. That is why God suffers too. Suffering is where God and human beings meet. It is the one place where all persons - kings, priests, paupers, and prostitutes - recognize themselves as frail and transient human beings in need of God's saving love. Suffering brings us closer to God and God closer to us.[99]

Asia is a continent stained by injustice, poverty, and *han*, and it suffers no less than Latin America or Africa. Injustice in the political and economic systems remains despite the end of the colonial age.[100]

Song constantly quotes and refers to Asian religious sources, and with regard to the theme of suffering, frequently draws upon Buddhist concepts. For Asians, suffering

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[98] McNeil, *Compassion*, p. 215. Also see Lucien Richard, *A Kenotic Christology* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), p. 235.

[99] COG, p. 115.

[100] See Jung-Young Lee, *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology* and Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, pp. 70-71.

is life and life is suffering.[101] This is the first Noble Truth of Buddhism. For that reason, the Buddha's perception of life as suffering has struck a chord in the minds and hearts of countless Asians for more than two thousand years.[102] Song points out that "Christians tend to dismiss the Buddhist teaching on suffering as the ground of Buddhist denial of the world and of its withdrawal from it." The Buddha, it is said, was so overwhelmed by the enormity of human suffering that he taught: "Birth is suffering; decay is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering."[103] The Pali word *dukkha* is usually translated "suffering"; but as C. Humphreys points out: "no word in English covers the same ground as *dukkha* in Pali. Originally set in opposition to *Sukha*, ease and well-being, it signifies dis-ease in the sense of discomfort, frustration or disharmony with the environment." Furthermore, *dukkha* is one of the three marks of existence or "signs of being... with *anicca*, impermanence, and *anatta*, unreality of self. *Dukkha* is largely the effect of the human being's reaction to *anicca* and *anatta*. It follows that existence cannot be wholly separated from *dukkha* and that complete escape from it is possible only by liberation from the round of birth and death."[104] Song explains the suffering of Asians by referring to the statement of an Indonesian Christian:

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[101] Cf. Christmus Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism* (London: Arco Publishers, 1962), p. 20.

[102] COG, pp. 162-3.

[103] See *The Wisdom of Buddhism*, ed. Christmas Humphreys (London: Curzon Press, 1979), p. 57; quoted in Song, *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 123.

[104] Christmus Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism* (London: Arco Publishers, 1962), p. 20.

"Asian people perceive suffering more as an integral part of being human [and] never regard it as a strange experience external to life. We have to struggle against it, yes, but in the first instance we have to accept it as a part of ourselves. The struggle against suffering is, after all, an inner struggle against our own self."[105]

Song emphasizes that such suffering of Asian people must be sublimated as a theme of Asian theology. He also acknowledges that theology should start from real life and life in suffering. Life as suffering is the position of an Asian's life (Sitz im Leben), where the search for God begins.[106] It may be unavoidable that theology becomes

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[105] Eka Darmaputera, "An Indonesian Comment," in Yap Kim Hao, ed., *Asian Theological Reflections on Suffering and Hope* (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1977), p. 65. Also see COG, p. 163.

[106] Many theologians agree with Song about suffering as theological starting point. According to Sölle, all true theology begins in the experience of suffering. "Theology originates in our need for more, in our sense of failure, in our awareness of life destroyed. Its locus is suffering or the disregard for life that we experience all the time" (Dorothee Sölle, *The Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Identity*, trans, Robert and Rita Kimber [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984], p. 90). For her, Christian theology grows out of the paradox or contrast between life experienced as finite and constricted by negative forces and the promise of abundant life given in the Gospels (e.g., John 10:10): "Theology begins with experience and sets experience over against the promise of a whole life, the promise of the Kingdom of God. It confronts these statements with the genuine life that has been promised to us, which is no more nor less than everything for all of us (Ibid., p. 91)." Sölle suggested that the first question we have to ask about our praxis is: "Who is victimized?" (Sölle, *On Earth as in Heaven*, Westerminster/John Knox press, 1993, p. x). In Fredrick Herzog's phrase, theology must start, "where the pain is" (Fredrick Herzog, *Liberation Theology*, The Seabury Press, 1972, p. 258). The liberation theologies take the suffering of the people as their starting point: For Jon Sobrino, the task of theology is to find its place in the reality of this suffering world and its fundamental purpose is the elimination of suffering. See Paul Knitter (ed.), *Pluralism and Oppression, The Annual Publications of the College Theology Society*, Vol. 34, [Lanham: University Press of America, 1988], pp. 156-159). Gustavo Gutiérrez does his theology from the perspective of those who suffer and believes human suffering and the question it raises about God are in fact one point of departure and one central theme in theology. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job, God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987, pp. xiv-x). The question of

muddled by abstract and universal doctrines, but nevertheless, it must begin with the particular sociopolitical and cultural situations of the people in which God's "pain-love" is manifested and actively work for their liberation. A theology that is culturally and historically neutral is not only a homeless theology but also an impossible theology. Every theology is necessarily a political theology because what is historical is political.[107]

Therefore, in order for a theology to penetrate into the soul and heart of Asia, it must reflect Asian suffering. Asian theology should not just analyze the suffering phenomenologically. It must go beyond the reality of suffering itself. Because God is not only a God of glory but also the God of suffering who feels pain, God weeps and suffers with us together.

Suffering, furthermore, is the suffering of the whole person, body and soul. Dorothee Sölle, a German theologian, points out that another inherited concept from Greek-philosophy is an idealistic spirituality which is based on the dualism of self and body, or the body-spirit dichotomy as the enemy of a creational spirituality. Idealistic spirituality is blind not only to the bodily reality, but even more so to the social reality.[108] But in the East Asian way of thought, a person does not possess a body; a person is a body. Body and mind are not two separate entities; they are one reality. In 'sitting

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suffering forces upon us the most serious questions about the meaning and goal of human life.

[107] Song has proposed ten theses on the nature and method of an Asian liberation-story theology. See *Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984), pp. 3-24. For his liberation theology, see *Ibid.*, pp. 163-205, and *The Tears of Lady Meng: A Parable of People's Political Theology* (Geneva: WCC, 1981).

[108] See Sölle, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation*, pp. 29-30.

Ch'an', the most spiritual discipline of Asia, the body is a beginning and an end. Breath control and controlling body are all part of spiritual discipline. The discipline of the body is not a means to spiritual discipline. The discipline of a body is the salvation of life. Most Asians experience the words of the scriptures with their bodies. Therefore, East Asian theology especially emphasizes body theology. Body theology focuses on the unity of life, the concretization of life, the materialization of life, the sacramental aspect of life by overcoming the dichotomy of body and mind.[109] As noted by Patricia Wismer in discussing women's writings on suffering, God is related to our bodies more positively than traditional theology often gives credence.[110] In many of these women's writings, the emphasis is on God's delight in our embodied existence (as, for example, in our sexuality), and that God is expressed through our bodies in the world (e.g., Heyward's and Brock's work on the erotic).[111]

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[109] In *Third-Eye theology*, Song discusses this theme in chapter 6 and 7 under the titles, 'The Seed of Hope Buried in the Womb' and 'The Rice of Hope.'

[110] As deftly outlined by Patrica Wismer, many thinkers are developing such areas as the body, relationality, virtues, sin, and grace. For example, many explore the necessity for a more holistic understanding of the human person, in which we see ourselves as "embodied" beings, with feelings as well as minds. For most of these writers, it is critical to have an accurate picture of the basic goodness and worth of bodies and feelings, and to understand that, to a great extent, "we are our bodies" (Patricia Wismer, "For Women in Pain," in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O'Hara Graff [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995], p. 150). Such a view also seeks to incorporate the ambiguity that is part of bodily experience, including both the goodness and the tragedy of living in a body that can suffer. Cf. Melanie May, *A Body Knows: A Theopoetics of Death and Resurrection* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

[111] Cater Isabel Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Realtion* (Washington, D.C.: University of Press of America, 1982); Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988).

Song says, "Theology must "body forth" from the people. It must bear the marks of humans in agony. It must echo their laughter, shed their tears, sigh their sighs. This is what theology must be about because this is what God is about."[112] For this reason, Song's theology demonstrates a theology of the pain of God who participates in Asians' suffering and injustice:

> God knows what it is like in the refugee camps in Malaysia, in Thailand, in Hong Kong. God also knows what was happening in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia that the Pol Pot regime turned into a ghost town by either murdering its inhabitants or driving them to the countryside to starve to death. God knows that the suffering of these Asians is God's own suffering, their anguish is God's own anguish, their misery is God's own misery.[113]

Song calls this "theology of the pain of God," "theology of God and the suffering of Asia" "Asian theology of the cross," or "Asian theology of *han*."[114]

2.3. Theology of God's Pain-Love: God's Heartache

Although Song acknowledges that Kitamori's emphasis on pain brings depth to our understanding of God and God's relation to the world, he also sees that in Kitamori's theology, "there is a strong tendency to internalize God's work of salvation within God's

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[112] TCG, pp. 165-166.

[113] Ibid., p. 245.

[114] Yewangoe provides an example of how Asian Christians perceive suffering within a situation characterized by overwhelming poverty and multifaceted religiosity in Asia. See A. A. Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis in Asia: Asian Christian Views on Suffering in the Face of Overwhelming Poverty and Multifaceted Religiosity in Asia* (Amsterdam: Rodophi, 1987).

own self, seeing it as a conflict within God's own self between love and wrath."[115] Song criticizes Kitamori's theology of the pain of God as a clear example of theology constructed and developed on what he calls "the internalization of salvation within God's own self."[116] Kitamori describes the trinitarian act of Christ's death as follows: "It is impossible for us to understand the logic of Paul completely unless the death of Christ means the death of God himself."[117] Unlike Kazoh Kitamori, who sees love as rooted in God's pain,[118] Song understands God's pain as one that sprouts from his love.[119] Song sees this "pain-love" as the point of entry into the heart of God.[120] For Song, God reveals

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[115] See Song, TET, pp. 76-77. Carl Michalson also interprets Kitamori's *Theology of the Pain of God* as:

> The pain is God in conflict within God's own self, God going outside of God's own self in Christ, God letting God's son die: all of which means God conquering God's wrath by God's love in the interest of loving the unworthy (Carl Michalson, *Japanese Contribution to Christian Theology* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960], p. 79).

[116] See Song, TET, p. 77.

[117] See Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, p. 45.

[118] Kitamori insists that the pain of God is a fundamental biblical theme and is the "heart of the Gospel." "The pain of God," writes Kitamori, "this is the essence of God, this is the heart of God." See Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, p. 19.

[119] Song is, of course, not the only Asian theologian who stresses love as the essence of God. Jung Young Lee sees *agape* as the very nature of God, including God's being and action. See Jung-Young Lee, *God Suffers for Us: A Systematic Inquiry into a Concept of Divine Passibility*, p. 1. In his *The Theology of Change* (Maryknoll: 1979), Lee asserts that the idea of a passible God accords with the interdependence of *yin* and *yang*. Their mutually inclusive relationship reflects the relation of Jesus to His Father ("I am in the Father and the Father in me") in which the Son's suffering cannot but also be the Father's (*The Theology of Change*, p. 126). M. M. Thomas emphasizes the self-emptying redemptive love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, as the essence of God. See M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: 1969).

[120] TET, p. 69.

himself in "pain-love." The basis of this view of love as the essence of God is found in Song's conviction that God refuses to remain alone. God seeks human beings as the objects of his love, even though they avoid him. Love cannot fulfill itself until the object of love fulfills itself in the purpose for which it was created and instituted.[121] For Song, the love that feels pain for its object becomes a pain-love. The more intense love is, the deeper the pain and the more powerful pain-love is. God's love for us is pain-love. The cross is God's excruciating pain-love. It is rooted in the love of the God who bears pain for the world.

This, says Song, is the God of pain-love, the God who judges, not because of His wrath, but rather because of his love. This is the heart of the Gospel, God's pain-love for His incarnation, which makes the divine judgment redemptive, not destructive.[122] Salvation must, therefore, be conceived of as God's love seeking its lost company, and at the same time as the homecoming of human beings to the love of God. Jesus Christ is the revelation of this pain-love of God.[123]

Song's idea of God's pain-love relates to his understanding of "passion."[124] He explains that "passion" involves two elements: love and suffering. Song believes that

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[121] See C. S. Song, "Love of God-and-Man in Action," *Doing Theology*, (ed.), C. S. Song (Madras, 1976), pp. 42-69.

[122] Ibid., p. 69.

[123] Ibid. p. 64.

[124] TWA, p. 110-1.

"passion must be a suffering love."[125] According to him, "passion brings God and human beings together. The heart makes us realize that God and human beings are joined together in love and suffering. This passion and this heart must be the passion and heart of theology also."[126] Song believes God deals with this world passionately, loving it and suffering for it. Song insists that our theology should be in tune with the rhythms of such a passion, which is God's passion. He sees one example of such a forceful theology in Korean theology of *han*. According to Song, God's passion is always communal, that is, com-passion. Seeing the compassionate God in Christ's broken body on the cross and the spirituality of compassion deeply embedded in Asian cultures, Song develops his theology of compassionate God. Using Asian resources, Song hopes his theology can touch the Asian soul, feel that heart, and be in tune with that compassion in Asian spirituality. Song endeavors to reflect on the rhythms of Asian passion that traditional Western theology has not yet touched.

2.4. God's Suffering in Creation

Song's concept of creation is notable in terms of his understanding of the original meaning of the creation and the relationship between humanity and nature. Song claims that God's creation and redemption are inseparable and are not considered to be in chronological order. He perceives that creation and redemption are two sides of the same coin. Song says: "Where there is creation, there is redemption. Conversely, where there

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[125] Ibid., p. 111.

[126] Ibid., p. 116.

is redemption, there is creation." [127] Creation is God's redemptive response to the pain and suffering of this world. It is a manifestation of God's love and compassion for the world:

> God's heart aches. His heart aches due to his painful love for his creature. That is to say, in the heart of God we find the beginning of theology. Theology begins with God's heartache on account of the world. Creation is the outpouring of the heart of God, the giving of God himself. This is clear in the suffering of Jesus Christ. Suffering is thus a new creation in the making. The whole being of God aches on the cross. The suffering God is therefore the redeeming God.[128]

In this connection Song believes that God's creational and redemptive involvement with the world is not foreign to Asian spirituality, but is reflected, for example, in Buddhist spirituality.[129] Although there is no "nature" history outside of the sphere of God's redeeming love, there are redemptive elements in all nations.[130] Therefore, our evaluation of the history of a nation is not complete until such redemptive elements are properly recognized. Song refers to Paul's words to explain that redemptive elements in human history are witness to the presence in the world of the God who, "sent forth God's Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that they might receive adoption as sons [and daughters]" (Gal. 4:4, RSV).[131] In Song's

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[127] TET, p. 56. And also see Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Attempt* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1975, and Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997). Chapter 2 and 3 are especially relevant to this issue.

[128] TET, pp. 35-41.

[129] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[130] Ibid., p. 135.

[131] Ibid.

view, Christian faith should include a readiness to acknowledge that God rules the redemptive elements outside Christianity to prevent human history from going bankrupt, to sustain the world, and to continue his creational work. He says: "God somehow uses the redemptive elements outside Christianity to sustain a world that often verges on destruction through such human cruelty as we witnessed in World War II in which the "Christian" West was brutally and demonically involved. Our acknowledgment of this fact should be accompanied by thankfulness to God for not leaving the world to its own destructive devices and meaningless chaos."[132] These historical realities may not be transcended, as though salvation is seen as having nothing to do with them at all.

Song's idea of God involves a redeeming God who commits Godself totally to the suffering world. Song defines the meaning of creation in relation to the cross as the place where a new creation begins in the midst of the old creation. The distinctiveness of Song's theological contribution is his understanding of God as a suffering, compassionate God, who aches because of his endless pain-love for all suffering humanity and all creatures. The suffering God participates directly in all human suffering and also experiences it as God's own. Song's inclusive exploration is extended towards non-Christian cultures in which he believes God's compassion is manifested and actively working for liberation.

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[132] Ibid.

3. Jesus: Incarnation of the Compassionate God

As a Christian theology, Song's is centrally informed by Jesus. His theology of the suffering God is naturally shaped in large measure by the biblical figure of Jesus. We must, then, consider his christology as an aspect of his theology of the suffering God. Song's work functions to provide a portrait of Jesus for Asian people. This section reviews Song's christology through all of his major works. Under the title *The Cross in the Lotus World*, Song concludes his trilogy with a profound meditation on the significance of Jesus for a post-Christian world. He explored the person of Jesus in *Jesus, the Crucified People* (1989) and the message of Jesus in *Jesus and the Reign of God* (1993) and the discovery of the "open truth" of Jesus at large in the world in *Jesus in the Power of the Spirit* (1994).

3.1. Method: Enfleshment and Transposition

In what sense does Song interpret Jesus as incarnation of God, particularly for Asian people? To grasp this, we must first look to his method of contextualization. Many terms have been used by many authors, e.g., "indigenization," "inculturation," "incarnation." Song prefers to speak of "enfleshment" and "transposition." First of all, Song does not accept the term "indigenization," because he believes that the word can be understood to encourage Christian churches in Asia to become rooted in Asian society as strongly organized and structured centers of Western traditions from the past. He prefers the biblical idea of "enfleshment" or "incarnation." He thinks that for Asians, the biblical concept of enfleshment refers to a setting aside of inherited western values, and becoming ready to let their Christian faith become flesh in their own cultural and

religious context, meeting their own needs and aspirations. This term "enfleshment" is from the Gospel according to St. John: "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14. NIV). Song says: "The decisive factor in the theology of history, from the Christian point of view, is Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, as the theological centre that guides our theological reflection and action in Asian settings."[133] According to Song's theology of enfleshment, if it is true that the Word became flesh, it is also true that the same Word became Asian flesh.[134] So, for Song, Jesus can be Chinese, Japanese, or Korean. [135]

In his book. *The Compassionate God*, Song divided theology into two types: transpositional and nontranspositional. According to the former, theology crosses the

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[133] Choan-Seng Song, "New Frontiers of Theology in Asia: Ten Theological Theses." *South East Asia Journal of Theology*, 20, 1979, p. 18.

[134] According to his interpretation, the verb "became" (*egento*) that connects the Word and flesh is an action that "brings about a fundamental change in the subject of the action." (Ibid., p. 19). Song asks: "Does this not mean that God's theological activity begins and is carried out in the anthropological domain? (Ibid.). If so, human beings can encounter God in themselves, in the community they constitute, and in the history they forge. Song says, therefore:

> We must be able to touch the hearts of women, men and children who seek emancipation in body and in spirit from centuries of oppression, poverty, fear, and despair, who struggle to regain their rights to be human. In short, we must go to the resources where the flesh and blood peoples of Asia are touched by theological dynamics working in these resources. (TET, p. 9).

The enfleshment theory is explained fully in his *Tell Us Our Names*, in which he sees it as the basic principle of his mission theology.

[135] Cf. JCP, p. 222. An Indian theologian, Raimund Pannikar, transposes Jesus Christ in relation to Hinduism with a term "the unknown Christ of Hinduism." For him, "that unknown reality, which Christians call Christ, is discovered in the heart of Hinduism, not as a stranger to it, but as its very principle of life, as the light which illumines every human being who comes into the world." Raimund Pannikar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London and Darton: Longman & Todd, 1981), pp. 19-20. His goal is to discern the unity between Christianity and Hinduism without mitigating the differences between them. See J. R. Levison and P. P. Levison *Jesus in Global Contexts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster and John Knox Press, 1992).

boundaries of cultures, religions, and histories in order to have deeper contact with other traditions. Black Theology, Feminist Theology, and Liberation Theology are all examples of transpositional theologies. Nontranspositional theologies are interpretations from one particular aspect of life and faith, arising from one particular culture, simply imposed in an abstract, artificial manner upon people of another culture. Namely, what western Christianity is and what it stands for culturally and spiritually are so different from other cultures and religions that it cannot simply project itself into them. Song of course chooses transpositional theology as the required theology in Asia. Asia has a great diversity of religions and cultures; its large number of nations and people have rich spiritual heritages that are a source both of faith and hope.

Song defines the term "transposition" with lexical meaning: shift in space and time, communication, and incarnation. These are methodological steps toward a theology for Asia. First, the purpose of a transpositional theology is "to facilitate a journey from Israel to Asia with a direct ticket."[136] Transposition of the Christian faith to the Third World has largely been a second-hand and a third-hand operation. Third World theologies have been sifted through European or North American theologies. In contrast to this, Song tries to do a theological leap directly from Israel to Asia.[137] He regards Israel as a symbol.

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[136] COG, p. 7.

[137] See Choan-Seng Song, "From Israel to Asia: A Theological Leap," *Ecumenical Review*, 1976, 28: 252-265.

> Israel is chosen not to present herself to the rest of the world as a nation through which God's redeeming love will be mediated, but to be a symbol, or an example, of how God is also at work among the nations in a redemptive way.[138]

In a sense, Song holds the presupposition that "God has not left the nations and peoples of Asia to the course of their own destruction."[139] Because this is so, the transposition of space and time is possible.

Second, transposition as communication is at the very heart of human activity. It is more than just formal or linguistic. For Song, "intercultural and interpersonal transposition is a prerequisite to human communication at all levels."[140] In order for Asians to communicate with the Bible, it is necessary to transpose the content of the Bible from the world of biblical faith to the world of Asian cultures and religions.

Third, transposition includes a meaning of "incarnation." "Incarnation" is Song's key word for transpositional theology. For Song, God is the one who "changes, transposes, and becomes flesh in human life."[141] The Gospel "could come in any shape and in any color."[142] With these definitions, Song breaks a barrier to transposition, which he identifies as "centrism." He comments:

> One of the roadblocks that creates a major problem for transpositional theology in Asia is the centrism with which traditional theology is accustomed to view the history of Israel and the history of Christianity. This roadblock of centrism must be removed so that the road may be cleared for theological traffic in Asia.[143]

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[138] Ibid., p. 258.

[139] Ibid., p. 7.

[140] COG, p. 8.

[141] Ibid., p. 12.

[142] Ibid., p. 11.

[143] Ibid., p. 16.

In order to break this roadblock, Song proposes three steps. The first step is "to locate the forces in the Old Testament that draw Israel out of its centrism and set it in relation to other nations." The second step is "to see how Jesus fought to liberate his own people from ethno-religious centrism." Song continues: "These two steps will, I hope, clear the road for the third step: our journey into movements of nations and peoples in Asia that may give us some clues to the ways of God in that vast portion of the world outside the Judeo-Christian traditions."[144] These three steps give the basic structure to Song's contextualization, especially in his book *The Compassionate God.*

This transpositional methodology refuses the terms "*heilsgeschichte*" and "special revelation" which are basic to the salvation doctrine of orthodox Christian churches. Accordingly, Song's views on christology, Trinity, history, and culture take a different direction. His transpositional theology is "to search what God is doing and how God is working among Asians."[145] In other words, transposition in Song's theological methodology aims to break the centrism of Israel, and then to discover and to interpret God's working in Asian contexts.

3.2. The Cross and the Lotus

In Asian traditions, Song finds a resonance with his Christian understanding of the compassion of God. In Buddhism, Song compares the mind of a *Bodhisattva*, who

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[144] Ibid, pp. 16-7.

[145] Dialogue between Western Theology and Eastern Theology: F. Buri, C. S. Song, Yong-Bock Kim, *Christian Thought* [Korean] 28 (1), p. 83.

suffers with sentient beings, with the pain of the biblical God. Song says, "in Christianity suffering leads to the cross, the symbol and reality of God's saving love for the human being. In Buddhism suffering gives rise to the Bodhisattva consumed with compassion for suffering humanity."[146] The symbol of Buddha seated on a lotus is very profound. The lake, on which the lotus floats, is the present *samsara*, the world of suffering, agony, and evil. In the middle of the lake of agony, a lotus blooms. Likewise, *nirvana*, the uncontaminated world of faith, exists in samsara. As the lotus is a symbol of awakening, so the cross is a symbol of sacrificial love overcoming the satanic forces and witnessing to justice and love. Kitamori, as we have seen, saw suffering not as a consequence for immoral behavior but as a principle of life.[147] With the affirmation of the redemptive-creational elements expressed outside the Christian church, Song reflects on Christianity and Buddhism, using the imagery of the cross and the lotus. In his comparison of Jesus and Buddha, Song's main concern is not the doctrinal teaching. He does not suggest that Jesus and Buddha share the same doctrines, but rather that they are alike in their compassionate love for the world. Song says: "Does not Buddhism, like other religions, including Christianity, also put compassion into practice when it engages in relief work, social projects, and reform programs?"[148] In Mahayana Buddhism, in which love and compassion are emphasized, and in the Bhakti religion in India, in which grace and devotion are stressed, Song identifies an important point of convergence between the

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[146] Choan-Seng Song, "Communion of Compassion," in *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), p. 137.

[147] Cf. Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*.

devotion are stressed, Song identifies an important point of convergence between the *agape*-love in the Bible and the Asian compassionate love for suffering humanity. In this love, says Song, God meets human beings, and in this divine-human encounter in love, people of different cultural backgrounds and religious traditions find their way to the heart of God and each other.[149] God is the source of love found in all religions and cultures which are concerned with human suffering. The whole creation is the arena of God's love, even for those who do not acknowledge God.[150]

In this light, the Buddhist concept of a Bodhisattva takes on an important meaning. Central to Mahayana Buddhism, a *Bodhisattva* is a person who follows the footsteps of Buddha and refuses to enter into Buddha-hood for the sake of suffering humanity. Although Bodhisattvas have attained the highest form of enlightenment and reached the gate of nirvana, they choose to turn around and "remain in the realm of incarnation to save all conscious beings." It is said in the Buddhist scriptures that Bodhisattvas, "with a great loving heart... look upon the sufferings of all beings... the Bodhisattvas filled with pity and love desire to suffer themselves for the sake of those miserable beings."[151] For Hyun-Kyung Chung, A Korean feminist theologian, the image of the Holy Spirit relates to the image of *Kwan In*:

> *Kwan In* is venerated as goddess of compassion and wisdom by East Asian Women's popular religiosity. She is a *Bodhisattva*, enlightened being. She can

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[149] TET, p. 75.

[150] Song, *Asians and Blacks* (Bangkok, 1973), pp. 7, 11; see also TCG, p. 108.

[151] Daisetz Suzuki, *Outline of Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Schocken, 1963), p. 293.

> go into nirvana any time she wants to, but refuses to go into nirvana by herself. Her compassionate wisdom heals all forms of life and empowers them to swim to the shore of nirvana. She waits and waits until the whole universe, people, trees, birds, mountains, air, water, become enlightened. They can then go to nirvana together where they can live correctively in eternal wisdom and compassion.[152]

Song believes that "the great loving heart" possessed by a Bodhisattva must be a heart that is very close to the heart of God and to the heart of fellow humans.[153] Song introduced a Buddhist parable of the mustard seed that describes human suffering and the Buddha's compassion in a most exquisite, touching, and moving way.[154] In the parable, "a woman dove-eyed, young, with tearful face," comes to the master with her dead son in her arms, beseeching him to bring her son back to life. The Buddha says to her: "I would pour my blood, if I could stay thy tears and win the secret of that curse which makes sweet love our anguish..."[155] Song says, "here in the voice of the grieving master [Buddha] one hears the voice of God in anguish."[156] Song considers that the death of a self-immolated monk in Vietnam, is an expression of genuine religious faith and of social and political concern, and believes that the death of these monks must have a redemptive significance. He does not equate such deaths with the death of Christ on the cross. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, Song stresses that the Buddha, for example, is not

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[152] Hyun-Kyung Chung, "Welcome the Spirit; Hear Her Cries," in *Christianity and Crisis*, p. 221.

[153] TCG, p. 189.

[154] See *The Wisdom of Buddhism*, ed. Christmas Humphreys (London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1979), pp. 83-85; quoted from Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, p. 137.

[155] Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, p. 138.

[156] Song, TWA, p. 138.

Jesus Christ. The redemptive nature of Christ's death cannot be reproduced by the death of another person.[157] Yet, Song affirms God's continuing presence outside Christianity, and he perceives that the redemptive quality in moments and events in other cultures and histories are related to the compassionate work of Jesus Christ.[158]

3.3. Jesus as the Crucified People

What is the redemptive significance of Jesus' suffering and death? Song describes the death of Jesus as the result of a historical conflict between two different understandings of God, that is, the God of love and compassion versus the God of retribution.[159] According to Song, Jesus' crucifixion was perpetrated in the name of the God of retribution taught by the religious traditions of the day and not the *Abba*-God portrayed in Jesus' life and teaching. Song postulates that Jesus' teaching about God as *Abba* is fundamentally in opposition to the accepted religious beliefs of his day. "No one in Jesus' time dared to address God as *Abba*." By doing so, Jesus affirms that "God is '*Abba*-God' and not Judge-God."[160] "*Abba*" represents a parental bond of love and trust that Jesus sought to accentuate as the heart of God's relationship to human beings, for whom God had remained inaccessible and vindictive. Jesus revealed the intimacy of *Abba*-God. "It is in this *Abba*-God that all our human loves have their origin, especially

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[157] See. TET, pp. 138-139.

[158] Ibid., pp. 132-133.

[159] Ibid., pp. 83-88.

[160] JCP, p. 72.

the love of parents for their children"[161] It is a significant theological question for Song why Jesus did not address God as *Abba* on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mark 15:34). Who is this God to whom Jesus directed his agonizing cry? According to Song, for Jesus "Abba could not have abandoned him [Jesus]."[162] The God Jesus trusted all his life as Abba could not have forsaken him. Song contends, "If God is like the father in his parable, instead of turning away from Jesus on the cross, should not Abba-God be 'running to Jesus, putting arms round him, kissing him?'"[163] For Song, the cross is "the height of human defiance against that Abba-God," and "the cross, in short, is human violence and not divine violence."[164]

> [The cross] was not planned by his Abba-God, but by human beings. It was not instituted in the name of Abba-God, but in the name of the God imprisoned by an organized religion and its power-holders. It was not conspired by Jesus' Abba-God, but by the God invented by the religious authorities. The cross was not carried out by the Abba-God of the crucified Jesus in a clandestine deal with the devil that had "sinful" human beings under its power, but by the political authorities that regarded political expediency far more important than respect for human rights. Nor did the cross reveal the Abba-God not to be Abba-God, consenting to the death of the innocent Jesus in order to "save" human beings from their "sins." The cross, in reality, is the height of human defiance against that Abba-God. It is a violence committed not by that Abba-God but by self-serving humanity.... The cross, in short, is human violence and not divine violence.[165]

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[161] Ibid., p. 73.

[162] Ibid.

[163] JCP, p. 77.

[164] JCP, p. 99.

[165] Ibid.

For Song, "the *Abba*-God of Jesus" was the God of loving not the God of retribution. The God of Jesus did not plan the cross. Song affirms that the God who could regard Jesus' suffering on the cross as a punishment for sins, even if not his sins but sins of the world, would be no better than the God of retribution.

If the cross was not for the sake of saving human beings from their sins, but human defiance against the *Abba*-God of Jesus, then, how is God related to Jesus in his death? In other words, how were God and Jesus engaged with each other on the cross? First of all, Song does not solve this problem with a doctrine of the Trinity. For him:

> The cross is not, as some theologians would have us think, Jesus-God tearing away from God, the Son-God going through the pain of separation from the Father-God. The cross is not such a "theo"- logical thinking. It is not "the Second Person" of the Trinity forsaken by the "the First Person" of the Trinity. Nor is it "the Second Person" of the Trinity left in the lurch by "the Third Person" of the Trinity. Such "trinitarian" language makes little sense of the cross on which Jesus died.[166]

Song rejects the views of Kazo Kitamori and Jürgen Moltmann on this question, which are constructed out of the doctrine of the Trinity. Song calls their views "The internalization of salvation within God's own self."[167] For Song, "Jesus was crucified as a human person, not as a divine being. The cross is an existential struggle between a human person and God."[168] Jesus was "a thoroughly, completely, and supremely human

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[166] JCP, p. 98.

[167] TET, 1991, P. 27. I will explore later in this thesis how Song is different from Moltmann in their interpretations of the cross.

[168] JCP, p. 63.

person."[169] Song says, "Jesus is not just like us but the same as us, he does not only share humanity with us but is part of that humanity."[170] Song argues:

> The Christian church and its teachers have taught as if the cross has to be absolutely unique to be the cross, as if the agony of Jesus has to be surrealistic to be of redemptive significance, and as if the horror of extinction does not belong to Jesus. There is a strong tendency in traditional theology to dwell solely on the "salvific" effect of the cross... Does the "Word" stop being the "flesh" it has become at that final stage of Jesus's life? Is the "incarnation"... no longer applicable to Jesus on the cross?

In reply to the question "how were God and Jesus engaged with each other on the cross," Song answers, "Jesus on the cross is where God is." He continues, "Jesus in the depths of suffering – this is where God is to be found."[171] Then why was Jesus' *Abba*-God silent? Why didn't his *Abba*-God[172] respond at the cross of Jesus? Song believes "this is eternal mystery."[173] He says:

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[169] JCP, p. 84.

[170] JCP, p. 88.

[171] JCP, p. 122.

[172] According to Joachim Jeremias, *Abba* (as *joba* is still used today in Arabic) was the word used by a young child to its father; it was an everyday family word, which no one had ventured to use in addressing God. Jesus did. He spoke to his heavenly father in as childlike, trustful and intimate a way as a little child to its father. (See Joachim Jeremias, *The Parable of Jesus* trans. By S. H. Hooke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons). To Jesus, God is *Abba* from whom he can ask for daily bread and forgiveness of sins (Luke 11:2-4; Matt. 6:9-13), like a child from its parents. Jesus taught his people to pray to their heavenly father (Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13), not to almighty God. Even in the garden of Gethsemane before he was arrested, Jesus himself prayed, "*Abba*, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mt. 14:36 NIV). Song interprets this prayer of Jesus:

> In that critical hour of his life Jesus was in deep communion with God, not with an "almighty" God, but with a "trusted Abba." When a momentous happening was about to take place, he was in earnest consultation not with an "omniscient" God, but with a loving father. As he was besieged with the conspiracy of the

> That silence of God is like a womb enveloping Jesus on the cross, empowering him during the last moments of his life and nourishing him for the resurrection of a new life from the tomb.[174]

In order for God to bear a new life, as in a womb, God should be familiar with its pain, risk, and struggle. For "God's own self is that womb."[175] In short, according to Song, the cross of Jesus is the cross of God.

Song also finds such a God in "Second Isaiah," and then calls it "the humble theology of a suffering God," saying:

> He has made a transposition from the lofty Deuteronomic doctrine of God to the humble theology of a suffering God. Theology of glory yielded to theology of suffering. Theology of a militant God is replaced by a theology of a compassionate God.[176]

This is typical of Song's transpositional theology which has moved from the victorious and glorious god to the powerless and suffering God. Song believes that the Messiah who saves this world is not the victorious God, but the suffering God who links together the cross of Jesus and the cross of the people's suffering. Here is a paradox: true power derives from the powerlessness of the cross. It is the power to become one with those

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> religious authorities to do him in, he ardently sought the counsel of God, not God of the law-giver but God of the caring parent. (JCP, p. 73)

In a word, for Song, God is not the all-powerful God whom the people fear, but the *Abba*-God, who gives strength, protection, and deliverance, and to whom a human child can cling.

[173] JCP, P. 114.

[174] JCP, P. 119.

[175] Ibid.

[176] COG, p. 49.

who suffer. Song sees this weakness of the cross becoming a redemptive power. For Song, Jesus' God is the suffering God. God suffers "with" humankind.

> Here vicariousness is replaced by identification. The crucified God is the God who identifies all the way with us in our suffering and death. He suffers with us and dies with us.[177]

Song also explicates the other aspect of Jesus' death as God's identification with the suffering people. Here Jesus appears as the "pain-love" of God.[178]

> The cross is the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth and it is the suffering of humanity. The cross means human beings rejecting human beings. It is human beings abandoning human beings... The cross is the plot of an organized religion blinded by its own power and orthodoxy and unable to tolerate those deeply and sincerely religious persons eager to restore faith in the God of love and mercy. And the cross discloses the complicity of sociopolitical powers ready to defend their self-interest at any cost, even at the expense of the law, even at the cost of the lives of those God-inspired persons faithful to the truth and devoted to love for others... The cross, in short, is human violence and not divine violence.[179]

According to Song, Jesus Christ is God's historical incarnation: "The incarnation, the word become flesh, is no other than the humanization of God."[180] For Song, the word become flesh means that "Jesus is one and the same as us human beings in every way from birth to death."[181] The credibility of Jesus' solidarity with people and the integrity of his identification with humanity are derived from the fact that Jesus is not *like* human beings but *the same* as them. God identified himself with human suffering through the

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[177] TET, 1991, p. 184.

[178] TET, pp. 83-88.

[179] JCP, pp. 98-99.

[180] CMR, p. 212.

[181] JCP. P. 88.

cross of Christ, but in spite of God's suffering and death, human beings still live in a world in which there seems to be no end to suffering and death. Song states, "The God who is crucified on the cross is not so much the God who vicariously suffers and dies for the world, as the God who suffers and dies with the world."[182]

God, according to Song, does not suffer for us; he suffers with us.[183] The cross as an expression of God's suffering and death becomes the model for other kinds of suffering experienced by human beings. Jesus is one with people and is able to identify himself with humanity, because he knows their pain. "God is not the explanation of human being. He is human being. He does not suffer for us; he suffers with us. He does not die for us; he dies with us. We do not suffer alone and die alone. The God of our faith is the God who suffers our suffering and the God who dies our death."[184]

For Song, the question is not who Jesus is, but where he can be found today, and with whom Jesus is identified. With these questions in mind, one can readily understand this seemingly disconcerting statement:

> Jesus, in short, is the crucified people! Jesus means the crucified people. To know Jesus is to know crucified people... By people I mean those women, men, and children whose company Jesus enjoyed, with whom Jesus liked to eat and drink, to whom Jesus declared, God's reign belongs. By people I mean those men, women, and children, in Jesus' day, today, and in the days to come, economically exploited, politically oppressed, culturally and religiously alienated, sexually, racially, or class-wise discriminated against.[185]

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[182] JCP, p. 166.

[183] Ibid.

[184] TET, pp. 163-166.

[185] JCP, pp. 215-216.

Song defines Jesus as the crucified people. What does this mean? To say "Jesus" is to say "suffering people," and "to know Jesus is to know crucified people."[186] In short, Jesus is found in suffering peoples. "Jesus is people and people are him."[187] Jesus is "on their side and in solidarity with them."[188] In interpreting "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, shed for many [*huper pollon*]" (Mk. 14:24), Song says, "For" [huper] means "'in behalf of,' ... 'to be on someone's side.' ... it implies being in the company of, making common cause with, or in solidarity with someone."[189]

According to Jung-Young Lee, in East Asian language there is no distinction between one and many, or singularity and plurality.[190] Lee says, "In East Asia, "I" is interchangeable with "we." Especially in Korea, my book is "our book," my house, "our house," my friend, "our friend," or my children, "our children." "I" and "we" are interchangeable, for they are inclusive. In other words, I is in we and we are in I."[191] Byung-Mu Ahn, a well-known Minjung theologian, articulates the notion of *uri*, which is more than the idea of "we." He says, " 'I' and 'you' are not important in our thinking.

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[186] JCP, p. 216.

[187] JCP, p. 173.

[188] Ibid.

[189] JCP, pp. 214-5.

[190] Jung Young Lee, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 228.

[191] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

'Uri' (we) is more important."[192] Another Korean minjung theologian, Yong-bock Kim, points out that Western thinking emphasizes differences, rather than communal identity. This makes it difficult to conduct a discussion on a positive tone. Frequently, the analytical style of thinking damages the necessary harmony (solidarity). Ahn says, "this applies, for example, to political issues such as peace or the world economic order. Common interests are not sought; moreover, you always remain "I." In this manner, Western science proves to be an obstacle to moving in solidarity."[193]

When we reflect upon the Christian concept of God from an Asian perspective, the concept of Jesus Christ as the people of God is acceptable. This new interpretation from an Asian way of thinking may provide a new understanding of divine identity, without losing the mystery of the historical Jesus.

3.4. Jesus and the Reign of God

Jesus as Incarnation of the compassionate God has to be seen in relation to the Reign of God, which was Jesus' central passion and message. The God who reigns is none other than the gentle and suffering God of the cross. The reign of this God is not forceful, coercive or authoritarian. Having established the way in which Jesus identifies

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[192] See Byung-Mu Ahn, *Minjung Shinhak Yiyaki* [The Story of Minjung Theology], (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1988), p. 70.

[193] Jung Young Lee, *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, p. 198. Ahn says, "the subject prepares the object, and thus difference is demonstrated. For us [Koreans], value judgments are always implied. "Objective truth," speculative truth, is something unfamiliar to us. The contents of knowledge are bound to the situation. Science tends toward praxis and wants to substantiate action, rather than develop a philosophy of life" (Ibid.).

with the 'crucified' people, Song goes on to reflect on his message and his action in the world today. For Song the central message in Jesus' preaching is precisely the reign of God. The reign of God is the vision that inspired Jesus' words and actions:

> This vision of God's reign is the *hermeneutical* principle of the life and ministry of Jesus. It is the *ethical* standard of his lifeview and worldview. It is the *theological* foundation of his relation to God and to his fellow human beings. And it is the *eschatological* vantage-point from which he relates the present time and the end of time. In short, the vision of God's reign is like the magnifying lens that gives us an enlarged picture of life and the world as Jesus sees them and of life and the world as we must also see them.[194]

Song prefers the expression "reign of God" to "kingdom of God."[195] According to Song, the latter conveys the notions of national territory, feudal system, and monarchical structure, in a word, a culture of authoritarianism. And linked with God's salvation as most Christians see it, it carries a false notion of a heavenly realm of inestimable joy and happiness reserved solely for them. Though the expression 'the reign of God' is not totally adequate, it at least does not represent the notion of a boundary, be it political or religious. Implied in it is the faith that it is God who exercises the rule in a very special way, uplifting the dispossessed and empowering the oppressed.[196]

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[194] Choan-Seng Song, *Jesus and the Reign of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 2.

[195] "The kingdom of God" literally translated into Greek *he basileia tou theou*, and "the kingdom of heaven (of the heavens)" translated as *he basileia ton ouranon*. It has been argued that since the kingdom of God/heaven is not primarily territorial, political, and national, *he basileia* should be translated as "rule," "reign" or "sovereignity" rather than "kingdom." On the other hand, because God's rule has political, economic and social implications, the term "kingdom" is to be preferred. For a biblical exegesis of the symbol of the kingdom of God, see Dennis C. Duling, "Kingdom of heaven," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, ed. David Noel Freefman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 50-70.

"The theology of the kingdom of God" which is held by religious authorities should, Song insists, be distinguished from Jesus' theology of God's reign by which Jesus articulated his own experience of *basileia tou theou, basileia* not in terms of kingdom, but in terms of "reign." The phrase "the kingdom of God" is taken literally by the religious authorities and taught as the dominion that "belongs to God," the empire ruled "by God." This understanding of God's kingdom has been the very core of the Christian worldview. However, this kind of terminology perpetuates at least two faults.

The first is that it pushes "Christians to identify the Christian church with the power and glory of a secular state."[197] This kind of interpretation leads to a militant faith and theology, and it has translated into an aggressive theology of mission practiced in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America.[198] The second problem is that such ideas

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[196] Song, JRG, p. 39. Here Song's thought is congruent with most liberation theology concerning the Reign of God. For example, Jon Sobrino has argued at length and convincingly that whereas for Latin American theology the liberation of the poor is the "primacy of reality," the kingdom of God rather than the resurrection of Jesus is its eschaton. In Sobrino's view, there are several convergences between liberation theology and the theme of the kingdom of God. Liberation theology presupposes a "pre-theological" option for the poor who are the addressees of the reign of God. By choosing the kingdom of God as its *eschaton*, liberation theology avoids the danger of identifying the kingdom with the church and helps retrieve the importance of the historical Jesus for today. See Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 122-125. See also his essay "Central Position of the Reign of God in Liberation Theology," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, eds. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), pp. 350-388. According to Sobrino, the reason why liberation theology prefers the symbol of the reign of God rather than the resurrection of Jesus as the central category around which to organize the whole content of theology is its ability to hold together transcendence and history and to denounce the presence of the anti-reign.

[197] JRG, p. 9.

[198] See Song, *The Believing Heart: An Invitation to Story Theology*, pp. 41-42.

create the illusions often embraced in a "Jesus-cult" whereby "kingdom" only refers to the afterlife. This kind of a "cult of Jesus" fosters one's apathy regarding social and political responsibilities and reinforces negative attitudes toward being involved in the world, thereby confining salvation to the church (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*).[199]

Instead, the reign of the compassionate God means freedom, justice and love.[200] As Song interprets Jesus' proclamation of the reign of God, he also emphasizes the link between Jesus' preaching and people. Jesus directly links the reign of God with the people: "the reign of God is yours" (Luke 6:20). "The reign of God, Jesus could have said, is made for people, and not people for the reign of God."[201] Song grounds his theology of the reign of God in the messages of the Hebrew prophets and the preaching of Jesus, especially in his parables. Using the two biblical images of a great banquet (Luke 14:16-24) and of the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:22-24), Song depicts Jesus' vision of the reign of God as the realm of truth and abundant life open to all people, "particularly those men, women, and children, oppressed, exploited, downtrodden, marginalized, in body and in spirit, those human persons treated inhumanly, and to whom injustice is done."[202] Like the banquet to which all are invited, the reign of God is characterized by inclusiveness and equality. "The way of Jesus derived from the way of God's reign tells us many things. First and foremost, it tells us

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[199] JRG, pp. 16-17.

[200] Ibid., pp. 11-13.

[201] Song, *The Believing Heart*, p. 40.

[202] JRG, p. 21.

who God is and how God carries out God's saving activity in the world. The God illuminated by Jesus' way with people is the God who does not discriminate against them on account of creed, color, or sex. God is a classless God, too."[203] This reign of God, Song reminds us, is not simply a future reality, but also a present dynamic at work inside history through men, women, and children, the power of redemption that mends, heals, and re-creates the entire creation for the day of a new heaven and a new earth. And like the new heaven and new earth, the reign of God always and necessarily contains socio-political and economic dimensions.[204] This vision of the reign of God as comprehensive inclusion and sociopolitical and economic liberation must, Song insists, be rooted in the reality of the present world, and must not be pictured as a purely eschatological event occurring at the end of time and in the beyond. In this way the reign of God promotes what Song terms "a culture of empowerment," that is, it enables oppressed and dispossessed people to realize the injustice of their condition (conscientization) and to take up action against it.[205]

Lastly, Song adopts the image of "transfiguration" to describe the change inaugurated in human beings by the reign of God. The goal of the reign of God is the transfiguration of life understood as liberation and symbolized by the resurrection: "The

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[203] Ibid., p. 8.

[204] The redemption brought about by the reign of God is "not the redemption of individual souls but the redemption that brings the dead back to life, rights the wrongs committed by those in power, and eradicates injustices inflicted on the powerless by demonic systems and establishments" (Song, JRG, p. 57).

[205] JRG, p. 136.

resurrection is essentially the proclamation that the reign of God is here, that it is in the midst of us in the world. The resurrection life is life in the reign of God. To live that life is to live life in all fullness in spite of the fact that it has to be lived in hardship, pain, and suffering."[206] Despite his repeated and emphatic insistence on the sociopolitical and economic dimensions of the reign of God, Song indicates that God's reign also brings forgiveness of sin and deliverance from demonic powers and that, above all, it reaches its fulfillment only in the eschatological resurrection.[207] However, Song's interpretation of resurrection is not unrelated to what we are doing now for the reign of God. Service of this compassionate, suffering God may lead to suffering, but also to life and transformation:

> The resurrection is not a denial of the past. It is a sacrament of tears shed, pain sustained, and death remembered. This sacrament affirms that the tears shed are not in vain, that the pain sustained is the birthpang of hope, and that death is remembered not to be feared but to be transformed into life.... To believe in life resurrected from the ruins of human conflict comes from God who is the power of transformation. And to work toward change in the human condition is a calling in response to the vision of God's reign.[208]

The resurrection faith of the church, therefore, propels it into the world, into human suffering, and into human history: "the church, together with the world as a whole,

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[206] Ibid., p. 287.

[207] Interestingly, Song affirms the "profound emptiness of the tomb" in *Compassionate God* (pp. 99-102), but later claims that "the empty tomb plays no significant role in the whole event of the resurrection" (Song, TET, p. 207). Song is influenced in this later position by Barth's recognition that the empty tomb is only a sign, not proof. "Christians do not believe in the empty tomb, but in the living Christ" (Karl Barth, *Church and Dogmatics*, III/1, *The Doctrine of Creation*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969, p. 453), quoted in Song, TET, p. 292 n. 15.

[208] JRG, p. 286.

continues to bear the pain and agony of the cross in the midst of the resurrection. The cross is the meaning of the resurrection. This is God's politics of resurrection."[209]

In sum, Song's political theology is not a revolutionary or self-serving politics, but the politics of the cross and self-sacrificing. He concludes that "A sword is no option for the reign of God. The politics of God is not a politics of the sword but the politics of the cross and suffering."[210] Song prefers people politics. The power of people politics comes from the peoples' tears. For the tears move God. Thus, people politics becomes God's politics. The sources and methods of Song's political theology come from people's political stories.[211] His political theology can be called people's political theology or theology of story-telling. Through the folktale " *The Tears of Lady Meng*," Song sees that people's tears are mightier than the rulers' naked power. In short, Song's people politics is the politics of the suffering God. One can then understand the whole event of Jesus Christ as God's victory over the powers of sin, death, and evil through the power of suffering love.[212]

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[209] Song, TET, p. 199.

[210] TET, 1991, p. 247.

[211] Rene Padilla, an evangelical theologian of Latin America, compares Song with the liberation theologian, Jon Sobrino, and says: "In contrast with Sobrino, Choan-Seng Song does not assume that in order to be historically relevant christology must be built from below. Theology for him takes as its starting point neither the Jesus of history alone nor the Christ of faith alone but the incarnate Son of God." (Rene Padilla, Christology and Mission in the Two Thirds World," in *Sharing Jesus in the two Thirds World*, eds. V. Samuel and C. Sugden [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], p. 24). Padilla evaluates Song's christology as follows: "I find him much more orthodox than many other people." (Ibid., p. 32).

[212] Cf. Song, JPS, p. 62; Lou Ann Trost, "On Suffering, Violence, and Power," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 21 (1994), pp. 38-8.

3.5. Jesus in the Power of the Spirit

We must ask how, according to Song, the suffering God is nevertheless a God of power. The power of God was disclosed in Jesus, especially in his cross, and the power of the Spirit, which is not confined to Christianity, but is universally at work.

The key to Song's interpretation of Jesus' ministry lies in the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God in Jesus led him to a ministry that was "fundamentally different from the religious teachers of his day."[213] However, "Christian theology has not paid sufficient attention to the role the Spirit played in empowering Jesus to cross the frontier of traditional religion."[214] Song attempts to deal with the issue by suggesting in *Jesus in the Power of the Spirit* how to proclaim Jesus as God's living truth and grace to our world of diverse cultures, religions, and sociopolitical systems. Song's definition of the truth is crucial for this discussion. First, truth is related to power. In the case of Jesus, the Spirit of truth is the power of love, justice, and freedom. Second, truth is relational. It is related to what God's reign is and what it stands for. It is "not defined by exclusions but by relation."[215] Furthermore, truth is contextual, historical and transcultural. Consequently, truth is open to everyone: "open to the poor and the disinherited..., to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews..., to those outside the Christian church as well as those inside it."[216] Consequently, the truth must

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[213] JPS, p. 48.

[214] Ibid., p. 70.

[215] Ibid., p. 47.

[216] Ibid., p. 64.

necessarily be relevant to human situations, human communities, human sufferings. If truth remains abstract, the reign of God remains relegated to an empty "kingdom of God" that promises spiritual privilege to some yet does not respond to the needs of the despised today.[217]

Essential to Song's theology of the reign of God are both "people politics" and The "politics of the cross."[218] Song reminds us that "justice is one of the most fundamental principles of God's politics" and that "Christians as such do not hold political power.... But the power of God's love given them through Jesus Christ becomes their power to judge abuses of power by those impositions of political authority. Herein is the essence of the political mission of the church, namely, the transition of power."[219] God's politics, which gives the people the power to challenge, criticize, and judge the abuses of those in power, naturally leads to what Song calls the "politics of the cross."[220] For Song, "what transpired in the final struggle of Jesus with power politics was the power and wisdom of the cross.... Whatever the reasons for not pursuing revolution, the fact is that Jesus opted for the politics of the cross."[221] The politics of the cross,

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[217] Ibid., p. 52.

[218] It is helpful to note Song's definition of politics: "what is politics for? The answer must be the well-being of the people. Politics is the art of ordering society in such a way that the well-being of the people is protected, respected, and enhanced" (Song, TET, p. 200).

[219] Song, TET, p. 255.

[220] Song, TO, p. 176.

[221] See TO, p. 178.

however, does not mean weakness and ineffectiveness. Song never rejects people politics having a revolutionary character and does not replace people politics with the politics of the cross.[222] Indeed, "the powerless cross proves so powerful that throughout the centuries it has empowered countless persons to struggle for justice and freedom.... The politics of the cross has taken form in resistance, in revolt, in revolution. But above all, it has inspired a great many people to believe in self-sacrifice as the most powerful weapon against self-serving political power. It has encouraged them to use nonviolence, not just for tactical reasons, but out of love, to carry the cause of the people to the court of rulers."[223] The key connection between power and the reign of God lies in the connection between justice and healing. The restoration of wholeness bound up in both justice and healing is fundamental to the ministry of Jesus. It is, therefore, also inherently the work of God's reign. "Healing in the faith and theology of Jesus is the power of God's love and compassion working in human community.... By pronouncing healing on the sick people, Jesus is pronouncing them to be God's reign, just as he pronounced the poor, the disinherited, the oppressed to be the reign of God."[224]

Song recognizes that claiming Jesus' proclamation as the truth that is open to the world rather than closed in exclusivity could be a threat to the established religious authorities, especially to their theology of salvation. By beginning a theology from the resurrection, according to Song, and not from Jesus' ministry, salvation becomes "highly

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[222] Cf. TET, 1991, p. 260.

[223] Ibid., p. 180.

[224] JRG, p. 269.

abstract."[225] By understanding salvation totally as "eternal life" after death, the struggle for life in the present is abandoned. Salvation, according to the example of Jesus' life and ministry, is a promise for this present life as well."[226] With this relational, contextual, historical, and transcultural meaning of the truth, and the definition of salvation put forth, Song can cross the boundaries of all cultures, which include art, customs, morals, and beliefs.[227] In terms of the relationship of Christianity and other religions, Song insists:

> Surely, Jesus in the power of the Spirit would not go along with the ways in which we Christians dismiss other religions as having nothing to do with the saving activity of God in creation. What he did was to bring the love of God back into the human community and test what we say and do in every sphere of life, especially in the faith we profess and in the religion to which we belong, whether

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[225] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

[226] Ibid., p. 62. In an earlier writing, Song parallels more closely the present and future salvation in relationship to one another:

> The "outer" space of salvation is transformed into the "inner" space of salvation. But that inner space of salvation does not remain inert. It is transformed back again to the "outer" space of salvation. This is what God's reign is. Salvation in the inner spiritual sense does not exist apart from salvation in the outer physical sense. And salvation in the outer physical meaning does not exist in separation from the inner spiritual meaning. The "inner" has to become the "outer," and the "outer" has to become the "inner." This is what the reign of God is as the space of salvation. This is the quality of salvation that persons of deep faith manifest in the world of suffering, pain, and conflict (Song, TWA, p. 203).

Note that Song's definition of conversion fits with this understanding of salvation:

> The world needs conversion to the God of life, justice, and freedom, that is, to the reign of God. This is the conversion preached by the prophets in ancient Israel, by John the Baptist, and by Jesus himself... It is a vision of God's in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. It is a vision of the empowering grace of God at work in human community. And it is a vision of life in God (Song, JRG, p. 28-29).

[227] For Song's explanation of the grammar, syntax, and semantics of culture, see JPS, p. 142-160.

> the love of God we confess is translated into the love of neighbor. It is, in the final analysis, this love of God translated into the love of neighbor that for Jesus would constitute the truth of religions, including Christianity. Did he not say to the lawyer in Luke's story: "Go and do as he [the Samaritan] did" (Luke 10:37)?[228]

Song develops his own version of liberation theology, and he adopts the reign of God as his foundational interpretative category. He begins with the concrete socio-political and economic situation of the people in which God's "pain-love" is manifested and actively working for their liberation, and he articulates a *basileia* theology that is both profoundly biblical and distinctively Asian. Song grounds his theology of the reign of God in the message of the Hebrew prophets, with their message of God's "pathos" and the preaching of Jesus, especially the parables of Jesus. His christology is a narrative christology rooted deeply in the New Testament. He suggests that the biblical accounts of the suffering people paint a portrait of Jesus as the prophet of the reign of God, the suffering God who identified with the crucified people of all times and places. To speak of the reign of God in Asia, Song wants to explore whether or not, and if so, how the biblical symbol of the reign of God can be meaningful to Asians. He attempts to do this by constant dialogue with the biblical stories in conjunction with the stories of Asian people and their folktales. And since the stories of most Asian people are those of poor, suffering, and powerless people, an authentic Asian theology must of necessity be a liberation theology. Song believes that the most important skill for Asian theologians is the ability to listen to the whispers, groaning, and shouts from the depths of Asian misery. This ability to recognize and understand their pain, to use one's "third eye," is to

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[228] JPS, p. 257.

tap into the power of perception and insight that will enable a theologian to grasp the meaning beneath the surface of things and phenomena.

For Song, theology is the "biography of God," and Jesus' message of God's reign is evident in the stories of strangers and outcasts.[229] He finds the "open truth" of Jesus Christ at large in the world. He detects the Spirit of truth alive and well not only among Christians, but also in non - Christians' stories and insights. Song wants to confirm that salvation, conversion, and resurrection are not limited to "eternal life" but they also involve one's participation in the struggle to find justice for the downtrodden in the present life.

Song has made a significant contribution to the formation of a distinctively Asian theology and in particular to the theology of the reign of God. His theology of the reign of God not only outlines how to communicate to Asians the truth that the reign of God includes sociopolitical and economic dimensions, but also illuminates the importance for Christians to involve themselves actively in social justice and liberation to overcome oppressive structures. Furthermore, his inclusive reflection of the relationship between

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[229] JCP, p. 102. Song says: "Christian theology is a biography of God from the perspective of the Christian faith." A Korean minjung theologian, Yong Bock Kim prefers to use the term "minjung social biography" to describe minjung's reality, struggles, suffering, longings, and hopes. Kim says:

> Social biographies of the Minjung, such as the stories of workers, of poor women farmers, or of the urban poor are being widely used to reveal the present social reality. Theological reflections on these stories have been very useful for the Christian witness in Korea. In recent years, life stories of the poor have been written by the poor themselves, published and given wide circulation. Poetry and novels deal with the people's experiences – their historical realities in the Korean society. Any theological reflection in Korea is necessarily and inevitably set in the context of the Korean people, and therefore, the stories of the people become very important for Korean theologians. (Yong Bock Kim, "Minjung Social Biography and theology," *Ching Feng* 28 [December, 1985], p. 221)

Christianity and other religions can help to recognize the power of God working in the world of diverse cultures and religions. It can also help Asian religions retrieve the potential for social transformation of some of their teachings.

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In sum, Song's views of God, Jesus Christ, and salvation are flexibly related each to the other. He does not deal with them in a rigid dogmatic way. We note that, though Song does not deny the Trinity, he does not use trinitarian terms to explain his view of God and the cross. Emphasizing the compassionate nature of God (suffering-love) in his view of *Abba*-God, he asserts that the cross is human and not divine violence, and hence on the cross the *Abba*-God suffered with Jesus and with suffering people. Song does not deal with the doctrine of salvation in a traditional way. Nevertheless, he illuminates for us "what salvation means in practical ways." Stressing God's grace, rather than the believer's faith, Song sees the possibility of salvation for all humans under God's redemptive love and power. He discovers God's heartache, God's suffering-love, through the Asian history of suffering and formulates a theology of the compassionate God which speaks authentically to what experience. Though God is the suffering one, God as Spirit is nevertheless powerful. God establishes the reign through the cross, and the courageous love and suffering of those who, like Jesus, are filled with the Spirit.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARING MOLTMANN AND SONG ON THE SUFFERING GOD

This chapter will compare the concept of the suffering God in the work of Moltmann and Song in terms of the commonalities and divergences in their approaches. My focus is to assess how these theologians approach and interpret the question of the cross and the suffering God in terms of both the active or passive participation of God the Father in the suffering of Christ, and God's unity with human suffering. This chapter not only asks: "What is the meaning of the cross for Moltmann and Song?" but also: "What does the suffering God have to do with human suffering in terms of the liberation of humanity in general and, in particular, for the minjung?"

1. Contributions

It is true that Moltmann's *The Crucified of God* clarified the theological basis of political theology and liberation theology, and Song's *The Compassionate God* provides a splendid example of doing Christian theology in open dialogue with diverse cultures and religions. Moreover, these writings may be two of the most provocative understandings of the suffering God to be written in our time.

The most provocative contribution of Moltmann's theology of the cross and of God's suffering is that it is oriented to praxis and characterized by its openness to dialogue. Such an openness is inherent in the very structure of his theology, with its socio-political implications and eschatological perspective. His most important contribution has been his ability to face suffering with utmost theological seriousness.

His radical interpretations of the suffering Christ and its implications for the suffering of the triune God are a unique contribution. His recovery of the fullness of biblical eschatology has led him to what he has coined a "christology in the eschatological history of God."[1]

The most important contribution of Song's theology of the compassionate God is that his theology is concretized by the experience of suffering and contextualized by its inclusiveness of diverse cultures and religions. His provocative interpretation of the relationship between the suffering God and the suffering people offers interesting christological insights. His proposal of a "people hermeneutic" provides a concrete description of God's seriousness in dealing with human suffering. His inclusive exploration of doing theology with non-Christian resources shows how global theological perspectives can help to formulate Christian theology.

2. Commonalities

With regard to the idea of the suffering God, both Moltmann and Song criticize the old metaphysical axiom of impassibility in the doctrine of God, which said that the Godhead is incapable of suffering; both attempt to explore the notion of the suffering God and its implications for Christian life and mission.

They both begin from the passion of God and place God's suffering on the cross as their theological locus for understanding God's relationship with suffering. They say

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[1] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (San Franciso: Harper Press, 1989) p. 70. Eschatological history is "history under the promise of life." Moltmann's answer to the problem of suffering is "christology on the road" which is also "a christology beneath the cross" (WJC, p.55).

that God suffers with us, and suffers in Jesus Christ. Therefore, God assumes the cross in order to be in solidarity with those who suffer -- not to sublimate and eternalize the cross, but as a sign of blessing, a sign of suffering love. Song and Moltmann see that love is the motive for God's assumption of the cross. For Moltmann and Song, as with liberation theologians, the cross is the central symbol of God's solidarity with the poor and oppressed and a revelation of God's love. In short, liberation is another word for salvation. They also share similar ideas with liberation theologians in their discussion of suffering, and evil; they see suffering as not only an individual but a social phenomenon with roots in distorted social values and structural sinfulness. They echo process, liberation, and feminist theologians in asking not only how God acts in history to alleviate anguish and distress but also how humans work with God to overcome the sin and evil that cause suffering. Song and Moltmann both speak in this way to bring out the scandal of the cross. Their ideas of the theological task are similar in their emphasis on the shared responsibility of God and humans for changing situations of personal and systemic evil, i.e., theology should change the world. According to Song and Moltmann, God's compassion and loving solidarity with those who suffer is paramount. God's power is reinterpreted to mean "power-with" rather than "power-over."

Similarly, as Moltmann adopted the concept of God's *pathos* as the passionate nature of God in his theological formulation, Song accepted the concept of *han* into his understanding of the relationship between the suffering God and suffering humanity. Just as Moltmann's *The Crucified God* is a contemporary restatement of Luther's "theology of the cross," Song's *The Compassionate God* is a restatement of Kitamori's "theology of

the pain of God." Whereas Moltmann favours "crucified God" as a way of conceiving God's relation to the world, Song favors God's compassion (God's heartache), but these are similar and complementary expressions. Their theological works are thoroughly contemporary with a scholarly historical perspective and a deep concern for contemporary social and cultural issues. They both focus on the relationship between the suffering God and the suffering world and both speak of the suffering of God in all creation. Both draw upon non-Christian sources: Moltmann's theology of creation is influenced by the Jewish rabbinic and kabbalistic doctrine of shekinah, while Song extends his focus in terms of Asian non-Christian culture and religion.

In this "suffering God" perspective of Moltmann and Song, the death of Jesus, the centrality of the cross, and God's identification with human pain and anguish in the person of Jesus, are stressed as God's fundamental response to suffering. While this perspective does not resolve the questions of "why" people suffer, it does provide a sense of divine solidarity with pain and anguish, which can give comfort, meaning, and hope to the sufferer.[2]

3. Divergences

Even though they share some important concerns and theological commitments, they have some quite different ideas and perspectives, particularly in their understanding of the cross and its meaning for humanity.

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[2] Cf. Lucien Richard, *What are They Saying about the Theology of Suffering?*, 1992), pp. 125-126; L. Bregman, "Suffering," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), pp. 1230-2.

Whereas Song's interpretation of the death of Christ is a divine-human event, and emphatically not divine violence, Moltmann sees the cross not only as an event between God and humanity, but primarily as an event within the Trinity between Jesus and his Father, an event from which the Spirit proceeds. For Moltmann, the crucifixion and death of Jesus is the abandonment of the Son by the Father in which the Son suffers the loss of the Father and the Father suffers the loss of the Son. Furthermore, Moltmann distinguishes the suffering of the death of the Son from the "pain of God the Father." In this way the theological debate about the suffering of God is given an explicitly trinitarian form. Explaining how God can suffer death, he prefers to speak of death in God as opposed to the death of God. This is important for his idea of 'social Trinity' wherein God is in an eternal communion of love. In this respect Song differs from him substantially in that Song rejects intra-trinitarian thought.

3.1. Critique of Moltmann on Atonement and Trinity

Moltmann's theology of the cross has been widely criticized regarding Trinity and atonement. The most controversial point in Moltmann's position is his affirmation that the suffering God in some way causes or wills the suffering of his Son. Schilliebeeckx, who maintains God's absolute support for Jesus in life and death, criticizes Moltmann's position as one that eternalizes suffering in God and therefore leads to a false soteriology. He says:

> Nor can one follow Jürgen Moltmann in solving the problem of suffering by 'eternalizing' suffering in God, in the opinion that in the last resort this gives suffering some splendor. According to Moltmann, Jesus not only shows solidarity 'with publicans and sinners,' with the outcast and those who are everywhere excluded; not only has God himself identified him with the outcasts; no, God

> himself has cast him out as a sacrifice for our sins. The difficulty in his conception is that it ascribes to God what has in fact been done to Jesus by the history of human injustice. Hence I think that in soteriology or the doctrine of redemption we are on a false trail, despite the deep and correct insight here that God is the great fellow sufferer, who is concerned for our history.[3]

Sölle has also protested against Moltmann's perception of God as causing suffering directly, especially the suffering of the Son. According to Sölle, "Moltmann attempts to develop a 'theology of the cross' from the perspective of the one who originates and causes suffering."[4] We shall return later to the feminist criticism of atonement.

We should note, however, that Moltmann defends himself in this matter. He points out that these criticisms overlook the unity of the triune God. According to Moltmann, if we look more closely, then we recognize the Father *in* the Son. Note Moltmann's other key point; the Son, Jesus Christ, is not merely a passive victim but willingly offers himself – "willingly walked the way of the cross."[5] He states:

> When the Son suffers, then the Father suffers with him – not in the same way as the Son but in his own way. So we cannot say that God killed his own son or caused him to suffer. On the contrary; God himself suffered this death of his beloved child and shared his grief.[6]

Harold Wells, defending a position similar to that of Moltmann, argues that the doctrine of atonement, which is so potentially dangerous to the human spirit when misunderstood, can be a profound source of reconciliation among the perpetrators of crimes and their

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[3] E. Schilliebeeckx, *Christ, the Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Crossroad, 1980), p.728.

[4] Sölle, *Suffering*, p.27.

[5] CG, p. 243.

[6] Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann, *God – His & Hers* (new York: Crossroad, 1991), p. 75.

victims.[7] Wells also reminds us that the theology of atonement should be understood as the divine solidarity, that is the self-giving *agape* love of God, which does not demand a blood sacrifice but which "bears the cost" of reconciliation.[8] Reconciliation is not cheap. It is painful and costly. God does not demand a price to be paid. Rather God reaches out to us in vulnerable love, and "pays the price" which that love entails.

Christians the world over, even in Korea, will not readily abandon the biblical idea that "Jesus died *for* us," or the Eucharistic words: "my body broken for you, my blood shed for you." That God gave Godself *for* us in Christ is a profound affirmation of God's utter and inexhaustible *agape* love. Moltmann's position may be defended, then, against Song's charge that he teaches a God of 'retribution.' On the other hand, Moltmann can be criticized for giving the impression in some passages that God did indeed will and cause the death of the Son: "abandoned him, cast him out and delivered him up to an accursed death."[9] Moltmann has not seen the destructive potential of misunderstanding God the Father as a "child abuser."

3.2. Critique of Moltmann's Political Theology

Song criticizes Moltmann's understanding of the cross as "the division of God from God to the utmost degree, while the resurrection is the union of God with God in

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[7] A theme explored by Moltmann at length in *The Spirit of Life*.

[8] Harold Wells, "Theology for Reconciliation," in Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, eds. *The Reconciliation of Peoples* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 1-15. See Harold Wells, "Trinitarian Feminism: The Wisdom Christology of Elizabeth Johnson" in *Theology Today*, Oct. 1995, pp. 330-343.

[9] CG, p. 242.

the most intimate fellowship."[10] For Moltmann, says Song, the cross and the resurrection have taken place within God, or between God and God. Song points out that this is a clear example of theology constructed and developed on the internalization of salvation within God himself: salvation takes place inside an introverted God.[11] Moltmann even spoke of the cross as "the theological trial between God and God."[12] Song protests that this objective understanding of the cross and the resurrection deprives God of his intimate and personal involvement in human suffering and pain. "Does this mean," Song asks, "that the cross is a drama of God's own trial and we humans are only its spectators?" The problem we are facing, as posed by Song, is how this drama within God himself (the internalization of salvation within God himself) also becomes our own drama. In other words, how does this "salvation" relate to the concrete situation of the Asian poor and despised?[13] Song concludes that Moltmann's theology of the crucified God, despite its insights and challenges, has no direct answers to the question "how to be a crucified church of the crucified God?"[14] The question becomes: "What can a theology of the cross mean for those who suffer?" Moltmann holds that we first understand the event of the crucifixion by our participation in Christ's death, which provides us the

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[10] Song, quoting Moltmann, TET, p. 61.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Moltmann, CG, p. 152.

[13] Cf. Song, TET, p. 61.

[14] CG, p. 183.

knowledge of the suffering of God. How, then, according to Song, do we participate in Christ's death and suffering? While it is clear that we cannot experience Christ's suffering directly, we can have an indirect experience of Jesus' suffering by taking part in the suffering of the downtrodden. Without knowing the suffering of people in the world, we cannot understand the cross of Jesus Christ, nor the reality of God, nor the Trinity. We will find Christ's crucifixion in the world through the oppressed. If we fail to encounter the crucified God in the hungry, the naked, the oppressed, and the imprisoned, we will never meet God crucified. Thus, according to Song, Moltmann's insistence on the vertical knowledge of the cross needs to be modified in light of the horizontal revelation of God in the history of the suffering world. God's direct revelation through the cross must be understood in terms of our indirect experience of the divine revelation through the crucified of the present world. Moltmann needs to clarify the whole history of God in relation to human suffering. Furthermore, Moltmann's understanding of the cross as the divine *pathos* for sinners needs to be seen from the other side of the cross: the side of the agony of the victims of sinners. For Moltmann,

> what happened on the cross must be understood as an event between God and the son of God. He is acting in himself in this manner of suffering and dying in order to open up in himself life and freedom for sinners.[15]

The cross means not only that God passed judgment on the sin of people against God himself, but also that God passes judgment upon the oppressors. Moltmann's theology of the cross cannot fully escape the accusation of being at times somewhat mystifying and open to misunderstanding. Ultimately only those who perceive the situation of suffering

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[15] Ibid., p. 192.

as it actually is can help.[16] Song also criticizes Moltmann's theology for having no direct answers for questions of suffering in the various parts of the world, because "Moltmann's theology of the crucified God comes out of his own context, namely, the context of the industrially developed and economically prosperous Germany of today."[17]

It is important to note that Song's criticism of Moltmann in his *Third-Eye Theology* is quite early and could not take account of Moltmann's later work. In his later works, especially in *The Spirit of Life*, Moltmann focused on, among other things, victims and perpetrators.[18] In many of his later works after *The Crucified God*, we find a developed political/liberationist/praxis dimension.[19] Nevertheless, Moltmann's political theology can be, and has been criticized for being insufficiently explicit in its analysis of political, social, and psychological structures. We may say that, while Moltmann's political theology is impressive, Song's criticism has some validity.

3.3. Critique of Song's Idea of Jesus

For Song, the fact that Jesus addressed his Father as "God" on the cross indicates that he rejected the God of vengeance and opted for the God of love and compassion. Song discovers that central to Jesus' teaching and experience is his rejection of the God of retribution, the God defended by Job's friends, and his affirmation of God as *Abba*, the

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[16] See Song, TET, p. 183.

[17] Ibid.

[18] See Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: An Universal Affirmation*, chapter VI.

[19] His political theology and ethics is very explicit in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, and *On Human Dignity*.

God of merciful love.[20] As we have seen, Song rejects Moltmann's view that the scandal of the cross consists in some inner-trinitarian act whereby God the Father abandons God the Son because he was covered with the world's sin and curse. He rejects this because he thinks this explanation presupposes that God is a God of vengeance. For Song, as Peter Phan rightly observes, though the death of Jesus was no accident, it was premeditated and predetermined, not by God, but by the twin evils of oppressive religious and political authorities to whom Jesus was a threat.[21] Song interprets the death of Jesus as the result of a historical conflict between Jesus and his opponents precipitated by their understanding of God (the God of love and compassion vs. the God of retribution).

Song also explicates the other aspect of Jesus' death as God's identification with the suffering people. Here Jesus appears as the "pain-love" of God.[22] Song's christology not only portrays Jesus as the reign of God identified with the crucified people, but also addresses God as the one who necessarily asks for the minjung's partnership. The question is not who Jesus is but where Jesus is. In other words, the question is not about the identity of Jesus but about his identification: With whom did Jesus identify himself? For Song, vicariousness is replaced by identification.

However, Song's almost exclusive concern with the identification of Jesus with the "crucified people" rather than on Jesus' own identity, leads him to neglect the question of the "ontological" relationship between Jesus and his Father and the Spirit.

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[20] See Peter Phan, "Jesus the Christ with an Asian Face," in *Theological Studies*, September 1996, Vol. 57, No. 3, pp. 417-21.

[21] Ibid., p. 419.

[22] See Song, TET, pp. 83-8.

question of the "ontological" relationship between Jesus and his Father and the Spirit. Song's interpretation of Jesus as crucified people, in terms of his emphasis on God's co-suffering with the suffering people, gives the sufferers strength to undergo suffering. But if indeed God was on the cross, suffering with us, and if Jesus is the enfleshment (incarnation) of God, then the identity of Jesus as God is essential. The question is: Is the suffering of Jesus God's own suffering? He seems to say yes. But can Song clarify this without reference to the Trinity? Is Song in the last analysis a unitarian theologian, for whom Jesus is just one of many "incarnations" of God? Song's christology is rather ambiguous on these questions. The divine identity of Jesus is still important because the intensity of God's presence in history, along with the sufferers, the poor, the despised and the oppressed, is thereby emphasized. If Song's theology wants to be faithful to the pain-love of God, he is obligated to clarify how it is possible for God, who is seen as a victim, to change the destiny of people who are suffering.

Further, Song needs to extend his understanding of salvation as more than a mere release from historically conditioned suffering. It is more than that. It has to do with something deeper in the hearts of human beings, who need to be reconciled with God and delivered from the power of death. We may ask, then, whether he has too easily given up the New Teatament claim that Jesus died *for* us, and that in Jesus, God gave Godself for us to the uttermost.

Song believes God's compassion is also manifested outside of Christian culture and is actively working for liberation. Surely he is right about this. The question is, just how should we understand these creational-redemptive elements from diverse cultures and religions? Song's inclusive exploration of the meaning of the cross of Jesus as an

expression of God's suffering and death becomes the model for many other crosses experienced by human beings in history. Whether this cross has definitive meaning for the salvation of humanity is not clear.[23]

Also, Nam-Dong Suh criticizes Song's view of the convergence of Buddhism and Christianity, arguing that he did not point out the differences clearly. The relation of suffering to salvation in Christianity, and of suffering to Enlightenment in Buddhism are quite different. According to Suh, Christianity is also distinct from Buddhism in terms of its awareness of the social and political evils of the world and Jesus' response to these evils.[24] In his very commendable openness to other religious traditions, perhaps he is in danger of blurring the differences in a way that neither Buddhists nor Christians would appreciate.

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In his theology, Moltmann presents a compelling vision of a unified world and shows a way to a lasting community of humanity and nature. He has also continued to seek a dialogue between the Churches of the East and West, and has discovered that Orthodox theology has preserved a wisdom which was pushed aside and lost in the West. He has devoted considerable attention to Jewish sources and has discovered that great wisdom is to be found in Jewish theology. Song focuses on how to proclaim Jesus as

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[23] Cf. TET, p. 167.

[24] See Nam-Dong Suh, "Cultural Theology, Political Theology and Minjung Theology," in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 3 - Vol. 6, No. 1, (December 1984 - April 1985): 12-15.

God's living truth and grace, that is, Jesus in the power of the Spirit for our world of diverse cultures, religions, and sociopolitical systems. I suggest that Song's resources are more extended than Moltmann's in terms of inclusiveness. Although Moltmann's theology significantly influenced and strengthened Third World liberation theologies, including Korean minjung theology, his theology does not and could not possibly reflect adequately the experience of people in the Third World, including Asia. This is to be expected since he is a European theologian, who addresses primarily the First World context.[25] It is interesting to note here, however, that Moltmann and Song are both greatly appreciated among Korean Christians. Most of their writings are translated into Korean and have become best sellers. I would say that they have both significantly influenced the formulation of minjung theology and the inculturation theology of Korea.

To sum up, Moltmann's theology of the suffering God is a developed theology of the cross, together with its socio-political implications, which particularly responds to western "protest atheism." Song responds to the vast suffering of poverty and oppression in Asia, with openness and sensitivity to other cultures and religions. The most notable achievement of Song is that he provides a concretized theology which contextualizes Christian faith in relation to people's lived experience. Song's work is a splendid example of an Asian doing theology with Asian cultural and religious resources.

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[25] Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 126.

4. Feminist Critiques about the "Suffering God" Approach of Moltmann and Song

Traditional theodicies have always fallen short in explaining satisfactorily how a good, just and powerful God can allow suffering. Moltmann and Song have not eradicated the mystery and perhaps no one will ever do so. However, their rejection of God's impassibility and their affirmation of God's suffering, (in accordance with the biblical testimonies) present a God of pain and heartache who can be loved and trusted. Moltmann and Song's ideas include more pragmatic approaches to an understanding of suffering.

This shift in emphasis in the present century, of which Moltmann and Song are prime examples, has moved theological inquiry toward finding appropriate responses to the suffering of the innocent. Moltmann exhibits his own anger and protest against innocent suffering when he writes:

> The suffering of a single innocent child is an irrefutable rebuttal of the notion of the almighty and kindly God in heaven. For a God who lets the innocent suffer and who permits senseless death is not worthy to be called a God at all. Wherever the suffering of the living in all its manifold forms pierces our consciousness with pain, we lose our childish primal confidence and our trust in God.[26]

In his *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, Song too does theology with a passion that has often been absent in traditional western theology. He believes that traditionalists have, among other things, overlooked the female dimension of God's image, which has been suppressed and forgotten by society, even within the Christian church and theology.[27]

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[26] Moltmann, TKG, p. 47.

[27] Song, "The Female Dimension of God's Image" in TWA, pp. 116-9.

It is necessary to examine how the theological responses of Song and Moltmann are reflective of women's concrete experiences of suffering. Female experiences and theological reflections on suffering need to be brought forward for a critical dialogue with the thought of these two male thinkers. Many feminist writings highlight concrete, often overlooked, experiences of suffering. This is a significant area that needs further development if our theological response to suffering is to be adequate.

In reconsidering redemptive/atonement theologies, writers such as Young, Brown, and Parker have highlighted the ways in which they have dismissed the suffering and the viewpoints of women.[28] For these writers, the central focus in their wrtings is a theology of the cross that does not glorify suffering but retains the centrality of the cross for Christian life.[29] These works deal with a wide range of concerns such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, and homophobia, identifying traditional religious beliefs and practices that have contributed to such suffering.

James Poling states that violence is often an abuse of power. He goes on further to say that "the abuse of power is a theological problem"[30] in that violence has its deepest

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[28] Pamela Dickey Young, "Beyond Moral Influence to an Atoning Life," *Theology Today* 52 (1995), pp. 344-55; Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), pp. 1-30.

[29] Patricia L. Wismer, "For Women in Pain," *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O'Hara Graff (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 143. Cf. Sharon Garred Thornton, *Pastoral Care and the Reality of Suffering: Pastoral Theology from the Perspective of a Theology of the Cross* (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1991).

[30] James Poling, *The Abuse of Power: A Theological problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), p. 155.

roots in our operational/espoused theologies. In terms of theological doctrines, Poling looks closely at theories of atonement. He believes that the doctrine of substitutional atonement is portrayed in patriarchal families. The perfect father (heavenly Father) demands that the perfect son (Jesus Christ on the cross) be punished so that the father can forgive the rest of the children (all human beings). The father's rage is believed to be justified because of the disobedience and disloyalty of the children. The parallels between the family portrayed in the doctrine of substitutional atonement and an abusive family are numerous, according to Poling.[31] In the theory of incarnational atonement, the emphasis is on God's love and the voluntary suffering of God with those who deeply suffer. This theory can also be disengaged from one's humanity and merged with distorted images of self (one way of understanding the crucifixion). Such a doctrine can be problematic, because it glorifies violence and promotes passive endurance of suffering.

According to Pamela Dickey Young and others, this means that Jesus' death should not be viewed as a glorification of suffering, but should be seen as the product of human evil, not divine will.[32] Considering Young's idea, Moltmann's statements on atonement are open to misunderstanding. For many women, a tradition that elevates the death of a son wherein the father silently stands by, condones, or wills his death appears to champion "divine child abuse," and portrays a God who advocates cruelty and

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[31] Ibid., pp. 169-171.

[32] Pamela Dickey Young, "Beyond Moral Influence to an Atoning Life," *Theology Today* 52 (1995), pp. 353-5.

violence, even to one's own beloved.[33] Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, two of the most vocal critics of atonement theologies, note that this can have consequences beyond the theological and religious, in that

> the image of God the father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son has sustained a culture of abuse and led to the abandonment of victims of abuse and oppression. Until this image is shattered it will be almost impossible to create a just society.[34]

For many critics, such a response to suffering raises serious questions. It perpetuates the view that suffering is part of a divinely-ordained process of personal and social transformation and ignores the responsibility and choice that the evildoer has to change. Song interprets the crucifixion as human violence, which is compatible with the women's reflection on suffering according to Young. By reflecting on Song's view of God's power from liberation and process perspectives, the focus must necessarily shift from what God can do, to what humans can and should do to help eradicate evil and suffering.

However, Moltmann and Song both emphasize that endurance of suffering for the greater good is an important process in the struggle for liberation. According to Song, "the politics of the cross has inspired a great many persons to believe in self-sacrifice as the most powerful weapon against self-serving political power. It has encouraged them to use nonviolence, not just for tactical reasons but out of love, to carry the cause of the

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[33] Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journey by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), pp. 53-70. Cf. Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, p. 2; 26.

[34] Brown and Parker, p. 9.

people to the court of rulers."[35] However, since women are most often assigned the role of suffering servant in church and society, Song's value of self-sacrifice can be misunderstood as the call to the continued victimization of women. As Brown and Parker contend, "it may be that this fundamental tenet of Christianity -- Christ's suffering and dying for us -- upholds actions and attitudes that accept, glorify, and even encourage [our] suffering."[36]

In the context of a patriarchal Korean culture, unfortunately most of the Christian missionaries to Korea were educated in a patriarchal ethic in terms of their religious doctrine, structure, and their theological orientation. The intermarriage between these Christian missionaries' patriarchal-hierarchical-religious ethic and Koreans' longstanding traditional patriarchy produced the serious result of a cultural system which did not support an equal-regard and mutual-respect ethic in the families of Korean Christians. In other words, the Christian religious ethic of early Korean missionaries endorsed the Korean patriarchal system more solemnly. Institutionalized Christianity reinforced the prevailing source of power and control within patriarchal societies. While promoting the concept of blind obedience and compliant acceptance of one's status within a hierarchy, the Christian Church has actively promoted the belief that women and children are inferior.[37] The community of faith plays a crucial role in experience of patriarchy and

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[35] Song, TO, p. 180.

[36] Brown and Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, p. 4.

[37] For example, religious teachings have advised parents, "He who spares the rod, hates his son; But he who loves him, disciplines him diligently" (Prov. 13:24). The law

family violence. The community of faith in the past has denied violence (joining with the abuser), and has maintained the authority of parents and the isolation of the nuclear family. Historically, the community of faith has played the role of silence, neglect, has even elaborated systems of abuse. Religious verification is provided in support of the dominance of males. Biblical passages are used to define the natural order of the universe: Males are strong and females are weak; adults are powerful and children must be obedient to such power; the role of victim is glamorized. God is portrayed as a white male, and men are believed to be divinely invested with their role as spiritual leaders. Therefore, it is a theological task to clarify patriarchy as the abuse of power and the roots of family violence, and also affirm that patriarchy, as the abuse of power, is a theological problem and love as mutuality or equal regard is the core of Christian love in families. The challenge it faces is to become a community in which patriarchy and family violence is named, victims and abusers are cared for, and the community as a whole struggles to make sense of where God is in patriarchy and family violence.

Song's definition of the truth is valuable for this discussion of women's suffering. In terms of his understanding of truth, he believes that it is related to God's reign and what it stands for, that is, it is "not defined by exclusions but by relation."[38] In this respect, it is significant to claim love in mutuality or equal regard rather than in self-

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set forth by the Ten Commandments require that all children honor and respect both their mother and their father (Exod. 20:12).

[38] Song, JPS, p. 47; Song, TET, p. 183.

sacrifice.[39] Therefore, we need to look carefully at theologies of self-sacrifice, on the part of women as either wives or mothers, or children. Relationship ultimately will not be life-giving if it does not involve the mutual reciprocity of parties involved. As Don Browning rightly puts it,

> Love transforms in dialectical relation to crisis and separation. Remove, downplay, repress, or attempt to avoid crisis and separation, and love may not work its transforming miracles... In fact, appeals to a sentimental view of love that denies crisis and possible separation can confirm people in their various idolatries, sins and pathologies.[40]

Joy Bussert distinguishes this movement from the "theology of suffering," of which she is critical, and prefers an "ethic of empowerment, which would enable her to begin reconstructing a new life for herself and her children."[41]

In thinking about Song and Moltmann's interpretation of the suffering and death of Jesus, this area needs to be reconsidered more seriously. One the one hand, it would

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[39] A place to begin Christian theological reflection is with the command to love your neighbors as yourself (an equal regard ethic that addresses all systems privilege that marginalize people). Using the early Christian theologies of equal regard between men and women, we can build a theological perspective that challenges all systems of privilege based upon social categories (to do with race, gender, etc.) that dehumanize people. The Christian world has inherited two apparently conflicting ideas of the relationship between men and women in the context of marriage and family. As Browning and his fellow authors describe it: "an unresolved tension exists in early Christianity between an ethic of gender equality and a softened patriarchal ethic of male responsibility and servanthood. However, both of these competing ethics challenged the male honor code that dominated family life in the surrounding Greco-Roman World" (Don S. Browning, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Pamela D. Couture, K. Brynolf Lyon, and Robert M. Franklin, *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* [Louisville: Westminister/John Knox, 1997], p. 50).

[40] Ibid., pp. 282-3.

[41] Bussert, *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment*, p.66.

be regrettable to promulgate a form of Christianity which abandons self-giving, *agapeic* love. The notion of self-sacrifice, even into death, is surely indispensable to a faith which follows a crucified Lord, and trusts in a God of *agape* love. Yet on the other hand, because of the ethic of self-sacrifice, many women have experienced and even accepted physical and sexual abuse and/or assault. Both Song's and Moltmann's views of suffering must appropriate this feminist reflection. Namely, they must have "experiential relevance" and must speak to the real-life experiences of women in pain. They both need to reconsider their theological categories of suffering and sacrifice in light of contemporary women's experience, yet without abandoning the vision of life as *agapeic* self-giving.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION:

THE CONCEPT OF THE SUFFERING GOD AND ITS PRACTICAL IMPLICATION FOR PASTORAL CARE

These concluding paragraphs will present a summary and discussion of the implications of this study. They will also provide practical implications for pastoral care in accordance with the concept of the suffering God.

What is God's relationship to suffering? I have said that our understanding of God's response toward suffering is the most important consideration in determining our own response to pain and suffering in the world. My premise is that we come to know the identification of God with the crucified Christ and the downtrodden only in the midst of experiencing *han* in the world. The pain of God is revealed when God embraces those who cannot be embraced (Kitamori). We can meet the suffering God of the cross through "God's suffering in the world" (Bonhoeffer). Indeed, the compassionate God needs the partnership of human beings if God's salvific history, initiated with creation, is to be fulfilled (Song). It is axiomatic that the only humanly conceivable goal is the abolition of circumstances under which people are forced to suffer through poverty or human tyranny. I believe a different understanding of God leads to a different attitude toward others. The God whom Job's friends defended was not the same as the God Job trusted. I am not suggesting that there were two Gods in the Old Testament story, but indicating that there can exist two different ideas of the same God. Thus I agree with Song's view that central to Jesus' teaching and experience is his rejection of the God of retribution, and his affirmation of God as *Abba*, the God of compassion. The death of

Jesus was the result of a historical conflict between him and his opponents precipitated by their different understandings of God. Yet, this need not exclude the biblical testimony that Jesus "died for us," and that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world..." (II Cor 5:17).

In this study, the question of suffering and the question of God are considered to be inseparable. The experience of suffering tends to change one's perception of God. For the believer, the experience of suffering becomes a critical question about God.[1] The question of God's relationship with the suffering of this world will continue to be an unshakable theme in my own life and study. Particularly in this thesis, I have focused on the concept of the suffering God, a notion which reflects the understanding of my own suffering and the sufferings of others from a theological and pastoral perspective.

Thinking and speaking about a suffering God is directly connected to the question of how a suffering God relates to the suffering of the world. Our identification with a suffering God is directly connected to the question of how we relate to each other's suffering. My theological studies have helped me to realize that atheism is often the result of people's experience in suffering.[2] For Walter Brueggemann, the struggle of the

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[1] This is true of C. S. Lewis. In his brief narrative, *A Grief Observed* (1962), he described his personal experiences during the months following his wife's death. As a deeply religious man, Lewis was seeking comfort from God but, instead of experiencing a consoling presence, he felt that a door was being slammed in his face. This experience transformed his previous understanding of God. C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (London: Bantam Books, 1976).

[2] As Moltmann writes: "The suffering of a single innocent child is an irrefutable rebuttal of the notion of the almighty and kindly God in heaven. For a God who lets the innocent suffer and who permits senseless death is not worthy to be called a God at all. Wherever the suffering of the living in all its manifold forms pierces our consciousness

oppressed against injustice is really the fundamental issue of theodicy.[3] As Brueggemann aptly put it, "theodicy is concern for a fair deal."[4] Even those who have no clear concept of God, or who do not believe in God's existence, immediately ask for God's response in extraordinary, traumatic situations. However, these people often receive an insufficient response from God, which leads them to conclude, "God is not there." Suffering for the believer always leads to the theodicy problem[5]: If God is all-powerful and all-loving, how can God permit suffering? The basic issue of theodicy is the defence of the existence of a loving and all-powerful God in the midst of all our suffering. Stanley Hauerwas states, "There can be no way to remove the loneliness of the death of leukemic children unless

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with pain, we lose our childish primal confidence and our trust in God" (Moltmann, TKG, p. 47).

[3] See Walter Bruggemann, *The Message of the Psalms* (Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984). For Bruggemann the question of theodicy is not simply a theological question: it is a question with much social implication. "Serious theodicy is always linked to social arrangements of access and benefit" (Bruggemann, Ibid., p. 169). Theodicy has to do with basic questions about power and powerlessness. A transformation of society or of an understanding of God is also connected to a change of theodicy.

[4] Ibid., P. 21.

[5] In *Images of God and Coping with Suffering*, Eric Vossen considered the place of theodicy symbols in the broader perspective of coping with suffering, aimed at finding an effective consolation. In this research a link is made between the theology of suffering and the psychology of the coping process. The problem of theodicy can be seen as a problem of significance from an empirical-theological perspective. His research supported the resistance of some theologians to a 'theoretical' approach to theodicy, and explained why a so-called 'practical' theodicy in contemporary theology has become central, and affirmed that our response to suffering should be "solidarity with the suffering of others." H. J. M. Eric Vossen, Images of God and Coping with Suffering, *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 6 (1993) 1, 5-18. On this issue, see Adrian Furnham & Laurence B. Brown, Theodicy: A Negiected Aspect of the Psychology of Religion, *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 2 (1), 1992, pp. 37-45.

they see witnessed in the lives of those who care for them a confidence rooted in the friendship with God and with one another - that, finally, is the only response we have to 'the problem' of the death of children."[6]

To be in the image of God also means "to live in revolt against the great Pharaoh and to remain with the oppressed and the disadvantaged; it means to make their lot one's own."[7] Compassion is not natural or self-evident, yet there is no alien sorrow; we are all a part of it, we share in it. Others' pain is ours, another's death is not radically different from mine. We should put ourselves beside others and bear others' pain with them and embrace them. We need to shift our attention away from heaven to those who are suffering here. Wherever people suffer, Christ stands with them. It is possible to help bear the burden. We can strive to change the social conditions under which people experience suffering. We can change ourselves and learn through suffering. To accept the way of Jesus means sharing in God's suffering with all of God's creatures.

This study of Song and Moltmann has strengthened my conviction that, since God loves the world, God suffers where people and other creatures suffer. The participation of divine pathos in our life becomes a foundation for our understanding of divine passibility. Thus, the primary aim of this study was not to build up arguments by which divine passibility or impassibility could be proved or disproved. Rather, this study has considered the significance and implications of the conception of the suffering God. A shift of emphasis in the approach to this question affects every other issue in the doctrine

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[6] Stanley Hauerwas, *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine and the Problem of Suffering* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eermans Publishing Co., 1990), p. 148.

[7] Sölle, *Suffering*, p. 132.

of God, as well as pastoral care and counselling. Therefore, the focus necessarily shifts from an abstract consideration to a more pragmatic consideration of care, nurture, and justice. This study also clarifies the renewed affirmation of divine suffering and its emphasis on solidarity with humanity as a clear sign of a paradigm shift in theology in the conception of God, as a theological context for pastoral caregiving. And it is precisely from this interconnected point of view that the issue of divine passibility appears to be well received in today's Third World liberation theologies.

There are general trends in the writings of Moltmann and Song, particularly on suffering, and those of liberation theology, process theology, feminist theology and minjung theology, that challenge the traditional approaches to the question raised by suffering.

First, the shift is from the abstract to practical, concrete discussions about evil and suffering. From blaming God as the creator of our suffering, we must learn to consider how God suffers with the afflicted and intimately knows the depths of their suffering. As discussed in the previous chapter, this suffering-God approach emphasizes the compassionate and empowering presence of God in the midst of distress rather than a distant, impassible God who is unaffected by humanity's turmoil.

A second trend that I see is that, along with other liberation theologies, the various feminist approaches attempt to look at the complexity and diversity of suffering. They are begining to look at sin, evil, and suffering as more than just a singular, monolithic experience. They are differentiating the various types of suffering, suffering that is intrinsic to the human condition with its limits and contingencies, the suffering

that one inflicts on another, as well as that which a society perpetuates in its very structures and policies. Many are carefully considering the effects of everything from poverty to patriarchy and distorted social, political, and religious values on suffering. How social location, ethnic and cultural parameters, and one's historical milieu affect the questions asked and how resolution is sought in the experience of suffering is being considered.

Third, there is a shift in the meaning and significance of relationality in one's suffering experience. Perhaps the most important aspect of a tragic vision for the sufferers is that it leads one to recognize, acknowledge, and change one's perspective away from meaningless suffering (in Sölle's sense) to meaningful suffering. Through a recognition of one's need for an actual encounter with God's healing presence, one may move from a place of despair, powerlessness, and confusion to a place of strength, solidarity with others, and transformation.

Finally, a shift in the direction of the well-being of the victims, especially women, is taking place. Andrew Sung Park points out that the Christian way of thinking has focused on "the well-being of sinners and has devoted little attention to their victims."[8] In his theology of *han*, Park is deeply concerned with women's lives in a patriarchal culture. Park describes Korean women's huge suffering as the wounded heart.[9] In

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[8] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, p. 72.

[9] Park contends:
Korean women's pain becomes acute when they are hated or abandoned by husbands or by lovers. Their dignity is trampled and their hearts broken. Few social systems exist to protect or advocate for their rights in a patriarchal society. Consequently pain develops within and their hearts are broken. Patriarchy

elaborating his theology with concern for women, Park points to patriarchy as one of the major roots of women's *han* in which the *han* of the world is produced.[10] He asserts that the primary source for maintaining patriarchal/hierarchical dualism is the power to control others. In Park's view, patriarchy is a huge and powerful cultural system that cannot be easily transformed. Unless we work through the individual and collective unconsciousness of the patriarchal value system, patriarchal expressions of oppression will continuously emerge in different forms.[11]

Generally, the emphasis is more upon concrete experiences of suffering and the social and historical structures which enable such suffering to occur, and less on abstract, theoretical justifications for God's actions or the lack thereof. These alternatives center on more pragmatic, praxis-oriented approaches, and focus on human responsibility for eradicating or overcoming evil and suffering, as well as how God assists in that process. No single approach is considered adequate for all instances of suffering. An approach may be viable in some circumstances, but literally deadly in others. I have discovered, through an exploration of their complexity, that suffering and evil are truly mysteries that we need to wonder about continuously, and that we need to seek social and personal transformation with God's help.

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breaks their broken hearts yet further, thus producing han, the deep wound of the heart and the soul (Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, p. 20).

[10] Asian feminist theologians consistently criticized patriarchalism and androcentrism in their churches and societies. See *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sun Ai Lee Park (Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Center for Culture and Theology, 1989) and Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990).

[11] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, pp. 53, 59-60.

An alternative way of addressing the problem of suffering is to begin with the idea that the unjust, violent assault upon human beings calls forth compassion rather than justification.[12] Against the background of the history of human injustice and suffering, I have argued, the concept of the compassionate God[13] is not only important as the core of our Christian faith but also as the most productive and critical language to communicate to the suffering individual.[14] Nevertheless, it has not only been denied by most

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[12] Dr. Rieux, the protagonist in Camus's novel *The Plague*, is revolted by the endless agony of death and disease endured by humanity. After watching the lengthy death-agony of a young child, Dr. Rieux refuses the priest's advice to "love what he does not understand." "No, Father, I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture" (Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Gilbert Stuart, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948, pp. 196-197). Camus juxtaposes Christian justifications of suffering with Dr. Rieux'a atheistic, compassionate resistance. What is needed is a more profound Christian appropriation of tragedy as a way to interpret suffering.

[13] Marcel Sarot contributes to the theological task of distinguishing conceptions of God that are psychospiritually unhelpful from those that are helpful. He argues that the conception of God as compassionate and co-suffering is psychospiritually more helpful than that of God as blissfully impassible. See Marcel Sarot, "Pastoral Counselling and the Compassionate God," *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 1995, pp. 185-190. There is some empirical research confirming this conclusion. Johannes van der Ven (1993) has directed an empirical research project on the theodicy question (pp. 157-224). In this survey project, the attitudes of active adult members of the Roman Catholic Church towards different religious perspectives on the meaning of suffering were investigated. The findings show that a theodicy according to which God suffers with suffering people was more acceptable than alternative theodicies (J. A. Van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993, pp. 194-195, 210). The survey confirms that when we are confronted with severe suffering, the conception of God that is psychospiritually most helpful views God as co-suffering.

[14] One of the most useful aspects of Sölle's study for women's experiences of suffering is the critical link she makes between language and suffering. In order to move through and out of situations of suffering, the sufferer must find a way, according to Sölle, to identify, express, amd share her situation. Cf. Sölle, "Suffering and Language," in *Suffering*, pp. 61-86.

traditional theology, but has been almost completely ignored by theologians until recently. Speaking about the suffering God challenges the conditions that dishonor human beings and other living creatures. Even in such circumstances, it is valid only if accompanied by the struggle to change the present conditions toward "a new heaven and a new earth." Bonhoeffer's insight continues to inspire religious reflection: "God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross...and that is the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us.... Only a suffering God can help."[15] But how can a suffering God be of any help?[16] As Johnson rightly puts it, "there is one way the symbol of a suffering God can help: by signaling that the mystery of God is here in solidarity with those who suffer."[17] Speaking about God's suffering can also help by strengthening human responsibility in the face of suffering. The question is: how can one's own pain "serve the pain of God in the world?" In other words, it is the question of how we can translate, transform, or apply the concept of a suffering God to the problem

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[15] Bonhoffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 219-20: letter of 16 July 1944.

[16] This question was asked by Elizabeth A. Johnson, in her *She Who Is*, from her feminist theological perspective. Johnson points out that the image of the powerless suffering of God is particularly dangerous to women's genuine humanity, and must be resisted. She asks: "Are the victims of state torture in the likeness of God? Do these and all the violated women of the world offer yet another symbol of the suffering God? When a woman is raped and murdered, what does the Shekinah say? She suggests that "the female symbol of the suffering God who cares for the oppressed is strengthened by a feminist retrieval of the wrath of God" (Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 259). On this issue, see James Poling, *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991); Majorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (NY: Continuum, 1994) and Carrie Doehring, *Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1995).

[17] Johnson, *She Who Is*, pp. 267.

of human suffering and the suffering of all creatures. Therefore, instead of merely building up arguments for divine suffering, we need to place the affirmation of divine suffering and its solidarity with humanity into the very structure of theology.

This study also affirms that suffering is ultimately relational. As Hauerwas perceives, we suffer because of others, in the eyes of others, and often abandoned by others, but sometimes in companionship with others.[18] Because God is relational, we are relational, and our suffering exists in the midst of broken and deteriorating relations. Evil itself, in many cases is a condition of the deterioration or destruction of relationships. The relationships we need are those of mutuality, reciprocity and equality, those that espouse non-competitive, non-hierarchical, non-dominating dynamics between human beings. Monitoring the images we have of God is important in learning about how we are to be in this world. We need to be part of a relationship in which we can glimpse the depths of another's world, our own world, and where God resides. We need to be in relationship with both the immanent God whose grace shines through our uniqueness and the uniqueness of our relationships, and the transcendent God who goes far beyond who we are.[19] Carrie Doehring suggests, "when monitoring whether images of God are part of emphatic and empowering relationships or part of disengaged, merged, and overpowering relationships, we can use a variety of pastoral theological

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[18] Stanley Hauerwas, *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eermans, 1990), p. 165.

[19] According to Carrie Doehring, "God representations can be understood as the core of one's espoused and/or operational belief system. An important dimension of ministry (whether one is functioning as pastor, priest, educator, counselor or preacher) is to be sensitive to the critical role of God representations in intrapsychic, familial, communal, and cultural systems" (Doehring, *Taking Care*, p. 111).

perspectives." This occurs particularly in the critiques of atonement theologies wherein women question the rationale and compassion of a God who demands the death of a beloved son to achieve reconciliation with humanity, or the imitation of the suffering servant model as a way of responding to human suffering. If the crucifixion is understood to be redemptive because Jesus experienced disengagement and was overpowered, then this suggests that disengagement and being overpowered are, in and of themselves, life giving dynamics. In this way, women and men of faith have been encouraged to suffer silently with no resistance.[20] Therefore, as Doehring points out, our theological task is to monitor the images of God in terms of the ways in which power dynamics and relational boundaries interact in our relationships.[21] I concur that this way of monitoring the interaction of power dynamics and relational boundaries is important. It will help prevent the use and abuse of power in our relationships and transform the models of healing into a "vision of the world in which genuine mutuality, reciprocity, and equality might prevail."[22]

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[20] Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*, xiii; Carrie Doehring, *Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, p. 119.

[21] Doehring, *Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, pp. 104-25.

[22] Anne Carr, "On Feminist Spirituality," in *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 54. Cf. Ewert H. Cousins, "What Is Christian Spirituality," in *Modern Christian Spirituality*, p. 44.

When a person suffers from repression, she or he may go to a psychotherapist for healing. When a culture suffers from the repression of collective consciousness, it needs religious, cultural, and social transformation, reformation, and revolution, moving toward the resolution of collective *han*. For creating more just communities and culture, cooperative efforts are needed. Not only individuals' transformation but also collective transformation can have great power for eliminating an unfair system. We can create a theology rooted in images of God as empowering, the redemption of creation in mutuality, diversity, dignity. The pastoral care and prophetic role of the community is in naming behavior, protecting the safety of the vulnerable, healing the wounds of violence, and if possible, healing violent relationships. The church today is repenting of its role in sanctioning violence, repenting its neglect of victims, helping those in families to understand how to handle overwhelming stress and resolve conflict, addressing the ways our community responds to violence. Yet, even if we learn to do all this, the community of faith will not have laid responsibility for healing and changing at the door where it belongs, in our culture, and in the community. We must not locate the source of suffering and redemption in the intrapsychic realm alone, but also in the external socio-political realm. For these reasons, we need to widen our lens, from a telescopic focus on the intrapsychic dynamics and the dynamics of the dyadic relationship between minister and congregation, and use a wide angle lens to view "the cultural context of neglect."[23] This understanding of the cultural context of neglect allows us to envision how we can change from being a culture that neglects, to a culture that not only is empathically

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[23] Doehring, *Taking Care*, p. 10.

present with those who are assaulted, but which confronts the roots of violence. If we, as a community and culture, can learn how to be empathetic in a way that values all dimensions, the personal and the social, the psychic and the cultural, the economic and political, as well as the psychological and spiritual, then we will have the context for and means of confronting the roots of violence in our culture. To understand the politics of family violence, it is critical to recognize the dynamics of patriarchy. Real change is not possible unless the basic attitudes, values, emotions, and socialization processes of patriarchy are confronted. Each of us must examine and evaluate what we are able to give up and what we are willing to gain by challenging patriarchy.

We are in a wholly new interpretive situation: the pluralistic, postmodern situation. In the shift from modernity to post-modernity, with the passing of the certainty and domination of modernity, we lose "our capacity to make large, grand claims for God's sovereignty, which have been characteristically expressed in virile terms... our articulation of God will begin again in local contextual ways."[24] Poling outlines four principles, with which I strongly concur, for ministry that can transform church and society: 1) Church and society need to offer prevention and healing from family violence so that victims are protected; 2) Church and society must more effectively hold offenders accountable; 3) Church and society must acknowledge the ways in which institutional policies and procedures have protected those who abuse power; 4) Church and society

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[24] Walter Brueggemann, *Texts under Negotiation*, (Philadelphia: Fortress. 1993), p. 11.

must critically evaluate its espoused and operational theologies of family, women, sexuality and violence, and the God images embedded in such theologies.[25]

Pastoral and psychological counselling presupposes that the nature of people's intrapsychic nature of suffering is closely related to their thinking about God,[26]

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[25] James Poling, *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem*, pp. 183-6.

[26] Psychologists of religion (Rizzuto, 1979; Meissner, 1977, 1978, 1984, 1987; McDargh, 1983; Randour and Bondanza, 1987; Spero, 1992) have described how our images of God are formed in part from bits and pieces of internal representations of significant others. The symbols of God function as the primary metaphor of the whole belief system, the ultimate point of reference for understanding experience, life, and the world. How Christians perceive God has a profound influence on how they live each day. In the psychology of religious experience, object relations theory suggests that the foundation of god-images in adults reflects early experience with human parents. Cf. A. M. Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytical Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). McDargh suggests that there may be aspects of the god-image beyond the purely transferential. He concludes: "What has not been accounted for ...is how it may happen that God may be a source for the sense of God" (J. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God*, [NY: University Press of America, 1983], p. 245). In other words, the reality of God might itself be a source of religious experience. As Michael Cavanagh observes, "Because we don't know much about the nature of God, we must rely on our perceptions of who God is" (p. 75). Cavanagh has shown that our perception of God "may be helpful or unhelpful to our psychospiritual development" (M. Cavanagh, The Perception of God in Pastoral Counseling, *Pastoral Psychology*, 41, 1992, pp. 75-80). He gave four examples of conceptions of God that are likely to be unhelpful: God is vengeful, God is needy, God is our caretaker, God is our tutor. These conceptions are likely to contribute to the difficulties that lead people to seek pastoral counseling, and therefore it is important that ministers are able to discern them. Moreover, Cavanagh argues, ministers should able tactfully to help people to change their unhelpful conceptions of God. By understanding this we can help people shed faulty images of God and experience a more balanced image of God. This reorientation can enhance counselling and strengthen our counselees' personality and spiritual health.

Multidimensionality in religion has been demonstrated also in the images of God that people hold. One investigation revealed up to twelve different concepts of God (Spilka, Armatas, and Nussbaum, 1964). Further research suggested eight basic patterns, six of which combined to produce two higher-level configurations (Gorsuch, 1968). Various God images also have been associated with different forms of personal faith and ways of looking at oneself and the world.

specifically how they understand God's response to their own suffering and others' suffering in this world.[27] The compassionate God approach of this study also provides us with pastoral and practical resources for our theology of suffering. The suffering-God approach leads us to change our understanding of God's power, and therefore, to qualify our understanding of God's compassionate solidarity with those who suffer. Just as God's loving presence and compassion are emphasized in this approach, so must our response to suffering be emphasized, particularly that of compassionate care and human solidarity in the ongoing transformation of life.[28] Divine compassion is life giving. It

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[27] In "The Misconception of Christian Suffering," Richard Driscoll and Lloyd Edwards perceive: "Many of those whom we counsel for personal adjustment problems are laboring under a popular misconception of the nature and meaning of Christian suffering. The misconception has been challenged repeatedly in the best of Christian traditions, but its force remains nonetheless. The misconception is a basis for misunderstandings and maladaptive actions, contributing to existing personal adjustment problems" (p. 34). Driscoll and Edwards attempted to distinguish between that suffering caused by misconceived views and other suffering of a more meaningful nature. They conclude that the view that there is something intrinsically noble about suffering is seen to involve a fundamental misconception of the nature of Christian suffering. (Richard Driscoll & Lloyd Edwards, "The Misconception of Christian Suffering," *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 32 (1), Fall, 1983).

The analysis of intervention in psychological suffering requires that one see through the camouflage of misconceived suffering, and so address the motivations and purposes which generate and make sense of the suffering. Any of the arguments against misconceived Christian suffering can be used to alter counselees' misconception of suffering, and provide religious support for our challenges of the suffering itself. The analysis of intervention suggested here apply and elaborate the concepts and guidelines of a general pragmatic approach to counselling and psychotherapy. Before attempting to help people loosen their grip on their unhelpful perceptions of suffering and God, ministers need to examine their own perceptions of suffering and God. Since the misconception is generally implicit, it must be interpreted and clarified for the counselees. The misguided use of suffering can contribute to a variety of maladjustment problems. The interpretation and resolution of such motivations is a major challenge in pastoral counselling.

[28] See Johnson, *She Who Is*, pp. 267-268.

creates the possibility for rebirth. Compassion involves not only understanding suffering but also feeling it; it is the capacity to enter into the joys and sorrows of another.[29] What is being affirmed here is the role of human solidarity in the transformation of suffering. Compassionate care for the suffering addresses the underlying problems. The compassionate presence of another person can help empower sufferers to resist the effects of suffering, even when the suffering itself cannot be completely overcome. The presence of compassion brings victory over despair. Consequently, compassion is resistance to suffering, a metaphor for divine power.

This study affirms, then, that compassion is the key to interpreting God's relationship to the world. God remains intimate with those who suffer. Compassion is evident in the presence of God in the recesses of the human soul wracked by affliction. Compassionate power enables the terminally ill person to defy the despair of his/her condition. It empowers parents to survive the suffering or death of their children. Nothing can take away the cruelty or pain of such suffering, but compassionate power makes it possible for meaning, healing, or love to transcend tragedy. And when we participate in the work of alleviating human anguish, we can taste the empowering presence and beauty of the divine life-giving Spirit. The suffering-God approach, which Song and Moltmann have reflected upon so deeply in their works, enables us to continue to love God, and to assist others to go on trusting God, even in the face of the worst that life has to offer.

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[29] See Thomas Merton's insightful interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan in *A Thomas Merton Reader* (Garden City, N. Y.: Image Books, 1974), pp. 348-356.

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A. ABBREVIATIONS

In the text and notes the following abbreviations are used for Song's Works and Moltmann's works. Full bibliographical details will be found in section B and D of the Bibliography.

Abbreviations for Song's Works

CMR *Christian Mission in Reconstruction.*
COG *The Compassionate God.*
JRG *Jesus and the Reign of God.*
JPS *Jesus in the Power of the Spirit.*
JCP *Jesus, the Crucified People.*
TUO *Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective.*
TWA *Theology from the Womb of Asia.*
TET *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings.* (2nd Edition, 1991)

Abbreviations for Moltmann's Works

CG *The Crucified God.*
CPS *The Church in the Power of the Spirit.*
FC *The Future of Creation.*
GC *God in Creation.*
JFT *Jesus Christ for Today's World.*
PPL *The Power of the Powerless.*
SL *The Spirit of Life.*
TCG *The Coming of God.*
TH *Theology of Hope.*
TKG *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God.*
TT *Theology Today.*
WJC *The Way of Jesus Christ.*

[*: This Literature is translated into Korean]

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the concept of the suffering God in the work of two theologians: God portrayed as 'the crucified God' in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann, and 'the compassionate God' in the theology of Choan-Seng Song. Among the contemporary theologians who deal with the concept of the suffering God, Song and Moltmann are particularly important in terms of their distinctive works on the suffering God and the question of its relationship to the problem of creaturely suffering.

This thesis argues, as do Song and Moltmann in their works, that the suffering of God should be central to the Christian conception of God. The primary aim of this study is to make the following points: (1) God's response to suffering is the most important consideration in determining our own response. (2) Compassion (suffering-with) is a way of interpreting God's relationship to the world. (3) The concept of divine compassion (suffering-love) is not only at the core of our Christian faith but also the most productive and critical language for the future, for it cannot be uttered without human beings hearing the challenge to solidarity and hope. (4) The compassionate God approach provides us with pastoral, practical resources in our ministry.

Chapter One examines the historical development of the doctrine of divine (im)passibility, surveys the paradoxical approach to a suffering God, explores the global context regarding the suffering God as a backdrop and a framework for a clear understanding of the contemporary rediscovery of a suffering God. Chapter Two and Three present Moltmann's theology of 'the Crucified God' and Song's theology of 'the Compassionate God' respectively. Moltmann's specific contribution is to articulate the concept of the suffering God within a trinitarian/eschatological framework, drawing out its ethical and political implications. Song's provocative contribution is in developing a

Christian theology of the compassionate God using the resources of Asian non-Christian religions and cultures. Through an analysis of the theological ideas that influenced their conceptions of the suffering God, some important theological works concerning the divine suffering in contemporary theology briefly surveyed. In this study, Moltmann's theology have corporated not only because his ideas on the suffering God as important and profound, but also because his theology serves as a point of comparison and clarification for Song's theology. This thesis is written from an East Asian perspective and explores appreciatively Song's inclusive manner of doing Christian theology with non-Christian resources as an important contribution to the enrichment of global theology. This study shows that Song and Moltmann offer specific and unique perspectives for a contemporary theology of the suffering God, which serves to deepen and broaden the theologies of God's suffering which have appeared in the latter part of this century. Chapter Four, by examining and comparing the concepts of the suffering God in the work of Moltmann and Song in terms of the commonalities and divergences in their approaches, points out how these similar, contemporary, but different theologies reflect and grow out of their differing (Asian and European) contexts of suffering, and critically reflects upon how these theologies complement each other. This chapter also examines how the theological responses of Song and Moltmann are reflective of women's concrete experiences of suffering. They both need to reconsider their theological categories of suffering and sacrifice in light of contemporary women's experience, yet without abandoning the vision of life as *agapeic* self-giving. Finally this dissertation concludes with implication for pastoral care in accordance with the concept of the suffering God.