

**JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN'S THEOLOGY OF THE TRINITY
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY
SOCIAL QUESTIONS: A DIALOGICAL APPROACH**

**BY
MANN PARK**

**A Dissertation submitted through Knox College
To the Department of Theology
Of the Toronto School of Theology
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Awarded by the University of St. Michael's College**

Toronto 2000

© Mann Park



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-54052-9

Canada

ABSTRACT

One of the most important theological developments in the last two decades is the renewal of the doctrine of the Trinity. Within this renewal of trinitarian theology Jurgen Moltmann stands as one of the most important contributors. This thesis is an elaboration and evaluation of Moltmann's trinitarian theology in dialogue with other major contributors to contemporary trinitarian discussion. This thesis particularly attempts to identify Moltmann's distinctive contributions and weaknesses by examining his responses to the four major trinitarian issues that broadly identify and characterize the current trinitarian milieu.

Chapter One deals with Moltmann's trinitarian theology as a theological response to the conflict between traditional theism and humanist atheism. It is argued that his trinitarian theology offers an insightful response to both traditional theism and humanist atheism by demonstrating that it is the doctrine of the Trinity that provides the ground of genuine human freedom and dignity.

Chapter Two examines Moltmann's understanding of the economic-immanent Trinity and its social implications in the light of current discussion of this issue. This chapter contends that his trinitarian theology rightly stresses the genuine historicity of God, while keeping the practical relevance of the doctrine of God for concrete human

life.

Chapter Three elaborates Moltmann's understanding of the unity of the triune God and its social implications in terms of the current debate of this issue. Moltmann's social Trinity provides a viable but not sufficient option for interpreting the unity-trinity relationship in God that is significant for human liberation and social equality.

Chapter Four deals with Moltmann's response to the gender issue of the Trinity. It especially focuses upon his response to the claim that the traditional trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Spirit is patriarchal and androcentric and thus must be discarded or at least balanced with more gender-neutral or gender-equal images of God. Here it is maintained that Moltmann provides a reliable, but not the only option, which enhances the equality and emancipation of women in our contemporary world.

The Conclusion summarizes and sorts out some important contributions of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity for the development of future trinitarian theology, especially as a response to contemporary social questions.

To My Mother Jeong-Ae Choi,
My Wife Bok-soon Park,
and our two Sons. Huyn and Jin

With Gratitude and Love

Acknowledgements

Many persons contributed to the completion of this thesis. Since this essay represents the culmination of many years of education, appreciation is due the teachers of the Toronto School of Theology of the University of Toronto. Especially I would express my deep gratitude to Dr. Harold Wells, my director. He was the model *doctor Vater* in every respect. I greatly appreciate the personal care, encouragement, and consideration that he showed throughout the process of writing this thesis. His crucial guidance exceeded by far the normal expectations and is reflected throughout this thesis. I would also express my gratitude to Professors Iain Nicol, Joseph Mangina, and Jean-Marc Laporte, each of whom provided significant assistance toward the completion of this thesis. I also wish to thank my Korean friends and fellow students at TST with whom I could enjoy not only many cheerful theological debates but also genuine friendship. But my greatest thanks and gratitude must be given to my mother, my wife and my two sons. My mother Jeong-Ae Choi has had to endure a lonely life in Korea, missing me and my family. My wife Bok-soon has continually encouraged me to finish this thesis, and has supported me at every point with love and strength, even in the midst of her own study and parenting with me our two sons, Hyun and Jin. It is to my beloved mother, wife, and two sons that I dedicate this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. The Renewal of the Trinity as a Practical Doctrine	2
2. Jurgen Moltmann as a 'Practical' Trinitarian Theologian in Dialogue	7
3. Purpose and Limitation of the Thesis	12
4. Thesis Statement	13
5. Method of the Thesis	14
6. Structure of This Thesis	16

CHAPTER ONE. TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY AS A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO THEISM AND ATHEISM

1-1. Introduction: A Renewed Interest in the Doctrine of the Trinity as a Critique of the Theistic Understanding of God	22
1-2. The Nature of Theism and its Relationship to Atheism.	25
1-3. Theological Responses to the Atheist Critique of Traditional Theism	30
1-3-1. A More Theological Approach: Karl Barth and Eberhard Jungel	31
1-3-2. A More Philosophical, Anthropological Approach: Wolfhart Pannenberg	44

2. Jurgen Moltmann's Trinitarian Response to Theism and Atheism.	53
2-1. Moltmann's View of Classical Theism.	54
2-2. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Protest Atheism	57
2-2-1. Protest Atheism Based upon the Experience of Suffering	57
2-2-2. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Protest Atheism	61
2-3. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Postulate Atheism	70
2-3-1. Postulate Atheism for Human Freedom and Liberation	70
2-3-2. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Postulate Atheism	77
2-3-2-1. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology and Human Freedom	78
2-3-2-2. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology and Its Relationship to Concrete Praxis	83
Conclusion	91

CHAPTER TWO. IMMANENT/ ECONOMIC TRINITY: GOD IN HISTORY

1-1. Introduction: The Doctrine of the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation.	94
1-2. A "Weak Identity" Between the Immanent and the Economic Trinity: Karl Barth and Eberhard Jungel	103
1-3. A "Strong Identity" Between the Economic and the Immanent Trinity: Wolfhart Pannenberg, Catherine LaCugna and Ted Peters	109
2. Jurgen Moltmann: the Relationship of the Economic to the Immanent Trinity	121
2-1. Trinitarian Theology as the Discourse of God's Salvific Activity in History	121
2-2. The Distinction of the Immanent and the Economic Trinity: Immanent Trinity as the Eschatological Form of the Economic Trinity	125
2-3. The God of History and Its Practical. Ecological Implication:	

A Trinitarian Doctrine of Creation	136
Conclusion	144

CHAPTER THREE. THE UNITY OF THE TRIUNE GOD

1-1. Introduction: Current Trinitarian Debate on the Unity of God.	146
1-2. The Unity of God based upon the One Divine Subjectivity, or the Father as the Origin of the Divinity	149
1-2-1. Karl Barth	149
1-2-2. Karl Rahner	155
1-3. The Unity of God Based upon the 'Perichoretic Union'	161
1-3-1. Wolfhart Pannenberg	161
1-3-2. Leonardo Boff.	168
2. Moltmann and the Unity of God	173
2-1. Moltmann's Criticism of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner	173
2-2. The Unity of God as the Perichoretic Union of Three Divine Persons	177
2-3. The Unity of God as a Historical and Eschatological Reality	197
2-4. The Unity of God and its Socio-Political Implications	203
Conclusion	211

CHAPTER FOUR. THE LANGUAGE OF THE TRINITY AND GENDER EQUALITY

1-1. Introduction	213
1-2. Five Options for the Issue of the "Gendered Trinity"	217
1-2-1. Keeping the trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Spirit	217

1-2-2. Replacing the Masculine Metaphor of God with the Symbol of Goddess	223
1-2-3. Finding Gender Balance in God in Several Different Ways	227
1-2-4. Desexing the Divine Persons	235
1-2-5. Depersonalizing the Divine Persons	237
2. Moltmann's Response to the Gender Issue regarding the Trinity	241
2-1. God the Father as Motherly Father	245
2-2. God the Son as a Brother among Us	252
2-3. Holy Spirit as a Feminine, Motherly Figure	255
2-4. Evaluation of Moltmann's Interpretation of the Trinitarian Formula of Father, Son, and Spirit	261
Conclusion	267
CONCLUSION	269
BIBLIOGRAPHY	279

**JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN'S THEOLOGY OF THE TRINITY
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY
SOCIAL QUESTIONS: A DIALOGICAL APPROACH**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Renewal of the Trinity as a Practical Doctrine

The Doctrine of the Trinity is the specifically Christian understanding of God. It characterizes the identity of the Christian God by guarding it from abstract monotheism as well as from polytheism.¹ Furthermore, this doctrine functions as the summary form of the Christian faith itself. While the person Jesus Christ constitutes the center of our knowledge of God, God's distinctive self-revelation as Trinity presents the overall framework within which all Christian theology is to be formulated. Thus, as Thomas Torrance writes, this doctrine is "the innermost heart of Christian faith and worship, the central dogma of classical theology, the fundamental grammar of our knowledge of God."²

Since this is so, it is no surprise that the question of the Trinity was once at the

¹ Christian faith is distinguished from other monotheistic religions by the fact that, although it confesses one God, it understands this God as triune, who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christianity is also differentiated from polytheism in the fact that it claims that this triune God is one Being. In this sense Karl Barth rightly points out, "The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, Translated by G. W. Bromiley, (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1975), 297. Hereafter abbreviated as CD. Nicholas Lash indicates the same thing by saying, "the doctrine of the Trinity simply is the Christian doctrine of God. Accordingly, any doctrine of God which has ceased to be trinitarian in character has thereby ceased to be Christian." Nicholas Lash, "Considering the Trinity," *Modern Theology*, 2/3 (1986): 183.

² Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1996), 2.

center of popular debate.³ In the history of Christian theology, especially after the fourth century's Arian dispute, however, this doctrine has been understood largely as a speculative exposition of God's inner life, that is, the self-relatedness of Father, Son, and Spirit.⁴ Thus gradually it has been considered to be of little relevance to the practice of Christian life. Especially in the time of the Enlightenment, when 'human reason' worked as the standard of reference, many thinkers regarded this doctrine as a piece of useless speculation, which has no practical value.⁵

The situation was almost the same in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. During this time the doctrine of the Trinity, even though still considered to be an important doctrine, in practical matters was understood to be of secondary significance for the Christian Church.⁶ In this context we understand Karl Rahner's

³ In the ancient Church, interest in the doctrine of the Trinity was not limited to church leaders and professional theologians. It was one of the common subjects debated among ordinary people. Gregory of Nyssa once wrote that it was impossible to go to the marketplace to buy bread, or go to the bank, or to go to the baths, without getting involved in a discussion about whether God the Son is equal to or less than God the Father. Citation is from Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," Christian Century, Vol. 109, No 22 (July 1992): 678.

⁴ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 31ff.

⁵ In the view of Immanuel Kant, "the doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has no practical relevance at all, even if we think we understand it; and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends all our concepts." Immanuel Kant, The Conflict of Faculties, trans. Mary J. Gregor. (New York: Abaris Books, 1979), 65. Schleiermacher also thought that this doctrine has no direct relationship with our human experience, especially with the religious feeling of total dependence. Thus he relegated this doctrine to an appendix of Christian theology. See, Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, trans and ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), especially 738-751.

⁶ It was especially the success of biblical criticism of the 19th and 20th century that caused the decline of the doctrine of the Trinity. The development of biblical criticism raised serious questions about the historicity of the gospel narrative and consequently made it actually impossible to accept the notion of

regret that "despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists'."⁷

What Rahner said was certainly true even by the middle of the 1970s. But since that time there has been an increasing interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, and now we see a 'renaissance' of this doctrine.⁸ Many significant books and articles have appeared and revitalized virtually ignored trinitarian symbols and ideas, and then attempted to apply them to current social, political, economic, spiritual, or church-related issues.⁹ Several factors helped to bring this explosion of interest in the

the literal revelation of the New Testament. Especially the method of 'objective' historical research applied to the Fourth Gospel made it quite difficult to argue for 'high Christology' and the doctrine of the Trinity, which is principally based upon this gospel. About the decline of the doctrine of the Trinity in nineteenth and early twentieth century European thought, see Claude Welch, In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 3-41.

7 Karl Rahner, The Trinity, trans. Joseph Donceel. (New York: Herde and Herder, 1970), 10. Rahner continues to refer to the Christian Church's ignorance of the Trinity by saying that even if the doctrine of the Trinity were proved to be false, most religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged. Ibid.

8 As a bibliographer of this field Erwin Schaedel observes, there is currently a " 'Renaissance' of trinitarian thought." See Erwin Schaedel, Bibliographia Trinitaria : Internationale Bibliographie trinitarischer Literatur/International Bibliography of Trinitarian Literature, Vol. 1: Autorenverzeichnis/ Author Index; Vol. 2: Registerunde Ergaenzungsliste/ Indices and Supplementary List (Munich: K. G. Sauer, 1984, 1988). Cited in Thomas R. Thompson, Imitatio Trinitatis: The Trinity As Social Model in the Theologies of Jurgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff, Ph. D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1996, 4.

9 We might mention Jürgen Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom of God, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981). Hereafter abbreviated as TK; Eberhard Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World, trans. Darrell L. Guder, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1983); Walter Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, trans. Matthew O'Connell, (New York: Crossroad, 1984); Leonardo Boff, Trinity and Society, trans. Paul Burns, (Maryknoll, 1988); Joseph Bracken, The Triune Symbol: Persons, Process, and Community (Lanham, MD.: University of America Press, 1985); David Brown The Divine Trinity (La Salle: Open Court, 1985). Robert Jenson, The Triune Identity (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Catherine LaCugna, God For Us (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991); Bruno Forte, The Trinity as History: Saga of the Christian God, trans. Paul Rotondi, (New York: Alba House, 1989); William J. Hill, The Three Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1982); Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is (New York: CrossRoad, 1994); James P. Mackey, The Christian

doctrine of the Trinity: the influence of the Second Vatican Council, new exegetical studies in Christology, the critiques of traditional 'theistic' ideas of God made by process theologians as well as many political, feminist, black, and Latin American and Asian liberation theologians, and the widespread interest in spirituality and world religions.¹⁰ We also have to point to the influence of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner as two of the greatest trinitarian theologians of the past generation.

It is now beyond dispute that one of the most important theological developments in the last two decades is the renewal of trinitarian theology.¹¹ And in this renewal or 'renaissance' of the doctrine of the Trinity, we observe a clear disposition that characterizes current trinitarian thought: A disposition to find a more relevant and practical trinity. As indicated above, this doctrine has suffered from a malaise of speculative and esoteric investigation regarding the inner relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in God. Yet contemporary trinitarian thought

Experience of God as Trinity (London: SCM Press, 1983); Ted Peters, God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); John Thompson, Modern Trinitarian Perspectives (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Thomas F. Torrance, Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1994); And Thomas G. Weinandy, The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1995).

10 Catherine M. LaCugna, "Practical Trinity," in Christian Century Vol. 109, (July 1992), 284.

11 Plantinga's observation is instructive in this matter: "the current trinitarian revival itself is unmistakable. . .virtually every serious theological movement of recent years has sought in its own terms to state and shape trinitarian doctrine." Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., eds., Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement. Philosophical and Theological Essays (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 3.

refutes this speculative tendency by understanding this doctrine in terms of practical Christian life. For many the doctrine is a description of the mystery of our salvation¹² as well as the theological ground on which to meet a wide range of today's practical and liberationist concerns. The ethos of our age, which is more sensitive to the practical dimensions of theology, might have in part provoked this development. In any case, current trinitarian thought is characterized by this attempt to spell out the practical applicability of this doctrine. Some find in it a theological framework for a friendly and egalitarian human community. Some find a model for a healthy and productive gender relationship. And others seek in this teaching a basis for an ecological theology or a ground for inter-faith dialogue. Perhaps it is the possibility of these practical implications that best accounts for the current renewal in the theology of the Trinity.¹³

¹² In fact, not only more traditionalist Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox theologians, but feminists, liberation theologians, and process thinkers desire to free this doctrine from its isolation from concrete Christian faith and life. For example, Catherine LaCugna, God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life; C. LaCugna and K. McDonnell, "Returning from 'The Far Country': Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," Scottish Journal of Theology 41 (1988): 191-215; Piet Schoonenberg, "Trinity-The Consummated Covenant: theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God," Studies in Religion: Sciences Religieuses, 5 (1975): 111-116; John Thompson, Modern Trinitarian Perspectives, 3ff; Thomas Torrance, "Toward an Ecumenical Consensus on the Trinity," in Theologische Zeitschrift 31(1975): 337-350; Joseph Bracken, "Process Theology and Trinitarian Theology", Parts 1, 2, Process Studies 8 (1978); Elizabeth Johnson, "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female," Theological Studies 45 (1984): 441-65. LaCugna summarizes this widespread tendency of current trinitarian thought by saying, "The doctrine of the Trinity, properly understood, is the affirmation of God's intimate communion with us through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. As such it is an eminently practical doctrine with far-reaching consequences for the Christian life." LaCugna, God for Us, ix.

¹³ Leonardo Boff's comment summarizes this present pursuit for the practical implication of this doctrine: "The mystery of the Trinity should be the deepest source, closest inspiration and brightest illumination of the meaning of life that we can imagine." Boff, Trinity and Society, 111.

2. Jürgen Moltmann as a 'Practical' Trinitarian Theologian in Dialogue

Jürgen Moltmann's trinitarian theology is a good example of this recent thrust for a more relevant and practical Trinity. In fact his whole theology is from the beginning explicitly praxis-oriented. He is not satisfied with a mere rearrangement of Christian doctrine, but has continually pursued the meaning and applicability of Christian truth for the social, economic and political transformation of the world.¹⁴ Thus his theology has been always political theology, in the sense that it explicitly aims at a "politically critical theology aiming at radical change in society."¹⁵ This is all the more true of his theology of the Trinity. His trinitarian theology is developed and constituted in large part as a Christian answer to contemporary social questions -

¹⁴ Richard John Neuhaus, "Moltmann and Monotheism," *Dialog* 20 (1981): 239.

¹⁵ Richard Bauckham, "Moltmann's Theology: An Overview," in *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1995), 18. Moltmann describes the general character of his theology as such: "If I were attempt to sum up the outline of my theology in a few key phrases, I would have at the least say that I am attempting to reflect on a theology which has:

- a biblical foundation
- an eschatological orientation
- a political responsibility."

Jürgen Moltmann, "My Theological Career," in *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, Translated by John Bowden. (London: SCM Press, 1991), 182. Hereafter abbreviated as HT. Cf. Moltmann, TK 7: "The practical act which is necessary in today's misery is the liberation of the oppressed. Theology is hence the critical reflection about this essential practice in the light of the gospel. It does not merely aim to understand the world differently; it wants to change the world as well. It sees itself as one component in the process through which the world is liberated." For Moltmann's 'political theology,' see Bauckham, "Political Theology," in *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 99-118. For a good elaboration of Moltmann's theological development since the 1970s, see Douglas Meeks, "Jürgen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions to Theology," *Religious Studies Reviews* vol. 22:2 (April, 1996): 95-102.

questions of human freedom, of equality, and of communal life.¹⁶ For him, the triune God of the Scripture is the God who “unceasingly desires the freedom of his creation.”¹⁷ The doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine of freedom and equality that provides genuine human dignity. Indeed, this doctrine is for him “nothing other than a short version of the passion narrative of Christ in its significance for the eschatological freedom of faith and the life of oppressed nature.”¹⁸

Since Moltmann hopes to find in the doctrine of the Trinity a theological response to contemporary social questions, - freedom, equality, dignity, and community, then a good way to understand his trinitarian theology is to examine it in the light of this goal. This paper therefore will elaborate Moltmann’s trinitarian theology in relation to these fundamental social questions.

In order to do this, this paper will place Moltmann’s trinitarian theology within recent trinitarian debate, and examine its distinctive contributions to trinitarian thought and its social significance. Especially it will study his thought in terms of four major

¹⁶ Arne Lasmussen rightly indicates this aspect of Moltmann’s theology of the Trinity, saying “in terms of his political theology and hermeneutics, that the elaboration of his doctrine of the Trinity is made in awareness of specific social and political interests, especially freedom and democracy.” Arne Lasmussen, The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jurgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 54.

¹⁷ TK 218.

¹⁸ CG 246.

contemporary trinitarian issues that I believe broadly identify and characterize the current trinitarian milieu.

The first major issue is the pursuit of a trinitarian theology that responds effectively to the conflict between the traditional theism and humanist atheism. Several theologians have attempted to refute the 'theistic' conception of God by reformulating trinitarian theology and by doing so to propose a responsible theological answer to humanist atheism that has emerged primarily as a rejection of the traditional theism. The social concern imbedded in this attempt is the question of human freedom and dignity in terms of massive and absurd suffering. The second major trinitarian issue today is the relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinity. This long debated, traditional issue is now being pursued in a new context, i.e., in the rediscovery of the soteriological importance of the Trinity. The social question behind this trinitarian debate is the meaning and importance of human history for Christian faith. The third important trinitarian issue that is widely discussed today is the question of the unity of the triune God. This traditional trinitarian question has become one of the most heated issues, especially since the emergence and wide influence of the social doctrine of the Trinity, which understands God's being as a society of divine persons, rather than in terms of one divine substance or single subjectivity. Here the related social issue is that

of human freedom, equality, and the nature of a desirable human community. Finally the fourth trinitarian issue that stands at the forefront of recent debate is that of gender. Many feminist theologians have argued that the traditional trinitarian formula, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," is sexist and oppressive to women, and thus must be rejected or at least balanced with more gender-equal or gender-neutral trinitarian symbols. The social concern behind this issue is the thrust for genuine human dignity and equality for women in patriarchal and androcentric cultures.

In fact, understanding Moltmann's trinitarian theology as a response to our social questions in terms of these four major trinitarian issues is putting him into dialogue with other trinitarian contributors. This attempt is justified by the fact that Moltmann's theology is eminently 'dialogical.' In fact, Moltmann has been remarkably open to dialogue from the beginning of his theological career, and this openness is for him more than an attitude: It is a "'structural openness inherent in his theology.'"¹⁹ His whole theological project has been developed in a conscious effort to respond to the diverse challenges that arise from the society as well as from the church. As Moltmann indicates, it has emerged "in movements, dialogues and conflicts," rather than from a

¹⁹ Bauckham, The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann, 6.

particular 'school' or Christian tradition.²⁰ Since this is the case, he does not attempt to create a theological 'system,' in the sense of the finished achievement of one theologian. Rather, he prefers to use the word, 'contributions.'²¹ He recognizes that the ability of one theologian is quite limited and thus he or she can offer only provisional contributions to continuing discussion within the ecumenical community of theologians, which itself must be in touch with the life of the churches and the sufferings and hopes of the world. He is therefore very open to dialogue: "truth is to be found in unhindered dialogue."²² If this is so, to approach his trinitarian theology in a dialogical fashion is to be faithful to the manner and spirit of his theology as a whole.

²⁰ Moltmann, "My Theological Career," in HT 176. Moltmann mentions here his diverse experience of dialogue: the Christian-Marxist dialogue in the 60's, the ecumenical dialogue in the Faith and Order commission of the World Council of the Church, including that of the Orthodox Church, dialogue with Jewish theologians, like Franz Rosenzweig and Abraham Heschel. Besides, he mentions his experience and encounter with the third world church - its suffering, resistance, hope, its charismatic worship and political commitment - all these elements have greatly influenced his whole theology, as he writes, "The development of the political dimension of Christian theology has brought me into partnership with the theologians of the Third world. Just as they were inspired by 'the theology of hope,' so I took up suggestions from the 'theology of liberation' of Latin America and the 'minjung theology' of Korea." Cited in Bauckham, The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann, ix.

²¹ Moltmann, TK xii-xiii.

²² TK xiii. In a more recent reflection upon his whole theological journey, Moltmann reaffirms this dialogical nature of his theology: "I have never pursued theology as a defense of ancient, impersonal doctrines or ecclesial dogmas, but always as a voyage of discovery. . . Theology is a common task and theologians belong also to the *communio sanctorum*, in which justified sinners and accepted skeptics are gathered. In this community, theology is a constant dialogue both with the generation that came before us and with our contemporaries, in expectation of those who will come after us. As a consequence, the theological approach to the truth of God is by nature dialogical." Jürgen Moltmann, "Reflections," Religious Studies Review, vol. 22:2 (April, 1996): 104. This is a reply to Douglas Meeks, "Jürgen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions to Theology," Religious Studies Review, vol. 22/2 (April, 1996): 95-102.

3. Purpose and Limitation of The Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the theology of the Trinity in the work of Jürgen Moltmann, in dialogue with other major contributors to contemporary trinitarian discussion: to identify his distinctive contributions, and to assess, both appreciatively and critically, the value and relevance of his trinitarian thought both for theological clarification and for practical Christian life in the world. This thesis, then, is expositional, but also analytical, critical, and dialogical.

Yet this study does not attempt to discuss Moltmann's theology as a whole, nor even his whole theology of the Trinity. Rather it will focus upon his distinct contributions to four trinitarian issues and their relevance to contemporary social questions. These four trinitarian issues have been selected because a) they are widely discussed among many theologians, b) they reflect Moltmann's own theological priorities and have a central place in his theology, and c) they have contemporary social relevance.

Because I am focusing upon Moltmann's theology of the Trinity, the stress will be largely upon The Crucified God, The Trinity and Kingdom of God, and History and the Triune God, with some references to other works.

Since this study is basically an examination of Moltmann's trinitarian theology

regarding the above four major trinitarian issues, it necessarily takes the form of a dialogue between Moltmann and other important theologians, such as Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Eberhard Jüngel, some feminist theologians, and others. I shall not, however, pretend to present the thought of these other theologians in any thorough fashion, but shall deal with their ideas selectively, only as they are related to Moltmann's views, and to the four issues mentioned above.

Finally, it must be pointed out that since this study attempts to identify Moltmann's contributions to four different but related trinitarian issues, there has to be some repetition in its presentation. This is because some of Moltmann's ideas relate to more than one of the issues treated here. For example, his idea of the perichoretic unity of God will be treated in terms of his response to postulate atheism (chapter 1) and also the issue of the unity of God's self (chapter 3). That is, since this study examines Moltmann's trinitarian theology in relation to four different issues, it does not present his thought in a straightforward expository way, but from four different complementary perspectives.

4. Thesis Statement

In this thesis I shall show that Jürgen Moltmann's theology of the Trinity provides valuable options for four major contemporary issues in trinitarian theology.

which have in turn great significance for practical Christian living in the world. First, Moltmann's trinitarian theology offers an insightful response to the conflict between traditional theism and humanist atheism by demonstrating that it is the Christian triune God that provides the ground of genuine human freedom and dignity. Second, his trinitarian theology rightly stresses the genuine historicity of God, thus assuring the practical relevance of the doctrine of God for concrete human life. Third, Moltmann's "social Trinity" in the perichoretic unity of God provides a viable option for interpreting the unity-trinity relationship in God, which is, again, significant for human liberation and social equality. Finally, Moltmann's trinitarian theology provides a helpful contribution to reshaping the theological issue of gender as it is related to the Trinity, and thus enhances the equality and emancipation of women in our contemporary world. While this thesis is highly positive and appreciative of Moltmann's trinitarian theology and its practical implications, the dialogue with other authors will help to identify some weaknesses or unclear points in his trinitarian thought that need further development.

5. Method of the Thesis

Moltmann's trinitarian theology has been studied in several ways. First, there

are simple presentations of his trinitarian thought.²³ Second, there are comparative studies that articulate his thought by comparing him with another (trinitarian) theologian.²⁴ Further, there are thematic studies that examine his trinitarian idea in terms of one theme or subject.²⁵ And there are some that combine thematic and comparative study together.²⁶ This study undertakes thematic as well as comparative study. First it is thematic in the fact that it elaborates Moltmann's trinitarian thought and its social implications in terms of the four current trinitarian issues. Yet at the same time this study undertakes the form of comparative study in the fact that it pursues a dialogue or comparison between Moltmann and other trinitarian theologians. Especially, each chapter will be constituted as follows:

1) First I shall provide a brief description of the recent development of the

²³ For example, Ted Peters, "Trinity Talk: Part I," *Dialog* 26 (1987): 44-7. "Moltmann and the Way of the Trinity," *Dialog* 31 (1992): 272-9. Richard Bauckham, "The Holy Spirit in the Trinity," and "The Trinity and Human Freedom," in *The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1995).

²⁴ For example, John O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Roger Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jurgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983): 213-27.

²⁵ For example, R. J. Neuhaus, "Moltmann vs. Monotheism," *Dialog* 20 (1981): 239-43. Paul Molnar, "The Function of the Trinity in Moltmann's Ecological Doctrine of Creation," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 673-97. S. K. Tang, *God's History in the Theology of Jurgen Moltmann*, Ph.D. thesis: University of St. Andrews, 1994.

²⁶ Waite Willis, Jr. *Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987). Faye Ellen Schott, *God is Love: The Contemporary Theological Movement of Interpreting the Trinity as God's Relational Being*, Th. D. thesis: Lutheran School of Theology, 1990. Thomas R. Thompson, *Imitatio Trinitatis: The Trinity As Social Model in the Theologies of Jurgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff*, Ph. D. thesis: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1996.

trinitarian issue in question. Here I shall characterize the ongoing discussion according to two or more groups or schools of thought. in order to clarify the content of current debates.

2) Second. I shall examine Moltmann's trinitarian response to the issue in question and thereby articulate its implications for the practice of Christian life. Here I shall attempt to engage Moltmann in a critical dialogue with other trinitarian theologians and by doing so identify his contributions and weaknesses.

3) Finally I shall provide a summary and evaluation of Moltmann's response to the designated trinitarian issue.

Thus basically this study takes the form of dialogue: Yet this dialogue is pursued not between Moltmann and one or two important trinitarian theologians. Rather, questions will be raised for Moltmann's understanding of the Trinity by a number of different theologians, as they relate to the specific, designated four issues.

6. Structure of The Thesis

This Thesis will consist of an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, and bibliography. Chapter one will deal with Moltmann's trinitarian theology as a polemic against traditional theism and humanist atheism. Here it will be indicated that

Moltmann's trinitarian theology was originally developed as a theological response to theism and atheism and largely succeeds in refuting both of them. This chapter will focus especially on Moltmann's book, The Crucified God.

The first part of this chapter will provide a general overview of the aspect of contemporary trinitarian theology that appropriates this doctrine as a theological response to both theism and atheism. Especially this section will serve as an introduction to Moltmann's response to theism and atheism by examining two things: The nature of classical theism and its relationship to atheism, and two different trinitarian approaches to theism and atheism as represented by Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel and Wolfhart Pannenberg respectively. The second part of this chapter will examine the elements of Moltmann's trinitarian theology that critically responds to theism and atheism. First, it will examine his understanding of classical theism. Then it will elaborate his idea of 'suffering God' and 'perichoretic unity of God' as a reliable polemic to protest atheism and postulate atheism respectively. As a conclusion it will contend that Moltmann's trinitarian theology includes a clear liberationist thrust and practical implications that rightly respond to the atheist charge against theism and Christian faith as well.

Chapter 2 will deal with Moltmann's understanding of the economic-immanent

Trinity and its social implication. This chapter will focus especially on Moltmann's books, The Crucified God, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, and History and Triune God. The first part of this chapter will deal with the general overview of current debate of the immanent-economic Trinity. Here we will point out these things: First, an important characteristic of current trinitarian thought is its emphasis upon the importance of salvation history for the doctrine of God. Second, this soteriological emphasis upon the theology of the Trinity has facilitated the debates of the relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinity. Third, it will examine two different approaches in understanding the immanent-economic Trinity, that of assuming a weak identity between these two trinities as represented by Barth and Jüngel and that of seeing a strong identity as represented by Wolfhart Pannenberg, Catherine LaCugna, and Ted Peters. The second part of this chapter will deal with Moltmann's understanding of the economic-immanent Trinity. First it will note that Moltmann finds God's being primarily in God's activity in the world. Second, it will examine his attempt to secure some difference between these two 'trinities' by understanding the immanent Trinity as the eschatological form of the economic Trinity. Third, it will articulate the ecological implications of this understanding. Finally it will indicate its contributions and weaknesses.

In chapter 3 we will examine Moltmann's understanding of the unity of the triune God and its social implication in terms of the current debates of this issue. The emphasis will be given to The Trinity and the Kingdom of God. History and Triune God. and Humanity in God. The first part of this chapter will survey the current debates of this issue. Here it will survey two distinct models in understanding the unity-trinity relationship: the unity model that is represented by Barth and Rahner and the trinity model of Pannenberg and Boff. The second part of this chapter will deal with Moltmann's social Trinity that understands God as the community or society of three distinct divine persons. First we will examine his criticism of the unity model that is represented by Barth and Rahner. Next, we will study his way of finding God's unity in the notion of divine perichoresis, as well as his contention that perichoretic union is also an historical and eschatological reality. Then we will examine the socio-political implications of Moltmann's argument. Finally we will provide some evaluations and criticisms of Moltmann's perichoretic unity of God.

Chapter 4 will examine Moltmann's response to the gender issue of the Trinity. Especially it will focus upon his response to the contention that the traditional trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Spirit is patriarchal and androcentric and thus must be discarded or at least balanced with more gender-neutral or gender-equal images of God.

Here the emphasis will be given to History and the Triune God. God - His and Hers. and some other articles such as “The Motherly Father: Is Trinitarian Patripassianism Replacing Theological Patriarchalism?”

The first part of this chapter will present a general overview of this gendered Trinity by surveying five different responses to this issue: 1) Retaining the traditional trinitarian formula, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: 2) Replacing the masculine metaphors of God with the symbol of goddess: 3) Finding and securing gender balance in one of several ways, such as attributing feminine nature to God, understanding one divine person as a female figure, speaking of God with both feminine and masculine symbols, or understanding God as a ‘Quaternity’: 4) Desexing God by dropping off both male and female expressions; and, 5) Depersonalizing God by adopting natural metaphors, or through abstraction. The second part of this chapter will examine and evaluate Moltmann’s response to this gender issue of the Trinity. Here it will be pointed out that first, Moltmann pays full recognition to the importance of this issue in his later writings (after the publication of the Trinity and the Kingdom of God), especially through his dialogue with his wife, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel. Second, his response to this issue is basically a recapitulation of his social doctrine of the Trinity. Third, his way of meeting the gender issue of the Trinity is to keep the trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Spirit.

while finding feminine aspects of each of the divine persons and by doing so seeking gender balance. Especially this part will critically examine Moltmann's notion of God the Father as 'Motherly Father,' God the Son as 'Brother among Us,' and God the Holy Spirit as a 'Feminine, Motherly Figure.' Finally it will be argued that Moltmann provides a reliable, but not the only option, that enhances the equality and emancipation of women in our contemporary world.

Finally, the conclusion section will summarize and sort out some important contributions of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity to the development of future trinitarian theology, especially as responses to contemporary social questions.

CHAPTER ONE

TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY AS A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO THEISM AND ATHEISM

1-1 Introduction: A Renewed Interest in the Doctrine of the Trinity as a Critique of the Theistic Understanding of God

In Christian tradition the word 'God' has generally referred to the one supreme holy being, the unity of ultimate reality and ultimate goodness. Thus understood, God created the entire universe, rules over it, and will bring it to its final redemption.¹ Especially from the time of the late medieval period this understanding of God has had specific content: God has been conceived in contrast to the finitude of creatures, and understood in absolutist terms, as "infinite, self-existent, incorporeal, eternal, immutable, impassible, simple, perfect, omniscient, and omnipotent."² And in God's relationship to the world, God has been understood mainly through the symbols of lord, king, and father.³

Yet this understanding of God is now severely under attack. For many theologians this concept of God, which is usually called 'traditional theism,' is not genuinely Christian.

¹ Langdon Gilkey, "God" in Peter Hodgson and Robert H. King eds. Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 89-90.

² H. P. Owen, Concepts of Deity (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 1.

³ Sallie McFague, Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 59-69.

Some believe that this theistic understanding is philosophically derived and does not correspond to the biblical witness to God.⁴ Some claim that this 'theism' reflects a hierarchical, patriarchal, androcentric social structure, which must be opposed.⁵ And some believe that it renders Christian faith vulnerable to the charge of humanist atheism that God is destructive of human freedom and wellbeing.⁶

Since this is so, many authors have attempted to counter and overcome this theistic concept of God in various ways. An especially important movement doing this is to return to the doctrine of the Trinity and to find there a resource to refute the theistic conception of God. Furthermore, many authors believe that, by replacing the theistic conception with a biblical, trinitarian doctrine of God, one can provide a creative theological response to the

⁴ For some selected examples of this criticism, see Jürgen Moltmann, CG 87-89, 200ff; John Macquarrie, Thinking about God (London: SCM press, 1975), 111ff; John O'Donnell, The Mystery of the Triune God (London: Sheed and Ward, 1988), 1-16. Especially problematic in this notion of God is the relationship between God and the world. According to John Macquarrie, this understanding of God presumes no mutual relationship between God and the world. On this view, God never changes vis-à-vis the world, although the world is constantly changing in relation to God. Everything flows from God to the world, but not from the world to God. God affects the world but the world does not affect God. Yet this picture of God, which Macquarrie names 'monarchical,' is not compatible with the biblical portrait of God, who responds to human decisions and is affected by them. Macquarrie, 11ff.

⁵ For example, McFague, Models of God, 63-69; also Johnson, She Who Is, 19-22. For Johnson, classical theism is no less than "the reflection of patriarchal imagination." Ibid., 21.

⁶ For example, besides Moltmann, CG 200-290, see Eberhard Jüngel, 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. J. C. B. Mohr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 3-104; Walter Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, trans. Matthew O'Connell. (London: SCM Press, 1983), 47-123. According to Kasper, this concept of God makes God the monarch of heaven who inhibits human freedom and ignores human suffering. Thus it has contributed to the rise of modern atheism as a resistance to 'the almighty Lord' in heaven. See, Ibid., 16ff. In this sense Walter Kasper even speaks of "the heresy of theism," by which he means the concept of God who stands over against the world as imperial ruler and judge. Ibid., 295.

modern atheism that has emerged primarily against the God of traditional theism.

In this chapter we shall deal with Moltmann's trinitarian theology as a theological response to classical theism and atheism, and consider its significance for the question of human freedom and liberation. First we shall briefly describe the nature of theism and its relationship to atheism. Here we will show that theism and atheism are inseparably tied to each other in the fact that both presuppose a similar concept of God and share the same methodology for understanding God. Then we will take note of two different trinitarian responses to theism and atheism, represented by Barth and Jungel on the one hand, and Wolfhart Pannenberg on the other hand. This survey will place Moltmann's handling of this issue in a broad theological context and clarify his specific contributions. Then we will examine Moltmann's trinitarian response to theism and atheism. First, we will treat Moltmann's view of traditional theism. Then we will elaborate the aspects of his doctrine of the Trinity that provide a critical response to modern atheism, especially to protest atheism and postulate atheism respectively.⁷

⁷ There are many different forms of atheism, including protest atheism and postulate atheism. But since it is protest atheism and postulate atheism that Moltmann aims to overcome with his doctrine of the Trinity, we will limit our elaboration of his response to these two forms of atheism. For the diverse forms of modern atheism, see Kasper, 16-46; also Paul Schilling, God in an Age of Atheism (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 115-136. Here Schilling introduces seven forms of modern atheism: 1) Atheism as a rejection of the theistic faith, which is conceived as a human projection. 2) Atheism in the name of human freedom and dignity. 3) Atheism in the name of human suffering. 4) Atheism for a true social transformation. 5) Atheism in the name of modern scientism. 6) Atheism based upon the linguistic problems of the word 'God.' Finally 7)

1-2. The Nature of Theism and its Relationship to Atheism.

The terms 'traditional theism,' 'classical theism,' 'metaphysical theism,' 'philosophical classical theism,' 'supernatural theism' or simply 'theism' represent for the understanding of God, a combination of certain biblical themes of divine sovereignty, power, justice, etc., with philosophical world views, which leads into the concept of God as Supreme Being.⁸ In general these terms refer to the concept of God developed by medieval and early modern theology in close contact with classical metaphysics. It designates the understanding that God is (contrary to atheism), that God is one (contrary to polytheism), and that this one God is not to be identified with the world (contrary to pantheism).⁹ Here we will focus on the feature of traditional theism that has provoked the atheist critique, and by doing so demonstrate the relationship between classical theism and humanist atheism.¹⁰

The structure of traditional theism consists of two basic elements: its theological method, and the doctrine of God that results from this method. The methodology of

Atheism because of the lack or absence of any personal experience of God.

⁸ W. Waite Willis, Jr., Theism, Atheism, and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jurgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism (American Academy of Religion, 1987), 9.

⁹ Johnson, Who She Is, 19.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive but critical study of classical theism, see Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, Philosophers Speak of God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

traditional theism is usually governed by an apologetic concern.¹¹ Traditional theism attempts to prove the existence of God or the truth of religion on a universal anthropological basis. In other words, traditional theism attempts to find the ground for the intelligibility of faith or religion in general human capacities such as reason, moral necessity, or human self-consciousness. And after this is done, it moves into the content of the Christian faith as a specific form of this already established general truth.¹² Thus what comes first in this method is general human reason, moral conscience, or feeling, as epistemological grounds for the existence of God, or the truth of religion. In fact one speaks about God and religion first on the basis of certain human capacities apart from the Christian revelation attested in the Scripture. The result is the weakening of the specifically Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which is rooted especially in the person and life of Jesus Christ. Instead, stress is placed upon the notion of the 'one' supreme God, who is conceived primarily as creator or cause of the world.¹³ A typical way to conceive this supreme God is to understand him in absolutist terms: God is thus depicted primarily as the omnipotent, immutable, impassible, simple, and infinite one. And when this is established, traditional

¹¹ Willis, 10.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

theism then moves into the specific Christian understanding of God as triune. Thus, although theism may speak of God as loving, merciful, and related, these attributes are put in a secondary position and become problematic by the absolutist terms that precede them.¹⁴

The problem with this concept of God is that it is structurally separated from the revelation of Jesus Christ, and thus barely Christian. Furthermore, it is quite vulnerable to the atheist critique. The main target of modern atheism is this philosophically conceived God, who is understood as the Supreme Being in heaven. In fact, atheism in its literal meaning is the denial of God or any supernatural reality.¹⁵ Yet a closer look at the writings of several atheists reveals that what is particularly rejected is the existence of God as the Supreme Being, the Lord in heaven,¹⁶ that is, the God of traditional theism.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The etymology of "atheism" is the combination of two Greek words, a (α) and theos (θεός), which literally means "no god." Thus atheism in its common understanding is the denial of the existence of God (or gods). We find similar definitions in many texts. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language understands atheism as "the belief that there is no God, or denial that God or Gods exist." Encyclopedia Americana identifies atheism as "the denial that there is any being or power deserving the name of God or the reverence accorded to God." In Encyclopedia Britannica atheism is explained as follows: 1) A denial that there is one supreme object of reverence. 2) A denial that this object of reverence is also the all-inclusive reality. 3) A denial that there is any one all-inclusive being at all. 4) A denial that the power which rules the world is worthy of our trust. 5) A denial that this power is a Being with whom we may hold personal communion. Thus atheism in its broad sense is 'the belief that there is no God or any kind of transcendental reality.' For this matter, see Robert A. Morey, The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom (Minnesota: Bethany Press, 1986), 10-46. Also, see Kasper, 16-20.

¹⁶ For example, a famous atheist Madelyn O'Hare demonstrates her atheist position by saying, "I am an atheist and this means at least: I do not believe there is a god, or any gods, especially a personal being who manifests himself, or herself, or itself in any way." Madelyn Murray O'Hare, What on Earth is an

A primary reason that modern atheism is hostile to the God of traditional theism is that this God is incompatible with human freedom and responsibility. If there is a God who rules all things, everything is already decided and there is no room for human freedom and responsibility. Indeed, "Where the great Lord of the world is, there is no room for freedom."¹⁷ Thus, God should be rejected for the sake of the freedom of humankind. Paul Schilling puts this point succinctly:

A favorite target of atheistic hostility is the personal, supernatural, omnipotent God of traditional theism. Belief in a personal deity is rejected in part because it is thought to enthrone above the world an absolute monarch whose arbitrary will leaves no room for any exercise of responsible freedom by men.¹⁸

In fact no one can endure a tyrannical God in heaven and in this sense the atheist rejection of this God is justified.¹⁹ But the question still remains whether this concept of

Atheist 2, 53. Cited in Morey, 18. According to another atheist, Charles Martin, "atheists deny that there is a Being called God who created the world, watches over man, knows their actions, hears their prayers, cares for their needs, speaks in a whirlwind, took upon himself flesh and walked upon earth and was seen and heard and felt." Charles Burton Martin, Religious Belief (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), 4. Etienne Borne also argues that "atheism (is) the deliberate, definite, dogmatic denial of the existence of a personal God." Etienne Borne, Atheism (New York: Harthorn Books, 1961), 8.

¹⁷ Ernst Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1959), 1413. Cited in Schilling, 127.

¹⁸ Schilling, 209.

¹⁹ In this sense Paul Tillich rightly says, "ordinary theism has made God a heavenly, completely perfect person who resides above the world and mankind. The protest of atheism against such a highest person is correct." Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. 1. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 245. Yet it is also necessary to point out that the image of God as a monarch or a tyrant in heaven is a caricature of the more nuanced classical theism, such as presented by Thomas Aquinas or Friedrich Schleiermacher.

God is the genuine Christian understanding of God. In any case, what is important to note here is that, although atheism rejects the theistic conception of God, it understands God within the context of traditional theism, and is tied to its method.²⁰ Like traditional theism, atheism also conceives the attributes of God not from the revelation of Jesus Christ, but from the world, whether in the form of expanding human virtues (*via eminentia*), or of negating the human limitations (*via negativa*), or of combining these two (*via analogia*). God is conceived therefore as a Supreme Being or reality that relates to the world as its creator or cause. God is also depicted as the omnipotent, immutable, impassible, and infinitely ruling one, while the human being is impotent, changeable, finite and miserable. Consequently God's omnipotent power appears to be an antagonist and threat to everything human. Atheism rejects this kind of God in the name of human freedom and dignity. Yet, in that modern atheism reaches a concept of God by abstracting from the world, it presupposes both the method and the doctrine of God of traditional theism. Modern atheism is therefore the heir of classical theism: It is "the brother of theism."²¹

²⁰ Willis, 10-11. Also, Moltmann, CG 219ff.

²¹ Moltmann, CG 221. For the close relationship of theism to atheism, see also Karl Rahner's saying, "A philosophical critique of atheism would also have to include a critique of theism whether popular or philosophical as it exists in fact. For atheism essentially lives on the misconceived ideas of God from which theism in its actual historical forms inevitably suffers." Karl Rahner, "Atheism," in Karl Rahner ed. Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, vol. 1. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 116-122, citation is in 117-18.

If this is the case, a challenge to classical theism is at the same time a challenge to the atheist charge against Christian faith. And this is exactly the approach that several contemporary theologians have adopted: They have attempted to reformulate the doctrine of the Trinity and by so doing to counter traditional theism and humanist atheism together. Now we turn to this matter.

1-3. Theological Responses to the Atheist Critique of Traditional Theism

A substantial number of theologians have recognized the importance of the atheist critique to Christian faith and attempted to overcome this charge by reformulating a more authentically Christian understanding of God as triune. There are, roughly speaking, two different approaches to the atheist charge to theism in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. The first is largely dependent upon the theology of Karl Barth, who attempted to overcome theism and atheism together by identifying a specifically Christian understanding of the triune God based in God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Barth's way of challenging theism and atheism is adopted and developed by several theologians, including Eberhard Jüngel, Walter Kasper, Colin Gunton, and Jürgen Moltmann. Those who adopt another approach also believe that the doctrine of the Trinity has the potential to challenge

traditional theism and atheism together, but they adopt a more philosophical approach, thus accepting some form of Christian theism as an argument for the existence of a divine being. For them a form of philosophical and anthropological ground is indispensable if we want to maintain the intelligibility of Christian faith in God. Among current theologians, Karl Rahner and Wolfhart Pannenberg take up this approach. This part will survey these two responses to the problem posed by theism and atheism and thereby provide a theological background for Moltmann's handling of this issue. We will examine Barth and Jungel as representatives of the first response, and Pannenberg of the second.

1-3-1. A More Theological Approach: Karl Barth and Eberhard Jüngel

A pioneer who recognized in the doctrine of the Trinity the clue and dynamic to counter theism and atheism is Karl Barth. For him the concept of God in traditional theism is radically different from a Christian understanding of God. It is a human, philosophical attempt to understand the nature of God, which is not directly related to the divine revelation in Jesus Christ.²² Furthermore, the traditional theism, which attempts to justify

²² Barth insists that God as Creator and Father has proper meaning and significance only through God's revelation in Jesus Christ and not through a general truth of reason, religion, or philosophy. But the traditional theism, which justifies the oneness of God on some philosophical basis before and in separation from the God of Jesus Christ, departs from the divine revelation attested in the person of Jesus Christ and consequently distorts the Christian understanding of God. He writes: "The first article of faith in God the Father and his work is not a sort of 'forecourt' of the Gentiles, a realm in which Christians and Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers are beside one another and to some extent stand together in the presence of a reality concerning which there might be some measure of agreement, in describing it as the work of God the Creator. . . It is not the case that the truth about God the Creator is directly accessible to us and that only

knowledge of God through a process of abstraction from nature or human self-consciousness, inevitably results in the Feuerbachian criticism, that the God-language drawn from nature or human self-consciousness does not represent God but only the world or humanity. It becomes vulnerable to the atheist charge that the concept of God is a mere product of human projection.²³

Barth takes a totally different path and reformulates theology in order to meet Feuerbach's criticism. And he does this by developing a trinitarian doctrine of God, rooted in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. According to Barth, we can speak of God only on the basis of God's revelation. And this revelation is found in a particular and concrete historical event, the history of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus Christ is the very Word of God and the revelation of God's self.²⁴ In Jesus Christ God has revealed God's self as the one who

the truth of the second article needs a revelation. But in the same sense in both cases we are faced with the mystery of God and his work and the approach to it can only be one and the same." Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, trans. C. T. Thompson. (London: SCM Press, 1949), 50.

²³ Barth insists, "If we really dare to go back to the sphere of what God is in Himself, it must have nothing whatever to do with the absolutizing of human nature and being. Indeed, it must not be that we try arbitrarily to withdraw from our own sphere. . . as if it lay in our discernment and power to set up or even to choose another." CD II/1, 73. Based upon this conviction, he rejects the notion of *vestigia trinitatis* as a way of speaking of the triune God. For if there are traces of the Trinity in nature, culture, history, religion, and the human soul, apart from God's revelation in Jesus Christ, this becomes an independent basis for talk about God and for developing the doctrine of the Trinity. Then Feuerbach's reversal of theology to anthropology can be asserted again. See, CD I/1, 394. For this same reason he also rejects the theological tradition that deduces 'the doctrine of the Trinity. . . from the premises of formal logic.'" CD II/1, 261. These theologies begin elsewhere than with the doctrine of the Trinity. They speak of it speculatively and are thus vulnerable to the Feuerbachian critique. CD II/1, 261.

²⁴ CD I/1, 343.

is identical with his act of revelation: Jesus Christ is the very act of God's self-revelation. Therefore, there can be no inquiry into the essence of God apart from God's act in Jesus Christ.²⁵

If Jesus Christ is no less than God's self-revelation, a "repetition of God."²⁶ and "God a second time."²⁷ Barth writes, this leads inevitably to the doctrine of the Trinity. God is not a monad in heaven but the triune God who reveals God's self in the event of Jesus Christ. Thus, for him, the notion of the self-revelation of God precedes and requires the doctrine of the Trinity. As Barth writes, "The doctrine of the Trinity arises from an analysis of revelation."²⁸ "Revelation is the root of the doctrine of the Trinity."²⁹ In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity means that revelation is identical with God him/herself.

Now Barth contends that the God who has revealed God's self in the person of Jesus Christ reveals God's self also as the Lord and Ruler of all God's creation.³⁰ This is

²⁵ Thus Barth writes, "God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. If we wish really to regard revelation from the side of its subject, God, then above all we must understand that this subject, God the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation, identical with its effect. See CD 1/1, 340:

²⁶ CD 1/1, 343.

²⁷ CD 1/1, 363.

²⁸ CD 1/1, 353.

²⁹ CD 1/1, 355. Cf, CD 1/1 357-59.

³⁰ CD 1/1, 425.

for him the constant theme of Scripture.³¹ Since this is the case, he maintains, the doctrine of the Trinity has to do with the fact that God is the Lord, that is, God is always the subject of the whole process of revelation. First, according to Barth, God remains the subject of God's revelation as the Revealer. God chooses to reveal God's self in absolute freedom. Without the act of God's revelation, God would be utterly hidden. Yet in God's sovereign act of freedom God decided to reveal God's self. Thus, in God's unveiling of God's self, God still remains the subject of this revelation: God is irreducibly subject and can never be made into an object that can be controlled by human beings. Second, God remains the subject of God's revelation in the act of revelation. God unveils and communicates God's self in such a way that God is identical with what God reveals. God does not reveal something about God's self but God's very self through a historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus Christ is God's self-revelation in the primordial sense. And this identity between God the Father who is the Revealer, and God the Son the

³¹ CD 1/1, 305-6. Barth observes that God, in giving the ten commandments to the Israelites, reveals God's self as the sovereign One: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me." (Ex. 20:2-3). This is also the message of the prophets, as we read in Isaiah, "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other (Is.45:22). He further indicates that in the New Testament Jesus is confessed as the Lord, a title that is attributed to God in the Old Testament. By confessing Jesus as the Lord the New Testament states that God is present in Jesus. In the Son, God determined to be present in yet another form. Since this is the case, according to Barth, the early Church was right in distinguishing the Son from the Father, while at the same time recognizing that he was one with the Father in terms of his essential nature or essence. In addition to this, Barth contends, the Christian Church rightly affirmed that God is present in another form in the Holy Spirit. Here, too, the one God is present again.

Revelation, allows God to remain irreducibly subject in the act of revelation.³² Third, God remains the subject of God's revelation in the impact or "impartation" of this revelation to human beings.³³ In the Holy Spirit, who is the concrete revealedness or impartation of the divine revelation, God remains the absolute Subject and Lord in this self-revelation. Indeed God is and always "remains indissolubly Subject."³⁴ In fact, even on the "subjective side in the event of revelation," where humans come to know the truth of God's revelation and experience it in their own lives, it is God who is subject.³⁵ Consequently, for Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity speaks of a God who is always 'the subject' for human knowledge of God, because God's revelation is grounded solely in God's self. If this is so, for him, the God of the doctrine of the Trinity has nothing to do with an abstraction from human self-consciousness or experience. Knowledge and speech about God is at no point a human possibility. He precludes all human synergism in the attainment of the knowledge of God. Rather, knowledge and speech about triune God are possible only on the basis of God's action, in which God distinguishes God's self from

³² CD I/1, 320. Here he writes, "That He reveals Himself as the Son is what is primarily meant when we say that He reveals Himself as the Lord. This Sonship is God's Lordship in His revelation."

³³ CD I/1, 330.

³⁴ CD I/1, 331-2. Also CD I/1, 438.

³⁵ CD I/1, 515.

him or her, making God's revelation real for human beings. Consequently this trinitarian thinking prevents theology from becoming mere human projection. Unlike traditional theism, which understands God from the world or self-consciousness, and thus fails to recognize the subjectivity of God, according to Barth, trinitarian thought advocates the subjectivity of God and thus goes beyond Feuerbach's criticism. The doctrine of the Trinity prevents God from being understood as a human construction and thus nullifies the atheist charge that the existence of God is simply a human projection.

What Barth is doing with this argument is reformulating the fundamental basis of theological epistemology. For him, finding God apart from the person of Jesus Christ, whether in nature or human self-consciousness, is a theological dead end: it leads to theism, and ultimately to Feuerbachian atheism. Theologies that start elsewhere than with the doctrine of the Trinity are led to speak of God apart from God's revelation, and necessarily end up with a form of anthropology: humans decide by what words to speak about God. Thus, Barth's doctrine of the Trinity asserts a methodological reversal of traditional theism, offering an authentic, biblical, and Christian response to atheism.

Eberhard Jüngel adopts and develops Barth's view that modern atheism is a negation of traditional theism, and thus both should be answered by identifying the Christian God as triune. Like Barth he argues that atheism can work as a corrective to the

distortion of Christian faith by criticizing theism as a pseudo-Christian understanding of God, and in this way points to a genuinely Christian concept of God beyond "theism and atheism."³⁶ Yet at the same time, for him, atheism has the problem of misidentifying and misrepresenting the Christian God who is fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and thus fails to understand the Christian concept of God as triune.

A valuable contribution of Jüngel's argument is that it provides quite comprehensive and insightful historical observations of the rise of the modern atheism. For him, the phenomenon of atheism is closely related to the rise of modern anthropocentrism. Atheism is the offspring of the modern spirit, which made the human person the measure of all things. Thus for Jungel, in order to overcome atheism, we need to repudiate the whole anthropocentric tendency of the modern world.³⁷

According to Jüngel, it is Rene Descartes who opened the door to modernity and modern atheism, advocating the existence of God as guarantor of the human self. For him the existence of God became a predicate of human self-certainty: God was proven to be a "necessary being."³⁸ But through Descartes' adoption of 'doubt' as a method for true

³⁶ Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World, 3-104. For an excellent treatment of Jungel's polemic against theism and atheism, John Webster, Eberhard Jungel: An Introduction to His Theology, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 79-92.

³⁷ Jüngel, 14.

³⁸ Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World, 16ff.

knowledge and his appeal to God's necessity. Jüngel observes, an inversion of the true relation between God and humanity took place: the former became a function of the latter.³⁹ In fact, "this proof of the necessity of God is the midwife of modern atheism."⁴⁰

Jüngel further observes that the God who is 'necessary' for humankind is always conceived as God the almighty Lord, whose love and mercy are secondary to the claim of his lordship. But the God who is 'necessary' as the Lord in heaven, gradually becomes 'non-necessary.'⁴¹ The worldly non-necessity of God means that a human person can be human without God.⁴² The possibility of human existence without God is turned into 'the necessity' of humanity without God, and thus to a godless human race.⁴³

Yet Jüngel maintains that the God who was at first required as 'necessary' and then refuted later as 'nonnecessary,' is not the genuine 'Christian' God. Rather, it is a theistically constructed idea of God, which has little relation to the biblical God. For him, what is rejected as 'nonnecessary' here is not the God of Jesus Christ, but metaphysical

³⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 21.

⁴² Ibid., 20.

⁴³ Ibid., 21.

theism, which understands God as the supreme reality that relates to the world as its creator or cause, who "remains in the dimension of a first cause *supra nos*".⁴⁴ Against this idea of God, Jüngel insists, atheism's challenge is right and legitimate. It is a challenge to think God anew, a cry for a genuine God who is more than the God of metaphysical theism. Consequently, for him, "atheism can be rejected only if one overcomes theism."⁴⁵

According to Jüngel, the true place where we identify the God of Christian faith is the cross of Jesus Christ. God identifies God's reality forever and for all with the human Jesus, who suffered and died on the cross: "the crucified is as it were the material definition of what is meant by the word 'God.'"⁴⁶ In fact, "Jesus Christ is that man in whom God has defined himself as a human God."⁴⁷ If this is so, Jüngel argues, "It is irresponsible not to conceive and define the essence of God out of God's identification with Jesus."⁴⁸ In short, Christian theology must be *theologia crucifixi* (the theology of the Crucified).⁴⁹ Yet theism fails precisely at this point: It fails to understand God "by ignoring the identity of God with

⁴⁴ Ibid., 279.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 343.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13: "The Crucified One is virtually the real definition of what is meant with the word 'God.' Christian theology is therefore fundamentally the theology of the Crucified One."

the concrete existence of a man, the man Jesus of Nazareth.”⁵⁰ Likewise, atheism also fails to see this christocentric understanding of God. Atheism adopts the false assumption of philosophical theism and thus misrepresents the genuine God of Christian faith. It fails as a critique of the Christian concept of God to the extent that it does not overcome the language and conceptuality of the theism that it rejects. Since this is so, he contends, a Christian theology has to reject both theism and atheism together: “The dual task of theology consists in . . . leaving behind the alternative of an unchristian theism on the one hand and an unchristian atheism on the other.”⁵¹ Ultimately, then, atheism is countered by appeal to the specific content of Christian faith, which affirms God’s self-identification with the crucified:

Theism fails God’s divinity, in that it defines God as absolutely unrelated essence. . . .Atheism, on the other hand, . . .also fails the true divinity of God, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ as precisely not a supremely self-possessed and self-willing absolutely independent essence. Whoever thinks of God as such a being has precisely not thought of him as God, but as all too human and, indeed diabolical.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid., 62.

⁵¹ Eberhard Jüngel, “Das dunkle Wort vom ‘Tode Gottes’” Evangelische Kommentare 2, 1969, 40. Cited in Webster, Eberhard Jungel: An Introduction to His Theology, 81.

⁵² Jüngel, “ . . . keine Menschenlosigkeit Gottes. . . .” Zur Theologie Karl Barths zwischen Theismus und Athismus.” Evangelische Theologie, 31, (1971): 344. Cited in Webster, 81.

What then is the identity of the God of Christian faith, who is revealed in the event of the cross? Jüngel contends that when we reflect upon the event of the cross, God is neither a 'necessary' nor 'nonnecessary' reality. Rather God is 'more than necessary.'⁵³ What he means by this awkward expression is that God is a whole new possibility, which transcends the worldly category of necessity. In other words, God is not one who can be grasped in the worldly category of necessity but must be understood as the truly gratuitous origin of all. In fact, for him, the notion of 'necessity' implies relationships: all worldly beings, including the human being, become 'necessary' in relation to others. Thus every necessary being is limited and conditioned by their relations to others: "The necessary as necessary is always thematic or interesting for the sake of something else."⁵⁴ But God is more than necessary: God is not limited or conditioned by non-God. To state this differently, God is limited and determined only by God's self: "Whatever is more than necessary is interesting for its own sake."⁵⁵ Thus that God is more than necessary means that God is the God of supreme freedom who has a radical priority over the human world. He expresses this idea in three striking propositions:

⁵³ Webster, 24.

⁵⁴ Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World, 34.

⁵⁵ Ibid

- a) Man and his world are interesting for their own sake.
- b) Even more so. God is interesting for his own sake.
- c) God makes man, who is interesting for his own sake, interesting in a new way.⁵⁶

What Jüngel argues here is that the divine reality has priority over human reality.

The personal God who reveals God's self has the priority in defining the religious experiences of humans and not vice versa. Thus, what it means to be human can be found and defined through the divine revelation. We do not come to God. God comes to us: Only when revelation occurs, are we able to reflect upon it. Therefore, theology's task is *nachdenken* (thinking after) the revelation.⁵⁷ Theology is a thought that does not decide about God's reality but corresponds to it. It should not attempt to search for God apart from God's actual self-revelation, much less to pronounce independently on the nature of God's existence and essence. Yet the modern world has lost this important insight and so has become hopelessly androcentric. The task of the theologian is therefore to recapitulate this priority of God over all worldly realms. More specifically, the task of a theologian is to start every theological discourse with the person of Jesus Christ, through whom God has revealed God's self. Because Jesus Christ is the one through whom God communicates

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 227-228.

God's self, he is the heart of Christian belief and the fundamental locus of all Christian theology.⁵⁸ Furthermore, for him, focusing upon the priority of God over all human realms is the way to counter the modern androcentrism, which has brought about the rise of modern atheism. Consequently, the way to overcome atheism and theism together is to be faithful to this radical priority of God over humankind, which was clearly revealed through Jesus Christ.

Jüngel's contribution lies in the fact that he presents a quite brilliant and insightful examination of the phenomenon of modern atheism. Besides, like Barth, he also successfully demonstrates that theism and atheism are based upon a false epistemological principle that can be countered by the specific nature of Christian epistemology, that God is known only through God, through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Yet, as we have seen, his discussion is focused entirely on the conceptual, thus theoretical aspect of this issue: He simply explicates the philosophical root of theism and atheism and then attempts to counter it by identifying 'proper speech' about the God of Christian faith. This approach is valuable in itself but not fully satisfying because it does not consider the complex

⁵⁸ Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World, 13. In this sense Jüngel writes, "Everything must be seen in the light of Christology: the human person, the church, the world, and even the devil. . . . And to think christologically means to reflect only on the revelation of God." Eberhard Jüngel, Karl Barth: a Theological Legacy, trans. Gartett E. Paul. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 128. Furthermore, for Jüngel every effort to ground theology in universal terms necessarily fails: it will turn out not to be faithful to its truest source and resource.

interactions between theological concepts and social reality. In fact, as Webster rightly says, mere explanation cannot change the reality.⁵⁹ A critique of modern atheism has to be more than theoretical. It has to present not only a radically different concept of God, but also relate that concept to the real situation of humanity in the world. Now we will turn to another approach to deal with modern atheism that is represented by Wolfhart Pannenberg.

1-3-2. A More Philosophical, Anthropological Approach: Pannenberg

In contrast to Barth and Jüngel, Pannenberg takes a more anthropological and philosophical approach in challenging modern atheism. He begins his polemic against atheism with a criticism of Barth's approach to Feuerbachian atheism. Although he appreciates Barth for recognizing the importance and validity of Feuerbach's critique of religion, for him Barth's claim that Christian faith is not a human religious project and therefore largely immune from Feuerbach's critique, cannot be an adequate response to the challenge of modern atheism. This way of response is in fact only an escape to a safer place, a sort of "spiritual capitulation to Feuerbach."⁶⁰ For him, this approach inevitably ends up with the isolation of Christianity from the modern world, making Christian faith an

⁵⁹ Webster, 83.

⁶⁰ Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Types of Atheism and Their Theological Significance," in Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. 2, trans. George Kehm. (London: SCM Press, 1971) 188-89.

irrelevant, private, subjective matter, which has no meaning for our world.⁶¹ Therefore, according to him, in order to keep the intelligibility of Christian faith, we have to challenge atheism on its own ground, that is, its denial of the religious tendency of the human person.⁶² In other words, atheism can be properly countered in the same field in which it demonstrates its attack on Christian faith, that is, the world of religions, and the human religiosity that is deeply imbedded in every human person.⁶³

Thus unlike Barth and Jüngel, Pannenberg attempts to demonstrate the worldly necessity of God on an anthropological basis. Already in 1962 he argued that the human person has an infinite dependence to the divine reality. A human person "presupposes a being beyond everything finite, a vis-à-vis upon which he is dependent."⁶⁴ Thus, our language of God "can be used in a meaningful way only if it means the entity toward which a man's boundless dependence is directed. Otherwise it becomes an empty word."⁶⁵

⁶¹ Thus Pannenberg writes, "Theology has to learn that after Feuerbach it can no longer mouth the word 'God' without offering any explanation: that it cannot pursue theology 'from above,' as Barth says, if it does not want to fall into the hopeless and, what is more, self-inflicted isolation of a higher glossolalia, and lead the whole church into this blind alley." Pannenberg, *Ibid.*, 189-190

⁶² Pannenberg, "Speaking about God in the Face of Atheist Criticism," in Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. 3, trans. George Kehm. (London: SCM Press, 1971), 104-105. See also "Types of Atheism and their Theological Significance," in Basic Questions in Theology Vol. 2, 184-200.

⁶³ Pannenberg, "Speaking about God in the Face of Atheist Criticism," 104f.

⁶⁴ Pannenberg, What is Man?: Contemporary Anthropology in theological Perspective, trans. D. A. Priebe. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Certainly, as Pannenberg acknowledges, pointing out that the human person has a transcendental dimension does not automatically guarantee the existence of God.⁶⁶ Yet for him this phenomenon enables us to provide a possibility for speaking of the existence of God on a common anthropological basis, without retreating into the specific revelation of God.⁶⁷

In his later works Pannenberg presents his argument in a more nuanced and qualified way. His thesis of the infinite dependence of the human person on God is now modified through the notion of the modern human person's experience of freedom. Yet here again, he attempts to find the intelligibility of the existence of God in human nature, which is open to the infinite. In fact the reference is still made to "the elevation of man above the finite content of human experience to the idea of infinite reality, which sustains everything finite, including man himself," which is for him essential to the human person.⁶⁸ He still

⁶⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Thus as William Hill indicates, Pannenberg assumes "an ontological structure of man's being that presupposes an infinity transcending man's nature." In this sense we find a similarity of Pannenberg to Rahner in the fact that both view God as the unspoken mystery present in human experience prior to the development of the religious life. For this matter, William Hill, The Three Personed-God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 156ff. Also, Stanley Grenz, Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 32-33.

⁶⁸ Pannenberg, "Anthropology and the Question of God," The Idea of God and Human freedom, trans. R. A. Wilson, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 89. Citation is in Jungel, God as the Mystery of the World, 17.

thinks it necessary to remark that "God is conceivable as the basis of human freedom, and no longer as its negation."⁶⁹ In other words, for Pannenberg, the existence of God must be presupposed for the sake of the genuine openness and freedom of the human person. If the ground of human freedom is simply the human person him/herself, he or she becomes the slave of his or her present life. Yet this contradicts the structure of personhood that is open to other human persons and transcends everything that is given in the present. Thus, the basis of human freedom cannot be a being that already exists, but only a reality, which has future as its nature, and thus it has to be God.⁷⁰

Pannenberg largely sums up the views of his varied writings in the first volume of his Systematic Theology.⁷¹ In this book he rejects both the traditional natural theology and its theistic proof of God, and Barth's theological critique to all forms of natural theology. For him the traditional theistic proofs of God's existence based upon natural theology no longer provide legitimate evidence for theistic claims: they are all vulnerable to the atheistic challenge.⁷² Likewise Barth's rejection of every form of natural theology is also in

⁶⁹ Pannenberg, "Anthropology and the Question of God," 93.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 93ff.

⁷¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

⁷² Ibid., 95ff.

the end self-destructive, since it is impossible to demonstrate that Christian faith is an exception from the atheist verdict that religion is the creation of human imagination.⁷³ Then, where can we find the possibility of arguing for the existence of God? For Pannenberg, there is still a 'natural' way of approaching the question of God if we hold fast to the conviction of natural theology, that is, that God is the ground of the possibility of the existence of the world and humanity. Although this does not provide a firm ground for developing a natural theology by means of reason alone, it nevertheless indicates the minimal possibility of conceiving of natural knowledge of God, as a factual characteristic of human life. In fact, as Christoph Schwobel observes, with this idea Pannenberg shifts the ground of the discussion from the acquired natural knowledge of God that forms the basis of the formal theistic proofs of God, to the innate knowledge of God in the structure of human being.⁷⁴ Indeed, for him, the expressions such as 'conscience,' 'immediate awareness,' and 'basic trust,' in terms of anthropology and in the history of religious thought reveal that human beings understand their existence to be oriented into and dependent on the divine reality.⁷⁵ Although this awareness is non-thematic and can only be

⁷³ Ibid., 102-107.

⁷⁴ Christoph Schöbebel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," in David Ford (ed), The Modern Theologians (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 272.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

identified as awareness of God through a reflective interpretative framework, it is nevertheless a human possibility that awaits actualization. It is fully actual in the very fact of human existence and thus works as an essential point of connection for the intelligibility of Christian claims. In Pannenberg's view this feature of the human condition is no less than what St. Paul refers to in Romans 1:19ff.⁷⁶

Pannenberg believes that this openness of the human person to the divine reality becomes explicit in world religions. For him religion in general and the diverse religions in particular are the place where the non-thematic God-consciousness in the human person is most fully realized.⁷⁷ In fact for him, the history of religions is the history of the appearance of the unity of God in which God discloses God's truth. Indeed, in opposition to the view that "religion is a purely anthropological phenomenon, as an expression and creation of the human consciousness," he maintains that religion "embraces deity and humanity, but in such a way that in the relation deity emerges as preeminent, awe-inspiring, absolutely valid, inviolable."⁷⁸ Thus, although it is no longer possible to 'prove' the existence of God in the traditional theistic way, one can demonstrate a minimal argument

⁷⁶ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology I, 106-107.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 119ff. Especially, 142ff.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 142. Cf. Ibid., 157-159.

for the existence of God at least in this area. Yet for him, religion has its own danger. Since human beings recognize the divine reality in the context of their experience of the world, the divine reality is easily identified in a religion with its specific form of manifestation. Then, the divine infinite is turned into something finite in the world. This can happen not only to the concept of God, but also to all cultic activities and to mythical descriptions of the Divine.⁷⁹ Thus religion is a distortion of divine revelation, and at the same time a manifestation of God. What this means for him is that the divine revelation which has manifested itself throughout the history of religion is always provisional. Every religion is in this sense a preparation for the full manifestation of the divine reality, which will occur at the end of the history.⁸⁰ It is a 'provisional form' of the 'divine answer' to the human question of God.⁸¹

Pannenberg's claim that every historical religion is provisional in terms of the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 180ff. In his observation, "in general religions have distinguished very well between the deity and the worldly reality in which its power is manifested. . . (But) Identification of the divine power with one sphere of its manifestation always means restriction to one aspect of worldly expression. . . Because of the restriction to a particular sphere of manifestation, the one infinite power is divided up into many powers for those who try to learn its nature through its manifestations. But these powers are simply particular aspects of the one Infinite." Ibid. 180. It is at this point that Pannenberg accepts in part Barth's criticism that religion is human self-assertion and rebellion against the reality of God. See Ibid., 177..

⁸⁰ Ibid., 185.

⁸¹ Pannenberg, "The Question of God," in Basic Questions of Theology II, 226. Yet for him even Christianity falls under the provisionality of the present. Thus he claims that Christians must be open to the revelation of God found in other religious traditions. They have to be attentive to the glimpses of the eschatological truth of God that are found in history as a whole.

manifestation of divine revelation is related to his well-known understanding of revelation. 'revelation as history.' For him, God is known only through God: "God can be known only if he gives himself to be known. . . Hence the knowledge of God is possible only by revelation."⁸² In this sense he adopts and follows Barth's understanding of revelation as the self-revelation of God. Yet what is different in his understanding is that God reveals God's self through the whole history. In other words, for him, revelation is God's self-revelation. Yet it happens primarily not by 'Word' but through all of history.⁸³ And if revelation happens this way, two important conclusions follow. First, everything in the world, including religious belief, is provisional. It is under the flow of history and thus open to change and correction. Second, if everything is tested in history, the truth of a religion will be finally revealed at the end of time. In the midst of history, the most one can say is that a religion tentatively corresponds to the revelation of God. Only at the end of history can the truth of God be fully revealed.

Pannenberg claims, however, that in Israel's understanding of history there occurred a decisive understanding of divine revelation, which overcomes the provisional nature of religion. In this history, especially in the apocalyptic movement of Judaism and in

⁸² Pannenberg, Systematic Theology I, 189.

⁸³ Ibid., 230- 257.

early Christianity, there arises an eschatological concept of revelation, which surpasses every other religious truth. Indeed, for him, in the divine revelation in the history of Judaeo-Christian religion, especially in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's self-disclosure is proleptically present. In other words, in the life of Jesus, and especially in his resurrection, the full revelation of God that will occur only at the end has come visible in the midst of the struggle of history. And if in the resurrection of Jesus the divine revelation is now proleptically manifest, then it has retroactive significance by affirming Jesus' oneness with God: it affirms the deity of Jesus Christ and necessarily leads to the Christian concept of God as triune.⁸⁴

2. Jürgen Moltmann's Trinitarian Response to Theism and Atheism.

We have seen two different responses to atheism's rejection of the existence of God. Among these two responses Moltmann follows the more theological response as represented by Barth and Jungel. Like Barth and Jüngel, Moltmann thinks that modern atheism has arisen as a rejection of the concept of God in classical theism. He also believes that atheism can be critically challenged by a properly conceived doctrine of the Trinity. Thus while Pannenberg responds to atheism at the philosophical level and thus posits the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 172ff. For Pannenberg's doctrine of the Trinity, Ibid., 259-336. Chapter 2 and chapter 3 of this thesis will deal with some part of his trinitarian theology in terms of the question of the immanent-

doctrine of the Trinity as the logical conclusion of his apologetic. Moltmann, like Barth and Jungel, begins directly with this doctrine and finds there the clue and dynamic to challenge atheism. Yet, while Barth and Jungel devote their effort largely to identifying the false epistemological principle of theism and atheism and thereby attempt to counter them with the doctrine of the Trinity, Moltmann attempts to find in this doctrine the 'practical' implications and dynamics that challenge the atheist charge against Christian faith. In fact, as we will see, since modern atheism's denial of God is to a large degree governed by practical concerns, his effort to find in the doctrine of the Trinity a practical response to modern atheism is an important contribution. Now we turn to Moltmann's trinitarian response to traditional theism and modern atheism. First we will examine Moltmann's view of classical theism, then elaborate his response to two types of atheism, protest atheism and postulate atheism.

2-1. Moltmann's View of Classical Theism.

Moltmann's trinitarian theology has been developed largely in his criticism of classical theism. For him the theistic tradition, which understands God as the absolutely perfect and simple Being is already problematic. If God is absolutely simple, then God

economic Trinity and the unity of God respectively.

cannot undergo any change. Metaphysically this implies that God cannot make room for anything besides God's self, nor be affected by any reality outside of God's self. But this self-sufficient God, whose perfection is far removed from the world, is not compatible with the biblical vision of God, who makes room for creation, and is affected by it, because of God's infinite faithfulness and love.⁸⁵ Furthermore, traditional theism's way of understanding the attributes of God is also problematic. Classical theism understands God by making use of logical inference from the world to God's absolute causality, power, and wisdom, and in this way arrives at the infinite being which it calls God.⁸⁶ It finds in the harmony and order of the cosmos the ground of faith in God.⁸⁷ Yet in view of the massive human suffering and oppression experienced in the world, he contends, it is actually impossible to see God's merciful presence in the world. Rather it is much easier to discern a "devil" in the world.⁸⁸ Thus Moltmann accepts the protest atheists' rejection of traditional theism in the name of human suffering. He favorably cites Horkheimer who contends, "In view of the suffering in this world, in view of the injustice, it is impossible to believe the

⁸⁵ CG 215.

⁸⁶ CG 219.

⁸⁷ CG 210.

⁸⁸ CG 220.

dogma of the existence of an omnipotent and all-gracious God."⁸⁹

Moltmann points out that in classical theism, death, suffering, and mortality are excluded from the beginning.⁹⁰ Yet if God remains the ultimate reference of the human person, God should be understood also from the vantage point of suffering, vulnerability and mortality. And if one begins to understand God in this way, he argues, then one has to conceive God from the crucified Christ rather than from the world. Our understanding of God must begin with the suffering death of Jesus Christ. Indeed, by identifying God in the cross of Jesus Christ, one can demonstrate a Christian theology that responds meaningfully to the massive suffering of today. Furthermore, by doing so, one can be faithful to the revelation of God, for, it is the cross that reveals who the Christian God is.⁹¹ He writes:

The death of Jesus on the cross is the *centre* of all Christian theology. It is not the only theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth. All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and death have their focal point in the crucified Christ. All Christian statements about history, about the church, about

⁸⁹ Marx Horkheimer, Die Sehensucht, 56. Cited in Moltmann, CG 225. In this sense Moltmann does not hesitate to call himself an a-theist. In his response to Ernst Bloch's assertion that 'only an atheist can be a good Christian,' Moltmann says that only a Christian can be a good atheist. Certainly Moltmann's a-theism cannot be identified with mere unbelief. His a-theism rather means a rejection of theism. What he means by this is that the Christian God who has revealed God's self in the person of Jesus Christ cannot be reconciled with the God of classical theism. For this matter, see CG 195.

⁹⁰ Moltmann, Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology, trans. W. Leitch, (London: SCM Press, 1967), 16. Hereafter abbreviated as TH.

⁹¹ CG 256.

faith and sanctification. about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ.⁹²

It is at this point that Moltmann accepts Luther's famous dictum. *crux probat omnia* (The cross proves everything). He builds his argument against classical theism by virtue of Luther's theology of the cross. Especially he emphasizes the importance of Luther's epistemological principle that God is revealed only in God's opposite: God is revealed in the cross of Christ, who was abandoned by God; God's grace is revealed in sinners; God's righteousness is revealed in the unrighteous; the deity of God is revealed in the paradox of the cross.⁹³ And if God is found in the cross, if "Christian theology must think of God's being in suffering and dying and finally in the death of Jesus."⁹⁴ then the God of theism who is characterized as absolutely perfect, and impassible, is certainly not

⁹² CG 204. Emphasis is original.

⁹³ CG. 212. For him classical theism of the medieval period, which was first formed by Peter Lombard, assumed an ontological continuity between God and God's creation. By presupposing *analogia entis* between God and God's creation, it viewed the world as a mirror, in which God's attributes, power, wisdom, and righteousness, etc can be reflected. In this understanding, "God's invisible being is known from his works and realities in the world; conversely, the reality of the world is recognized as God's world, that is, . . . as his good creation." Moltmann, CG 210. Thomas Aquinas' cosmological arguments for the existence of God are also based upon this understanding that God is indirectly manifested through God's works. Yet Luther vehemently rejects this notion of God. For Luther, God is not manifested indirectly through God's creation. Rather, God is revealed through the suffering and death of Jesus. In fact Luther does not deny the possibility of natural knowledge of God. For him, natural knowledge of God is potentially open to human persons. Yet in fact they misuse it in the interest of their self-exaltation and their self-divinization. Thus, all human attempts to know God from human nature or the world, which Luther calls the theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*), necessarily fails and ends up with a glorification of human nature. CG 211-2. Since this is the case, the only possible knowledge of God is at the cross. God reveals God's self in the contradiction and the protest of Christ's passion. The only way to know God is through the lowliness, weakness, and dying of Christ and not the exaltation of the human person. See CG 207-14.

⁹⁴ CG 214.

the true God. This God is absolutely in contradiction with the God of Jesus Christ who experienced every weakness and suffering at the cross. Classical atheism, which misidentifies the true God, therefore, has to be rejected. It is a fatal distortion of the biblical understanding of God. Moltmann argues:

God cannot suffer, God cannot die, says theism, in order to bring suffering, mortal being under his protection. God suffered and in the suffering of Jesus, God died on the cross of Christ, says Christian faith, so that we might live and rise again in his future. . . This God of the cross is not the 'great huntsman' (Cardonnel), who sits over man's conscience like a fist on the neck. Anyone who understands God in this way misuses his name and is far from the cross.⁹⁵

2-2. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Protest Atheism

2-2-1. Protest Atheism Based upon the Experience of Suffering.

Protest atheism was born out of the theodicy question and rejects the existence of God in the name of human suffering. In the face of inexpressible misery, it denies any God who would continue to allow such conditions. This atheism asks how can one believe in God who remains unmoved by and does not respond to injustice and human agony. Thus, for the sake of humanity and the human desire for justice, God must be rejected. Indeed, "The only excuse for

⁹⁵ CG 216.

God would be for him not to exist.”⁹⁶

Protest atheism has emerged from various kinds of human suffering. One of them is natural evil, human suffering resulting from natural causes.⁹⁷ However, the major compelling force behind this atheism is not the natural evil but the injustice and suffering inflicted on humans by other humans. The focus is not mainly nature but the political, social and economic context.⁹⁸ In Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov, Ivan, himself an atheist, demonstrates a typical form of this protest. In conversation with his brother, Alyosha, he describes several episodes of horror in which children were tortured or killed. In one account he tells the story of a poor serf child who by mistake harmed the paw of one of his master’s hunting dogs. Upon discovering this, the master had the boy stripped and driven out by the dogs. The dogs tore the boy apart before his mother’s eyes. Ivan cries for justice that he could see himself:

I want to forgive. I want to embrace. I don’t want more suffering. And if

⁹⁶ A quotation from Stendhal, cited in Moltmann, CG 225.

⁹⁷ In The Myth of Sisyphus Albert Camus analyses the absurdity of the world, in which “hope has no further place” and “only death prevails.” Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, trans. Justin O’Brien, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 20. In The Plague he dramatizes his atheist response to the absurdity of the natural world. Here, after watching the torturous death of a child, Dr. Rieux, an atheist, complains to Father Panelous. “Ah! That child, anyhow, was innocent, and you know it as well as I do! . . . And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture.” In view of the absurd creation, which includes the suffering of innocent children, Camus claims that one must reject God. Albert Camus, The Plague, trans. Stuart Gilbert, (London: Hamilton, 1962), 196-197. Cited in Willis, 80.

⁹⁸ Willis, *Ibid.* Cf. Moltmann, Religion, Revolution, and the Future, trans. Douglas Meeks, (New York: 1969), 205. For a fine study about the issue of theodicy in general, see Douglas John Hall, God and Human Suffering (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986).

the suffering of children goes to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth. then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price. I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! . . . Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? I don't want harmony. From love of humanity I don't want it. . . .too high a price is asked for harmony. . . . It's not God that I don't accept. Alyosha. only I most respectfully return Him the ticket.⁹⁹

In this passage we see protest atheism in its clearest form. The world is filled with absurd pain and suffering. But God does nothing to bring justice to the victims of suffering. to atone for their agony. or to end human misery altogether. Thus. God must be rejected: one no longer needs God's ticket.

Another important symbol of human suffering in the modern world that serves as a basis for this form of atheism is the Holocaust. The horror of Auschwitz and other concentration camps. where millions were tortured and exterminated. has shattered traditional faith in God for the multitudes of people. In view of this massive human injustice and suffering there is no way to accept the existence of a merciful God. The grounds for belief and worship have been totally destroyed. Adorno writes.

After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claim of the positivity of

⁹⁹ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett. (New York: Modern Library, 1970), 254. Cited in Willis, 81. Moltmann also cites this story as a good example of the cry of the protest atheism. See CG 220-21.

existence as sanctimonious. as wronging the victims: they balk at squeezing any kind of sense. however bleached. out of the victims' fate. . . .[These events] make a mockery of the construction of immanence as endowed with a meaning radiated by an affirmatively posited transcendence.¹⁰⁰

What is important to notice here is that this form of atheism does not reject the existence of God merely on the basis of speculation or formal epistemological considerations. Rather, it denies the existence of God because of the 'concrete' sufferings which humans have to endure. Because God does nothing to prevent the history of human suffering, God is conceived to be unjust and thus must be negated. If this is so, a theological response to this form of atheism must be more than a 'theoretical' representation of the Christian doctrine of God: it must show a 'concrete' answer that helps to reduce or even stop the reality of suffering. Furthermore, it is also important to note that what is especially problematic to protest atheism is the idea of the impassability of God. Protest atheism presupposes the idea of the divine impassibility of traditional theism and rejects this. It claims that an impassible God cannot love or, in fact, be God: "A being

¹⁰⁰ Theodore Adorno, Negative Dialectics (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 361. Cited in Willis, 82. Milan Machovec, a Marxist philosopher, confesses that a major reason for his atheism is the massive evil exemplified by the Holocaust. For him, one cannot combine faith in God with Auschwitz. See, Schilling 122. Richard L. Rubinstein, a Jewish rabbi, also writes that after Auschwitz Jews can no longer believe in a good and all-powerful God who rules in history. See, Richard L. Rubinstein, After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism (Indianapolis :Bobbs-Merill, 1966), 153.

without suffering is a being without a heart."¹⁰¹ Consequently this God must be rejected, because he does not exist or act in any meaningful way for human beings. An important response to this form of atheism is therefore to demonstrate that the God of the Christian faith is not impassible, but the suffering God, who participates radically in all the sufferings of the world.

2-2-1. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Protest Atheism.

Moltmann accepts the concern of protest atheism. He observes that the question of suffering is today the most profound basis for unbelief and the most serious challenge to Christian faith and theology.¹⁰² For him, the question of theodicy is unavoidable if one considers the relevance of theology for the modern world. Christian theology becomes relevant only when it takes the theodicy question as an "absolute presupposition."¹⁰³ Furthermore, the issue of suffering stands at the heart of Christian faith itself. Indeed, the center of Christian faith is the crucifixion of Jesus and his dying cry, "My God, why has

¹⁰¹ Ludwig Feuerbach, Essence of Christianity, trans. George Eliot. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 62.

¹⁰² Moltmann writes: "The question about God arises most profoundly from the pain of injustice in the world and from abandonment in suffering." Jürgen Moltmann, "Der Gekreuzigte Gott, Neuzeitliche Gottesfrage und Trinitarische Gottesgeschichte," in Concilium 8 (1972): 408.

¹⁰³ Jürgen Moltmann, Hope and Planning, trans. Margaret Clarkson. (London: SCM Press, 1971), 33-35.

thou forsaken me?' Thus, "all Christian theology and all Christian life is basically an answer to the question which Jesus asked as he died."¹⁰⁴ Only by treating the issue of suffering with uttermost seriousness, therefore, can we maintain Christian identity and its relevance in the contemporary world as well.¹⁰⁵

Moltmann notes that the context of the theodicy question has shifted from natural evil to evil in political and socio-economic spheres: "For us it has no longer only the old naturalistic form, as in the earthquake of Lisbon in 1775. It appears today in a political form as in the question of Auschwitz."¹⁰⁶ Today the question of theodicy arises out of the "hells of world wars, the hells of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Vietnam, and also the everyday experiences which make one man say to another 'You make my life hell' . . ." ¹⁰⁷ He maintains that, in view of the weight of this historical agony and pain, one cannot hold the concept of God in traditional theism. For him traditional theism's answer to the question of suffering, that is, that suffering must be tolerated, or it will be compensated for

¹⁰⁴ CG 4.

¹⁰⁵ CG 4. For Moltmann's discussion of the identity-relevance crisis of the Christian faith in the contemporary world, CG 7-31.

¹⁰⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, Religion, Revolution, and the Future, trans. Douglas Meeks. (New York: 1969), 205.

¹⁰⁷ CG 220.

by the next world after death. is totally off the point. It is simply an 'idolatry.'¹⁰⁸ At the same time. for him. atheism also cannot provide an adequate answer to the question of human suffering. The reason is that it is tied so closely to theism. sharing the same hermeneutical principle. When theism attempts to overcome the obstacle of suffering by contending a hidden purpose or harmony within it. protest atheism believes that suffering and the omnipotent and loving God of theism are incompatible and thus God must be denied.¹⁰⁹ Since this is so. "atheism demonstrates itself to be the brother of theism."¹¹⁰ And if this is so. atheism necessarily fails to provide a meaningful answer to the question of suffering. Indeed. all that is left for atheism is rebellion against the absurdity of suffering. Protest atheism's rejection of God in the face of human suffering can function. therefore. only as a negative theodicy.¹¹¹

What then is the answer to the question of suffering. which theism and atheism together fail to answer? What concept of God is compatible with the absurd suffering of

¹⁰⁸ CG 225.

¹⁰⁹ CG 219-222.

¹¹⁰ CG 221. In another place he writes: "Metaphysical atheism. too. takes the world as a mirror of the deity. But in the broken mirror of an unjust and absurd world of triumphant evil and suffering without reason and without end it does not see the countenance of a God. but only the grimace of absurdity and nothingness. Atheism too draws a conclusion from the existence of a finite world as it is to its cause and its destiny. but there it finds no good and righteous God. but a capricious demon. a blind destiny. a damning law or an annihilating nothingness." See. CG 219-20.

¹¹¹ CG 225.

the world? At this point Moltmann presents his famous understanding of 'the crucified God,' which is closely related to his trinitarian theology of the cross.

As we have seen, for Moltmann the cross of Jesus Christ is the center of Christian faith.¹¹² It is "not the only theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth."¹¹³ Therefore, "All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and sanctification, about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ."¹¹⁴ What then is the meaning of the cross? Here Moltmann questions the long tradition that understands the cross primarily as the means of human salvation. Certainly for him the cross of Jesus Christ is for human salvation: It is soteriological. But this is not the first and the most important interpretation of the cross. The crucial interpretation of the cross is, for him, rather the identity and nature of God whom Jesus called '*abba*.' In its essence Jesus' whole existence took place in relationship to God. Thus, the real meaning of the pain and agony of the cross must be sought in his relationship with God, with whom he had enjoyed the closest relationship¹¹⁵ In other words, the primary meaning of the cross is

¹¹² CG 204: "The death of Jesus on the cross is the center of all Christian theology."

¹¹³ CG 204.

¹¹⁴ CG 204.

¹¹⁵ CG 149.

theological rather than soteriological. Indeed, the question is “who is God in the cross of the Christ who is abandoned by God?”¹¹⁶

Who, then, is this God of the cross? What is the nature of God from the criterion of the cross? Moltmann answers this question in two ways. First, the God of the cross is the God who can suffer. In the metaphysical concept of God, which the early church fathers took over from Greek philosophy, it is categorically impossible for God to suffer. Yet if it is the cross that reveals the nature of God, God is not the impassible, immutable God of traditional theism. The God of the cross is the ‘passible’ God who opens God’s whole heart to suffering.¹¹⁷ In a summary passage Moltmann writes:

God was not silent and uninvolved in the cross of Jesus. Nor was he absent in the God-forsakenness of Jesus. He acted in Jesus, the Son of God: in that men betrayed him, handed him over and delivered him up to death. God himself suffers the pains of abandonment. In the death of the Son, death

¹¹⁶ CG 4. Yet Moltmann does not detach the doctrine of God from soteriology. Rather, for him the doctrine of God and soteriology are deeply interconnected: the event of the cross as God’s suffering is in effect profoundly soteriological. God embraces all suffering in the world and thus all suffering becomes God’s suffering. In the cross of the suffering Christ God suffers with all God’s suffering creation for the sake of their redemption. In other words, God’s willingness to suffer at the cross reveals that God has opened God’s self to all the sufferings of history, which God takes up and integrates into God’s triune life, thereby promising to overcome and transform them. And this is in fact Moltmann’s ‘atonement’ theory. See Bauckham, The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann, 51-52. Also see chapter 4 of this thesis.

¹¹⁷ In fact Moltmann indicates that God does not change or suffer under the “constraint from that which is not of God” or from “a deficiency in his being.” But this does not mean that there is no possible way for God to change and suffer, that God cannot voluntarily open God’s self for change and suffering. For at the cross God does precisely this. At the cross God “is acting in himself in this manner of suffering and dying in order to open up in himself life and freedom for sinners. . . The suffering and dying of Jesus, understood as the suffering and dying of the Son of God, on the other hand, are works of God towards himself and therefore at the same time passions of God.” CG 192.

comes upon God himself, and the Father suffers the death of His Son in his love for forsaken man. Consequently, what happened on the cross must be understood as an event between God and the Son of God. In the action of the Father in delivering up his Son to suffering and to a godless death, God is acting in himself.¹¹⁸

An important presupposition behind Moltmann's notion of the 'suffering God' is that what happened on the cross between Jesus and his God is a trinitarian event, that is, an event between God the Father and God the Son.¹¹⁹ In fact Moltmann adopts a high Christology, which identifies Jesus as the second person of the Trinity.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ CG 192.

¹¹⁹ CG 192.

¹²⁰ Ibid. Moltmann's identification of the crucified Jesus with God the Son has brought the question how a human person Jesus can be identified with the second person of the Trinity. Indeed Jesus was a Jew who lived in the first century of Israel. He was a human person like all of us. If this is so, how can the cross of Jesus be an event between the first and the second person of the Trinity? Furthermore, how can we say that at the cross "The Son suffers in his love being forsaken by the Father as he dies. The Father suffers in his love the grief of the death of the Son." CG 245. Actually some commentators have criticized Moltmann for leaving this unanswered or merely assuming that Jesus was in fact God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. George Hunsinger, for example, argues that "Moltmann... has not explained how it is epistemologically possible to move from history to eschatology, from the cross as an event between an abandoned man and a silent God, to the cross as an event between God and God." George Hunsinger, "The Crucified God and the Political Theology of Violence: A Critical Survey of Jürgen Moltmann's Recent Thought: I," *The Heythrop Journal*, XIV (1973): 277. Roland D. Zimany also criticizes Moltmann by saying that "Jesus whom he had designated 'Son' only in view of his special relationship with the God whom he called 'Father', suddenly becomes the Second Person of the Trinity." See, Roland D. Zimany, "Moltmann's Crucified God," *Dialog* XVI (Winter, 1977): 51. Yet contrary to these authors' criticism, Moltmann does not simply identify Jesus as the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, without any explanation. In fact he answers this question in the light of his understanding of the resurrection. For him the resurrection of Jesus Christ vindicates Jesus and his message and finally his identity as the Christ of God, the Son of God. Resurrection shows that the one who was crucified was "the incarnation of the coming God in our flesh and in his death on the cross." CG 184. Also, CG 179. In fact, for Moltmann, it is "By the resurrection Jesus is qualified in his person to be the Christ of God. So his suffering and death must be understood to be the suffering and death of the Christ of God." Ibid., 182. In other words, this interpretation is possible because Moltmann adopts the hermeneutical principle of "reading history both forwards and backwards." CG 162. According to him, although the crucifixion precedes the resurrection historically, the saving significance of the cross is known only by looking back on it in light of the resurrection. By reading history from back to

Second, according to Moltmann, if God is the one who is open to suffering, it means that God actively participates and suffers in the history of human suffering: On the cross, God "enters the situation of man's god-forsakenness."¹²¹ If this is the case, the history of human suffering cannot be separated from the history of God. Rather, "The history of the divine pathos is embedded in this history of men."¹²² And ". . . God himself suffers at the human history of injustice and force. . ."¹²³ God can be identified, then, only as the One who willingly suffers in the sufferings of human beings. When humans suffer, therefore, God is suffering with them. In fact, God's suffering at the cross reveals that God has opened God's self to all the sufferings of history. At this point, Moltmann believes that understanding God as the suffering God can effectively respond to the challenge of protest atheism, which rejects faith in God because of the problem of suffering. The triune God of the Christian faith does

front, that is, from the resurrection to the cross, the identity of the crucified one is made clear. Then Jesus of Nazareth is turned out to be the Christ of God: "The risen Christ is the historical and crucified Jesus, and *vice versa*." CG 160. For Moltmann this way of reading the Bible corresponds to the primitive Christian tradition: "Primitive Christian recollections of Jesus were determined from the start by the experience of his resurrection through God. That was the only reason why his words and his story were remembered and why people were concerned with him. CG 161. In fact what Moltmann maintains here is that if the crucified Jesus is the Risen Christ, the Son of God, and furthermore, the second person of the Trinity, the crucifixion of Jesus is a triune event, which takes place within God's self. And if the crucifixion is a triune event, that is, if God is at the cross, in sending and delivering up God's Son, then it follows that God is really present there and suffered and experienced death in Christ. Thus the God who is defined by the cross is not the impassible, immutable God of traditional theism, which is presupposed and denied by atheism. The God of the cross is the one who can and does suffer and change.

¹²¹ CG 246, also CG 276- 277.

¹²² CG 270.

¹²³ CG 274.

not remain aloof from human suffering. God joins in the human suffering by suffering God's self. Indeed God takes the side of the innocent victims of suffering and includes them and their suffering into God's own being: "There is no suffering within this history of God which is not God's suffering: no death which has not been God's death in the history on Gologtha."¹²⁴ If this is so, as Moltmann claims, the triune God of the Christian faith is immune from protest atheism's rejection of the impassible and unresponsive God. Rather, the triune God of the Scripture accepts and justifies the atheist protest against suffering, and by doing so goes hand in hand with the protest of this atheism.

Yet as a response to protest atheism it is not enough to point out that the God of Christian faith is the suffering God who includes in God's self the innocent victims of suffering. It must also clarify how this inclusion can be salvific. In other words, it has to show how this identification of God with the victims of suffering can overcome suffering and thus provide the ground for the hope of justice. Moltmann recognizes this and answers by saying that God not only suffers with God's suffering creation, but also takes up and integrates this suffering into God's triune life, thereby overcoming and transforming it. And at this point Moltmann reclaims the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For him

¹²⁴ CG 246.

the resurrection means God's final victory over evil and suffering in the world.¹²⁵ The resurrection of Jesus Christ means "a prelude to and a real anticipation of. God's qualitatively new future and the new creation in the midst of the history of the world's suffering."¹²⁶ Thus understood, God's lifting of Jesus from the power of death means that God is the one who overcomes every negativity in the world - its subjection to sin, suffering, and death. In fact, while the cross of Jesus Christ means God's presence and solidarity with the present suffering of the world, his resurrection implies God's eschatological victory over suffering. The triune God, who has taken all suffering into God's own being at the cross of Jesus Christ, now opens up in the resurrection of Jesus Christ a new future of God. This is the foundation of hope, the hope for justice and for the transformation of all human suffering.¹²⁷

Moltmann stresses that this hope is quite different from the secularly understood idea of Christian hope, that is, the hope for a second world after death. Rather it is a very concrete and historical hope, which challenges people to stand against every evil and suffering in history. It is hope that helps people to see the reality of evil and to oppose it.

¹²⁵ CG 163.

¹²⁶ CG 163.

¹²⁷ CG 163.

while believing in God's final victory over all the transience of the world. This is for him the contour of Christian life. Becoming and living a Christian life means therefore to counter and challenge evil and suffering in history, while hoping in the final victory of God that is already anticipated and promised in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Based upon this reasoning, consequently, Moltmann concludes that a proper trinitarian theology, which defines God as the one, who through the cross of the resurrected Christ participates in and overcomes human suffering, enables Christian faith to overcome the charge of protest atheism. Indeed, "With a trinitarian theology of the cross, faith escapes the dispute between and the alternative of theism and atheism."¹²⁸

2-3. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Postulate Atheism

2-3-1. Postulate Atheism for Human Freedom and Liberation.

Postulate atheism is closely related to protest atheism in that it accepts the argument of protest atheism that denies faith in God in the name of human suffering. Yet postulate atheism's primary concern is that of human freedom and responsibility. For this type of atheism, belief in the sovereignty of God is incompatible with human freedom and dignity. If God as an omnipotent being does exist, and rules the world solely according to his will,

¹²⁸ CG 252.

then, this atheism maintains, there is no room for human freedom. The human person is reduced to a passive respondent, or even an automatic machine. Thus for the promotion of 'genuine' human freedom and dignity, this atheism 'requires' the non-existence of God.¹²⁹

Postulate atheism finds its representatives in some of the exponents of existentialist philosophy. Nicolai Hartmann, for example, requires atheism as the condition of the human being's 'free' ethical decision. For him, human persons are able to create and rearrange their own ethical principles. But if there were a higher personal being than human persons, they could not do that. Thus for the sake of free ethical decision-making, the existence of God must be denied.¹³⁰ Likewise, Jean-Paul Sartre contends that, if God existed, values would be given in advance of human choices, and consequently a human could not be wholly free. Thus God has to be rejected for the achievement of true human freedom.¹³¹ Some Marxist philosophers echo the same thinking. Ernst Bloch assumes that one cannot reconcile the omnipotent and absolute God of traditional theism

¹²⁹ In this sense postulate atheism represents more than any other type of atheism the anthropocentric character of modernity. The theological background of the rise of modern atheism is the idea of God in later medieval nominalism. Nominalism carried the idea of God's omnipotence and freedom to an extreme and thus turned God into an absolute deity who acts in an arbitrary manner. Modern atheism is a rejection of this God in the name of human freedom, which is of paramount importance for the modern mind. For this matter, see Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, 17ff.

¹³⁰ Nicolai Hartmann, Ethik (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1962), 604-14, 741ff. Cited in Schilling, 126.

¹³¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology, trans. Hansel Barnes. (New York: Washington Square, 1966), 544. Cited in Schilling, 67-68, 126.

and the freedom and responsibility of the human person. Indeed, "Where the great Lord of the world is, there is no room for freedom, not even the freedom of the 'Children of God'." Therefore, according to him, "human activity can be liberated only through atheism."¹³² Roger Garaudy echoes the same thought: "If God exists, is my liberty decreased? Is God alienating where my liberty is concerned? And Marxist atheism answers: Yes, God is alienating insofar as he is regarded as a Moral Law existing before the creation of Man, as a heteronomy, opposed to the autonomy of Man."¹³³

Postulate atheism is enforced especially by the observation that theistic belief often seems to produce a passive attitude toward social change in the presence of injustice and opposition. In modern times it is Karl Marx who presented a typical form of this critique, which many of his successors have adopted. For him, religious belief must be rejected because it justifies and even perpetuates the unjust *status quo* of a given society. Marx's atheism is basically rooted in Feuerbach's claim that religion is a human projection that is connected with human alienation.¹³⁴ But while Marx accepts Feuerbach's projection

¹³² Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung , 1413. Cited in Schilling, 127.

¹³³ Roger Garaudy, "Creative Freedom," 144. Cited in Willis, 150.

¹³⁴ Karl Marx, "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Lewis S. Feuer ed. Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 262. Elsewhere he also argues, "it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "German Ideology," On Religion (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), 74ff.

theory and the atheism that follows from it, he transcends Feuerbach by establishing *praxis* as his central concern. In his judgement, Feuerbach is not sufficiently 'materialist.' Although Feuerbach rightly saw that faith in God is a projection of human life, he did not see that the content of this projection is the concrete human life, which consists of actual relationships, and social and political activity.¹³⁵ In other words, for Marx, Feuerbach fails to see that people project God into heaven precisely because they are first alienated in the economic, social and political spheres, where their real lives are determined. Thus for Marx, religion is not merely the projection of the best ideals of humankind, but the reflection of, and a perverted answer to, this concrete political and socio-economic existence. God is projected as an attempt to make sense out of this world, to find consolation in it. Religion is an expression of the suffering of oppressed people and protest against this suffering. As such it serves the positive function of making life endurable which otherwise could not be faced. But just at this point religion is basically false. It gives a wrong answer by providing only 'the illusory happiness,' and by doing so functions as the "opium of the people."¹³⁶ It

¹³⁵ Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, 43. Here he maintains, "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness."

¹³⁶ Karl Marx, "Contributions to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," On Religion, 41f.

directs people's attention away from the conditions of this world and drugs them to accept their present condition, while depriving them of the power and motivation to change the alienated social structure. Religion, therefore, serves as the ideological framework of the *status quo*.

In fact Marx's central charge against religion is related to praxis. He has no special interest in a mere philosophical discussion of theism or atheism. For him faith in God is false because it is proved false in practice.¹³⁷ Atheism is true for him because it supports revolutionary practice in the political, social and economic realm that constitutes the world of human beings. Most Marxists and other humanist writers have adopted Marx's praxis-oriented atheism. They hold to their atheism, maintaining that Christian belief is frequently an instrument of exploitation and the preservation of an unjust social system. According to Roger Garaudy, the church has sanctified class domination and social inequality, regarding these as God's judgement against human sin. It has successively offered justification for slavery, feudal serfdom, and the suppression of the proletariat.¹³⁸ Milan Machovec indicates that he became an atheist because of the church's inability to act for social

¹³⁷ Willis, 123.

¹³⁸ Roger Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, trans. Luke O'Neill (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 56, 99, 102, 123. Cited in Schilling, 52.

reform.¹³⁹ According to Ernst Bloch, traditional Christianity has consistently resisted change and justified injustice. Hence a world view which stresses futurity, novelty, and hope, and which assigns to human persons an active role in the forward movement of history, has to be atheistic.¹⁴⁰ Bertrand Russell, writing from a humanistic standpoint, contends that "the Christian religion, . . . has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world."¹⁴¹ The Christian Church, by orienting its members toward a transcendent power, decreases its responsible actions in society and hinders human progress. It has consistently opposed every movement toward more humane treatment of criminals, the lessening of war, the abolition of slavery, better race relations, and other forms of ethical advance.¹⁴² Even when Christians look positively at the possibility of improving conditions they still see the world as broken and humankind as unable to free themselves. Therefore, instead of accepting their human responsibility, Christians turn to

¹³⁹ In his dialogue with a Christian writer, Machovec states that a major reason for his atheism in this way: When the Communists came to power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and when he spoke of wanting to help change the world, his parents told him this was impossible. Pointing to the sinfulness of the human person, they held that social discrimination and class conflict would always remain as they were; hence Christians should learn to accept and endure this world while preparing for another. In sharp contrast, he contends, the Communists called for the humanization of society and the transformation of the world. Says Machovec: "The Christians forgot the promise of Revelation 21:1: 'Behold, I make all things new,' but the Marxists talked and acted as the Christians should have." Cited in Schilling, 130.

¹⁴⁰ Perez Esclarin, Atheism and Liberation, (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 158.

¹⁴¹ Bertrand Russell, Why I am not a Christian (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 21.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 20-22.

Jesus Christ for strength to endure the circumstances that confront them.¹⁴³

Certainly these authors' claim that the Christian religion has been 'a great hindrance' to the moral progress of the world is an exaggeration. Yet it is true that the Christian Church has often legitimized the *status quo* of a given society, while standing on the side of injustice and thus promoting an evil human structure. In this sense postulate atheism's critique is appropriate: it can work as a catalyst to the Christian Church to fulfill its calling.¹⁴⁴ In any case what is important to note here is that, more than any other forms of atheism, postulate atheism is governed by practical concerns. It rejects faith in God primarily on behalf of human freedom and responsibility. It contends that God, conceived as the Lord of all, is basically in conflict with everything human and must be rejected to secure genuine human freedom and dignity. Furthermore, this form of atheism is strengthened by the Christian Church's failure to stand up for social responsibility. Since

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ In this sense Simone Weil's remark is illuminating: "there are two atheisms, of which one is a purification of the notion of God." Simone Weil, Gravity and Grace trans. Ema Crauford (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1952), 103. Cited in Webster, Eberhard Jüngel: An Introduction to His Theology, 79. Certainly there are more than two forms of atheism. But Weil's remark includes the important recognition that some forms of atheism can be prophetic against the illusions of religious belief and behavior and that as such they may be cathartic. Paul Ricoeur makes the same point, saying, "atheism is not limited in meaning to the mere negation and destruction of religion. . . rather, it opens up the horizon for something else, for a type of faith that might be called. . . a postreligious faith or a faith for a postreligious age." Paul Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 440. Martin Buber also indicates a similar point: "The atheist staring from his attic window is often nearer to God than the believer caught up in his own false image of God." Cited by Garret Barden, S. J., in his Introduction to Jean Lacroix' The Meaning of Modern Atheism, trans. Garret Barden. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965), 12.

this is the case. an adequate theological response to this form of atheism has to be more than theoretical. It must demonstrate that authentic Christian faith is not a hindrance to social reform, but is in its very nature the very dynamic for the new society of God, which reflects the dream of the Hebrew-Christian prophetic movement and of Jesus. Especially a trinitarian theology, if it seeks to provide a critical response to the atheist charge against Christian faith, must project a practical and liberative thrust for social justice and peace. Otherwise, this form of atheism is likely to charge that trinitarian theology is a mere rearrangement of old theories about God. Now let us consider to what degree Moltmann's trinitarian theology meets this requirement in its response to postulate atheism.

2-3-2. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Response to Postulate Atheism.

As we have observed, postulate atheism has two important characteristics. First it rejects faith in God because it is not compatible with human freedom and dignity. Thus an important task of a trinitarian theology is to demonstrate that the God of the Scripture is not one who inhibits, but promotes human freedom. Second, this form of atheism is strengthened by the observation that religious faith appears to be impotent to stand up against injustice and oppression. Since this is so, trinitarian theology should demonstrate itself not simply as a theoretical rearrangement of Christian talk of God but as a doctrine of

a revolutionary God who challenges the unjust social context in concrete praxis, leading believers toward a more humane society. In this section we will treat aspects of Moltmann's trinitarian theology that respond to these two critiques of postulate atheism.

2-3-2-1. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology and Human Freedom

Moltmann takes seriously postulate atheism's protest against the almighty God in the name of human freedom. He affirms and agrees with this protest. The God who exists at the expense of human freedom and dignity, the God who robs humanity to glorify God's self, must be opposed. However, he does not consider that postulate atheism is the right alternative to this 'God.' The reason for this is that it misidentifies God and therefore negates a 'God' who is not God. For Moltmann the triune God of the Scripture does not inhibit or reject freedom. Rather, God makes room for genuine human freedom and dignity. In fact, for him, only in this triune God can we secure the true basis for human freedom. He supports this claim by demonstrating that the triune God of the Bible is not the God of monotheism but the God of eternal loving fellowship among divine persons, who establishes the true basis of human freedom.

As we have seen, for Moltmann the question of the Trinity arises especially from the cross. If we begin our discussion about the Trinity at the cross of Jesus, he argues, we have to accept that there are three 'different' and 'distinct' persons in God. In other words,

there are three subjects of activity in God whom we call Father, Son, and Spirit.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the true task of the doctrine of the Trinity is to discover the relationship among these three living persons in God, and then discern the unity among them.¹⁴⁶

What, then, is the nature of divine unity? Moltmann rejects a prior ontological unity of God based upon one divine essence or one divine subjectivity. For him, the unity of the triune God is no longer found in a homogeneous divine nature, nor in one divine subject, but in the eternal *perichoresis* of Father, Son, and Spirit. In other words, the triune God is a single communion or fellowship that is formed by the three divine persons themselves. Thus God's unity is an integrative unity, a unification of dynamic mutuality and relationality.¹⁴⁷ Since this is so, 'communion', 'fellowship' in agape love is the very nature and characteristic of the triune God.¹⁴⁸ He writes:

If we search for a concept of unity corresponding to the biblical testimony of the triune God, the God who unites others with himself, then we must dispense with both the concept of the one substance and the concept of the identical

¹⁴⁵ CG 204: "When one considers the significance of the death of Jesus for God himself, one must enter into the inner-trinitarian tensions and relationships of God and speak of the Father, the Son and the Spirit."

¹⁴⁶ TK 149. We will deal with the issue of the unity-trinity in God in detail in chapter IV.

¹⁴⁷ Ted Peters, God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life (Kentucky: Westminster Press, 1993), 104.

¹⁴⁸ HT, xi.

subject. . . It must be perceived in the perichoresis of the divine Persons.¹⁴⁹

Based on this argument, Moltmann rejects the monotheistic trend in the understanding of the Trinity, which has dominated the history of Christian thought. He rejects 'monotheism' in the fact that it is not sufficiently trinitarian: It minimizes or denies the living and dynamic relations among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as disclosed in the Gospel narrative. Besides, and this is important for our subject here, it is incompatible with human freedom: Traditional monotheism is not compatible with genuine human freedom and responsibility. In fact, for Moltmann, the God of monotheism, which is often depicted as an imperial Monarch who rules with absolute power, serves only to legitimize earthly Monarchism and its political oppression.¹⁵⁰ Against this monotheistic God, he observes, the attack of atheism in the name of human freedom rightly emerges.

In contrast to monotheism, Moltmann writes, the triune God, who is one in the perichoretic union of three divine persons, can be the foundation for all genuine human freedom. God understood in this way is the God who loves and serves in eternal mutuality and equality. "To confess that God is triune," Moltmann declares, "is to affirm that the eternal life of God is personal life in relationship. . . The God of the biblical witness is not

¹⁴⁹ TK, 149-150.

¹⁵⁰ TK 192-195.

impersonal but personal and enters into living relationship with creatures."¹⁵¹ Thus, the confession of the triune God radically calls in question all totalitarianism that denies the freedom and rights of people. The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, cannot be used as "the religious background to a divine emperor."¹⁵² Rather, "the Christian doctrine of the Trinity provides the intellectual means whereby to harmonize personality and sociality in the community of men and women, without sacrificing the one to the other. . . the Christian doctrine of the Trinity can play a substantial role for a truly 'humanistic' society."¹⁵³ In this sense, Moltmann argues that "the Trinity is our social program."¹⁵⁴ The task of Christian community is to help bring a human community that faithfully reflects the love and fellowship of divine persons, who dwell in eternal perichoretic unity.

Since this is the case, Moltmann contends, the trinitarian understanding of God need not to be in conflict with human freedom. Rather, it can offer a solid foundation for the human freedom and dignity that many humanistic atheists strive to achieve throughout their lives. Indeed, the doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine of freedom. The triune God of the

¹⁵¹ TK 68.

¹⁵² CG 326.

¹⁵³ TK 199-200.

¹⁵⁴ Jürgen Moltmann and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, Humanity in God (London: SCM Press, 1984), 104. Hereafter abbreviated as HG.

Scripture is the God who “unceasingly desires the freedom of his creation.”¹⁵⁵ No conflict exists, then, between Christian faith and postulate atheism in terms of human freedom. Rather, in light of the Trinity, they can work hand in hand for human freedom and happiness.

Moltmann’s contention is compelling. In fact, the symbol of God functions for humanity as the ultimate point of reference for understanding experience, life, and the world. It works, consciously or unconsciously, as the paradigm by which one interprets the whole realm of reality.¹⁵⁶ Thus if God is conceived simply as the Lord in heaven, then there is a substantial possibility that this understanding legitimizes a hierarchical society and thus reduces human freedom and liberation.¹⁵⁷ But if God is understood as the divine community of love and friendship that is open wide to the whole creation, this enables us to interpret the whole of reality in accordance with love and freedom, and consequently to devote ourselves to human freedom. In this sense, Moltmann’s contention that faith in the triune God is compatible with the serious atheist’s longing for a genuine human freedom and liberation is legitimate. The trinitarian doctrine of God helps us to enhance genuine

¹⁵⁵ TK 218.

¹⁵⁶ For this matter, see Johnson, *She Who Is*, 3-6. Walter Wink also expresses this by saying, “finding out a proper God-image is crucial, for *our images of God create us*.” Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 48. Emphasis is original.

¹⁵⁷ For some critical comments of Moltmann’s this claim, see Chapter 4 of this thesis.

human freedom. Indeed, "The theological concept of freedom is the concept of the trinitarian history of God. . . God is the inexhaustible freedom of those he has created."¹⁵⁸

2-3-2-2. Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology and Its Relationship to Concrete Praxis

Moltmann is quite conscious of the fact that the position of postulate atheism is strengthened by the Christian Church's impotence in countering social injustice and oppression. Thus, for him the Christian response to this form of atheism must include a concrete content and form that can be applied for the practice of social change. Especially in terms of the doctrine of God, one has to present a revolutionary God who challenges the unjust social system from its root, while providing God's new vision for human society. Moltmann presents this aspect of his trinitarian theology in terms of the 'eschatological Trinity,' that is, the triune reality of God as an open, eschatological reality.

According to Moltmann, the doctrine of the Trinity must deal with the triune God's eschatological form as well as its present form. The reason is that God, who has identified God's self with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, has an open future. In other words, for him, the present Trinity is an open reality, which will only be complete in the future.¹⁵⁹ Thus, he distinguishes the 'Trinity of the sending'¹⁶⁰ and the 'Trinity in the

¹⁵⁸ TK 218.

¹⁵⁹ TK 88-90.

glorification.¹⁶¹ The Trinity of the sending is the present form of God's reality in the world. It is a traditional way of interpreting the doctrine of the Trinity in that it asks about the origin of the appearance of Christ and finds this in God the Father. It perceives the Father as the one who sends and the Son as the one who is sent, and the Holy Spirit as sent both by Father and Son.¹⁶² In terms of sending, the Father is always active, the son is both active and passive and the Spirit passive.¹⁶³

Moltmann accepts this traditional understanding of the Trinity. Yet, for him, this form of trinitarian conception is not enough in itself and must be complemented by the eschatological form of the Trinity. In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity must be taken further and be conceived in the light of the future history of Christ and its culmination in the Spirit. This doctrine must be understood not simply in terms of the origin of Christ as seen in the Father's sending the Son, but in the Son's future with the Father as the

¹⁶⁰ TK 65ff.

¹⁶¹ Jürgen Moltmann, The Future of Creation, trans. Margaret Kohl. (London: SCM Press, 1979), 88. Hereafter abbreviated as FC. Besides these two forms of the Trinity, Moltmann introduces another Trinity, 'the Trinity in the origin,' which refers to the pre-temporal trinitarian reality that makes possible God's trinitarian activity in the world. For him this concept is important in that it secures God's freedom over creation while holding that God is already triune before God enters into creation. We will deal with this in chapter II. For this matter, TK 65-96; Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, trans. Margaret Kohl. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 54; HG 70-84.

¹⁶² TK 89.

¹⁶³ FC 88. Cf. TK 71-74.

culmination of the trinitarian history of God. Moltmann calls this culmination of the trinitarian history of God "The Trinity in the glorification."¹⁶⁴ He writes:

Protologically we talk about the Father's sending of Christ into the world. Eschatologically we talk about his being raised from the dead to the Father. Protologically his being sent points to his origin with the Father. Eschatologically his resurrection points to his future with the Father. His messianic mission in the world corresponds to his eschatological gathering of the world. . . . When we relate a historical narrative we always begin at the beginning, and ultimately come to the end. But when we think eschatologically we begin with the end and from there arrive at the beginning.¹⁶⁵

According to Moltmann, the trinitarian history of God as a reality open to the future moves into the eschatological glorification of God the Father. He notes that the term in the New Testament that describes God's eschatological future, the divine power and beauty, is glory (*doxa*).¹⁶⁶ The reason Jesus Christ came to the world, died on the cross, and was resurrected is "ultimately for the glorification of God the Father."¹⁶⁷ And when we think about the trinitarian history from this perspective, the direction of generation and

¹⁶⁴ FC 88. Also TK 90-96.

¹⁶⁵ FC 86.

¹⁶⁶ FC 86.

¹⁶⁷ FC 90.

spiration related to the Trinity in sending is reversed: Now all activity proceeds from the Holy Spirit:¹⁶⁸ "The Holy Spirit is the one who glorifies: he glorifies both the Son and the Father. The Son can be glorified but only through the Spirit: whereas the Son for his part can also glorify, but only the Father; the Father is glorified both through the Spirit and through the Son."¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, according to Moltmann, the Holy Spirit brings the suffering love of Father and Son to all creation, and leads this creation into the future kingdom of God. In other words, the Holy Spirit unites the human person and creation with the Son and the Father and directs them to the perfect unity of the Son with the Father.¹⁷⁰ If this is so, the future of God is also the future of all things in the world. Since "God does not desire glory without his glorification through man and creation in the Spirit,"¹⁷¹ God's eschatological unity and glory "contains itself the whole union of the world with God and in God."¹⁷² Thus God's unity and glory is inextricably "bound up with the salvation of creation."¹⁷³ God's glorification and unification will be complete only with the

¹⁶⁸ FC 88.

¹⁶⁹ FC 88.

¹⁷⁰ FC 92.

¹⁷¹ FC 94.

¹⁷² FC 92.

¹⁷³ FC 92.

transformation of all living and non-living beings in the world.¹⁷⁴ He writes:

God does not desire glory without his glorification through man and creation in the Spirit. God does not desire to find rest without the new creation of man and the world through the Holy Spirit. God does not desire to be united with himself without the uniting of all things with him.¹⁷⁵

Moltmann now argues that if the future of the triune God includes the transformation of all creation, then it means that Christian faith, which is rooted in this future of God, does not justify or validate any present reality. Rather, it radically challenges present reality: It calls into question every existing social structure. In fact, faith in the promised future of God “contradicts existing reality. . .”¹⁷⁶ It criticizes and counters every human attempt to justify and absolutize a given society or system from the eschatological perspective of ‘not yet.’¹⁷⁷ Since this is so, for Moltmann, the charge of postulate atheism that faith in God supports the *status quo* of a given society is not true. Rather, faith in the triune God provides the power and energy for the transformation of any human system. Indeed, it is the triune God of the future who frees us from the bondage of the present for

¹⁷⁴ FC 94: “God comes to his glory in that creation arrives at its consummation. Creation arrives at its consummation in that God comes to his glorification.”

¹⁷⁵ FC 91.

¹⁷⁶ TH 86.

¹⁷⁷ TH 92.

the praxis into God's liberated future. Between the appearance of God in Jesus Christ and its culmination in the eschatological kingdom of God, an interval is wide open for free human action. Consequently, for Moltmann, the trinitarian concept of God involves people in concrete practice in anticipation of God's future. He writes,

We are construction workers and not only interpreters of the future whose power in hope as well as in fulfillment is God. This means that Christian hope is a creative and militant hope in history. The horizon of eschatological expectation produces here a horizon of ethical intentions which, in turn, gives meaning to the concrete historical initiatives. If one hopes for the sake of Christ in the future of God and ultimate liberation of the world. . . he must seek the future, strive for it, and already here be in correspondence to it in the active renewal of life and of the conditions of life. . .¹⁷⁸

Yet Moltmann also recognizes that simply pointing out that the future of the triune God challenges and overcomes the *status quo* of a given society is not enough. The future of the triune God has to be conceived more concretely if one wants to present it as a 'real' challenge to the present *status quo*. The future of God must have a concrete form if it can really work as a desirable social model. Thus he attempts to find out the concrete content of this future of God.

¹⁷⁸ Moltmann, Religion, Revolution, and the Future. 217.

According to Moltmann, the transcendence of the triune God has a specific content through the appearance of Jesus Christ. In his concrete human life Jesus defined for us who God is and what God's future would be. For him, the most important characteristic of Jesus' life and mission is that it is permeated by the message of the kingdom of God, which is characterized as hope for sinners, the poor, and the outcasts.¹⁷⁹ Jesus identified himself with the poor, the oppressed, and the outcast, especially through his passion at the cross. As an inevitable result of his attack upon *Pax Romana* and Judaism's legalistic system, Jesus was condemned and crucified by the socio-political and religious leaders as a grave threat to the established order.¹⁸⁰ Jesus was killed by the political and religious authorities who were determined to preserve their power and privilege in the name of order and harmony. In short, Jesus' eschatological message of freedom meant a total attack on the very existence of the socio-political and religious system of his age and because of that he had to be executed.¹⁸¹

If Jesus is so, Moltmann maintains, then the God whom Jesus called Father has to be the God of the poor, oppressed, and outcast: The God of Jesus Christ works for the

¹⁷⁹ Moltmann, "The Cross and Civil Religion," 42 f. Also The Experiment of Hope, 111.

¹⁸⁰ CG 128-35. The Experiment of Hope, 110ff.

¹⁸¹ Moltmann, "The Cross and the Civil Religion," 34.

liberation of the economically poor, the politically oppressed and the socially outcast.¹⁸²

The doctrine of the Trinity therefore demonstrates God as the transcendent future who has a ‘concrete’ revolutionary content. Commitment to this God and God’s future therefore has a specific direction: Christian practice must always stand with the poor and the oppressed against the structures of wealth and power. The Christian Church has the task of “struggling against not only the religious alienation of man but also his political, social and racial alienation in order to serve the liberation of man. . .”¹⁸³ It must stand for “social critical freedom in institutions,” and as such, it must uncover not only religious idolatry, but political idolatry as well.¹⁸⁴ Since this is so, contrary to postulate atheism’s critique, Christian religion is always related to praxis. Especially when we think from the perspective of trinitarian theology, God has a concrete future and from that future calls present reality into question. Following this God, human beings are freed from the dominance and power of a given system and able to work for the liberation of the poor, the oppressed and the social outcast.

¹⁸² CG 329: “The crucified God is in fact, . . . the God of the poor, the oppressed and the humiliated.”

¹⁸³ The Experiment of Hope, 115.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 114-115. CG 328f. Thus for Moltmann, the Christian Church is understood as “the people of the kingdom of God,” “an Exodus community,” “the vanguard of the new humanity,” and “the beginning of the reconciled cosmos which has arrived at peace.” For this, see Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, 196, 78, and The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions, trans. Margaret

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the aspect of Moltmann's trinitarian theology that provides a critical response to traditional theism and modern atheism. As we have seen, an important element of current trinitarian thought, in the work of a number of authors, is to find in the doctrine of the Trinity the clue and dynamic to counter both the theistic concept of God and the atheist charge against it. Moltmann joins this attempt and provides a creative and critical response to traditional theism and humanistic atheism. First, he successfully demonstrates that the doctrine of the Trinity contains in itself a succinct polemic against traditional theism. The triune God, who is actively involved in history against human suffering, and works for genuine human liberation, cannot be identified with the impassible, immutable God of traditional theism, who remains in heaven, and whose very existence negates human freedom. Second, he rightly contends that from the trinitarian perspective, atheism also fails in its attack on the existence of God. Protest atheism and postulate atheism, while uncritically accepting the misidentification of God that is held by traditional theism, never look beyond traditional theism in their thinking and negation of God. However, the doctrine of the Trinity provides a critical response to these forms of atheism by offering reliable

Kohl. (London: SCM Press, 1990), 285.

responses to the questions of suffering and human liberation. The triune God is the 'suffering' God who identifies God's self with the human suffering in the cross and finally overcomes this in God's eschatological victory anticipated in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. Besides, the triune God is the one who opens God's self and makes room for true human freedom and dignity, while calling us to join in for the transformation of the unjust world with God's power of eschatological hope. It is in this God that one finds not only the answer but also the energy to overcome the reality of human suffering and the question of genuine human freedom.

What is important to note here is that Moltmann especially succeeds in providing a 'practical' response to the atheist charge against Christian faith. Indeed, modern atheism's denial of God is to a large degree practical. It rejects faith in God primarily in the light of human suffering and liberation that emerges from the 'concrete' human condition. Thus it is not enough to reformulate proper speech about God and thereby reject the 'misidentified' concept of God, which is affirmed by theists and rejected by atheists. In fact this attempt is in the end vulnerable to the charge that mere explanation cannot change the given reality. As Charles Davis points out, "discourse draws the map of our journey to emancipation", but it "does not net our destination, nor provide the

vehicle and the motive power."¹⁸⁵ Moltmann demonstrates considerable success in this matter. He presents not only a radically new concept of God but also helps this concept to act. By doing so, he challenges us to counter the atheist charge not only theoretically but also in practical ways.

¹⁸⁵ Charles Davis, Theology and Political Society (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 102.

CHAPTER TWO

IMMANENT/ ECONOMIC TRINITY:

GOD IN HISTORY

1-1. Introduction: The Doctrine of the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation.

The doctrine of the Trinity is often regarded as 'an esoteric dogma' about the inner mystery of God, which has little relevance to the practice of Christian life. Yet current trinitarian thought refutes this misunderstanding, demonstrating that this doctrine is essential to an adequate description of God's salvific activity in the world through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.¹ For most trinitarian authors, this doctrine is indispensable for a coherent understanding of the mystery of our salvation, as expressed in Scripture, creeds, and liturgy. Furthermore, the doctrine of the Trinity is inseparably connected to other areas of theology: to Christian ethics, to spirituality, and to the life and mission of the church.²

¹ LaCugna, God for Us, Forward.

² For selected examples of the authors who see this doctrine as the description of God's salvific activity in the world, Moltmann, The Crucified God: The Trinity and the Kingdom of God; Jüngel, God's Being is in Becoming, God as the Mystery of the World; LaCugna, God For Us; LaCugna and McDonnell, "Returning from 'The Far Country': Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 41 (1988): 191-215; Piet Schoonenberg, "Trinity-The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God," Studies in Religion Sciences Religieuses, 5 (1975): 111-116.

The current emphasis upon the soteriological importance of the doctrine of the Trinity is reminiscent of the eastern trinitarian tradition, which has consistently understood the mystery of the triune God primarily as the mystery of salvation.³ And in contemporary western theology the recovery of this emphasis is largely due to the trinitarian theologies of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. Both of them stressed the connection of salvation history to the doctrine of the Trinity, and by doing so contributed to ending "the museum days of trinitarian theology."⁴

According to Barth, the Trinity has to be understood in the context of the salvation history of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The reason is that Jesus Christ is the very Word of God, and thus the very revelation of God.⁵ Since this is so, the mystery of the triune God can be properly apprehended only through the concrete

³ For the soteriological nature of the eastern trinitarian tradition, see John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology (New York: Fordham Press, 1974), 180ff. Especially instructive is a comment of Gregory Havrilak, an Eastern theologian: "...the classical Greek formulation of the Trinity as expounded by the Cappadocians, with them any discussion of the Trinity which describes the unity of persons was of secondary importance. The Greeks were more concerned with the "salvific" aspects of theology than with the functions of the three persons." Gregory Havrilak, "Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity," 68. In St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 34 (1990): 68.

⁴ The phrase "museum days of trinitarian theology" is cited in LaCugna and McDonnell, "Returning from 'the Far country'," 191.

⁵ Barth, CD 1/1, 340: "God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. If we wish really to regard revelation from the side of its subject, God, then above all we must understand that this subject, God the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation, identical with its effect." Also see Karl Barth, "Revelation," In Revelation: A Symposium, edited by John Baillie and H. Martin. (London: 1937), 42: "The Christian apprehension of revelation is the response of man to the Word of God whose name is Jesus Christ. It is the Word of God who creates the Christian apprehension of revelation. From him it gains its content, its form and its limit." Cited in John O'Donnell, The Mystery of the Triune God, 21.

history of the person Jesus Christ.⁶ Our understanding and speaking of the triune God is possible only through Jesus Christ, who is the culmination of God's saving work in human history:

We have consistently followed the rule, which we regard as basic, that statements about the divine modes of being antecedently in themselves cannot be different in content from those that are to be made about their reality in revelation. All our statements concerning what is called the immanent Trinity have been reached simply as confirmations or underlinings or, materially, as the indispensable premises of the economic Trinity: . . .the reality of God which encounters us in his revelation is his reality in all the depths of eternity.⁷

In this sense, Barth predates the widely accepted current trinitarian thesis, "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa," which is associated with Karl Rahner.⁸

Karl Rahner accepts and develops Barth's recognition of the importance of

⁶ Thus for Barth, knowledge of God that is grounded in the self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ cannot be called in question or proved from any position outside itself. The task of theology is thus to follow and correspond to what God has already spoken in this person. Barth, CD 1/2, 4-5.

⁷ Karl Barth, CD 1/1, 479.

⁸ Karl Rahner, The Trinity, trans. Joseph Donceel. (London: Burns and Oates, 1970), 22ff. Yet this does not mean that Barth precludes the importance of the immanent Trinity. He does not dissolve the immanent Trinity in the economic Trinity, that is, God's salvific activity in God's world. Rather, for him the immanent Trinity remains the indispensable premise of the economic Trinity. He maintains the ontological priority of the immanent Trinity in order to recognize and respect God's freedom. In this sense his position is different from many contemporary trinitarian theologians who adopt Rahner's thesis and argue a virtual identification of the immanent and economic Trinity. We will see Barth's position on this later.

salvation history for trinitarian theology.⁹ He laments the ignorance of this doctrine in the recent history of Christian thought. In his observation, this doctrine has been treated apart from other theological themes, such as incarnation, grace, and creation.¹⁰ Furthermore, it has been studied in isolation from concrete Christian life and piety. Because of this isolation of the doctrine of the Trinity, Rahner observes, most Christians have become mere 'monotheists' in their practical life. In fact, "should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged."¹¹

Rahner recaptures the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian theology and life by identifying God's salvific activity in the world as the proper locus of this doctrine. For him, there is no genuine doctrine of God apart from the mystery of salvation. The identity of God is known only in salvation history, culminated in the

⁹ For Rahner's trinitarian theology, see Rahner, The Trinity: "Theos in the New Testament," Theological Investigations, Vol. I. (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961): 79-148; "Remarks on the dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" Theological Investigations, Vol. IV. (New York: Crossroad, 1982): 77-102; "Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam," Theological Investigations XVIII. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 105-121.

¹⁰ Rahner, The Trinity, 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10-11. According to Rahner, the root of this irrelevancy of the trinitarian doctrine is the Latin tradition, which treats the one divine nature as a whole first, and then sees God as three divine persons. In other words, the Latin separation of *De Deo Uno* (on the one God) and *De Deo Trino* (on the triune God) resulted in the loss of the practicability of this doctrine to Christian life. In this tradition, the salvation of God, which is experienced in Jesus Christ through Holy Spirit, plays no important role in the treatise on the Trinity. As a result, the entire discussion of divine persons and relations within trinitarian theology appears to be rather formal and highly abstract, and thus loses its relevance to Christian theology and life. See, *Ibid.*, 5-17.

incarnation of Jesus Christ. Thus, a trinitarian theology, properly understood, has to be a discourse of God's salvific activity in the world. Indeed, "No adequate distinction can be made between the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the economy of salvation."¹²

This contention of Rahner is grounded upon his understanding of grace as God's self-communication. For him, God's grace is not 'something' that comes from God, but God in God's self. In grace God gives God's self as an offer, as a gift and thus divine grace as a gift is nothing other than God's own self. Therefore, the God of Jesus Christ, whom we come to know in the Spirit is the same God who dwells in absolute mystery. Since this is the case, what is given in grace is "not merely a copy or an analogy of the inner Trinity, but this Trinity itself."¹³ In other words, what is communicated in salvation history is precisely the triune God *in se*: "The communication bestowed upon the creature in grace, if occurring in freedom, occurs only in the intra-divine manner of the two-communications of the divine essence by the Father to the Son and the Spirit."¹⁴ Therefore, for Rahner, the doctrine of the

¹² Rahner, The Trinity, 24. Also, *ibid.*, 120: "Christology and the doctrine of the grace are, strictly speaking, the doctrine of the Trinity."

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Trinity means basically the explication of God's activity in the world that occurs through the Son and the Holy Spirit. Based on this understanding, Rahner affirms that there is no qualitative difference between God in God's self in eternity and God in God's activity in salvation history. In fact, "The economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and the Immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity."¹⁵ A trinitarian theology must be rooted in and start with God's activity in the world. It must be primarily the description of God's salvific offer to God's created world.

Rahner's thesis that identifies the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity has been widely accepted by many theologians across many traditions. It now enjoys "a broad consensus among the theologians of the various churches."¹⁶ Yet it also has provoked several criticisms. The most important criticism is that this virtual identification of the 'two trinities' leads into an uncritical compromise of God's

¹⁵ Rahner, The Trinity, 22. According to Rahner, the 'instance,' which proves the identity of economic and immanent Trinity is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. If the incarnation of Jesus Christ is truly God's self-communication, it must reveal something proper to the Logos as the second person of the Trinity. In other words, the mission of the Son must be grounded in the 'intra-divine' procession of the Son who is eternally begotten of the Father. Otherwise, we end up with the separation of the God of Jesus Christ in salvation history from the God *in se*. Then there comes the possibility of the dark face of *deus absconditus*, who stands behind *deus revelatus*. Therefore, for Rahner, the commensurability between mission and procession must be preserved: the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa. For this matter, Karl Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate'," 90.

¹⁶ Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, 274. Also see LaCugna's remark that "Rahner's principle is invoked and endorsed by virtually every theologian now writing on the topic of the Trinity." LaCugna, God for Us, 13. Thomas Torrance also observes that Rahner's thesis has gained almost "an ecumenical consensus" of contemporary trinitarian theology. Torrance believes that Rahner has introduced a "necessary movement of thought (a logical necessity)" into the immanent trinity but that his basic axiom of identity is acceptable." Thomas Torrance, "Toward an Ecumenical Consensus on the Trinity," in Theologische Zeitschrift 31(1975): 338.

ontological transcendence and freedom over creation.¹⁷ In other words, if the immanent Trinity is the same as the economic Trinity, God is reduced to God's activity in the world and God's transcendence is lost. Thus some theologians argue that the economic Trinity may be identical with the immanent Trinity, but that the reverse is not true. For them, the doctrine of the Trinity must be rooted in and start with God's salvific activity in the world. But this does not justify the total identification of the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity.¹⁸

To be fair to Rahner, however, it is necessary to point out that he did not assume a strict ontological identity of the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity. For him, these two 'trinities' are not literally the same, as $A=A$. Rather, as LaCugna indicates, Rahner's intention with the axiom was to posit this doctrine in God's salvific activity in the world, and thereby to rescue it from falling into useless speculation about the inner nature of God. It was to correct the historical developments that had separated

¹⁷ Paul Molnar, "The Function of the Immanent Trinity in the Theology of Karl Barth: Implications for Today," Scottish Journal of Theology, 42 (1989): 367.

¹⁸ For some representatives of this criticism and their arguments, see Jungel, The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming; Yves Congar, I Believe in the Holy Spirit (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), Vol. 3, 13-18; Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, 276ff; Piet Schoonenberg, "Trinity - The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God," 111-116; Paul Molnar, "Toward a Contemporary Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: Karl Barth and the Current Discussion," Scottish Journal of Theology 49 (1996): 311-357, and "The Function of the Immanent Trinity in the Theology of Karl Barth: Implications of Today," Scottish Journal of Theology 42 (1989): 367-399.

the economy of salvation and the being of God.¹⁹ However, as Haight points out, it is true that Rahner did not fully explain why and in what way they are distinct and thus left the room for misunderstanding.²⁰

In any case, Rahner's thesis has challenged many theologians to doubt the traditional understanding of the immanent Trinity as a reality independent from God's 'economic' activity in the world, and consequently to reformulate the relationship of the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity. Roughly speaking, there are two different positions that respond to Rahner's thesis. The first position, held by many authors, sees only a 'weak identity' between the two. Those who adopt this position maintain that the immanent Trinity cannot be totally identified with the economic Trinity. If this happens, then God is reduced to God's activity in the world and God's freedom and sovereignty over creation is severely undermined. Thus they hold the notion of the prior actuality of the immanent Trinity, rejecting a strict ontological identity. Another position presupposes a 'strong identity' between these 'two trinities.' Those who accept this position find the self-related God in eternity almost exclusively in the economic process of salvation. Thus the triune God is virtually identified with

¹⁹ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 216.

²⁰ Roger Haight, "The Point of Trinitarian Theology," 202. Cited in LaCugna, *Ibid.*, 222.

God in history, the God who revealed God's self in Christ and Spirit. As background to Moltmann's theology of the immanent-economic Trinity, the next section will survey these two approaches to the economic-immanent Trinity. First we will take note of the trinitarian thought of Karl Barth and Eberhard Jüngel as representatives of the 'weak identity,'²¹ then consider the trinitarian thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Catherine LaCugna, and Ted Peters as representatives of the 'strong identity.' After that we will examine Moltmann's understanding of the relationship between the immanent and the

²¹ Besides these two theologians, authors like Piet Schoonenberg, Yves Congar, and Walter Kasper adopt this position. According to Schoonenberg, our experience of God in our faith is undoubtedly trinitarian. God has revealed God's self as the triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through the mystery of redemption. Yet this does not necessarily mean that God is also trinitarian in God's self: We do not know whether God is trinitarian in God's eternal mode of being. It depends upon God's free self-determination and thus for him the question whether the immanent Trinity is the same as the economic Trinity is merely speculative. Therefore, the strict ontological identity of these two cannot be maintained: otherwise, it ends up with the undermining of the sovereign freedom of God. Consequently, for him, even though the starting point of the doctrine of the Trinity is salvation history, this does not mean that God in God's nature is always in some way trinitarian. See Piet Schoonenberg, "Trinity - The Consummated Covenant: theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God," 111-116. Yves Congar also adopts a weak identity of the economic and the immanent Trinity. He agrees with Rahner that God's self-communication in human history is truly a divine self-communication. Thus, the mode of God in salvation history truly and genuinely reflects the reality of God in God's self. But this does not mean that there is a perfect ontological identity between the two: There is an asymmetry between two aspects of the one divine self-communication. For him, the self-communication of God in the economy is a "humiliation," "ministry and 'kenosis'," for human salvation. Thus there must be "a distance between the economic, the revealed Trinity and the eternal Trinity." Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, III, 15. Since the self-communication of God takes place in history, there are limitations: at the very least the mode of temporality and chronology has to be placed upon God. Thus, he concludes, while the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, the reverse is not always true. God in God's self in eternity remains ineffable and is not fully identical with God's self-expression in history. See *Ibid.*, 13-18. Walter Kasper takes a similar view. He observes that if Rahner's axiom is understood at face value, it is a grave misunderstanding. Such an equation cannot convey the 'something new,' which happened to God because of God's entry into history. In God's creation of the world, especially through the incarnation of the second divine person, something new happened to God. Thus there is not a total identity of these two trinities. The relation of the economic and the immanent Trinity cannot be conceived in a simple tautological formula A=A. Rather, the relation has to be understood not as "an identification but a non-deducible, free, gracious, historical presence of the immanent Trinity in the economic Trinity." Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 276. The immanent Trinity remains a mystery, even though it corresponds to the economic Trinity. Consequently he rephrases Rahner's axiom in this way: "In the economic self-communication the intra-trinitarian self-communication is present in the world in a new way, namely, under the veil of historical words, signs and actions, and ultimately in the figure of the man Jesus of Nazareth." *Ibid.*

economic Trinity.

1-2. A “Weak Identity” Between the Immanent and the Economic Trinity: Karl Barth and Eberhard Jüngel

A staunch supporter of ‘weak identity’ of the economic to immanent Trinity is Karl Barth. In fact Barth’s understanding of the economic-immanent relationship in God was already formulated before the appearance of Rahner’s thesis and thus cannot be conceived as a direct response to it. Yet in its content Barth’s trinitarian theology can be categorized with those who argue for a ‘weak identity.’ As we have seen, Barth stresses that the proper context for the study of trinitarian theology is God’s salvific activity in the person of Jesus Christ. Yet at the same time he makes it clear that the divine life, the mystery of God in God’s self, cannot be reduced or dissolved into salvation history. The immanent Trinity cannot be simply identified, or synthesized with the economic Trinity. Rather, the former has to remain as the indispensable premise of the latter.²² He even claims that immanent Trinity is in its nature the very content of a trinitarian theology:

“(T)he content of the doctrine of the Trinity. . . is not that God in His relation to man is Creator, Mediator, and Redeemer, but that God in

²² Barth, CD 1/1, 402

Himself is eternally God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . . [God acting as Emmanuel] cannot be dissolved into His work and activity."²³

What this means for Barth is that before the Trinity is economic it is already immanent.²⁴ Before God creates fellowship with us, God is already who God is. God is already in fellowship in the concrete relation of the three modes of God's being, and God's fellowship with the world is totally based upon and determined by this divine fellowship.²⁵ In fact, Barth's main concern with this notion is to recognize and uphold God's absolute freedom over God's creation. God remains Subject, even in God's revelation: God is distinct from the world and humanity and does not need the world to become God in God's self. In short, for Barth, the notion of the immanent Trinity, which exists apart from and remains as the non-temporal basis of the economic Trinity, is crucial if we are to respect the divine freedom.

Barth's understanding of the relation of the economic to the immanent Trinity

²³ Barth, CD II 2, 878-9. Cf. CD 2 2, 309, 313.

²⁴ CD II/1, 275. Here he writes, "As and before God seeks and creates fellowship with us. He wills and completes fellowship in Himself. In Himself He does not will to exist for Himself, to exist alone. On the contrary, He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and therefore alive in His unique being with and for and in another."

²⁵ Karl Barth, The Humanity of God, trans. John Newton Thomas and others. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), 50. Thus for Barth, God does not need the world or humanity to be who God is. Even the notion that 'God is Love' does not necessarily require human beings to be the object of God's love. The reason is, for him, God is the one who loves us, but 'in freedom.' God is sufficient in God's self, needing neither the world nor human being in order to be what God is. As we will see later, Moltmann criticizes this, while arguing that the creation is 'necessary' for God, because God is love.

has its merits. Its strength is that it enables us to point to the divine supremacy and freedom. If we find the triune God only in salvation history, we leave little room for the immanent Trinity, which provides the ground of the economic Trinity. Then we lose the crucial point that God transcends all God's creation. In fact, if the triune God is reduced solely to the God of salvation history, then we seem to imprison God in history. In this sense Barth is quite right. Yet Barth's understanding also has its limits. First of all, it tends to reduce the importance of God's history in and with the world. If the immanent Trinity already exists apart from the economic Trinity, and exclusively determines the latter, the economic Trinity is reduced to a mere repetition of the immanent Trinity and involves nothing new for God. This results in the undermining of the importance of history in the life of God. Second, if God has the freedom not to be the God of the human being, as Barth contends, it becomes suspicious whether God in God's self is really merciful. In fact, God has revealed God's self as merciful in the economic Trinity through the person of Jesus Christ. Yet this does not necessarily imply that God in God's self is also merciful and gracious, for God has still the freedom to be different in God's own self. If this is so, then the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity become virtually separate in Barth's thought and there remains (at least logically) the possibility of an ominous '*Deus Absconditus*' existing behind, and thus irrelevant to, the revelation

in Jesus Christ.

Another important trinitarian theologian who adopts the 'weak' identity of the immanent and economic Trinity is German theologian Eberhard Jüngel. In fact, Jüngel is greatly indebted to Karl Barth in his doctrine of the Trinity.²⁶ He adopts Barth's stress upon the priority of the immanent Trinity, contending that the ontological priority of the immanent Trinity is essential to understanding the economic Trinity as a veridical and gracious self-revelation of God. For him, only when the immanent Trinity is conceived as 'primordial,' can God's economic activity as Father, Son, and Spirit be understood as the free expression of God's love and grace.²⁷ Thus, like Barth, he contends that God could be God in eternal blessedness without human persons or the world.

Yet Jüngel also maintains that God has from eternity freely chosen to be "for man" in Jesus Christ, which is the "office" of the Son.²⁸ Indeed God "could" be God in eternal blessedness without human persons or the world, but in the love between Father and Son there is room for human persons so that God has not chosen to be God without

²⁶ Jüngel develops his trinitarian theology in the context of his interpretation of Barth's trinitarian theology. His The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming, in which he presents his theology of the Trinity, is basically an interpretation of Barth's trinitarian theology.

²⁷ Jüngel, God's Being is in Becoming, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

humankind.²⁹ Since this is so, he contends, the historical ‘mission’ of the Son is included from all eternity in God’s inner-trinitarian self-determination to be for humankind. Indeed, according to him, God’s relationship to the world *ad extra* ‘corresponds’ (*entsprechen*) to the inter-trinitarian relationality within the divine life *ad intra*. In other words, in God’s becoming in time through the creation, reconciliation and the final redemption, God ‘corresponds’ (*entsprechen*) to God’s self in God’s eternal, freely chosen self-election between Father and Son for the sending of the Son into the world. Thus for Jüngel God’s absoluteness is not the ground of God’s opposition to historical reality but the basis for God’s gracious immanence in it, in which God does not lose God’s self in its relativity and dependence. In other words, for him, the priority of the immanent Trinity does not mean that the inner-trinitarian reality of God is separated from the salvation-historical ‘missions’ of the divine persons, as has happened all too often in the past. It does mean that the processions ‘in’ God cannot be exhausted in the missions *ad extra* without introducing the world into God’s essence as a constitutive moment. God has no ‘stake’ in God’s historical relation with the world other than to fulfill God’s freely chosen self-determination to be humanity’s savior. Yet from

²⁹ Yet this is again a free decision of God. God’s inner-trinitarian determination to become for human person in Jesus, to become historical in creation, reconciliation and redemption is grounded in the fact that “He does not need us and yet He finds no enjoyment in His self-enjoyment.” Jüngel, *Ibid.*, 77. Cf. Barth, CD 2/1, 283.

all eternity God does so freely choose and the inner-trinitarian relation of Father and Son 'already' includes this elective purpose. Therefore, in the person of the Son, God already relates God's self to human persons before they have been created. "God's being takes place as *historia praeveniens*. In this *historia praeveniens* God determines himself to be ours as one of us."³⁰

In this sense Jüngel accepts Rahner's thesis on the identity of the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity, while contending that a trinitarian theology should begin with the concrete salvation history of God in Jesus Christ. For Jüngel the former refers to God's history with us, and the latter is a summary concept of God's historicity, thought as truth. Especially for him, God is known only through Jesus Christ, because God identifies God's being forever with the one who suffered and died on the cross: "the crucified is as it is the material definition of what is meant by the word 'God'".³¹ Indeed, God's *opus ad extra* in salvation history is the immanent *opus Dei ad extra internum*.³² Thus for him, the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity although the reverse is not exactly true.

³⁰ Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming*, 76.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 13. Also see 343: "Jesus Christ is that man in whom God has defined himself as a human God."

³² *Ibid.*, 76.

1-3. A “Strong Identity” Between the Economic and the Immanent Trinity: Wolfhart Pannenberg, Catherine LaCugna, and Ted Peters.

An important representative advocating ‘a strong identity’ between the immanent and the economic Trinity is the contemporary German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg. For him, the doctrine of the Trinity has to be conceived exclusively in relation to the salvation history of God. Indeed, according to him, there is no such thing as the immanent Trinity that exists before and apart from God’s activity in the world. God’s trinitarian life is constituted and determined exclusively in and through the history of the world. He develops this idea with his notion that “God’s deity is God’s rule.”³³

Pannenberg observes that in the Bible God’s identity is inherently related to and in fact dependent upon God’s kingly rule over God’s creation.³⁴ A disobedient creation denies the existence of the reign of God, and since the deity of God is inseparably connected to God’s lordship, it is now in question: the deity of God is at stake in the outcome of world history. Since this is so, according to Pannenberg, God’s identity as God can be validated only when the Father of Jesus Christ has turned out to be the Lord

³³ This thesis has appeared numerous times in his writings. For an early statement of this, Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* I, trans. George H. Kehm. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 242: “. . . the future of his lordship, the kingdom of God (is) essential to his deity. . . his deity will be revealed only when the kingdom comes, since only then will his lordship be visible. . . The God of the Bible is God only in that he proves himself as God. He would not be God of the world if he did not prove himself to be its Lord.”

³⁴ Ibid. Also, Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* I, 329.

of all, by establishing God's kingdom in the end of history. Only at that time will God's deity be finally confirmed.³⁵ Therefore God's deity, his eternal trinitarian essence, is dependent on the works of the Son and Spirit in the redemption of history.³⁶

But Pannenberg recognizes that this notion by itself cannot secure God's sovereign freedom over the world. In fact, if God's deity is constituted only in God's activity in the world, then God is virtually identified with worldly history, and God's ontological priority over God's creation is declined. Thus Pannenberg attempts to secure the divine transcendence by introducing another concept, 'God as the power of the future.'³⁷ For him, the God of Christian faith can be best understood as 'the power of the future.' As the future is beyond our control, always open, new, unpredictable, and thus never graspable, God is always free and sovereign: God is always the other who is not grasped by the human person.³⁸ As the past and the present are continually released

³⁵ Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology 1, 242.

³⁶ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 313. Here he writes, "The rule of kingdom of the Father is not so external to his deity that he might be God without his kingdom. The world as the object of his lordship might not be necessary to his deity, since its existence owes its origin to his creative freedom, but the existence of the world is not compatible with his deity apart from his lordship over it. Hence, lordship goes hand in hand with the deity of God."

³⁷ This is also one of the most important and often repeated expressions that Pannenberg uses from his early theology in order to articulate the Hebrew-Christian concept of God. For him, this understanding of God is biblically based and helps us to grasp God's transcendence, freedom, and lordship. For his early use of this term, see Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, 61: "God in his very being is the future of the world." Also, Basic Questions in Theology 1, 242f.

³⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 63. Here he argues, "The very idea of God demands that there be no future beyond himself. He is the ultimate future. This in turn suggests that God should be conceived as pure freedom." Ibid.

from the future. God is always the One from whom every finite event is being released. God is related to the temporality of the world in such a way that all reality finds its true ground of being in God. In short, God is the power of the future that gives unity among the scattered fragments of finite events. Since this is so, all historical beings and events are dependent upon God as their future. The future has ontological priority to the past and present. It is the future's power and love that maintains the coherence of the temporal order.³⁹ Consequently, for Pannenberg, God is the one who is involved so deeply in the process of history that the contingencies of worldly events influence and determine God. Yet at the same time God transcends all worldly events and in fact determines the process of history as the power of the future.

Pannenberg's reasoning includes two important elements. First, the relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinity is conceived in eschatological terms.

³⁹ In fact, Pannenberg's idea of God as "the power of the future" is inherently related to, and can be properly explained in the light of, his "revelation as history" and of "Jesus Christ as the anticipation of God's eschatological future." For Pannenberg, human history is not an autonomous reality in itself. Rather, it is related to God in a specific way, that is, as the indirect revelation of God. God reveals God's self throughout the whole of history, but in an indirect way. Since this is so, we can see in the history many glimmers or divine hints and intimations of immortality and of the mysterious power behind things. Yet since this self-disclosure of God is going on throughout history, the meaning of history and thus the final form of God's self-disclosure will be clear only at the end of time. Yet in the history of Jesus Christ, especially through his resurrection, he argues, we see the end of time in advance. The resurrection of Jesus is the proleptic event that will occur at the end of time. Since Jesus was being raised in the context of the apocalyptic thought world, according to which the resurrection of the dead clearly implies the arrival of the eschaton, we gain in his resurrection a clear advance picture of God's final revelation, or God's self-disclosure. In short, for him, "the universality of the eschatological self-indication of God" is proleptically achieved in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this implies the priority of the future over past and present. Pannenberg, Revelation as History, 49.

For him, there cannot be any presupposed immanent Trinity, which exists apart from the works of Father, Son, and Spirit in the world. Rather, the immanent Trinity is an eschatological reality, which exists as the fulfillment and consummation of the present process of the economic history of God. Conversely, the economic Trinity is the present form of the eschatological immanent Trinity: It exists as an anticipation of the final fulfillment of the Father's monarchy through the works of the Son and Spirit. Second, according to him, the relation of these "two trinities" is mutually reciprocal. The immanent Trinity is not possible without the work of three persons in history, which aims to establish God's deity by bringing God's disobedient creation to God's kingdom. In other words, the immanent Trinity is dependent on the economic Trinity in exactly the same way that the Father's monarchy is dependent on the Son. Without the Son's activity the Father would not be Father and would not become Lord of all. But at the same time, Pannenberg contends, it is the Father's eschatological Lordship that constitutes the ground of the Son's life and message. For, God exists as the "power of the future" in advance of all historical contingencies. The eschatological unity of Father, Son, and Spirit in the immanent Trinity works as the final goal and ground of the three divine persons' historical activities. Consequently, for Pannenberg, God is the God of sovereign freedom even in God's radical participation in history. God determines the direction and

content of history in the fact that God remains as the power of the eschatological future.

Like Pannenberg, Catherine LaCugna believes that the doctrine of the Trinity is not a doctrine about God in God's self, but ultimately "a teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other."⁴⁰ It is a teaching about the God of Christian faith, who has come to God's creation for communion and friendship through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Thus this doctrine is basically about relationship, the relationship of God to us.⁴¹ It is "the affirmation of God's intimate communion with us through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit."⁴²

Since this is so, for LaCugna, a doctrine of the Trinity has to be constituted exclusively upon the economy of God in the salvation history. In fact this doctrine is no less than the explanation of God's life with us in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit.⁴³ Therefore, according to her, we do not need to presuppose the immanent Trinity, which exists in itself, apart from the economic Trinity. Rather, there is only one reality: the mystery of divine-human communion: "There is neither an economic nor an immanent Trinity; there is only the *oikonomia* that is the concrete realization of the

⁴⁰ Catherine LaCugna, God for Us, 1, 228.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Forward.

⁴³ *Ibid.*,

mystery of *theologia* in time, space, history and personality."⁴⁴ And the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity are two aspects of this one divine-human communion: In other words, for her, the distinction of the economic and immanent Trinity is not ontological but conceptual: there is only one divine self-communication, which is revealed through salvation history. And the immanent Trinity means the structure or pattern of this one self-expression of God, while the economic Trinity implies the concrete expression of this structure.⁴⁵ Thus she does not like to use the 'troublesome' conception of 'the economic Trinity' (as the manifestations of God's activity in the world) and 'the immanent Trinity' (as the triune mystery of God in God's self, apart from God's activity in the world). Rather, she recommends that we speak of *oikonomia* (the economy of salvation) and *theologia* (eternal mystery of God). For her *oikonomia* is not the Trinity *ad extra* but God's grand plan reaching from creation to consummation, in which God and all creatures are destined to exist together in the mystery of love and communion. Similarly, *theologia* is not Trinity *in se* but the mystery of God with us.⁴⁶ In other words, for her theology of the immanent Trinity is not an analysis of God *in se*, but the 'internal structure of the economy of redemption, that is, the structure or pattern

⁴⁴ Ibid., 222-24.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 225-228.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 223.

of God's self-expression in salvation history.⁴⁷ It does not refer to "God as such apart from relationship to us." but to "God revealed in Christ and the Spirit."⁴⁸ By saying so, LaCugna rejects the existence of an immanent Trinity which exists apart from the economic Trinity. For her the immanent Trinity is not an ontological reality but a concept, which refers to the structure of God's self-expression in history as triune.

Ted Peters holds a similar view with LaCugna in his understanding of the economic- immanent Trinity. He adopts and appreciates LaCugna's exclusive stress upon the salvation history of God by calling it a 'real jewel'.⁴⁹ Like LaCugna, he does not find the necessity to assume the immanent Trinity, which exists apart from the salvation history. He also thinks that the doctrine of the Trinity is in its very nature the explication of the salvation history of God: "The notion of one being in three persons is simply a conceptual device for trying to understand the drama of salvation that is taking place in Jesus Christ."⁵⁰ Furthermore, he argues that "God is in the process of becoming God's self through relationship with the temporal creation."⁵¹ In other

⁴⁷ Ibid., 224-225.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 227.

⁴⁹ Ted Peters, God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 122.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 70. See also 16: "The Trinitarian life is itself the history of salvation."

⁵¹ Ibid., 92.

words. for Peters. the identity of the triune God is determined through the process of history and will be finally achieved at its eschaton.⁵² For him. "the relationality of God experienced through Christ's saving relationship to the world is constitutive of trinitarian relations proper. God's relations *ad extra* become God's relations *ad intra*."⁵³

In this point Peter's view is quite similar to that of Pannenberg and LaCugna. What is unique in his understanding is the way he conceives the relation of God's eternity to God's temporality (or. historicity). His main dialogue partner in this matter is the contemporary physics. He attempts to understand the relation of the eternity and temporality in God with the aid of the findings and insights of the theories of relativity, thermodynamics, and quantum physics.⁵⁴ According to him. Christian Church has understood eternity under the influence of Platonic thought mainly as 'timelessness.' Thus God's eternity and the creation's temporality became mutually exclusive. Augustine. for example. attributed God the eternity. which is totally in opposition to time: There is no temporal movement in eternity. To be sure.

⁵² Ibid., 70. For Peters, "the immanent Trinity is consummated eschatologically, meaning that the whole of temporal history is factored into the inner life of God. God becomes fully God-in-relationship when the work of salvation-when the economic Trinity-is complete." Ibid., 181.

⁵³ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 155-165.

soteriological concern worked in this understanding of divine eternity: "Temporality means passage and passage means decay and death. If God is to be able to redeem, then God cannot be subject to decay and death."⁵⁵ Yet this understanding, which brought the traditional understanding of the immanent Trinity as God's a-seity, has difficulty in relating eternity to time. Besides, it does not correspond to the Biblical view that conceives God in temporal terms.⁵⁶ Therefore he turns his focus and finds in the contemporary physics alternative way of understanding the relationship of the eternity and time. In his observation, contemporary physics have found 1) time is more than a phenomenon of human consciousness: it is an integral and basic aspect of the universe and thus exists objectively.⁵⁷ 2) The flow of time is not consonant. It is affected by velocity and gravity. 3) Time has a mono-direction: It flows from past to present to future.⁵⁸ 4) Time had a beginning and thus some day it will have a finish: It is not eternal. Based upon these findings, Peters proposes to understand eternity as the 'whole of time,' which includes temporal passage. For him, time and eternity is not mutually exclusive. Rather, eternity includes the temporality of time: In fact eternity is

⁵⁵ Ibid., 152.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 151.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 162.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 171.

not conceivable without its relationship to time.⁵⁹ Eternity is the consummation of time at the end of time. And if this is so, "the coming into existence of eternity – at least salvific eternity- is contingent."⁶⁰ The nature and form of the eternity as the final form and consummation of the time is dependent upon and determined by historical reality. Thus for him, the immanent Trinity means the final consummation of the economic Trinity as God's relationship with the world. If this is so, "there is but one Trinity and . . . that it is the Trinity we have experienced in the economy of salvation."⁶¹

Pannenberg, LaCugna, and Peters together stress the historicity of God. For them God is radically the God of history and thus the notion of the inner life of God, which exists apart from history, is virtually rejected. For them the doctrine of the Trinity is exclusively the explication of a God who enters into history. The merit of this position is that it rightly emphasizes that the triune God is the God of history. Yet this position has the problem of endangering God's freedom by dissolving God into God's history

⁵⁹ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 177.

⁶¹ Ibid. In connection with this line of reasoning Peters rejects the idea of eternal Sonship of Christ. He asserts that it is misleading to think "of the eternal Son as some sort of preexistent disincarnate logos (*logos asarkos*) just waiting up there in heaven for the moment to incarnate and become the historical and soteriological Jesus." Peters, Ibid., 23. For him it is the historical Jesus who gains his divinity. Ibid., 180.

with the world. Pannenberg, for example, does not appear to succeed in securing the transcendentalty of God. Although he adopts the idea of 'God as the future' in order to hold God's freedom and transcendence over creation, he fails to explain how this future predetermines God's history in the world. Rather, in his theology, what is constituted in history is God's deity as trinitarian essence, and thus God is virtually identified with God's activity in the world. Consequently in Pannenberg's doctrine of the immanent-economic Trinity divine freedom is undermined. Likewise, for LaCugna, the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity are not ontically distinguishable and the former is virtually dissolved into the latter. She denies that we can have any knowledge of the inner life of God: "The existence of such an intra-divine realm is precisely what cannot be established on the basis of the economy, despite the fact that it has functioned within speculative theology ever since the late fourth century."⁶² Furthermore, she moves beyond this apparent apophaticism to an implicit denial that God has an 'inner life.'⁶³ Indeed, LaCugna suggests that any discussion of the immanent Trinity, which exists apart from the world, is "a fantasy about a God who does not exist."⁶⁴ This would seem to imply that, if there were no created order, no human beings to experience redemption,

⁶² Ibid., 223.

⁶³ Ibid., 224.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 230.

the triune God might simply vanish into oblivion. The underlying assumption seems to be that, unless God exists wholly for the sake of humanity, then God must be nothing at all. Ted Peters takes a similar view. He also unduly stresses the historicity of God to the point that God's being is virtually dissolved into the flow of history. In fact, for him God's being is determined by the events of history. God's dependence on history is such that it is not God, but history, which defines who and what God is like. And as a result, God's transcendence and freedom become obscure.

* * *

We have seen two different positions regarding the relation of the immanent to the economic Trinity. The first position sees a 'weak identity' between the immanent and the economic Trinity, by insisting that God in God's self and God in history are not the same, although they are inherently related to each other. The merit of this position is to hold and preserve the divine freedom, but it carries the danger of undermining the historicity of God. The second position assumes a strong identity between these 'two trinities,' while arguing that God's being is exclusively identified with God's activity in history. The overarching concern of this position is to recognize and respect the radical

historicality of God, but it has a problem maintaining God's freedom over God's creation. From this observation it becomes clear that the main issue of the economic-immanent Trinity is how to hold both God's sovereign freedom and historicality together in a logically viable way. In other words, what is required is a concrete conceptualization of how the immanent Trinity determines the economic process of the divine life in salvation history, without destroying the historical reality of that process.

Now keeping these concerns in mind we move into Moltmann's understanding of the relation of the economic to the immanent Trinity. First we will examine Moltmann's understanding of the immanent-economic relationship in God. Here we will maintain that his trinitarian scheme can provide a theoretical framework that secures both of God's absolute freedom and radical historicality. Then we will study the social significance of his understanding of the immanent-economic relationship in God, while focusing upon his response to today's ecological crisis.

2. Jürgen Moltmann: The Relationship of the Economic to the Immanent Trinity

2-1. Trinitarian Theology as the Discourse of God's Salvific Activity in History

Moltmann's trinitarian theology shows in its basic structure a strong identity between the immanent and the economic Trinity. In fact from the early stage of his

theology he questions the traditional distinction of these two trinities. Already in The Theology of Hope, which was published in 1964 in German, he finds it problematic to accept the notion of an immanent Trinity that exists non-temporally behind the economic Trinity. This understanding is for him more akin to Greek metaphysical thought than the biblical conception, which understands God's revelation as promise. It obscures the eschatological direction of God's trinitarian activity in history, reducing the latter to a mere temporal reflection of God's eternal being, "as epiphany of the eternal present and not as apocalypse of the promised future."⁶⁵ Thus he speaks of the importance of the genuine temporality of God, since only this will guarantee the biblical perception that truth is to be found in the event of history and eschatology. In other words, already in the middle of the 1960s Moltmann tries to understand the immanent trinity in its relation to the salvation history of God, rather than in its traditional conception, as the divine reality that remains aloof and predetermines the economic Trinity.

Moltmann continues to hold this idea in his consequent works. His uneasiness with the traditional understanding of the immanent Trinity as non-temporal, independent reality that remains apart from God's activity in the world becomes clear when his

⁶⁵ Theology of Hope, 57. In this sense he criticizes Barth's understanding of the immanent Trinity as still more similar to Greek thought in the fact that it makes the history of Jesus Christ a revelation of eternity instead of a revelation of the future. See, *Ibid.*, 50-58. Also, Moltmann's Letter to Barth of April 1965, Karl Barth, Letters 1961-1968, J. Fangmeier and H. Stoevensandt, eds. trans and ed. G. W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 348.

theology takes a more explicit trinitarian structure.⁶⁶ In The Crucified God, where he develops a trinitarian theology of the cross, this uneasiness becomes clear. In this book, he shifts his focus from the resurrection to the cross of Jesus Christ. As we have seen in chapter I, the crucial issue of the cross for him is basically theological rather than soteriological. It is the question, "who is God in the cross of the Christ who is abandoned by God?"⁶⁷ And for him, the answer is that the God who identifies God's self with the suffering and dying Christ is the suffering God. And if this is so, Moltmann argues, the doctrine of the Trinity has nothing to do with "impractical speculation" about the nature of God, but is "nothing other than a short version of the passion narrative of

⁶⁶ Moltmann's theology moves from the beginning between two poles: the event of the history of Jesus Christ and its universal horizon in the eschatological future of all reality. This movement is possible because for him the resurrection of the crucified Jesus implies the definitive event of God's eschatological promise. In fact in raising the crucified Jesus from the dead, God enacted God's promise for the new creation of all things. Thus for him a Christian theology starts from the specific historical event of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and proceeds to the transformation of the world and to its eschatological future. Moltmann's trinitarian thought is developed by providing a trinitarian interpretation to this structure of his early theology, that is, a christological center in the history of Jesus and a universal eschatological horizon. Moltmann makes this clear in his recent reflection upon his whole theological development: "What is God's relation to the crucified and risen Christ? What does the cross of Christ signify for God in God's very self? With this theological question I discovered not only the passibility of God, who is love (1 John 4:17), but also the trinitarian relations in the dialectic of cross and resurrection. I integrated this christological dialectic into the larger framework of a "social doctrine of the Trinity. . . . The contradiction between cross and resurrection is thereby integrated into larger trinitarian interrelations." See Jürgen Moltmann, "Reflections: A Reply to Douglas Meeks' "Jurgen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions to Theology," Religious Studies Reviews, vol. 22:2 (April, 1996): 104. And this trinitarian interpretation becomes explicit with The Crucified God. He makes this clear by saying, "For me, the work on this theology of the cross meant a surprising turning-point. Having asked in many different ways what the cross of Christ means for the church, for theology, for discipleship, for culture and society, I now found myself faced with the reverse question: what does Christ's cross really mean for God himself? . . . *And from the cross of Christ I also found access to the trinitarian life of God.*" Moltmann, Experiences of God, trans. Margaret Kohl, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 15-16. Emphasis is mine.

⁶⁷ CG 4.

Christ. . ."⁶⁸ The doctrine of the Trinity is therefore no less than the explanation of the salvation history of God, which is culminated in the passion narrative of Jesus Christ. It is "the theological interpretation of God" who is with us through the history of Jesus Christ and the Spirit.⁶⁹ Therefore, for Moltmann, "Any one who really talks of God, talks of the cross of Jesus, and does not speculate in heavenly riddles."⁷⁰ In a summary passage he maintains:

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 formal principle of knowledge of the cross is the doctrine of the Trinity.⁷¹

If the doctrine of the Trinity is no mere theological speculation about God but the summary form of God's salvation history in the person of Jesus Christ, then there is no room to speak of the immanent Trinity as the inner-trinitarian life of God that remains aloof from history. Rather, God is always the God of history and thus the true nature of

⁶⁸ CG 246. He further contends, "Anyone who really talks of the Trinity talks of the cross of Jesus, and does not speculate in heavenly riddles." CG 207.

⁶⁹ Bauckham, The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann, 156.

⁷⁰ CG 207.

⁷¹ Ibid., 240f. See also Moltmann, CG 245: "The doctrine of the Trinity is "the complete perception of the cross of Christ." Besides, TK 83: "The Cross is at the center of the Trinity." Similarly in The Church in the Power of the Spirit, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977), 95: "Christ's surrender of himself to a Godforsaken death reveals the secret of the cross and with it the secret of God Himself. It is the open secret of the Trinity."

God must be understood in God's activity in the world centered on the cross. Furthermore, if the trinitarian reality of God is open to human history through the cross, then God's inner life is determined and influenced by God's external history on the cross. Indeed, "the pain of the cross determines the inner life of the triune God from eternity to eternity."⁷² Thus, God's relationship to the world has a retroactive effect on God's relationship to God's self. In short, "the economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity; it also has a retroactive effect on it."⁷³ God's being is primarily identified and determined by God's activity in the world.

2-2. The Distinction of the Immanent and the Economic Trinity: The Immanent Trinity as the Eschatological Fulfillment of the Economic Trinity

As we have seen, in his early understanding of the economic-immanent Trinity, Moltmann virtually identifies the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. For him, God is Trinity only through God's history in the world. Indeed, when one understands the cross of Jesus Christ as an event between trinitarian persons, this understanding "overcomes the dichotomy between immanent and economic Trinity, and that between the nature of God and his inner tri-unity. It makes trinitarian thought necessary for the

⁷² TK 161: "the Son's sacrifice of boundless love on Golgotha is from eternity already included in the exchange of the essential, the consubstantial love which constitutes the divine life of the Trinity." Ibid. Also, The Way of Jesus Christ, 173: "What happens on Golgotha reaches into the very depths of the Godhead and therefore puts its impress on the trinitarian life of God in eternity."

⁷³ TK 160.

complete perception of the cross of Christ."⁷⁴

Yet Moltmann's identification of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity has provoked several criticisms. The most serious and consistent criticism is that this understanding reduces God's being into God's activity in history, and thus loses the notion of the divine freedom and transcendence over creation. Walter Kasper, for example, argues that for Moltmann, "God is, in an almost Hegelian manner, entangled in the history of human sin, so that God's existence in and for himself (the immanent Trinity) can no longer be distinguished from the history of God's suffering in the world."⁷⁵ John O'Donnell also points out that Moltmann's trinitarian theology entails the danger of dissolving the immanent Trinity into the economic history of God, and thereby reaches to "the doctrine that God can only be God, can only realize himself as divine by involving himself in history."⁷⁶

In fact, Moltmann acknowledges this problem and in his succeeding works shifts away from the virtual identification of these two 'trinities' that he held before. He recognizes the need to keep some distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity in order to preserve the ontological priority of God over God's creation. This

⁷⁴ CG 245.

⁷⁵ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 60-61.

⁷⁶ O'Donnell, *The Mystery of Triune God*, 38.

recognition appears first in his book The Church in the Power of the Spirit. (German. 1975).⁷⁷ Here he retains some distinction between God's being in God's self and God's activity in the world, while coining and distinguishing "the Trinity in the origin," and "the Trinity in the sending."⁷⁸ For him the first term refers to the original condition of God that enables God's activity in the world, while the second implies the historical manifestation of this condition, that is, the sending of the Son and the Spirit to the world. Thus "the Trinity in the sending" presupposes and corresponds to "the Trinity in the origin" – that is, to "the preexistent relationship in God himself."⁷⁹:

As God appears in history as the sending Father and the sent Son, so he must earlier have been in himself. The relation of the one who sends to the one sent as it appears in the history of Jesus thus includes in itself an order of origin within the Trinity, and must be understood as that order's historical correspondence. Otherwise there would be no certainty that in the messianic mission of Jesus we have to do with God himself. The relations between the discernible and visible history of Jesus and the God whom he called 'my Father' correspond to the relation of the Son to the Father in eternity. The *missio ad extra* reveals the *missio ad intra*. The *missio ad intra* is the foundation for the *missio ad extra*. . . From the Trinity of the sending of Jesus we can reason back to the Trinity in the origin, in God himself, so that-

⁷⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977). Hereafter abbreviated as CPS.

⁷⁸ CPS 54.

⁷⁹ Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 84. Hereafter abbreviated as FC.

conversely we may understand the history of Jesus as the revelation of the living nature of God."⁸⁰

In fact by adopting and distinguishing the terms, "Trinity in the origin," and "Trinity in the sending," Moltmann holds the idea that God is already triune before God enters into history. For him this attempt is necessary to maintain that God is not totally identical with God's activity in the world, and thus God is free even in God's activity in the world. Finally this notion allows Moltmann to argue for God's ontological transcendence over the world. In fact, as we will see later, Moltmann's claim that God in God's nature predetermines God in God's activity is justified only with his idea of "the Trinity in the origin," that assumes some form of pre-temporal triune reality.

Indeed Moltmann's adoption of the idea that God is already triune before God enters into history is a correct and necessary safeguard to hold divine freedom and transcendence. Yet what is important to note here is that his notion of the 'Trinity of the origin' is not exactly the same as the traditionally understood 'immanent Trinity,' in that the former is explicitly open to God's history in the world. While the traditional understanding of the 'immanent Trinity' largely stresses its independence and distance from God's activity in the world, Moltmann's notion of the 'Trinity in the origin' is open

⁸⁰ Moltmann, CPS 54.

to and inseparably connected to it. Therefore while Moltmann assumes the existence of the pre-temporal trinitarian reality, he does not completely return to the traditional distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity. Rather for him the 'Trinity in the origin' as the pre-temporal trinitarian reality is always open to history and thus stands as one constituting element of the whole trinitarian history of God.⁸¹

Moltmann's mature understanding of the immanent-economic Trinity appears in The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (German: 1980). Here Moltmann proposes to understand the relation of the immanent and the economic Trinity within the framework of salvation history. In other words, he retains the term, 'immanent Trinity' not for the pre-temporal divine reality but a reality that is categorically related to God's activity in the world.

In this book Moltmann continues his earlier criticism of the traditional distinction between the economic and the immanent Trinity. He thinks the traditional distinction of these two trinitaries is conceptually related to the Platonic distinction between the 'Idea'

⁸¹ Therefore, for Moltmann the triune reality of God can be explained with three forms of trinitarian reality in a sequence: 'Trinity of the origin,' (the pre-temporal trinitarian reality), 'Trinity in the sending,' (the present form of God's reality in the world), and 'Trinity in the glorification,' (the eschatological form of the Trinity as the culmination of the trinitarian history). For this matter, see CPS 54, TK 65-96, HG 70-84, FC 88f. and The Spirit of Life, trans. Margaret Kohl. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 292-4. In this book Moltmann uses 'primordial Trinity' instead of 'Trinity in the origin.' Yet he still understands this as an open reality by saying, "The primordial Trinity is from eternity an open Trinity. It is open for its own sendings, and in its sendings it is open for human being and for the whole created world, so that they may be united with itself." Ibid., 294.

and its 'appearance,' which is based upon a general metaphysical distinction between God and the world. Yet this distinction is derived from experience of the world, not from experience of God, and thus cannot be attributed to the nature of God. Furthermore, this distinction tends to separate God from God, allowing suffering and mutability in the economy, but holding the Trinity in immanence aloof in impassivity.⁸² But at the same time he strongly holds that at least there must be some form of distinction between the economic and the immanent Trinity if one wants to maintain the notion of divine freedom.⁸³ How then can we hold this distinction while escaping from the traditional, Platonic understanding of the immanent and economic relationship in God? Here Moltmann proposes to understand this relationship from the doxological perspective. According to him, theology, which means the knowledge of God, finds its concrete expression in thanksgiving, praise, and adoration. Theology is basically the knowledge of God, who brings redemption to God's creation, and thus it finds its full expression through the glorification of God in worship and praise. Doxology is the fulfillment of theology, which attempts to understand and explain the salvific work of God.⁸⁴ Based

⁸² TK 158-160.

⁸³ For example, TK 151 where he contends, "The distinction between an immanent Trinity and an economic Trinity secures God's liberty and his grace. It is the logically necessary presupposition for the correct understanding of God's saving revelation."

⁸⁴ TK 152-53.

upon this reasoning. Moltmann proposes to understand the economic Trinity as the Trinity experienced in the history of salvation, while the immanent Trinity is the Trinity praised in doxology.⁸⁵ In his words, "The 'economic Trinity' is the object of kerygmatic and practical theology; the 'immanent Trinity' the content of doxological theology."⁸⁶ And if the immanent Trinity is the Trinity in praise and glory, it is based upon the knowledge of the economic Trinity. As our doxological expressions are inescapably bound to the experience of salvation, so the immanent Trinity is inseparably tied to the economic Trinity. Furthermore, the immanent Trinity belongs to the sphere of eschatology,⁸⁷ for the full and genuine praise and adoration of God is possible only at the end of history when God becomes all in all. If this is so, the immanent Trinity is in its nature an eschatological reality. It remains as the future fulfillment and glorification of the economic Trinity. In other words, it is the eschatological perfection, or the *telos* and final form of the economic Trinity:

The economic Trinity completes and perfects itself to immanent Trinity when the history and experience of salvation are completed and perfected. When everything is 'in God' and 'God is in all', then the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended in the immanent

⁸⁵ TK 153.

⁸⁶ TK 152.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Also TK 161: "If it is the quintessence of doxology, then the doctrine of the immanent Trinity is part of eschatology as well."

Trinity.⁸⁸

If the immanent Trinity is conceived as the eschatological fulfillment of the economic Trinity, then it cannot be understood as the pre-temporal reality. Besides, if these two trinities are conceived in this way, according to him, they can be distinct but not separate. The reason is that the eschatological future is always the future of past and present and thus inseparably related. Therefore, there are not two separate trinities. Rather, "There is only one single, divine Trinity and one, single divine history of salvation."⁸⁹ which has two different dimensions. If this is so, "*Statements about the immanent Trinity must not contradict statements about the economic Trinity. Statements about the economic Trinity must correspond to doxological statements about the immanent Trinity.*"⁹⁰ Furthermore, if the immanent Trinity is the eschatological perfection of the economic Trinity, Moltmann argues, the former is not only affected by but also affects the latter, for in its order of being the immanent Trinity precedes the economic Trinity.⁹¹ Thus, the relationship between the economic and the immanent

⁸⁸ TK 152.

⁸⁹ TK 153.

⁹⁰ TK 154. Therefore, for Moltmann, "The history of salvation is the history of the eternally living, triune God who draws us into and includes us in his eternal triune life with all the fullness of its relationships." TK 157.

⁹¹ TK 153.

Trinity is not one-sided but two-sided. Their relation is a 'mutual relationship.'⁹² "God's relationship to the world has a retroactive effect on his relationship to himself even though the divine relationship to the world is primarily determined by that inner relationship."⁹³ In other words God both affects and is affected by God's experience with the world.⁹⁴ And in this sense Moltmann accepts Rahner's thesis. "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa." Yet while he takes up and affirms this, he understands this in a mutual way. In other words, this thesis implies for him that the economic Trinity corresponds to and reveals the immanent Trinity, but also that the economic Trinity has an effect upon the life of the immanent Trinity. That is, the relations of God within the Trinity and God with the world are mutually interactive. He writes: "What this thesis is actually trying to bring out is the interaction between the substance and the revelation, the 'inwardness' and the 'outwardness' of the triune God. The economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity it also has a retroactive effect on it."⁹⁵

What Moltmann is seeking to do is to stress the 'true historicity' of God, without losing the freedom and transcendence of God over God's creation. For him,

⁹² TK 161.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

God's activity in the economy of salvation is indeed a revelation of God, corresponding completely to what God is in eternity: God is eternally loving, open, and in mission.⁹⁶

This God is paradigmatically engaged with creation and history.

This attempt of Moltmann is a welcome contribution when we consider that the traditional doctrine of the Trinity has so much focused upon the immanent Trinity that the economic Trinity has been robbed of reality, becoming a mere shadow of heavenly events in eternity. His emphasis upon the true historicity of God is a necessary corrective to this non-historical, transcendentalized understanding of the Trinity.

Yet the question still remains whether Moltmann has really succeeded in securing both God's transcendent freedom and genuine historicity. This question is important in that the main task of the doctrine of the immanent-economic Trinity is to provide a logically viable explanation that secures both God's freedom and God's historicity together. At this point some commentators argue that, contrary to his intention, Moltmann does not succeed in securing God's freedom over God's creation. Roger Olson, for example, claims that Moltmann does not provide a proper answer to the question of how the immanent Trinity as the eschatological future affects the

⁹⁶ CPS 54.

historical, economical reality of God.⁹⁷ For him, Moltmann's 'immanent Trinity' is a 'pure' future, and thus not a completed reality at any point in the historical process of the divine life, and therefore it is continually determined by God's activity in the world. Since this is so, the immanent Trinity as the eschatological reality cannot predetermine the economic Trinity as God's historical activity in the world. Consequently, in Moltmann's scheme it is God's history with God's world that affects and determines God's inner being and not vice versa: His trinitarian scheme threatens to dissolve God into God's acts, eternity into time, and thus fails to uphold the divine transcendence.⁹⁸

As Olson contends, Moltmann's understanding of the economic-immanent Trinity, taken by itself, can be easily understood in a reductionist way. But what is important to note here is that when Moltmann claims that there is a mutual relationship between the economic and immanent Trinity, he presupposes that *God is already triune before God enters into history*. Indeed he secures this with his notion of 'the trinity in the origin' (and later, 'the primordial Trinity').⁹⁹ And if God is already the triune reality before

⁹⁷ Roger Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jurgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg," Scottish Journal of Theology 36/2 (1983): 221-2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 222. For a similar criticism, see Tang, God's History in the Theology of Jurgen Moltmann, 127-129.

⁹⁹ For example, see CPS 54: "as God appears in history as the sending Father and the sent son, so he must earlier have been in himself. The relation of the one who sends to the one sent as it appears in the history of Jesus thus includes in itself an order of origin within the Trinity, and must be understood as that order's historical correspondence."

God has engagement in the world, then God's being as triune already determines God's activity in the world. In other words, for Moltmann the preexistent triune being of God provides and guarantees the ontological transcendence of God's being over God's activity in the world, and thus that of God over the world. Thus understood, Moltmann's claim as follows is largely justified: "If the immanent Trinity is the counterpart of praise then knowledge of the economic Trinity. . . precedes knowledge of the immanent Trinity. *In the order of being it succeeds it.*"¹⁰⁰ Moltmann succeeds then, in holding the divine freedom and transcendence God's creation, while emphasizing that God is always the God of history.

2-3. The God of History and Its Practical, Ecological Implication: A Trinitarian Doctrine of Creation

As we have seen, Moltmann puts great emphasis upon God's history in the world. He sees the Trinity as a *dialectical historical process* that opens itself to the whole creation and takes it into itself for its final reconciliation and transformation.¹⁰¹ What

¹⁰⁰ TK 152-153. Emphasis is mine. What is closely related to this point is that when Moltmann speaks of God's perichoretic unity that is constituted at the end of time, he means this not in terms of God's existence *in se* but in terms of God's rule, the dynamics of God's kingdom. In other words, for him the historical question of God is not that of God's existence itself but of God's reign over God's creation that has been put at risk after creation. And at this point we find a notable difference between Moltmann and Pannenberg: For Moltmann what is constituted in history is God's kingly rule, while for Pannenberg it is God's deity itself.

¹⁰¹ CG 218.

this means is that the triune God is not simply the God of transcendence. Rather, God is in and with all of God's creation. Certainly, the triune God is beyond creation but at the same time radically immanent in creation.¹⁰² The doctrine of the Trinity therefore precludes "the one-sided stress on God's transcendence in relation to the world" as seen in Newtonian deism, as well as "pantheism's one-sided stress on God's immanence in the world," as in Spinoza's thought.¹⁰³ Rather it adopts a *panentheistic* view that sees God as the one "who, having created the world, also dwells in it, and conversely the world which he created exists in him."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, for Moltmann, the trinitarian history of God logically ends up with the panentheistic relation of God to the world, which stresses God's radical immanence in the world, while not losing God's transcendence and freedom over creation. He writes:

Understood in trinitarian terms, God both transcends the world and is immanent in history. . . . He is, if one is prepared to put it in inadequate imagery, transcendent as Father, immanent as Son and opens in the future of history as the Spirit. 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.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Jürgen Moltmann, God in Creation, trans. Margaret Kohl, (London: SCM Press, 1985), 98. Hereafter abbreviated as GIC.

¹⁰³ GIC 98.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ CG 255-6. Moltmann develops his 'panentheistic view' in several ways. One is by stressing 'love' as God's primordial nature. According to him, God is in God's very nature 'love.' CG 247f. Cf. TK 57ff, 105-108. And a true love is more than self-love. It must be more than a self-love between divine

Moltmann's theology of the Trinity and its panentheistic understanding of the God-world relationship include several important social implications. The most important one is that this view enables a theological response to today's ecological crisis. Indeed it is thanks to his panentheistic doctrine of the Trinity that Moltmann can develop his corresponding ecological doctrine of creation. The Trinity and the Kingdom of God is, then, an indispensable precedent for his next major writing, God in Creation, the purpose of which is to develop a Christian ecological doctrine of Creation. (German:

persons. The Father's eternal love to the Son and the Son's love to the Father in response is an inner-trinitarian love and as such it is "the love of like for like, not love for one who is essentially different." TK p. 58. A true love goes outside itself and finds others as objects of this love. Thus, "God has desired not only himself but the world too, for he did not merely want to communicate himself to himself; he wanted to communicate himself to the one who is other than himself as well." TK 108. If this is so, then God needs the world and human person as the object of God's love and consequently the idea of creation of the world was already in God from eternity for eternity. TK 58, 106f. Cf. GIC 15-16. Yet Moltmann cautiously modifies this contention by saying that God created the world not because of deficiency but because of God's perfect love. For him, God has neither external necessity nor internal compulsion to create the world and thus he strongly holds the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*. For him, "The world was created neither out of pre-existent matter nor out of the divine Being itself." GIC 75. Another way Moltmann develops his panentheistic view of God's revelation to the world is by adopting Issac Luria's concept of *zimsum* (divine self-limitation). He contends that if God is omnipresent, and if God created all things *ex nihilo*, then there must in some sense be "a 'within' and a 'without' for God." TK 109, GIC 87f. In other words, in order that there should be an open Trinity that expands itself outside, there must be something outside of God. Therefore, the *extra Deum* implies "a self-limitation of the infinite, omnipresent God, preceding his creation." TK 109. Indeed, "it is only God's withdrawal into himself which gives that *nihil* the space in which God then becomes creatively active." TK 109. But if this is true, then we must affirm that "this creation outside of God exists simultaneously in God, in the space which God has made for it in his omnipresence." TK 109. Hence creation must be viewed as "God's act in God and out of God. . . a "self-humiliation on God's part, a lowering himself into his own impotence." TK 109. What this means for Moltmann is that God is primarily the God of creation, God is never distant from creation, as traditional theism assumes, but radically immanent in it. But at the same time God is absolutely transcendent to creation. For him, "it is equally impossible to conceive of God's evolutive immanence in the world without his world-transcendence." GIC 206. Indeed, for Moltmann, the idea of God as love and the doctrine of *zimsum* bring us to think of the world in God without falling into pantheism. TK 110, GC 86ff. If we view creation as the expression of God's love or the result of God's self-limitation, then creation can be in God without God being totally identical with or exhausted in creation. Therefore, according to Moltmann, we can speak of "'an immanent transcendence' and 'a transcendent immanence.'" GIC 318.

1985).¹⁰⁶ In fact what Moltmann is doing here is to expand the realm of his doctrine of the Trinity to that of the natural world, while holding to his earlier stress upon history and eschatology. In other words, if in the 1960s and 70s Moltmann understood created reality basically as historical, he now focuses upon nature as the primordial reality. The reason for this change is that his immediate social context is drastically changed. The belief in technology and progress and the revolutionary expectations of the earlier period have been replaced by the recognition that human beings are on their way to destroying nature. Yet there is still continuity in this change in the fact that his trinitarian view remains steadfast. In fact Moltmann's change is not a contradiction in itself but an expansion of the realm of the triune God: the God of history is now expanded into the realm of nature and conceived as the indwelling God of nature.

According to Moltmann, the origin of our ecological crisis lies not simply in the modern technological developments that have made possible humanity's ruthless exploitation of nature. It is based much more profoundly upon human sinfulness, that is, the striving for power and domination. Since this is so, the crisis can be overcome only

¹⁰⁶ For this matter, see Moltmann's saying in GIC I: "With this doctrine of creation I am taking a further step along the road on which I started out with *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (1980: ET 1981). In that book I developed a social doctrine of the Trinity. Here my subject is the corresponding ecological doctrine of creation."

if we radically change our consumerist pattern of life.¹⁰⁷ The Christian Church is also in part responsible for today's crisis. A misunderstanding of the first Genesis creation story, for example, has legitimized the human person's unreserved abuse of nature and thus helped to bring about today's ecological problem.¹⁰⁸ Especially in terms of the concept of God, Moltmann believes, it is the 'monotheistic' understanding of God as the absolute Subject that is guilty of this crisis. This concept of God, with its overemphasis on divine transcendence, led humanity to see God's creation as a *mere* 'nature,' as lifeless material, and thus made it vulnerable to human exploitation. Furthermore, this concept of God, which understands God as 'absolute power,' has caused modern 'man' to find 'his' identity in 'his' power, and consequently encouraged and legitimized the domination and exploitation of creation.¹⁰⁹ Since this is so, Moltmann believes, one has to reformulate a new understanding of the God-world relationship if one really wants to overcome our ecological crisis.¹¹⁰

Moltmann believes that we must respond theologically to today's ecological crisis by understanding God not as an abstract transcendence or absolute power, but as

¹⁰⁷ GIC 20-21.

¹⁰⁸ GIC 21. Cf. GIC 28-29.

¹⁰⁹ GIC 26-27.

¹¹⁰ GIC 21.

radical immanence and love. If God is conceived to be really present in the world, then the world can no longer be regarded merely as an object of human use, but rather as God's dwelling place - God's residence and God's home. Indeed if God is really "in" the world, this brings "reverence for the life of every living thing into the adoration of God."¹¹¹ while challenging us to become more cautious and appreciative in our handling of nature. And in this sense he maintains that his theology of the Trinity and its panentheistic view of the God-world relationship rightly respond to today's ecological crisis. Moltmann contends:

An ecological doctrine of creation implies a new kind of thinking about God. The center of this thinking 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 presence of the world in God.¹¹²

Another way Moltmann appropriates his theology of the Trinity as a response to the ecological crisis is to reclaim his social doctrine of the Trinity.¹¹³ As we have

¹¹¹ GIC xii (Preface to the Paperback Edition).

¹¹² GIC 13. According to Moltmann, the agent of God's immanence in God's creation is the Holy Spirit. God is present in, and with creation through God's Spirit. The Spirit is the bridge between God and the world as a whole. And the primary task of the indwelling Spirit is the transformation of the world. Through the Spirit "the world will be transfigured, transformed into God's world, which means into God's own home." Moltmann, TK, 104; cf. 98. What this means is that it is the Holy Spirit that directs the creation to the future kingdom of God: "The inner secret of creation is this indwelling of God. . . . If we ask about creation's goal and future, we ultimately arrive at the transfiguring indwelling of the triune God in his creation. . . . The divine secret of creation is the Shekinah, God's indwelling; and the purpose of the Shekinah is to make the whole creation the house of God." CG xiv-xv.

¹¹³ GIC 1.

seen, for Moltmann, God is not a 'monarch' in heaven, but a community of Father, Son, and Spirit in a perichoretic union characterized by mutual love and equality. What this means for him is that God is characterized by relations of love and fellowship. And if God is understood in this way, then God's relation to the world also must show the same character. In other words, if God's own life is seen in terms of "a relationship of fellowship, of mutual need and mutual interpenetration," rather than "the relationship of superiority and subordination," then the relationship between God and creation shares this same kind of mutuality and reciprocity.¹¹⁴ The inner-trinitarian perichoresis is the "archetype" for the relation between God and the world.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, according to Moltmann, the fact that the God-world relation is understood as mutual love and respect means that the relationships in the whole of creation must show the same character. In other words, the God-world relationship as such provides the pattern for God's creation as a community of reciprocal relationships: "All living things - each in its own specific way - live in one another and with one another, from one another and for one another."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ GIC 258. Also GIC 16-17.

¹¹⁵ GIC 16. Cf. GIC 17. Here he writes, "... all relationships which are analogous to God reflect the primal, reciprocal indwelling and mutual interpenetration of the trinitarian perichoresis: God in the world and the world in God."

¹¹⁶ GIC 17.

And at this point we may argue that Moltmann provides a viable theological ground for confronting our ecological crisis. Indeed, as Moltmann indicates, our ecological crisis is largely caused by the human person's desire for power and domination over nature. And behind this lies the view that sees the human-world relationship as that of superiority and subordination, command and obedience, master and servant. But if we begin to see nature not as an object to subdue and dominate, but as God's creation, with which we live together in mutual love and respect, then much of the ecological problem is addressed at the deepest level. Furthermore, if God lives eternally in relationships of love and fellowship, then this encourages us to think of the human-nature relationship also as that of mutual love and respect. If this is so, Moltmann's trinitarian theology, emphasizing God's radical historicity and communal nature, provide us a viable theological response to the profound ecological crisis of our time.

Moltmann's effort to find a helpful concept of God in a time of ecological crisis does not, of course, provide a specific ecological praxis. His trinitarian theology of creation obviously does not include any 'concrete' and 'practical' strategy to overcome our ecological problems. Yet it does present a fresh way of seeing God's relationship to

the world, and thereby challenges the deep spiritual roots of our ecological crisis. By doing so, as Bauckham indicates, it provides a theoretical framework from which a new kind of praxis can emerge.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Moltmann's theology of the economic-immanent Trinity in the context of current debates on this issue. Moltmann rejects the older concepts of the relation between the economic and the immanent Trinity, according to which the former merely 'reflects' or 'reveals' the latter. Rather, he finds God primarily in the history of God with God's creation. For him our knowledge of the inner life of God is primarily grounded and determined by the economic history of God. The doctrine of the Trinity is therefore not an extrapolation from salvation history: it speaks of God's own history with the world in the person of Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit. But at the same time Moltmann does not totally equate God's being and God's activity in the world. He maintains a distinction between God *in se* and God 'for us,' and thereby acknowledges God's freedom and transcendence.

Moltmann's effort to understand God in terms of God's activity in the world

¹¹⁷ Bauckham, The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann, 184.

has important social implications. Especially his stress upon God's radical historicity and immanence in the world leads him into a trinitarian theology of creation, which offers a helpful theological response to our ecological crisis. His trinitarian theology, stressing God's radical historicity and communal nature, challenges us to see God's creation, as that with which we live together in mutual love and respect. Besides, it encourages us to see the human-nature relationship as that of mutual love and respect and thus to appreciate nature as it is. Consequently Moltmann's trinitarian theology, emphasizing God's radical historicity and communal nature, presents a helpful theological response to the current exploitation of nature.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNITY OF THE TRIUNE GOD

1-1. Introduction

The Christian church has confessed that God is one being in three persons.¹ Thus a crucial trinitarian issue is how to conceive of the divine Three as one God, without falling into modalism or subordinationism on the one hand, or tritheism on the other hand. In other words, the question is how to equate trinity in unity and unity in trinity. Generally speaking, there are three different approaches for understanding this unity-trinity relationship in God.² The Western tradition has usually taken an intra-personal or psychological analogy and found the unity of God in one divine nature, while distinguishing the divine Three in their substantial relations. The danger of this approach is that of modalism: the divine persons can be dissolved into mere modes of one divine entity. The Eastern tradition usually takes an inter-personal or social analogy and locates God's unity in the Father as the source and origin of all divinity. The Father communicates his whole divinity to the Son and the Holy Spirit, so that both are

¹ For a classic example of this confession, see the so-called Athanasian Creed, verses 15, 16, and 28 (c. 500): "Thus the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Spirit God; and yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God. . . . So he who desires to be saved should think thus of the Trinity." Citation is from The Athanasian Creed, trans. J. N. D. Kelly (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1964), 18.

² Here I adopt Leonardo Boff's categorization in Trinity and Society, 234-235.

consubstantial with the Father. The danger of this approach is subordinationism, the subordinationism of Son and Spirit to Father.³ The third approach, which arises in more recent times and is in a sense a variation of the Eastern approach, adopts a strong communal analogy and posits God's unity in the perichoretic union of the divine Three. For this model, the unity of the Trinity means the union of the three 'distinct' persons by virtue of their perichoretic communion. Compared with the other two approaches this approach has no danger of modalism or subordinationism but might be vulnerable to tritheism.⁴

³ Here Karl Rahner's observation is illuminative: "The latter (Latin) proceeds from the unity of God's nature (one God in three persons), so that the unity of the divine nature is a *presupposition* of the whole doctrine of the Trinity; while the former (Greek) begins with the Three Persons (Three Persons, who are of a single nature) or better, with the Father, who is the source from which the Son, and through the Son the Spirit proceeds, so that the unity and integrity of the divine nature is conceptually a *consequence* of the fact that the Father communicated his whole nature." Karl Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament," in Theological Investigations, 1, 46. Emphasis is original.

⁴ Boff, 235. The emergence and prevalence of this 'strong' social doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important aspects of recent trinitarian thought. As representatives of this strong sense of social Trinity, we might mention the following: In England, David Brown, The Divine Trinity (La Salle: Open Court, 1985), Colin Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1991), Kenneth Leech, The Social God (London: Sheldon Press, 1981), The BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine of Today, The Forgotten Trinity (London: The British Council of Churches, 1989); On the Reformed Side, besides Jurgen Moltmann, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.'s several articles including "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," (see bibliography), Daniel Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), esp. chapter 4; Among those who adopt some form of process thought, Joseph Bracken, The Triune Symbol: Persons, Process and Community (Lanham: University of America Press, 1985), and other essays (see bibliography), Donald Gelpi, The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); Among Liberation theologians, Leonardo Boff, Trinity and Society, trans. Paul Burns, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988); Among feminist authors, Anne E. Carr, Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 156ff., Maria Clara Bingemer, Gender and Grace (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 38-41, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey: Perspectives on Feminist Theology (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 181ff., Patricia Wilson-Kastner, Faith, Feminism and the Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), esp. ch. 6; Among philosophical theologians, Timothy W. Bartel, "The Plight of the Relative Trinitarian," Religious Studies 24 (1988): 129-55, C. Stephen Layman, "Tritheism and the Trinity," in Faith and Philosophy 5 (1988): 291-98, Thomas V. Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), esp. 210-18, Richard Swinburne, "Could There Be More Than One God?" Faith and Philosophy 5 (1988): 225-41; Besides, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), Ted Peters, God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), John Zizioulas, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), and Douglas Meeks, God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political

If these three approaches are distinguished in terms of their emphasis upon unity (oneness) or trinity (threeness) in God, they can be reduced to two distinct models: The Latin unity model, and the Eastern and Modern trinity model. The Latin unity model stresses the unity rather than the diversity in God. In this model the unity of God is already presupposed and thus the real trinitarian issue is to secure the distinct personhood of the divine Three. The apologetic concern of this model is to avoid the danger of tritheism. In contrast to this, the Eastern and the Modern trinity model already presupposes the three distinct persons in God and thus the real issue is to account for their unity.⁵ In fact in the history of trinitarian thought this social model of the Trinity has been relatively minor, except for some notable exceptions like the Cappadocian Fathers, some parts of St. Augustine's trinitarian thought, and Richard St. Victor's analogy of love. Yet current trinitarian thought discloses the growth and prevalence of this social model of the Trinity, while the unity model appears to be fading into the background.

This chapter will examine Moltmann's understanding of the unity of God in the context of current debates on this issue. First as a background of Moltmann's understanding, we will

Economy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

⁵ Theodore de Regnon's observation about the difference between the Western and Eastern approach can be applicable to this categorization: "Latin philosophy first considers the nature in itself and proceeds to the agent; Greek philosophy first considers the agent and afterward passes through to find the nature. The Latins think of personality as a mode of nature; the Greeks think of nature as the content of the person. De Regnon S. J., Etudes de Theologie Positive sur la Sainte Trinite, Vol. 1. (Paris, 1892), 433. Cited in Gregory Havrilak, "Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity," 68. In St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 34 (1990): 68.

survey two different models in current understanding of the unity of God. The first model, that is, the unity model, is largely presented in contemporary trinitarian thought by Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. Both of them emphasize the unity rather than the trinity, while finding God's unity in the subjectivity of the one God (Barth) or in the Father as the unoriginate origin of all divinity (Karl Rahner). The trinity model, which is largely advocated by the social trinitarians, such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, Leonardo Boff, Joseph Bracken, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., and Jürgen Moltmann, finds the unity primarily in the perichoretic unity of God. First we will examine these two approaches by briefly surveying the thought of some of their representatives. We will not, of course, present a comprehensive treatment of the trinitarian thought of these major figures. Here we only glimpse the features of these authors' thought that are relevant to our inquiry about the unity of the triune God. Then we will examine Moltmann's way of understanding this unity.

1-2. The Unity of God based upon the One Divine Subjectivity, or the Father as the Origin of the Divinity

1-2-1. Karl Barth

Barth treats God's unity first and then proceeds to a discussion of the trinity in unity.⁶

⁶ In the section of "The Triunity of God" (CD I/1, 348-383), Barth treats the unity of God first and then articulates the trinity. This procedure already discloses his emphasis upon the unity of God, although he attempts to do justice to both the unity and trinity in God.

And he finds this unity in the divine subjectivity, or the lordship of God.

As we have seen in chapter one, Barth develops his trinitarian theology out of the concept of God's self-revelation. God reveals God's self in the person of Jesus Christ. And the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ is the God who is utterly sovereign and free: "Godhead in the Bible means freedom, ontic and noetic autonomy."⁷ The free God is the self-grounded, unconstrained God, and thus God is never conditioned by any other reality except God in God's self.⁸ What this means for Barth is that God remains always the Lord and Ruler in God's relation to creation, even in God's revelation: "God reveals Himself as the Lord."⁹

According to Barth, God's revelation of God's lordship occurs in a three-fold repetition.¹⁰ And for him this three-fold repetition of God's Lordship corresponds to the nature of revelation.¹¹ In other words, what we see in the revelation of God is that there is a three-fold distinction within God: God the Revealer, God the Revelation, and God the Revealedness (or impartation) of the revelation.¹² For Barth, these are equivalents for the New

⁷ CD 1/1, 307.

⁸ CD 2/1, 301.

⁹ CD 1/1, 306. For this matter, see chapter 1 of this thesis, footnote 31.

¹¹ Barth contends that these distinctions which mark God's revelation and repetition of God's self (that is, economic Trinity) point to distinctions within the Godhead (immanent or ontological Trinity). Thus the threeness which is visible in God's revelation is a reflection of the triunity or the threeness which is integral to God's nature as God. See CD 1/1, 402.

¹² CD 1/1, 417.

Testament names of God: God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the agent, the content, and the state of revelation. God reveals. God reveals God's self, and God reveals through God's self.¹³

First, Barth asks the question, 'who is God?' and answers that God is the Revealer. God chooses to reveal God's self in an absolute freedom. Without the act of God's revelation, God would be utterly hidden. Yet in God's sovereign act of freedom God decided to reveal God's self. God decided in God's absolute transcendence to address the human being as Thou.¹⁴ In God's unveiling of God's self, however, God remains the subject of this revelation: God is irreducibly subject and can never be made into an object that can be controlled by human beings.¹⁵

Barth observes that the second question in regard to revelation is 'what does God do?' Here the answer is, God unveils and communicates God's self in such a way that God is identical with what God reveals. God does not reveal something about God's self, but reveals God's self, through the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus Christ is God's self-revelation in the primordial sense. And this identity between God the Father who is the

¹³ CD I/1, 195: "God Himself is unimpaired unity yet also in unimpaired distinction is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness."

¹⁴ CD I/1, 381.

¹⁵ Thus Barth writes, "And in remaining Thou, He remains the Lord. The subject of revelation is the subject that remains indissolubly subject. One cannot get behind this subject. It cannot become object. See CD I/1, 381.

Revealer and God the Son the Revelation allows God to remain irreducibly subject in the act of revelation. For, God never turns into an object of human knowledge even in God's revelation. God is God in God's pure indissoluble subjectivity, and therefore remains in the event of revelation the One who meets the human person as 'Thou,' rather than 'It' or 'He.'¹⁶ In short, "God's self-unveiling remains an act of sovereign divine freedom."¹⁷

Having articulated who God is and what God does in God's revelation, Barth proceeds to the third question: 'What does God effect in God's revelation?' His answer is that God effects us, the recipients of God's revelation, and that brings us into communion with God. The agent who does this is the Holy Spirit, the third mode of God's being in God's revelation.¹⁸ For Barth, the divine revelation in the person of Jesus Christ is given to us in a hidden and veiled form. This is because of the historical contingency of the event of revelation: the human form of Jesus Christ stands as a barrier for us to see God there. Yet in the Holy Spirit this veiled revelation of God is unveiled and imparted to us as the salvific grace of God. In fact, for Barth, it was necessary that the act of revelation be completed by this third mode of God's being. Otherwise revelation would have remained purely an event of the

¹⁶ CD 2/1, 57. Also, CD 1/1 351: "...the Trinitarian repetitions of the knowledge of the lordship of God radically prevent the divine He, or rather Thou, from becoming in any respect an It."

¹⁷ CD 1/1, 321.

¹⁸ CD 1/1, 332.

past, and God would have remained an object over against us and ceased to be the subject of revelation. In any case, the point here is that even in the impartation of the divine revelation, God always remains the sovereign Lord: God remains the Subject in the form of the Holy Spirit even in the impartation of God's revelation.¹⁹ Therefore, Barth employs the doctrine of the Trinity in order to account for the 'Lordship' of God in God's self-revelation.²⁰ And 'Lordship' is for him the way of describing God's absolute freedom, which is not forfeited, even though God takes concrete historical form in the event of revelation:

The lordship discernible in the biblical revelation consists in the freedom of God to differentiate Himself from Himself, to become unlike himself and yet to remain the same, to be indeed the one God like Himself and to exist as the one sole God in the fact that in this way that is so inconceivably profound He differentiates Himself from Himself, being not only God the Father, but also, . . . God the Son. That He reveals Himself as the Son is what is primarily meant when we say that He reveals Himself as the Lord. This Sonship is God's lordship in His revelation.²¹

According to Barth, the Bible tells us that the one God reveals God's self three times as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and this is what he refers to as the "threefold repetition" of God's

¹⁹ CD I/1, 332. Here he contends, "God reveals Himself as the Spirit, . . . the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and therefore the same one God, . . . God is Spirit is also God's lordship in His revelation."

²⁰ CD I/1, 307. Barth argues, "The statement, understood thus, that God reveals Himself as the Lord, or what this statement is meant to describe, and therefore revelation itself as attested by Scripture, we call the root of the doctrine of the Trinity." Elsewhere he also indicates, "The text of the doctrine of the Trinity is at every point related to texts in the biblical witness to revelation." CD I 1, 308.

²¹ CD I/1, 312.

self.²² In this context Barth is cautious about using the word 'person' for the divine Three. When this term is adopted to describe the three different ways God has revealed God's self, it is easily misunderstood in a tritheistic sense. Especially since the word 'person' is now, in modern times, understood as the center of an independent self-consciousness,²³ we can no longer apply it to depict God. He writes: "The Christian Church has never taught that there are in God three persons and therefore three personalities in the sense of a threefold ego, a threefold subject. This would be tritheism."²⁴ Thus instead of the 'three persons' he prefers to speak of the "three modes" of God's being.²⁵ For him this wording has the advantage of escaping the danger of tritheism. Furthermore, it secures the original meaning of person when it is attributed to the divine entities. Therefore, for him, "the statement that God is One in three ways of being, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, means, therefore, that the one God, i.e., the one Lord, the One personal God, is what He is not just in one mode but. . . in the mode of the Father, in the mode of the Son, in the mode of the Holy Spirit"²⁶ Consequently, according to

²² CD 1/1, 350: "The name of Father, Son and Spirit means that God is the one God in threetfold repetition, and this is such a way that the repetition itself is grounded in His Godhead."

²³ CD 1/1, 410. Here he writes, "What in the conceptual language of the 19th century is called personality is distinguished from the ancient and mediaeval personal by the addition of the attribute of self-consciousness."

²⁴ CD II/1, 297. Cf 1/1, 407-415.

²⁵ CD 1/1, 355, 358f, 365f, 370, 392, CD 4/1, 204-5.

²⁶ CD 1/1, 402.

Barth. "With the doctrine of the Trinity, we step on to the soil of Christian monotheism."²⁷

The doctrine of the Trinity functions then, to assert the strict and absolute unity of God, the unity of the absolute Subject.²⁸

1-2-2. Karl Rahner

Like Barth, Rahner's concern in his understanding of the question of the unity-trinity in God is to stress the ontological unity of God. And he finds this unity of God in the Father as the unoriginate origin of the Son and the Spirit.

As we have seen in chapter two, Rahner's main project is to revive the doctrine of the Trinity as a relevant and practical doctrine for Christian life, by understanding it as the description of God's salvific activity in the world. For him the doctrine of the Trinity is precisely the discourse of God's activity in the world.²⁹ In his words, "The economic Trinity

²⁷ CD I/1, 354. Cf CD I/1, 351: "Christian monotheism was and is also and precisely the point also and precisely in the Church doctrine of the Trinity as such."

²⁸ Yet it is important to note that, although Barth stresses the unity of God based upon the divine subjectivity, he does not preclude the real distinctions between the divine persons. He affirms a genuine divine plurality and this becomes more explicit in his later thought, especially in some of his christological passages of CD IV/1. For example he writes: "He is God in their concrete relationships the one to the other, in the history which takes place between them. He is God only in these relationships and therefore not in a Godhead which does not take part in this history, in the relationships of its modes of being, which is neutral towards them. This neutral Godhead, this pure and empty Godhead, and its claim to be true divinity, is the illusion of an abstract 'monotheism'." CD IV/1, 203. Yet he still preserves his stress upon the one divine unity based upon the notion of divine subjectivity as seen in CD IV/1, 205: "Christian faith and the Christian confession has one Subject, not three. But He is the one God in self-repetition, in the repetition of His own and equal divine being, and therefore in three different modes of being- which the term "person" was always explained to mean." For a good survey of the development of Barth's trinitarian theology, see R. Williams, "Barth on the Triune God," in S. W. Sykes ed. Karl Barth: Studies in His Theological Method (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). For some alternatives that might correct Barth's undue stress upon the divine unity, while securing a genuine divine multiplicity, see Webster, Eberhard Jungel, 74-76.

²⁹ Rahner, The Trinity, 24.

is the Immanent Trinity and the Immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity."³⁰

Rahner attributes this claim to his understanding of the unity of God. If God in God's salvific activity in the world is the same as God in God's self, God's own unity must be identical with the feature of God's activity in the world. More specifically, it must disclose the threefoldness (*Dreifaltigkeit*) of God in God's self-communication as Father, Son, and Spirit in the world. Indeed God's threefoldness towards us in the economic Trinity indicates that God has already an integral and real threefoldness (*Dreifaltigkeit*) in God's very being, rather than the indivisibility of one single divine nature.

Since this is so, Rahner rejects the Latin tradition that finds the unity of God in one divine nature.³¹ Instead he follows the eastern tradition which understands the Father as the origin and source of all divinity. This approach is for him more biblical and at the same time more faithful to the pre-Nicene traditions.³² When the New Testament refers to God (*ho theos*), he contends, it signifies almost exclusively the Father, the first person of the Trinity.

³⁰ Ibid., 22.

³¹ In his judgement the traditional western division of *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino*, and its stress upon one divine nature has brought the false idea that the task of trinitarian theology is to deal with "the necessary metaphysical attributes of God, and not very explicitly with the experiences of the history of salvation which have come from God's freely adopted relations to creation." Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic These 'De Trinitate'," 84. Consequently it has undermined the importance of salvation history for reflection of God, while bringing the misunderstanding that "everything which matters for us in God has already been said in the treatise On the One God." Rahner, *The Trinity*, 17.

³² Rahner, *The Trinity*, Ibid. Here he writes, "The Bible and the Greeks would have us start from the one unoriginate God who is already Father even when nothing is known as yet about generation and spiration."

and not the "single divine nature that is seen subsisting in three hypostases."³³ The Father of Jesus Christ, the one whom he intimately calls 'Abba' in the gospels, is the one whom the New Testament calls 'God.'³⁴ Thus, for Rahner the proper place to locate the unity of God is in the Father as the unoriginate origin of the divinity, and not one divine nature:

For when we mean the expression "on the one God" literally, this treatise does not speak only of God's essence and its unicity, but of the unity of the three divine persons, of the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and not merely of the unicity of the divinity. We speak of the mediated unity, of which the Trinity is the proper consummation, and not of the unmediated unicity of the divine nature. For when we think of this nature as numerically one, we are not yet thinking *ipso facto* of the ground of God's tri-unity. However, since the treatise's title is *On the One God*, not *On the One Divinity*, we are from the start with the Father, the unoriginate origin of the Son and the Spirit.³⁵

What is important to note here is that, although Rahner adopts the eastern tradition that finds in the Father the unity of the divine Three, he does not follow the Cappadocian Fathers' more communal understanding of the Trinity. While the Cappadocians stress the existence of the three 'distinct' divine persons and thus 'koinonia,' 'communion,' or 'fellowship' is central in their understanding of the Trinity, Rahner adopts a more typical unity model or one-person

³³ Karl Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament." In Theological Investigations, vol. I. (London: Longman and Todd, 1961), 146. Cf. 126-7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 128-29.

³⁵ Rahner, The Trinity, 45-46.

model, by claiming that there is only one divine consciousness in God. In other words, for Rahner, the triune God who dwells as the threefoldness of the Father, Son, and Spirit has only one divine consciousness. And for Rahner, this consciousness is the Father's consciousness, which is shared by Son and Holy Spirit together.

In order to sustain the claim that there is only one divine consciousness in God Rahner argues that in the immanent Trinity there is no mutual relation between Father and Son. Rather, Father always utters, while Son is always the uttered: "the Logos is not the one who utters, but the one who is uttered. And there is properly no mutual love between Father and Son."³⁶ The reason is, according to Rahner, if both Father and Son utter to each other and thus there is a mutual relationship between them, this implies there are at least two divine consciousnesses in God, and this implies tritheism (or at least bi-theism). Therefore, for Rahner, the active personhood of the Logos is kept until it is 'sent' to the world: "The Word is, by definition, immanent in the divine and active in the world, and as such the Father's revelation."³⁷

Rahner's contention reveals some problems.³⁸ In any case, his primary concern here is

³⁶ Ibid., 106.

³⁷ Ibid., 29.

³⁸ For example, if there is no mutual relationship between Father and Son in the immanent Trinity, and Son is always passive in his relationship to the Father, as Rahner contends, then the Son does not have a full personhood as the Father does. This leads to a subordinationism of the Son to the Father. Besides, the Son's passivity in God's eternal self-communication does not correspond to the mutual relation of the Son and the Father in the economic Trinity and thus violates his basic axiom that identifies the economic and immanent Trinity. In this sense Walter Kasper rightly indicates, "Since in Rahner's theology of the Trinity everything focuses on the relation and unity of God and man, there is really no room left for the relations and unity of the trinitarian persons

to preserve the unity of God by asserting 'one divine consciousness in God' and by doing so precludes any element of tritheism, which is, in his judgement, "a much greater danger than Sabellian modalism."³⁹ Thus, like Barth, Rahner hesitates to use the word 'person' in describing the multiplicity in God. One reason he does not want to use this word is that it is not a biblical concept but a theological construct, and so can be set aside without jeopardizing the language of revelation.⁴⁰ Yet the primary reason is that the word 'person' is now being understood generally as "an autonomous center of consciousness."⁴¹ and when this understanding is adopted with reference to the divine multiplicity, it necessarily implies three different consciousnesses in God, and thus ends up with the heresy of tritheism.⁴² Therefore,

themselves. . . it is unable to show clearly in what the special character and difference of each hypostasis consists and what comprehensible meaning each has." Walter Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, 302-303.

³⁹ Karl Rahner and Karl Lehmann, Mysterium Salutis, trans. Feiner Johannes, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 342f.

⁴⁰ Rahner, The Trinity, 104. Here he maintains that 'person' is not to be used in the New Testament, in designating the divine Three in the economic Trinity.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴² Rahner contends, "When today we speak of person in the plural, we think almost necessarily, because of the modern meaning of the word, of several spiritual centers of activity, of several subjectivities and liberties. But there are not three of these in God - not only because in God there is only one essence, hence one absolute self-presence, but also because there is only one self-utterance of the Father, the Logos. The Logos is not the one who utters, but the one who is uttered. And there is properly no mutual love between the Father and Son, for this would presuppose two acts. But there is loving self-acceptance of the Father, and this self-acceptance gives rise to the distinction." Rahner, The Trinity, 106. Also, see Rahner, "Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam," Theological Investigations XVIII, trans. Edward Quinn, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 110: "If someone today, whether Christian or not, hears the statement that there are three persons in God, he will think instinctively of three subjects differing from one another in their subjectivity, knowledge, and freedom, and wonder what kind of logic it is that permits three persons understood in this way to be simultaneously one and the same God."

instead of 'person' he proposes to use "distinct manners of subsisting."⁴³ What he means by this phrase is that the God who has one 'consciousness' subsists in three different ways. In his own terms, the single 'person' in God meets us "in this determined distinct manner of subsisting."⁴⁴ For him this phrase is better than Barth's "mode of being."⁴⁵ Besides, according to Rahner, this phrase is exactly what Thomas Aquinas wanted to express by the word, 'person.' If we use this terminology, he argues, we can easily maintain the unity of God, while not sacrificing the distinctiveness of three divine entities.⁴⁶ Since this is the case, Rahner argues, The doctrine of the Trinity "does not cancel or threaten any real acknowledgement of the oneness of God."⁴⁷ Rather, this doctrine is no more than the radicalization of Christian monotheism.⁴⁸ Christian religion is therefore primarily and not merely secondarily monotheistic religion.⁴⁹

⁴³ Rahner, "Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam," in Theological Investigations XVIII, 112.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 110. Also, Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt eds. Contents of Faith: The Best of Karl Rahner's Theological Writings. (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 380. Cf. Rahner, and Lehmann, Mysterium Salutis, 392: "The one God subsists in three distinct modes of subsistence." Or Karl Rahner, Grundkurs des Glaubens, 141: "The one and the same God is given for us as Father, Son-Logos, and Holy Spirit, or: the Father gives us himself in absolute self-communication through the Son in the Holy Spirit." Cited in Moltmann, TK 147.

⁴⁵ Rahner, The Trinity, 100: "We consider it better, simpler, and more in harmony with the traditional language of theology and the Church than the phrase suggested by Barth." In fact what Rahner is doing here is to borrow the idea of 'modality' from Barth while adding the notion of 'distinctness,' thereby stressing that existence as subsistence.

⁴⁶ Rahner, The Trinity 111-112.

⁴⁷ Karl Rahner, "Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam." 106.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 107.

1-3. The Unity of God based upon the 'perichoretic' Union

1-3-1. Wolfhart Pannenberg

In contrast to Barth and Rahner, who adopts 'unity model,' while finding the unity of God in the one divine subject or in the Father as the origin of all divinity, there are many social trinitarians who take 'trinity model,' while locating this unity in the perichoretic union of God. One of them is Pannenberg, who holds a 'social' model in understanding the divine unity.

Pannenberg stresses the fact that the New Testament clearly affirms the existence of the three distinctive divine persons who work together for the establishment of the kingdom of God. Thus for him a proper trinitarian theology must begin with the 'plurality' of God in salvation history and only then ask about their unity.⁵⁰

Pannenberg further contends that the New Testament distinguishes the personhood of

⁵⁰ According to Pannenberg, a basic error in trinitarian thought lies in the attempt to deduce the threeness of God from an *a priori* concept of the one divine nature or one divine subject. Systematic Theology, I, 298. Thus he rejects both the Eastern tradition which finds the unity of God in the Father as fountain of all divinity and the Western way that secures the unity in the one divine essence. For him these approaches are highly speculative and have always tended toward Subordinationism or Sabellianism respectively. *Ibid.*, 279-80. Furthermore, in this context he is quite critical to the trinitarian thought of Karl Barth. For him, Barth also adopts the same approach as Augustine and Hegel and thus endangers the threeness of the Trinity. Especially for him Barth's derivation of the Trinity is clearly seen in his formal concept of revelation as 'self-revelation,' which includes a Subject, an Object, and Revealedness. In this model, according to him, the self-revealing Subject is structurally similar to Hegel's self-conscious Absolute and still only one individual and not three. There is no more room here for a plurality of persons in the one God "but only for different modes of being in the one divine subjectivity." *Ibid.*, 296. Indeed, "The construal of the Trinity as the self-unfolding of a divine subject inevitably does damage to the co-eternity of the divine persons, diminishing their plurality to mere modes of being subordinate to the divine subject." Pannenberg, "Der Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre" In Grundlagen Systematisch Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze Vol. I.(Göttingen, 1980), 100. Cited in Webster, Eberhard Jüngel: An Introduction to his Theology, 74. Consequently, Pannenberg sees in Barth only another example of how a false method leads to a non-trinitarian doctrine of the Trinity. By beginning with a single subject and attempting to deduce threeness from it, one fails to do justice to the distinctness of the persons and falls into implicit Modalism. Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 295-97. For a good study of Pannenberg's trinitarian theology, Roger Olson, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity ["Rahner's Rule" and "Pannenberg's Principle"]," Scottish Journal of Theology, 43:2 (1990): 175-206.

the Father and the Son especially in their co-work for the establishment of the kingdom of God. For him, the aim of the whole message of Jesus was to set up the lordship of God the Father.⁵¹ In order to establish God's lordship, Jesus distinguished himself from the Father: Jesus did not proclaim himself, but put himself in the place of a creature below God, proclaiming the nearness of God's kingdom, the lordship of God.⁵² But by this act of self-distinction from God, he contends, Jesus showed himself as the Son of God. In other words, Jesus revealed his true identity as the Son of God by subjecting himself to God's will, and thus proclaiming God's lordship.⁵³ In short, for Pannenberg, Jesus is the eternal Son of the Father because he uniquely revealed and established God's lordship among humans by living out his message through active self-differentiation from God.⁵⁴ If this is so, then, the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is determined by his Father. Jesus receives his deity from God by his act of self-distinction and thus is dependent upon the Father for his divinity. Likewise, the deity of God the Father is also achieved through the obedience of Jesus Christ. In fact the deity of God can be achieved only by God's ruling of the world: God recapitulates God's identity as God

⁵¹ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology I, 309.

⁵² Ibid. Thus, according to Pannenberg, Jesus claims that "the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Besides, Jesus will not let himself be called "good teacher" because "no one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18). Besides, he cites Mark 13:32, Matt 20:23, Mark 14:36 as proof texts of this argument.

⁵³ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology I, 310.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

through God's kingly rule over God's creation.⁵⁵ Yet after the fall of creation, God's reign and the disobedient creation are in conflict. A disobedient creation denies the existence of a kingdom of God and thus God's deity is also in jeopardy. In this fallen creation, Pannenberg argues, Jesus was the first and still the only individual who has obeyed completely the will of the Father. In fact, what the historical Jesus did in a sinful world was to dedicate himself to the Father in a complete obedience. Through his total obedience, Pannenberg contends, Jesus actually granted God's rule and thereby granted God's divinity. By granting dominion to the Father through his whole life, the Son recapitulated the deity of the Father. Therefore, God the Father is dependent upon the Son for his divinity, as the Son is dependent upon the Father: The Father's "kingdom and his own deity are now dependent upon the Son."⁵⁶

Pannenberg contends that this relationship between Father and Son points toward a third distinct person, the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ For him, the personal distinctiveness of the Spirit lies especially in the Spirit's function of glorifying the Son and the Father.⁵⁸ In other words, this 'glorifying' function of the Spirit constitutes the Spirit's self-differentiation from the Father

⁵⁵ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 313: "The rule of kingdom of the Father is not so external to his deity that he might be God without his kingdom. The world as the object of his lordship might not be necessary to his deity, since its existence owes its origin to his creative freedom, but the existence of the world is not compatible with his deity apart from his lordship over it. Hence, lordship goes hand in hand with the deity of God." See also *Ibid.*, 329.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 314f.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 315.

and Son.⁵⁹ Indeed this active self- differentiation shows that the Spirit is more than merely an eternal communion between Father and Son. It constitutes the Spirit as a particular person alongside Father and Son and related to them.⁶⁰

Pannenberg sees the Spirit's work in the history of salvation as another irreducible aspect of the historical process of the fulfillment of God's lordship. If the Spirit glorifies the divine community and draws the human being into it, then Father and Son are also dependent on the Spirit for their deity. And if this is so, this eliminates any notion of subordinationism of the Spirit. Consequently from his analysis of the revelation of God in the history of Jesus' relationship with the Father in the Spirit, Pannenberg concludes that we need to hold the distinct personhood of Father, Son, and Spirit. The divine persons cannot be comprehended as merely different modes of being of a single divine Subject. Rather, they can only be conceived "as living realizations of separate centers of action."⁶¹ In other words, there are three distinct divine persons who constitute their identity through their relationship in salvation history. The Son realizes his deity only through his active self-differentiation from the Father. The Spirit achieves his/her deity by glorifying the Son, who acts in obedience to the Father. The Father

⁵⁹ Ibid. Here he writes, "As Jesus glorifies the Father and not himself, and precisely in so doing shows himself to be the Son of the Father, so the Spirit glorifies not himself but the Son and in him the Father."

⁶⁰ Ibid., 315-319.

⁶¹ Ibid., 319.

receives his lordship through handing it over to the Son and receiving it back from him.⁶²

After contending that the divine Three are 'distinct' but inter-related persons who work together for the establishment of the kingdom of God, Pannenberg goes into the question of their unity. For him the unity of God lies primarily in the perichoresis of the three persons, that is, their reciprocal relations. The distinct personhood of the Son, like his deity, is entirely constituted by his relation to the Father and the Spirit. Likewise the Father gains his personal distinction through his relations with the Son and the Spirit. In the same way the Spirit gains distinct personhood by virtue of glorifying Father and Son at the same time. In short, because of their interdependent relations, the divine persons constitute a totality, which is no greater than each individual alone. Consequently, for Pannenberg, the true basis and ground of the doctrine of the Trinity as well as of the very deity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, lie in their reciprocal self-differentiation as concrete forms of the trinitarian relations.⁶³

Yet Pannenberg also finds the unity of God in the Father's monarchy as well as in the perichoretic union of the three divine persons. He does not want to undermine monotheistic

⁶² Ibid., 320.

⁶³ Thus he writes: "The unity of Father, Son, and Spirit certainly finds expression in their relations of salvation history which are determined by their mutual self-distinction, and especially in their joint working in manifestation of the monarchy of the Father in creation." Ibid., 334. He further argues that his this idea escapes the danger of tritheism. If the divine persons exist first as independent persons and then go into relationship, then relationship is merely contingent and thus the charge of tritheism is inescapable. Yet this is not the case of the divine persons. They gain their divine identities only through their acts of surrender and self-differentiation over against one another. Pannenberg, *Grundfrage*, II, 108.

belief in God. He believes that a strongly trinitarian doctrine of God does not betray monotheism, but rescues it from its problems.⁶⁴ Yet Pannenberg does not accept the traditional meaning of the Father's monarchy in which the Father possesses it exclusively, while the Son and Spirit are supposed to be dependent upon him.⁶⁵ Rather, he understands the monarchy of the Father as his lordship over creation, which is the goal of the three persons' common activity. Thus the unity lies in three divine persons' mutual dedication to bringing the kingdom of God. Since the kingly rule of God is dependent upon the co-work of all three, the Father's monarchy does not imply his superiority over Son and Spirit. Instead, his monarchy, and therefore, his deity, is brought to him through the other two persons: The Father is dependent upon the Son and the Spirit, as they are dependent upon the Father. Since this is the case, he contends, this understanding of the monarchy of the Father rejects any form of inferiority within the trinitarian community. Neither the Son nor the Spirit is ontologically inferior to the Father, although they voluntarily submit themselves to the Father.⁶⁶

Another difference between Pannenberg's understanding of the Father's monarchy and

⁶⁴ Pannenberg, "Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God," 256.

⁶⁵ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology I, 324.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 324-25. In this sense Pannenberg is critical of Moltmann's explicit rejection of 'monotheism.' He argues that there are two kinds of monotheism, a trinitarian monotheism and abstract monotheism. In his judgement what Moltmann wants to reject is abstract monotheism which was advocated in the 19 century under the name of theism. Yet since Moltmann does not wish to abandon the unity of God as such, he is already accepting a trinitarian monotheism. Thus for Pannenberg, Moltmann's problem is in failing to choose a proper terminology. See Systematic Theology I, 335-36. Footnote number 217.

the traditional understanding is that for him the monarchy is not *a priori* but an eschatological reality. It is the goal rather than the origin of the trinitarian missions of the Son and Spirit in the world. This means, then, that the unity of God is also eschatological since it is intrinsically related to the monarchy of the Father. Like the Father's monarchy, the unity of God is constituted not in some non-historical immanent trinitarian life but through the activities of Son and Spirit in salvation history.⁶⁷ For him the unity of God is not a presupposed, timeless reality, but is an eschatological reality that is constituted in three divine persons' concrete living relations in salvation history.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the essence they share is not the Father's essence *per se* (as in the older models of the Father's monarchy), but it is the relationally structured love that unifies without weakening the distinctions among three divine persons.⁶⁹ The common object of this love is to unify humankind under the lordship of the Father. Thus, for him, the phrase "God is love" is the comprehensive expression of the trinitarian fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit.⁷⁰ Consequently, for Pannenberg, the word 'God' means two things. First it is the Father, whose monarchy is the cause of the three divine persons' life-projects. Second, and more primarily, it is the perichoretic union of God, the bond of fellowship that

⁶⁷ Olson, Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity, 194.

⁶⁸ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 327.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 325-26. Olson, 195.

⁷⁰ Pannenberg, "Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God," 256.

unites Father, Son, and Spirit together.⁷¹ In fact, for him the divine 'essence' is basically the relationally structured unity of the three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Spirit. His doctrine of the Trinity includes, therefore, a form of social Trinity. Yet a major characteristic of his social Trinity is that it finds the unity of God in the process of history. For him the divine unity is an eschatological project that the three divine persons achieve through their co-working in history.

1-3-2. Leonardo Boff

Leonardo Boff presents his trinitarian theology mainly in his book, The Trinity and Society.⁷² In this book Boff rejects two traditional models for understanding God's unity: the Latin model and the Eastern model. According to him, The Latin model finds God's unity in the one divine nature. The three persons appropriate the same nature in distinct modes: The Father without any beginning, the Son begotten of the Father, and the Spirit breathed out by the Father and the Son. The three are of the same nature, consubstantial and thus one God. Yet this model has the danger of modalism.⁷³ The Greek model proceeds from the monarchy of the Father and seeks the unity of the Trinity in him. In this model the Father is the source and

⁷¹ Olson, *Ibid.* 195.

⁷² Leonardo Boff, Trinity and Society, trans. Paul Burns. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 233.

origin of all divinity. The Father communicates his whole substance to the Son and the Holy Spirit, thus both are consubstantial with the Father. In fact Boff prefers this Greek approach to the Latin approach, since this approach corresponds at least to the biblical witness that presents the Trinity in terms of the co-working of the three distinct divine persons in salvation history. Yet he does not adopt this as his own trinitarian hermeneutic. For him this approach is erroneous in that it assumes the monarchy of the Father. "The monarchy of the Father is so absolute that everything has its being and resolution in him: Son and Spirit form expressions. . . of the one principle, the Father. The Father is, in the final analysis everything, with the other Persons being eternal derivations of him."⁷⁴ But according to the New Testament, "there is a self-communication of the Son and the Spirit in history which is not simply the result of the efficient causality of the one God, but a personal act by each of these persons."⁷⁵

Boff locates the unity of God in the eternal perichoresis of God. In fact the notion of the perichoresis is from the start central to his own trinitarian theology: "Communion is the first and last word about the mystery of the Trinity."⁷⁶ For him the unity of the Trinity means the union of the three persons by virtue of their perichoretic union and eternal fellowship.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 235.

According to Boff, this way of securing God's unity has two merits. First, it corresponds to our changed cultural situation.⁷⁸ The current culture that is characterized by excessive Western individualism and its destructive effects upon other parts of the world requires a more relational and communal understanding of God and all beings. Thus, this model that understands God as a communion of three divine persons provides a better understanding of the universe and of human society as a community.⁷⁹ Especially it helps to empower the oppressed people to liberate themselves for true fellowship and communion.⁸⁰ Second, according to him, this understanding of the unity of God is the best way of reading Scripture: "In my view, the perichoretic-communion model seems to be the most adequate way of expressing the revelation of the Trinity as communicated and witnessed by the scriptures."⁸¹ Consequently states Boff,

We follow this current: first, because it starts from the *datum* of faith - the existence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as distinct and in communion; and

⁷⁸ According to Boff, behind the diverse ways of understanding of the unity of God lie their specific historical contexts and concerns. The context in which the Latin Fathers explicated the mystery of the triune God was the prevailing polytheism of the Roman Empire. Thus Latin Fathers had to find the unity of God in one divine essence. The Greek Fathers were in a different climate: The task of the Greek Fathers was to combat the rigid monotheism of Arianism and modalism. Thus naturally they tended to emphasize the diversity in God. They had to begin with the three divine persons and then come to their unity in the Father. This was a way to oppose the errors of Arian monotheism and modalism that had little room for the doctrine of the Trinity. Now Boff maintains that the ethos of our culture is totally different and thus requires a different approach. For this matter, *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 136: "This concept is central to the relevance of the Trinity to our desire for a society that lives together in more open communion, equality and respectful acceptance of differences."

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

second, because it allows a better understanding of the universe and human society as a process of communication, communion and union through the interpenetration of creatures with one another (perichoresis).

After grounding the unity of God in the perichoretic union of three divine persons Boff considers the nature of this union. For him, the *perichoresis* of the three persons can be interpreted in two different ways. First, it can be interpreted as static, implying that each of the three persons dwells in the others (*circuminsessio*). Second, it can be conceived as active and means the dynamic mutual interpenetration of the persons in one another (*circumincessio*). Boff prefers the second interpretation and understands the perichoretic union of God as “communion, *Koinonia*: a permanent process of active reciprocity, a clasping of two hands: the Persons interpenetrate one another and this process of communing forms their very nature.”⁸² For him the perichoretic union of God means the eternal and dynamic interpenetration and fellowship of three divine persons.

Boff’s way of securing God’s unity in the perichoretic union seems open to the charge of tritheism. In fact he is sensitive to this charge as seen in his acknowledgement that a social Trinity like his “carries a risk of tritheism.”⁸³ Yet he asserts that the notion of perichoretic union is immune to the accusation of tritheism in the fact that in their perichoretic

⁸² Ibid., 136.

⁸³ Ibid., 5.

union the divine persons are always defined in their relationship. In other words, if the divine persons first exist and then go into the perichoretic relationship, this has to be tritheism. But the perichoretic union of the divine persons is not subsequent to the divine nature but happens always at the same time. Thus the charge of tritheism does not hold:

This choice carries a risk of tritheism, but avoids it through perichoresis and through the eternal communion existing from the beginning between the three Persons. We are not to think that originally the Three existed on their own, separated from the others, coming only later into communion and perichoretic relationship. Such a picture is false and makes their union a later result, an outcome of communion. No, the Persons are intrinsically and from all eternity bound up with each other. They have always co-existed, never existed apart from one another.⁸⁴

After finding God's unity in the perichoretic union of three divine persons, Boff goes into the socio-political and economic implications of this unity. For him, the eternal loving relationships within God, characterized by equality and fellowship in the perichoretic union, can function as the prototype of human community, whether a socio-political structure or ecclesial system. Here he refers to the classical theory of the *vestigia trinitatis*, and notes that "Human society contains a *vestigium trinitatis*, because the Trinity is the divine society."⁸⁵ If

⁸⁴ Ibid., 5-6.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

this is so, he contends. "the Trinity is . . . our true social program."⁸⁶ The doctrine of the Trinity, understood as the perichoretic union of God, can help us to overcome hierarchical and oppressive social structures and to create a more genuine human society that reflects and corresponds to the communion of God, characterized by love, equality, and freedom.

2. Moltmann and the Unity of God

2-1. Moltmann's Criticism of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner

We have seen two different approaches in understanding the question of the unity of God. Now we will turn to Moltmann's handling of this question. Moltmann develops his understanding of the unity of God largely in dialogue with Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. Thus in order to elaborate Moltmann's understanding of the unity of God it is necessary to examine his criticism of these two theologians first.

Like many current trinitarian theologians, Moltmann owes much to the thought of Barth, who did more than anyone else to revitalize trinitarian theology in the twentieth century. Yet he criticizes Barth for not being sufficiently trinitarian in his approach.⁸⁷ For him Barth still holds a monotheism of absolute subjectivity, in which God as absolute subject exists

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ CG 203. Here he criticizes Barth by saying, "Remarkably, I see the critical limitation of Barth in the fact that he still thinks too theologically, and that his approach is not sufficiently trinitarian."

eternally in three modes. Moltmann believes that Barth's mistake, which leads him to this monotheism of absolute subjectivity, is that he starts with the sovereignty or the divine lordship of God, and uses the doctrine of the Trinity to secure and establish God's sovereignty.⁸⁸ To secure the sovereignty of God, Barth insists on the self-identity of God in God's relationship to the world: in all of God's dealings with the world, God remains exactly the same Lord over the world.

Barth holds that the Trinity is a *repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate*, and believes that he can reconstruct this by means of a shift in emphasis in the statement: God reveals himself as the Lord. But to understand God's threefold nature as eternal repetition or as holy tautology does not yet mean thinking in trinitarian terms. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be a matter of establishing the same thing three times.⁸⁹

In short, Moltmann's criticism of Barth is that, for him, the lordship of God precedes the Trinity and as a result God is primarily understood as an absolute Subject in heaven and not a divine community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And this ends up in a hidden modalism and not in genuine trinitarian thinking. For him, Barth's trinitarian theology, which speaks of three modes of being, is a kind of "Sabellian modalism, which the early church condemned."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ TK 143-144: "The reason for the difficulties Barth gets into here with his acceptance of the idealistic reflection Trinity of divine subject, is that he puts the divine lordship before the Trinity and uses the 'doctrine of the Trinity' to secure and interpret the divine subjectivity in that lordship."

⁸⁹ TK 141.

⁹⁰ TK 139. Yet Moltmann's accusation of Barth of being "Sabellian modalism" is too far. As we have seen before, Barth still speaks of an eternal (immanent) Trinity.

Furthermore, as we will see later, in Moltmann's view Barth's employment of the Lordship of God carries the danger of legitimizing a hierarchical and oppressive social and churchly structure. For Moltmann a theological or philosophical monotheism is closely interconnected with political monotheism and the former justifies the latter. Consequently, to understand God primarily as the Lord ends up with a justification of unequal and authoritative social structures.

Moltmann's criticism of Rahner follows a similar track. According to Moltmann, Rahner, like Barth, also shows a strong monotheistic trend in his understanding of God, while failing to do justice to the existence of the three distinct divine persons. In fact, "Karl Rahner developed his doctrine of the Trinity with an astonishing similarity to Barth and almost the same presuppositions. And the conclusions he arrives at are in accordance with this."⁹¹

Moltmann focuses his criticism of Rahner especially on his understanding of 'person.' According to Rahner, when modern understanding of 'person' as "an independent, free, self-disposing center of action in knowledge and freedom, different from others."⁹² is applied to the divine Three, it necessarily assumes three different consciousnesses and centers of activity in God, and thus falls into tritheism.⁹³ Yet according to Moltmann, this understanding of the

⁹¹ TK 144.

⁹² TK 145. Here he cites Rahner, Mysterium Salutis, 342ff.

⁹³ TK 144-45.

'person' is an inadequate representation of modern understandings of person. Rather it is an expression of an extreme individualism, that is, an "individualistic reduction" of this concept.⁹⁴ For Moltmann, 'person' has always meant person-in-relationship, and this is true in the thought of many recent authors. For him, modern understandings of 'person' carry a strong sense of relationality, as demonstrated by "the philosophical personalism of Holderlin, Feuerbach, Buber, Rosenstock and others."⁹⁵ If this is so, Moltmann argues, Rahner's reluctance and rejection of 'person' has no solid ground. Rather, his suspicion of using this word for the divine Three discloses that Rahner himself is in danger of Sabellian modalism.⁹⁶

Moltmann furthermore criticizes Rahner's argument that there is only one divine consciousness in God and that there is no mutual relationship between Father and Son in the immanent Trinity. If this is so, he contends, the Son is always passive in his relationship to the Father, and thus does not possess a full personhood as the Father does. For him this leads into a subordinationism of the Son to the Father.⁹⁷ In fact, this means for Rahner that there is only "the one single God-subject," namely, the Father. And the Son and the Spirit are reduced to mere historical instruments of the Father's activity for human salvation. In other words, as

⁹⁴ TK 145.

⁹⁵ TK 145.

⁹⁶ TK 144.

⁹⁷ TK 146.

“salvation history is reduced to the self-communication of the Father, the history of the Son is no longer identifiable at all.”⁹⁸ Consequently, in Moltmann’s observation, “Rahner’s reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity ends in the mystic solitariness of God. It obscures the history of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit to which the Bible testifies.”⁹⁹

2-2. The Unity of God as the Perichoretic Union of the Three Divine Persons

As we have seen, Moltmann refuses to locate the unity of God in the one absolute subject or in the Father as the origin of all divinity. Instead, like Pannenberg and Boff, he finds the divine unity in the perichoretic unity of the three divine persons: “It (the concept of God’s unity) must be perceived in the *perichoresis* of the divine Persons.”¹⁰⁰ For him, the New Testament narrative plainly indicates that there are three distinct divine persons in God.¹⁰¹ Especially if the doctrine of the Trinity is understood out of the cross of Jesus Christ, the Christian understanding of God identifies as three distinct persons in a unique community. Indeed God is the relational community of the fellowship of the Father, Son, and the Spirit.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ TK 147.

⁹⁹ TK 148.

¹⁰⁰ TK 150. Emphasis is original.

¹⁰¹ TK 63-64. Cf. CG 204: “When one considers the significance of the death of Jesus for God himself, one must enter into the inner-trinitarian tensions and relationships of God and speak of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.” Also, HG 71ff.

¹⁰² TK 64.

If our doctrine of the Trinity is to be faithful to the gospel narrative, therefore, we must begin with the knowledge of these three distinct subjects and their particular cooperation in history, and only after that treat the question of their unity. Thus, the real issue is not the 'threeness' but the 'oneness' of the divine persons. The Gospel story in the Bible begins with the three living persons in God and then makes unity the problem.¹⁰³

In order to support his argument that the divine unity has to be found in the perichoretic union of three distinct divine persons, Moltmann offers an analysis of three related terms, which together constitute the communal nature of God: relationship, personhood, and perichoretic union.¹⁰⁴ First he deals with the relation of the 'relationship' and 'personhood.' In his observation, the Western tradition has adopted the notion of subsistent relations in order to distinguish the divine persons in God. According to this tradition, which was eminently introduced by Augustine, the relations within the one God define and constitute the three persons, so that the personhood of each of the persons is conceived as his /her relation to the other persons. The personhood of the Son, for instance, is the Son's unique relation to both the Father and the Spirit. The relation itself is recognized as conferring a real or subsistent identity.

¹⁰³ TK 149.

¹⁰⁴ For Moltmann these three are the basic elements that constitute together the concept of community. He writes, "From this we want to take up three basic concepts of the Trinity and see what they say to the understanding of the human community, because they are nothing else but the basic concepts of community: (1) person, (2) relation, (3) community (perichoresis)." See HG, 96.

While there is one divine 'substance,' subsistent within this substance are three relations, which constitute the three divine persons.¹⁰⁵

Moltmann accepts this tradition that the divine persons are defined and constituted by their relations.¹⁰⁶ Yet he also contends that this relational understanding of person is not enough in itself. It is in itself insufficient and needs something more that constitutes a real personhood: "It is impossible to say: person is relation."¹⁰⁷ If divine persons are defined only through their relationships with each other and if there is no substantial understanding of personhood, Moltmann contends, there emerges necessarily the danger of modalism in which the divine persons are conceived only as three-fold repetitions of the one divine subject.¹⁰⁸ But this is a clear betrayal of the New Testament witness that Jesus of Nazareth and the one whom he calls Father are 'distinct' persons in deep relationship.¹⁰⁹ Thus he adopts Boethius' definition of person as 'an individual substance' and attempts to provide the personal identity of the three divine persons. The personhood thus must be given more priority, ontologically, than that of relations. Consequently, for Moltmann, the relational understanding of the persons

¹⁰⁵ TK 172.

¹⁰⁶ TK 172: "(T)he three divine persons exist in their particular, unique natures as Father, Son and Spirit in their relationships to one another, and are determined through these relationships."

¹⁰⁷ TK 172.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Here he contends, "It is true that the Father is defined by his fatherhood to the Son, *but this does not constitute his existence; it presupposes it.*" Emphasis is mine.

¹⁰⁹ CG 245. Also, TK 64.

has as its premise the substantial understanding of the divine persons. Both the substantial personhood (Boethius) and relationship (Augustine) must be maintained. He writes: "Person and relation therefore have to be understood in a reciprocal relationship. Here there are no persons without relationship. But there are no relations without persons either."¹¹⁰

Therefore, when Moltmann speaks of person, he means "the subject of acts and relationships."¹¹¹ For him the three trinitarian persons are different not merely in their relations to one another, but also in respect of their character as persons."¹¹² Thus, he calls Father, Son, and Spirit, "three divine subjects,"¹¹³ each of whom is distinguished from the others as 'as actor' or 'center of act.'¹¹⁴ And as actor or center of act, each of the divine persons has his or her own will, understanding, and consciousness.¹¹⁵

Moltmann's understanding is most vividly portrayed in his discussion of "the Surrender of the Son at the cross."¹¹⁶ Here he assumes a distinction of will between Father and Son. Furthermore, this distinction of will accompanies different experiences and

¹¹⁰ TK 172.

¹¹¹ TK 18.

¹¹² TK 189.

¹¹³ TK 94.

¹¹⁴ TK 126.

¹¹⁵ TK 146, 171.

¹¹⁶ TK 80-83.

consciousnesses between these two divine persons: The Son experiences the dying at the cross and the absence of the Father: the Father experiences the death of his loving Son. The Son has the experience of Godforsakenness and the Father has the experience of forsaking the Son.¹¹⁷ What this means for Moltmann is that the Father and the Son are two 'distinct' persons who have distinct will, emotion, and consciousness. Furthermore, for him the Holy Spirit is also a 'distinct' divine subject.¹¹⁸ He is not satisfied with the traditional understanding of the Spirit as the *vinculum caritatis* (the bond of love) between the Father and the Son. For, in that tradition the distinct personhood of the Spirit is virtually lacking: "If the Spirit is only termed the unity of what is separated, then he loses every center of activity. He is then an energy but not a Person. He is then a relationship but not subject."¹¹⁹ This tradition therefore contradicts the biblical tradition, which depicts the Holy Spirit as "the third Person of the Trinity, and not merely the correlation of the two other persons."¹²⁰ Since this is so, he contends, theology must provide the way to understand the Spirit as "an independent existence as person in the Trinity."¹²¹

¹¹⁷ TK, 81. Cf. CG 243. Here he writes, "The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father."

¹¹⁸ TK, 125.

¹¹⁹ TK 142.

¹²⁰ TK 143

¹²¹ TK 143. The German text is "*selbständiges Personsein des Heiligen Geistes in der Trinität*"

According to Moltmann, the explicit personhood of Spirit is disclosed in the Spirit's act of raising the Son from the Dead. The Spirit reveals her personal identity as distinguished from Father and Son, by her act of raising the Son as the Lord of all.¹²² Yet his main stress is the Spirit's eschatological glorification of the Son, and through the Son the Father. In her act of glorification of the Father and Son through the glorification of the world, the Holy Spirit shows that, like Father and Son, she is also "independent subject of his own acts."¹²³ Consequently, for Moltmann, the Father, Son, and the Spirit are all distinct persons, each of which is distinguished by will, emotion, and self-consciousness. In a conclusive passage Moltmann contends:

Biblically, Father, Son and Spirit are in fact subjects with a will and understanding, who speak with one another, turn to one another in love, and together are 'one.' . . . So the concept of God may not do away with the subjective differences between the persons, because otherwise it would do away with the history which takes place between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit for the salvation of the world.¹²⁴

After pursuing the meaning and the relationship of 'personhood' and 'relation' in God,

Moltmann, Trinität und Reich Gottes, 160. It is unfortunate that Moltmann uses the word "independent (*selbständiges*)."¹²² For this expression can be easily misinterpreted in individualistic and thus tritheistic way. Yet it is important to note that Moltmann's concern here is to stress the 'distinct' personhood of the Holy Spirit that has often been ignored in the history of Christian thought.

¹²² TK 88.

¹²³ TK 125-26.

¹²⁴ HT 84-85.

Moltmann considers the issue of the unity of these three divine persons. This is important because, if he stops only with the notion of the three distinct divine persons in relation, then the divine unity will not be acknowledged, and the heresy of tritheism will be the result. Moltmann is quite aware of this and attempts to do justice to the unity of God by way of the traditional term 'perichoresis,' which indicates the mutual indwelling, or inter-penetration of three divine persons.¹²⁵ In fact, for Moltmann, the notion of perichoresis is synonymous with community, the third of his basic trinitarian concepts, and serves as a summary notion of the former two concepts, person and relation. Just as person and relation are correlative terms, divine unity-as-community is also bound up with his trinitarian concept of person and discloses a relational dimension:

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are by no means merely distinguished from one another by their character as persons: they are just as much united with one another and in one another: since personal character and social character are only two aspects of the same thing. The concept of person must therefore in itself contain the concept of unitedness or at-oneness, just as, conversely, the concept

¹²⁵ According to Prestige, the term *perichoresis*, which was first used in Christological debate over the two natures of Christ, was first applied in trinitarian theology by pseudo-Cyril to counteract tritheist tendencies in the sixth century. Its purpose was to support the numerical identity of the divine persons. In this sense, "It forms the exact reverse of the identity of *ousia*." G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952), 298. According to Verna Harrison, the word *perichoresis* has served in three different theological areas. In the doctrine of the Trinity, it is used to explicate the relationship of unity and distinction among the three divine persons. In the doctrine of Christology, it is adopted in order to explain the relationship of the divinity to humanity in Christ. Finally, in regard to the God-human relationship, it is used in order to explain God's indwelling in God's creation. See Verna Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 53-65. For a short history and meaning of perichoresis, see August Deneffe, "Perichoresis, circumincessio, circuminssessio. Einer terminologische Untersuchung," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 47 (1923): 497-532. Peter Stemmer, "Perichorese. Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 27 (1983): 9-55. G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 282-300. Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," 53-65.

of God's at-oneness must in itself contain the concept of the three persons.¹²⁶

But for Moltmann perichoretic unity is more than the formal concept that sums up divine persons in relation: It also has a distinctive dynamic content. He adopts a dynamic rather than substantial-metaphysical understanding of this term and argues that the divine persons live and dwell in one another to such an extent that they are completely one.¹²⁷ "The Father exists in the Son, the Son in the Father, and both of them in the Spirit, just as the Spirit exists in both the Father and the Son. By virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to such an extent, that they are one."¹²⁸ In other words, in their *perichoresis*, the trinitarian persons are not three different individuals, but a unique community that forms its own unity in the circulation of the divine life.¹²⁹ Therefore, in their perichoretic unity "the trinitarian persons are not to be understood as three different individuals, who only subsequently enter into relationship with one another," as in tritheism: nor are they "three modes of being or three repetitions of the One God," as in modalism.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ TK 150.

¹²⁷ TK 149-150. Perichoresis has both a static and dynamic sense, brought out in Latin in the difference between *circuminsessio*, usually translated "coinherence" or "mutual indwelling" (static sense) and *circumincessio*, usually translated "interpenetration" (dynamic sense). Moltmann prefers the latter meaning and understands the perichoretic union of divine persons as a living and dynamic community of divine persons. He describes this perichoretic union of God variously as "living fellowship," "life process," and "eternal life" of the Trinity.

¹²⁸ TK 175.

¹²⁹ TK 175.

¹³⁰ TK 175.

Rather "the doctrine of the perichoresis links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness."¹³¹

Therefore, for Moltmann, the unity of the triune God is located precisely in the union (*Vereinigung*) and fellowship (*Gemeinschaft*) of the three persons in their relationships to one another. It does not consist in one divine essence, nor in one divine subject, but in the history of the trinitarian communal relationships: "The triune God is a single communion or fellowship that is formed by the three divine persons themselves. The unity of the triune God is no longer seen in the homogeneous divine subject nor in the identical divine subject, but in the eternal perichoresis of Father, Son and Spirit as distinct persons."¹³²

Moltmann presents a perceptive doctrine of the Trinity that deserves a welcoming assent. Especially in terms of the issue of the unity-trinity in God, perhaps it is Moltmann who presents the most widely accepted and influential form of social Trinitarianism. Yet his social doctrine of the Trinity also has provoked criticisms and objections. The first and most important objection raised against Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity is that it is

¹³¹ TK 175.

¹³² Thus Moltmann prefers the term *Einigkeit* or *Vereinigung*, which indicate a process of unifying or integration rather than the term *Einheit*, which describes an original or ontological unity. Moltmann, TK xii. See also TK 95: "the unity of the Trinity cannot be a monadic unity. The unity of the divine tri-unity lies in the union (*Einigkeit*) of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, not in their numerical unity. It lies in their fellowship (*Gemeinschaft*), not in the identity of a single subject." Besides, he prefers the word, 'trinity' as the proper English translation of his term *Dreieinheit*. See HT 59: "The English expression 'trinity' really denotes 'three persons-one fellowship' in a remarkable unity."

tritheistic. George Hunsinger, for example, argues that Moltmann's trinitarian theology is tritheistic in that the triune unity, as he sees it, is only volitional, not ontological and thus ends up with tritheism.¹³³ John O'Donnell also contends that Moltmann's unity of God is not a substantial unity but only a moral union, the union of the will of three divine persons. In other words, the unity of divine persons in Moltmann's thought is a perichoretic union characterized by fellowship (*Gemeinschaft*) rather than identity (whether of subjectivity or substance) and thus is vulnerable to tritheism.¹³⁴ Walter Kasper echoes this response by saying, "The danger of tritheism is even clearer in Moltmann's idea of a social or open Trinity."¹³⁵ Pannenberg, while not accusing Moltmann of tritheism, argues that perichoretic union is not enough as the bond of divine unity.¹³⁶

Moltmann responds in two ways to the charge of tritheism on his social doctrine of the Trinity. First he presents his preliminary response by saying that there has been no serious tritheist in Christian history, and tritheism has been and still is no real danger to Christian

¹³³ George Hunsinger, "The Crucified God and the Political Theology of Violence. A Critical Survey of Jürgen Moltmann's Recent Thought," I, II, *Heythrop Journal* 14 (1973): 266-79, 379-95, esp. 278.

¹³⁴ John O'Donnell, "The Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection upon Recent Theological Developments," *Gregorianum* 69/1 (1988): 21. Cf. Moltmann, TK 95: "If the three divine subjects are co-active in this history, as we have shown they are, then the unity of the Trinity cannot be a monadic unity. The unity of the divine tri-unity lies in the union (German: *Einigkeit*) of the Father, the Son and the Spirit not in their numerical unity. It lies in their fellowship (German: *Gemeinschaft*), not in the identity of a single subject."

¹³⁵ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 379.

¹³⁶ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* I, 334-35. Thus, as we have seen, Pannenberg speaks of the monarchy of Father as another unification principle of the divine reality.

faith.¹³⁷ Rather, the genuine threat to Christian faith has been modalism and non-trinitarian monarchianism. In his estimation, “the standard argument against tritheism practically serves everywhere to disguise the writer’s own modalism.”¹³⁸

Moltmann’s second response to the charge of tritheism is more substantial. In his view, tritheism arises only if one adopts and applies an individualistic understanding of ‘person’ to the divine Three. In other words, if the divine persons were considered to exist in themselves, and subsequently to enter into relations with one another, this would be tritheism. But if the divine persons and their relations are genetically connected and come into being always at the same time, as his trinitarian theology maintains, no reason for the charge of tritheism exists. In short, when the divine person is conceived immediately in relationship, and not in a Cartesian individualistic sense, there exists no danger of tritheism. The notion of the eternal perichoresis of the divine Three precludes this charge.¹³⁹

Indeed, Moltmann’s contention is compelling. Although he posits consciousness as a constituent of personhood, it is quite different from the modern Cartesian understanding of ‘person’ as an isolated ‘I’. In other words, while he speaks of “independent existence as person

¹³⁷ Moltmann, TK 144. Cf. TK 243, note 43: “No Christian theologian has ever taught that there were three gods.”

¹³⁸ TK 243.

¹³⁹ TK 175. Cf. HT 86.

in the Trinity.” he never intends to portray Father, Son and Spirit as three individuals in any Cartesian sense of individual.¹⁴⁰ For him, person is always person-in-relationship. Furthermore, as Moltmann points out, this modern understanding of person as “a self-possessing, self-disposing center of action that sets itself apart from other persons.”¹⁴¹ appears to be declining, giving way to a more relational understanding of person. The current understanding of person, as John Macmurrary and many others show, is relational.¹⁴² In today’s understanding, the unit of the personal is no more an isolated ‘I’ but ‘You and I’. If this

¹⁴⁰ TK 143. In fact Moltmann vehemently rejects the Cartesian concept of person by saying that it is a modern individualistic reduction of its original meaning that must be overcome. Ibid., 145. And as Moltmann contends, the modern understanding of person as a privatized ‘self-conscious ego’ is a derivation of the traditional understanding of the person. Indeed, in the ancient time person is always understood in his or her social relationships. For example, in classical Greco-Roman culture a person is understood and identified in this relational way. It is the social relationship or role that constitutes one’s ‘personal identity’ and not his or her self-reflection. In other words, in classical society a person’s identity was found in terms of her social and external relations and not in her internal reflection. In such a context to speak of a plurality of persons in the Godhead cannot be a problem. The notion of the three divine persons in the Godhead meant that there are three divine persons who have distinguishing relationships with each other and this is no indication of tritheism. Actually this is what the Cappadocian Fathers kept in mind when they used the word ‘person’ in indicating the divine Triad. For the Cappadocian Fathers, person always meant person in relationships. For them the Greek term *hypostasis* basically meant a distinct being. When this term was applied to the Triad, it signified distinct, subsistent relation in Godhead. Thus the Cappadocians thought that the peculiarity of the Father lies in relationship with the Son: the father is the origin of all divinity and thus begets the Son. The Son is understood in relationship with the Father: the peculiarity of the Son lies in the fact that the Son is to be eternally ‘generated’ by the Father, receiving all his substantial reality from the Father. The peculiarity of the Holy Spirit lies in the fact that he/she proceeds from the Father in a way different from the Son. The Cappadocian Fathers did not take the unity of the divine nature but the three divine persons as their starting point, seeing them as the basic reality. The unity that forms the essence of the persons springs from the communion and relationship between them. For this matter, see David Brown, “Trinitarian Personhood and Individuality,” in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr (ed), Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1988), 48-73, esp. 51-53. Also Boff, Trinity and Society, 54ff.

¹⁴¹ TK 145. Cf. Spirit of Life, 34.

¹⁴² John Macmurrary, Persons in Relation (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961). Here Daniel Migliore’s comment is instructive: “We are becoming increasingly aware today of the interdependence of all life. The idea of an absolutely independent, completely self-made individual is a destructive myth.” Daniel Migliore, The Power of God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 39. For a good introduction to the recent scholarly efforts to establish a relational understanding of person and all reality, LaCugna, God for Us, 255-305.

is so. Moltmann's notion of perichoretic union of the three distinct divine persons carries little danger of tritheism in our present context.

More specifically, I believe that at least in three respects Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity escapes the charge of tritheism, while providing a viable option for understanding unity - trinity in God. First, his social doctrine of the Trinity is derived from, and is strongly supported by the witness of the Bible. Second, his social the Trinity stands as 'orthodox', finding substantial support in Christian tradition. Finally, it succeeds in escaping the 'actual' danger of tritheism as a form of polytheism.

First, Moltmann's social Trinity is justified by the witness of the New Testament. Indeed it appears that the social doctrine of the Trinity is more firmly grounded in the New Testament than the unity model of the Trinity. The New Testament narrative refers to three 'really' distinct divine persons.¹⁴³ Especially the Pauline and Johannine materials, which express the fullest biblical witness to the Trinity, indicate that there are three divine persons who are distinct from each other. In 1 Corinthians 8, for example, Paul says that there is one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. Here Paul echoes the great Old Testament monotheistic claim of Deuteronomy 6:4, the so-called *Shema*, and explicitly identifies this one

¹⁴³ For the biblical support of this argument I am largely dependent upon Cornelius Palantinga, Jr. "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in Ronald J Feenstra, and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., eds. Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement, 21-47.

God as 'Father.' And then he writes that "there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ." Here Paul claims that the Son is also God, though explicitly distinguished from the Father. For 'Lord' is a divinity title in Paul's usage. In other parts of his letters, he contends that Jesus Christ is equal with God, cosmic ruler and savior, a person in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells and to whom every Christian prays.¹⁴⁴ In addition to this, in Ephesians 4:4 Paul tells us that there is also one Spirit and speaks of the Spirit as a distinct personal being. The Spirit searches and intercedes. The Spirit gives gifts and can be grieved. Moreover, the biblical notion of 'Spirit of God' and 'Spirit of Christ' implies clearly that the Spirit is a person who is distinct from God the Father and Jesus Christ. Further, the Spirit is presented clearly as a divine being. The Spirit performs such acts proper to God as pouring out the love of God and regenerating human persons. Especially decisive is the fact that the Spirit can be blasphemed - which in the New Testament, is an act of verbally injuring someone divine.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, in Pauline literature we find that the Son and the Spirit are distinct divine persons, together with the Father.

The Johannine material offers an even more evident account of divine distinctions within unity. In John's Gospel, for example, Father, Son, and the Spirit are clearly distinct

¹⁴⁴ For example, Phil. 2:5-11, Tim. 2:10, Col. 1:19, 1 Cor. 16:22.

¹⁴⁵ Plantinga, "Social Trinity," 23-24.

divine persons who play differentiated roles within salvation history. Yet they are primordially united 'in' each other and thus they are 'one.'¹⁴⁶ In other words, Father and Son are said to be in each other. Each divine person makes room for the others in his/her own inner life. Each is in the other two divine persons (John 17). That is, according to the Fourth Gospel, the unity of Father, Son, and the Spirit is constituted by their common will, work, and knowledge, and by their reciprocal love and glorification.¹⁴⁷ These six phenomena - common will, work, word, knowledge, their reciprocal love and glorification - both distinguish the three persons and also unite them. Let us think about 'will' as an example. In this Gospel, the Son in his mission does have his own distinct 'will.' But he does not accomplish his own will but subordinates it to his Father. The Spirit in this Gospel also has her own will, but subordinates this will to the Son and thus to the Father. Consequently, even though there are three distinguished persons and their wills, what is expressed here is only one divine will: that of the Father who sends the Son and through the Son, the Spirit.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, we can say with Moltmann that the biblical witness to the holy Trinity is a divine society or community of three fully personal and fully divine entities, the Father, the

¹⁴⁶ The Gospel of John, 10:30, 38.

¹⁴⁷ Plantinga, *Ibid.*, 25. See, The Gospel of John, 4:34, 5:19-22, 15:26, 3:34, 16:14, 10:17, 14:31, 8:50, 5:41, 16:14.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Son, and the Spirit. Each of these three persons has his/her own center of knowledge, will, love, and action. Thus, they can be conceived as distinct centers of consciousness and in this sense they are 'persons' in the full sense of that term. Yet they constitute a perfect unity with each other: they are one in their will, work, word, and knowledge, and by their reciprocal love and glorification.¹⁴⁹ Since this is the case, Moltmann's contention that Father, Son, and Spirit are the names of the three distinct persons has a strong biblical basis. This contention does not render him a tritheist.

Second, Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity finds substantial historical support that enables us to negate the charge of tritheism. As Plantinga writes, in the fourth and fifth centuries when the doctrine of the Trinity was first developed, the view that there are three 'distinct' persons in God lay at the heart of orthodoxy, accepted by both Cappadocian Fathers and Augustinians alike.¹⁵⁰ Indeed the two heretical teachings that the Church at that time

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 34. The Cappadocian theologians, for example, often compared the Trinity to a human trio. In terms of the unity-trinity relationship, the contribution of the Cappadocians was to fix *ousia* as the main term for God's oneness, while *hypostasis* was used for the individual names of Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus for Basil (and Gregory of Nyssa) the *ousia* is the common word for the three but the *hypostasis* is the sign for the specific entities. Basil the Great, *Epistle* 38.5 translated by Agnes Clare Way, notes by Roy J. Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church* vol. 12 (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 89. Citation is in Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," *The Thomist* 50 (1986): 325-52, esp. 329. Besides, for Basil and Gregory, just as Peter, Paul, and Barnabas are each human, so the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there are not three Gods. Rather, God is one. For the three are "divided without separation and united without confusion." (*Ad Graecos* (Jaeg. 3.1. 20.); *Tres Dei* (Jaeg. 3.1. 55). For Gregory, these three distinct divine persons are distinguished from each other in the fact that the Father is the fount, source, or cause of the deity and hence is 'properly God' while Son and Spirit are 'of' or 'from' him as his 'effects.' Thus the Father is 'the cause,' the Son is 'of the cause' indeed directly so, while the Spirit is 'through the one who is directly from the first.'" (*Tres Dei* (Jaeg. 3.1. 65) Citation is in Plantinga, "Gregory Nyssa," 330. These causal distinctions give Father, Son, and Spirit distinct 'modes of existence' according to their 'identifying properties' or 'characteristic idioms.' *Ad Graecos* (Jaeg. 3.1. 21-22). For the Father this is unbegottenness; for the Son, begottenness; for the

rejected were Sabellianism on the monist side, and Arianism on the tritheist side. Especially it was Arianism that was identified as a 'pluralist' heresy by Hilary, Augustine, and the Cappadocian fathers. For Arius and his followers the Son and the Spirit are different from the Father in the fact they do not have the perfect divine essence: Indeed they are creatures. Yet they also worshipped Christ and the Spirit and baptized in their names, while refusing to acknowledge their full ontological deity. Thus, as Jaroslav Pelikan points out, Arianism became the standard tritheist heresy, because Arians believed in three ontologically graded 'distinct' persons in God.¹⁵¹ What this means is that the form of social trinitarianism that Moltmann presents (that stresses the givenness of three distinct divine persons but at the same time secures their unity) was not a heretical teaching in ancient times. Rather, in refuting both Sabellian modalism and Arian tritheism, it stood in the standard trinitarian tradition.¹⁵²

Yet after the emergence and prevalence of the doctrine of the divine simplicity that

Spirit, mission or procession. Ad Graecos, (Jaeg 3.1. 25) Tres Dei (Jaeg3.1. 56). Consequently this understanding for Gregory stands between "Jewish dogma" and that pagan polytheism and refutes these two together. The Great Catechism 3. 477. When this understanding is transposed to the Christian heretical side, Gregory might reject Sabellius as monist heretic and Eunomius and the other Arians on the 'pluralist' heretics. Augustine also argues that there are three distinct persons in God. In book 15 of his De Trinitate, he contends that we will be seriously misled if we imagine Father, Son, and Spirit to be merely faculties of one divine person called God. Augustine deliberately says that each of the persons is a rememberer, a thinker, a lover, and a willer. Indeed, Father, and Son mutually know and love each other. Even the Spirit who is love, who is the *vinculum caritatis* between Father and Son, - even the Spirit loves. (De Trinitate 15.17.1: 15.19.36). Elsewhere Augustine speaks of Father and Son sharing a 'society of love' and a unity of will like that of cooperative human beings.

¹⁵¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971-1989), 1200.

¹⁵² Plantinga, "Social Trinity," 34.

understands God's nature as one, simple, indivisible, and ineffable *thing*, the situation was drastically changed. The unity of God was conceived only through this doctrine and other options were categorically precluded as improper or even heretical.¹⁵³ But the thought of divine simplicity has two apparent problems. First, as we have seen, this understanding lacks biblical foundation. The Pauline and Johannine materials do not state or even suggest that Father, Son, and Spirit are finally just the same thing. Rather, they plainly indicate that each person is distinct and divine, rather than that he or she is identical with one divine essence. Besides, this understanding does not do justice to the givenness of the three 'distinct' divine persons. If Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons, but also each identical with one divine thing or reality, as the Lateran Council claims, then it means that the three divine persons are the same thing and thus identical with each other. Indeed, the Lateran Council and the

¹⁵³ It is Augustine who first presented a divine simplicity theory. Although he holds the existence of the three distinct persons in God, he also claims that each is identical with the one divine essence. As a result it was claimed that even if Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons and each is great, yet in the divine life there are not three but one who is great. The so-called Athanasian Creed of the later fifth or early sixth century, which was largely formed under the influence of Augustinian thought, rejected the idea that there are three infinities, three eternals, three almighties in God, as heretical tritheism. (See, Athanasian Creed 10-13: "The Father is infinite, the Son is infinite, and the Spirit is infinite. The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal. Yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal." Especially vs. 15-16 says that "there are not three Gods, but there is only one God." Cited in Creeds of the Churches: a Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present, John H. Leith ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1963, 1982), Addendum, 705. Consequently by the time of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), which represents the ethos of the high Medieval Roman Catholic Church, God meant the one, divine, invisible, and simple essence to which each divine person is identified. [See, the Fourth Lateran Council, Canon 1: "Three persons but a single essence, substance, or nature that is wholly one: . . . the Father begetting, the Son being begotten, and the Holy Spirit proceeding." Cited in Creeds of the Churches, 57. Consequently, one cannot hold the idea of the social Trinity, that the triune God is a community of three divine persons, each of whom is divine. The Fourth Lateran Council apparently ruled out the possibility that each person might be an instance of the essence. Accordingly, in the Western trinitarian theological tradition trinitarianism has meant the view that distinguishes the persons from each other while refusing to affirm their simultaneous identity with the one divine essence or thing.

consequent tradition, including the genius of Thomas Aquinas, and Catholic and Protestant scholasticism, attempted to distinguish the divine Three with the notion of difference of relationship among divine persons. Thus the Father is different from the Son and the Spirit in the fact that the Father generates, the Son is distinguished from the Father and the Spirit in the fact that the Son is generated and so on. But the problem is that, although the divine persons are ontologically distinguished within deity as 'subsistent relations,' they are prone to be seen as little more than notional 'relations of opposition,' since each person is also strictly identical with the numerically one divine substance. Consequently, this view has the tendency to slide into modalism.

If this is so, simplicity theory is *not* the only 'orthodox' option for understanding the unity of the triune God. Rather, the social doctrine of the Trinity that understands God as the community of the three distinct divine persons is also an important 'orthodox' option. The social doctrine of the Trinity faithfully reflects the biblical understanding that sees God as the communion of three distinct divine persons. It is firmly rooted in the history of Christian thought: It stands in the standard trinitarian tradition. It rejected tritheism as a pluralist heresy that fails to secure the triunity of God, before the emergence and prevalence of the doctrine of the divine simplicity.

Furthermore, Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity overcomes the 'practical'

problems of tritheism. As Stephen Layman rightly observes, tritheism is rejected largely because it is a form of polytheism and as such includes the danger of the latter.¹⁵⁴ Tritheism as a form of polytheism has two fundamental problems: First it assumes a conflict in the divine will. As Radlbeck writes, the dynamic of polytheism is that it places humanity in the terrible dilemma of having to choose between different and contradictory divine wills. In other words, vis-à-vis monotheism, the crucial issue is not a matter of a multiplicity of divine wills, but that of conflicting divine wills.¹⁵⁵ So understood, Moltmann is not guilty of tritheism as a form of polytheism: he escapes the notion of conflicted divine wills, while upholding a unity of will, purpose, and activity in God. Second, tritheism as a form of polytheism means a violation of the worship of the Creator. According to Jewish theologian Pinchas Lapide, the difference between God and the gods is qualitative, and not quantitative. And the qualitative difference is the difference between Creator and creature. In other words, polytheism is the result of elevating creatures or creative characters to the realm of Creator.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Layman, "Tritheism and the Trinity," in Faith and Philosophy 5 (1988): 294.

¹⁵⁵ Radlbeck, Der Personbegriff, 94-101, esp. 98. She cites Ulrich Berner's "Trinitarische Gottesvorstellungen im Kontext theistischer Systembildungen," Saeculum 31, (1980): 93-111. Cited in Thomas Thompson, Imitatio Trinitatis, 93. In this sense, Walter Kasper rightly points out that polytheism as the belief in a multiplicity of gods is the expression that our reality is multi-leveled, and in fact broken into unreconcilable pieces. Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, 235.

¹⁵⁶ Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann, Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine, a Dialogue by Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann, trans. Leonard Swindler. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 26. Therefore, according to Lapide, when the Jew recites the "Shema Israel" it is principally an acknowledgement of God as Creator over the creation, while placing creation into its proper place. See *Ibid.* 30.

Thus understood, Moltmann is certainly no tritheist. He never violates the difference between the Creator and creation. Indeed if we understand tritheism in terms of this criterion, it is again Arianism that can be properly called tritheism, as a form of Christian polytheism. Arianism grades the divinity of the divine persons. The Father alone is the fully perfect divine being, while the Son and the Spirit are 'Gods' in a lesser degree - in fact, they possess a created degree of divinity.¹⁵⁷ And it is beyond dispute that Moltmann rejects Arianism: He does not assume any gradation in God. Consequently, Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity is not tritheism. It is immune to the charge of tritheism as a form of polytheism. Rather if we consider tritheism as a polytheism, he remains as a 'monotheist.' His social doctrine of the Trinity that stresses the perichoretic unity of God is not associated with the heretical teaching of tritheism: it provides a viable option for understanding the unity-trinity relationship in God.

2-3. The Unity of God As a Historical and Eschatological Reality.

Moltmann further contends that the perichoretic unity of God is inseparably related to the process of history. In other words, for him God's perichoretic unity is a historical

¹⁵⁷ For the view of Arianism as a form of Christian polytheism, see Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, 1200f. Also see, Plantinga, "Social Trinity and tritheism," 34 and de Margerie, Christian Trinity, 87-89.

process that is open to the world and will be complete at the end of time. Thus he speaks of an 'open Trinity,' which means that God is open to God's creation in love and mutual fellowship, and seeks union with it.¹⁵⁸ He writes: "The New Testament talks about God by proclaiming in narrative the relationships of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, which are relationships of fellowship and are open to the world."¹⁵⁹

Moltmann claims that this 'open Trinity' has a history that includes several different forms of trinitarian relationships. Since the Christian God exists as three distinct persons in a perichoretic union, one cannot speak only of a single form of the Trinity, but three different trinitarian forms in the history of salvation. The relationships of the three divine persons are not the same in creation as in redemption and the final liberation of the world. In each stage and event of salvation history there is a distinct, clearly discernible trinitarian pattern, requiring three distinct actors to complete the action. Throughout these distinct and different forms of trinitarian relationships, he contends, God achieves God's redemptive plan that

¹⁵⁸ TK 94.

¹⁵⁹ TK 64. As we have seen before, for Moltmann the open Trinity includes three related forms of the Trinitarian reality: 'the Trinity of the origin,' 'the Trinity in the sending,' and 'the Trinity in the glorification.' 'The Trinity of the origin' means the pre-temporal trinitarian reality of God. 'The Trinity in the sending' indicates the trinitarian history of God that began with the sending of the Son and the Spirit from the Father. For him this sending of the Son from the Father in salvation history corresponds to his eternal generation by the Father, while the sending of the Spirit from the Father corresponds to the Spirit's eternal procession from the Father. (The Trinity in the origin). 'The Trinity in the glorification' means the consummation of the trinitarian history, which is characterized by the final glorification of God by the history of the Son and the Spirit. Thus for him the trinitarian history of God includes chronologically these three forms of the Trinity. See footnote 161 of Chapter I of this thesis, and footnote 68 of Chapter II.

moves from creation to the consummation of the world.

According to Moltmann, the first trinitarian form, which is found in the sending, delivering up, and resurrection of the Christ, takes the order of Father-Spirit-Son. Here the subject is the Father who initiates the redemptive process. God the Father takes the initiative and redeems through the Son in the power of the Spirit.¹⁶⁰ It could be summarized as the Father sending, the Son coming, and the Spirit empowering and linking.¹⁶¹ The second trinitarian form, which represents the lordship of Christ and the sending of the Spirit, consists in the order of Father-Son-Spirit. Here the subject is the Son. The Son, who is raised from the dead by the Father in the power of the Spirit, is now exalted to the right hand of the Father, and stands at the center of the sending of the Spirit for the redemption of God's creation. In fact, in the sending, in the surrender, and in the resurrection, the Spirit acts on Christ. But now the relationship is reversed: "(T)he risen Christ sends the Spirit: he is himself present in the life-giving Spirit: and through the Spirit's energies - the charismata - he acts on men and women."¹⁶² The Son sends the Spirit from the Father, and the Spirit is poured out on the whole creation. The third trinitarian pattern, which represents the eschatological consummation and glorification of God's redemptive work in history, has the order of Spirit-

¹⁶⁰ TK 71-75, especially, 75.

¹⁶¹ TK 75.

¹⁶² TK 89.

Son-Father. Here the subject is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes the initiative in relation to the Son and the Father, and culminates the salvation history of the triune God by glorifying the Son, and through the Son, the Father. And for Moltmann, the goal of this open Trinity that manifests itself through these changing forms of the trinitarian relationships is the establishment of the kingdom of God. The unifying theme, which ties together the different forms of the trinitarian relationships, is the rule of God: "the scarlet thread that runs through the biblical testimonies might be called the history of the kingdom of God."¹⁶³

In fact, by introducing these changing forms of trinitarian relationship Moltmann rejects the Western tradition that has exclusively stressed the pattern of Father- Son- Spirit. (The Son is generated [*generatio*] by the Father and the Spirit proceeds [*spiratio*] from the Father and the Son). For him this traditional trinitarian form is only one form of trinitarian relationship that needs to be supplemented and balanced by the other two. And by contending this, he attempts to overcome the monarchianism of the Father that is implicitly inherited in this form. For him, there is no higher or lower rank among the divine persons in their co-work for the redemption of the world.¹⁶⁴ Besides, by speaking of these three forms of changing relationship in God, he rejects a static understanding of the Trinity, while stressing that the

¹⁶³ TK 89.

¹⁶⁴ TK 95.

triune God is a dynamic and living reality that continually re-orders and reforms itself in its relationship to the world. Consequently, for him the triune reality means three divine subjects in mutual loving relationship who also have a "reciprocal relationship in which God in his love for the world not only affects the world but is also affected by it."¹⁶⁵

Moltmann further maintains that this trinitarian history of God is salvific. It is wide open to all God's creation for its final redemption and liberation. For him the goal of the trinitarian history is the glorification of God. But since God wants to be glorified only in the liberation of God's creation, the time of God's glorification is also the time of the glorification of the world. God is glorified only when the whole creation is unified in free fellowship with God, and brings joy to God.¹⁶⁶ Thus God's unity is not only for God, but also for the creation: God's unity will be entirely achieved only when God's whole creation will overcome all its negativity and participate in the eternal liberation. Thus he writes: "The union of the divine Trinity is open for the uniting of the whole creation with itself and in itself."¹⁶⁷

Consequently, the goal of history coincides with the completion of God's own history, that is, the eschatological glorification of the Trinity. This will come to pass when the mission

¹⁶⁵ Bauckham, 303.

¹⁶⁶ Moltmann, CPS, 63.

¹⁶⁷ TK 96. Also TK 149: "The unity of the three Persons of this history must consequently be understood as a *communicable* unity and as an *open, inviting unity, capable of integration*" Emphasis is original.

of the Son and the Spirit is accomplished and the kingdom is handed over to the Father. And at this moment Moltmann contends that it is the Holy Spirit who brings God's creation into the communion of the triune God and thus achieves the eschatological unity of God. The Spirit brings the world to confess and glorify the Son and through the Son the Father. And through this work of glorification the Spirit brings God's reign over the world and thus the unity of God. At that time God will be all in all and the whole creation will participate in the eternal joy and fellowship of God.¹⁶⁵

What is important to note here is that, when Moltmann argues that God's perichoretic unity will be constituted at the end of time, he means this in terms of God's divine ruling, that is, the establishment of God's kingdom, and not in terms of God's existence *in se*. In other words, for him the historical question of God is not that of God's existence itself but of God's reign over God's creation. For him God is already triune before God enters into God's creation for its redemption and final liberation, and thus what is at issue is God's rule. Indeed after the creation enters into existence, God's rule is called into question. A disobedient creation denies the existence of the reign of God and thus God's rule is now closely related and dependent upon creation's transfiguration and liberation. Thus the glory of God through God's ruling

¹⁶⁵ If this is so, for Moltmann, the unity of the Trinity is not merely a "theological" question. At heart it is soteriological as well. Besides, since "salvation means being taken up by the trinitarian history into the eternal life of the Trinity," [Moltmann, HT 83. Cf. *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 181-196; and especially CG 246], and this being taken into the triune life includes every human and non-human being, his theology virtually accepts the idea of "universal salvation" (*apokatastasis*).

over creation is now the eschatological goal of history. In analogy with the kabbalistic doctrine of *Shekinah* (glory), Moltmann states that God's glory in hypostatic form goes out from God, and suffers in the exile of human history, until God's whole creation is redeemed, transfigured and thus finally delivered back to God's glory. In trinitarian terms this means that the triune God enters into creation for its salvation, suffers together with creatures in the trinitarian history of God, until the Son hands over the kingdom to the Father and God will be all in all. Only then will the kingdom fully come: the rule of God will be finally established. Thus he writes:

In eschatological thinking, . . . the unity of God is the final, eschatological goal, and this unity contains in itself the whole union of the world with God and in God. Eschatologically, therefore, the unity of God is bound up with the salvation of creation, just as the glory is bound up with this glorification through everything that lives. Just as his glory is offered to him out of the world by the Holy Spirit, so his unity too is presented to him through the unification of the world with himself in the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁴

2-4. The Unity of God and its Socio-Political Implication

After identifying God as the perichoretic unity of three divine persons, Moltmann now articulates the socio-political implication of this concept of God. First, he contends that there is a close connection between the doctrine of God and the political order. In particular, he

¹⁶⁴ Moltmann, FC 91-92.

argues that philosophical and theological 'monotheism' is closely related to and legitimizes political monotheism: "The notion of a divine monarchy in heaven and on earth. . . generally provides the justification for earthly domination - religious, moral, patriarchal or political domination. - and makes it a hierarchy: a holy rule."¹⁷⁰ The reason is that monotheism understands God in terms of sovereignty and thus necessarily legitimates a hierarchical social structure.¹⁷¹ Specifically Moltmann distinguishes two forms of monotheism that have to be firmly opposed: political monotheism and clerical monotheism. By political monotheism he means a hierarchical world order, whose apex is the divinely ordered monarchy. Christian theology has taken an absolutist political model for God, according to which God is the universal monarch. This distortion of the Christian conception of God has legitimized the emergence of various forms of political absolutism. Traditional trinitarian thought, which finds God's unity in the one divine essence or one divine subject, did not really challenge the notion of a universal monarch. Rather, it legitimized this understanding and thus strengthened various hierarchical systems and social oppression. It simply endorsed the scheme of one God - one political ruler - one nation (people).¹⁷² By clerical monotheism Moltmann implies the counterpart to the divine monarchy in the church's hierarchy, especially the monarchical

¹⁷⁰ TK 191.

¹⁷¹ TK 195.

¹⁷² TK 195.

episcopate and the papacy. The sequence of one God - one Christ - one pope (or one bishop) - one church functions to legitimate a hierarchical church structure of clerical supremacy and lay obedience, as well as male domination and female subjugation.¹⁷³

Since this is so, Moltmann contends, a properly understood trinitarian theology has two tasks. Negatively, it has to disclose the ideological aspect of monotheism by showing the relationship between monotheism and political monarchianism: "It is only when the doctrine of the Trinity vanquishes the monotheistic notion of the great universal monarch in heaven, and his divine patriarchs in the world, that earthly rulers, dictators, and tyrants cease to find any justifying religious archetype any more."¹⁷⁴ Positively it has to provide a model for a healthy and desirable human society. Here he finds in the notion of the perichoretic unity of God a desirable model for human society. "The triune God is community, fellowship, issues an invitation to his community and makes himself the model for a just and livable community in the world of nature and human beings."¹⁷⁵ As an image of the Trinity (*imago trinitatis*), we human beings are called to realize the fellowship found in the divine perichoresis. Thus our political system and social structure must correspond to the eternal love of the Trinity by

¹⁷³ TK 201. Cf. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jürgen Moltmann, HG 110.

¹⁷⁴ TK 197.

¹⁷⁵ HG Introduction, xii-xiii.

providing equality, freedom, and egalitarian relationships.¹⁷⁶ Likewise, the Christian Church has to correspond to the reality of God as communal relationship: The relation of authority and obedience in the Church must be replaced by "dialogue, consensus, and harmony."¹⁷⁷ In fact, "Monarchical monotheism justifies the church as hierarchy, as sacred dominion. The doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the church as a "community free of dominion."¹⁷⁸ The trinitarian principle based upon the perichoretic unity of God "replaces the principle of power by the principle of concord."¹⁷⁹ Since this is so, he contends "the Holy Trinity is our social program."¹⁸⁰

As Moltmann contends, there is certainly a connection between the understanding of

¹⁷⁶ TK 199.

¹⁷⁷ TK 202.

¹⁷⁸ TK 202.

¹⁷⁹ TK 202.

¹⁸⁰ HG 104. More concretely, Moltmann contends that democratic socialism is the best way in the economic sphere, in the fact that it seeks solidarity with the poor while breaking through the vicious cycle of capitalistic materialism. He writes, "socialism is the symbol for the liberation of men from the vicious cycle of poverty." CG, 332. For him, the essence of democracy is a political iconoclasm that serves the freedom of God. See, Experiment of Hope, 114; also Moltmann, "On Latin American Liberation Theology: An Open Letter to Jose Míguez Bonino," Christianity and Crisis (March 29, 1976): 61. In this context Moltmann agrees with Marxists and others and contends that to gain justice in the economic sphere, humans would be willing to give up the freedoms and justice they have won in the political sphere. *Ibid.*, 60-62. Yet what is important to note here is that Moltmann does not equate his socialist vision with any given social systems. For him, "the so-called actually existing socialism provides no alternative, because its ethos of achievement and its will to power are not different (from Capitalism)." Moltmann, Menschenwürde, Recht und Freiheit, (Berlin: Keruz Verlag, 1979), 72. Cited in Rasmusson, The Church as Polis, 126. Because of this he celebrated the revolutions of Eastern Europe in 1989. He did not see these as the end of socialism, but only as the end of the politically, ideologically and economically centralized socialism. He notes that these socialist systems lack the ethos of democracy that acknowledges and enhances personal human right. Thus the sort of socialism he actually envisions is a completely new world order that is at peace with nature and is characterized by the satisfaction of material needs and social justice that enhances both "social personalism" and "personal socialism." Moltmann, TK, 199. For a good elaboration of Moltmann's understanding and critique of capitalism and socialism, see Rasmusson, The Church as Polis, 123-135.

God and socio-political order: Our concept of God influences our understanding of reality, including socio-political reality. In this sense Moltmann's basic thesis that 'Trinity is our social program' deserves due respect. His trinitarian theology, which understands God as a community of persons in perichoretic union, may indeed inspire a desirable model for human community, while disclosing the false ideology behind a hierarchical and oppressive society. Especially his trinitarian theology of God as a perichoretic community of relationship, friendship, and equality offers a desirable communal model that is desperately required for our time. It is widely pointed out that modernity, which sees reality as objective, mechanistic, hierarchical, and individualistic, has greatly wounded human life by causing "individualistic narcissism, pragmatism, and unbridled restlessness."¹⁸¹ It has failed to satisfy the deepest desires of the human heart, while resulting in "fragmentation and depersonalization of a magnitude previously unimagined."¹⁸² In depersonalized and fragmented modern culture, contemporary people urgently seek healthy and genuine community that provides unconditional acceptance and respect, and thereby helps them to grow as healthy and mature human persons. Since this is so, Moltmann's understanding of God as a perichoretic, unified

¹⁸¹ Michael Downey, Understanding Christian Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 18. For a shrewd handling of the negative effects of modernism on human life see *Ibid.*, 5-28, besides, Ronald Rolheiser, The Shattered Lantern: Rediscovering a Felt Presence of God (New York: Crossroad, 1995). For the contemporary people's thrust for spiritual experience and a genuine human community, Henri Nouwen, The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1972).

¹⁸² Downey, 19.

community of love and freedom has abundant social implications for our time. It fits our post-modern consciousness that increasingly emphasizes the importance of relationality in all reality.

Yet it is also true that the relation of our concept of God to concrete human reality is more complicated than Moltmann assumes. First, although our understanding of God certainly affects our understanding of reality, including socio-political realm, changing people's concepts of God would not bring an immediate change in their politics, or the power structure of society. Rather the influence of religious ideas on a society becomes clear only over a long period of time. Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity seems to imagine a direct relationship between the concept of God and concrete socio-political structure is in this sense somewhat naïve. Furthermore, the relationship between our concept of God and socio-political system is not one way, as Moltmann assumes, but two ways: they are mutually interactive. In other words, philosophical and theological monotheism may produce and legitimize hierarchical and oppressive social structures. But the reverse is also true: hierarchical, monarchical societies produce a philosophical, theological monotheism as a religious ideology. Third, it is not so straightforwardly obvious that a philosophical or theological monotheism *necessarily* legitimizes a political monotheism and its hierarchical social system. Sometimes, monotheistic concepts of God may have helped to overcome

hierarchical and oppressive social structures. For example, the basis of Israel's prophetic movement was the monotheism of Yahweh. All the prophets criticized the socio-political and economic exploitation of the poor on the basis of the sovereignty of the one God. Since Yahweh is the only king, all earthly kings and rules must follow and correspond to God's law, whose primordial concern is, as indicated in the Exodus and the message of the Prophets, compassion and care for the poor and oppressed. Also the Reformation tradition, which understands God as the sovereign lord or king over the world, has helped its adherents to relativize and counter socio-political authorities, while expecting a better society that reflects the Lordship of God.¹⁸³ It is therefore an overstatement to say that a monotheistic conception of God necessarily legitimizes a hierarchical and unjust social structure, while a trinitarian concept of God provides a desirable model for human society. Their relationship is much more complicated than Moltmann suggests. Certainly all these observations do not undermine the basic insight of Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity. But it needs to be articulated in a more nuanced way.

Finally, it must be pointed out that Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity is closely related to his Christology and as such it properly works as a desirable social model that enhances freedom, equality, and mutual respect. As Ted Peters points out, the doctrine of the

¹⁸³ For the Reformed tradition and its influence on the Western world, see W. Stanford Reid, ed. John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World. (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Press, 1982).

Trinity is "a second order symbol."¹⁸⁴ It is a reflection of the more primary symbols of Father, Son, and Spirit and thus in itself may not have much dynamic for concrete social action. More specifically, the concepts of personhood, relationality and community, which are essential to Moltmann's social Trinity, are concepts for the analysis and understanding of the divine triune mystery. They may not provide Christians much energy for social transformation. In this sense Peters' claim that Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God is a more reliable and primary biblical symbol for social transformation carries weight.¹⁸⁵

Yet what is important to note is that in the theology of Moltmann the perichoretic union of God and the life and death of Jesus Christ are inseparably interconnected with each other. As we have seen, the doctrine of the Trinity arises for Moltmann from the specific event of the cross of Jesus Christ. It attempts to understand relationship in God through the event of the cross. Thus for him, "The material principle of the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross of Christ."¹⁸⁶ Trinitarian theology emerges and is continually nourished by the life and death of Jesus Christ. When Moltmann speaks of a perichoretic unity of God, therefore, it has a

¹⁸⁴ Peters, God as Trinity, 185.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Likewise, John O'Donnell also argues that God's identification with Jesus as the proclaimer of the kingdom message and his cross works better than the doctrine of the Trinity as the basis for the critique of political systems of oppression. John O'Donnell, "The Trinity as Divine Community," in Gregorianum 69:1(1988): 22.

¹⁸⁶ CG 240-41. See also Moltmann, TK 83: "The Cross is at the center of the Trinity." Similarly in CPS 95: "Christ's surrender of himself to a Godforsaken death reveals the secret of the cross and with it the secret of God Himself. It is the open secret of the Trinity."

specific content. This God is the one who identifies with the poor and the oppressed and thus brings God's liberation to all God's creation. If this is so, Moltmann's doctrine of the perichoretic unity of God has value as a Christian way of social transformation. It can provide a theological model for a more humane and egalitarian society, which reflects God's communal nature and reciprocal love.

Conclusion

Moltmann presents an insightful concept of social Trinity that deserves a welcoming assent. His social doctrine of the Trinity, which understands the one God as a living and dynamic community characterized by mutual love and fellowship, works as a theologically viable and practically relevant doctrine of God. First, an important strength of his social doctrine of the Trinity is that it is more faithful to the Scripture which presents God as the community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their co-working for the creation, redemption, and final liberation of creation. In contrast, the unity model that assumes the unity or oneness of God as a matter of fact, and then asks about the threeness of God is more philosophical and speculative, rather than biblical and salvation-historical. Further, Moltmann's social Trinity successfully escapes the danger of tritheism. It stands within a thoroughly 'orthodox' patristic

tradition. Besides, even though Moltmann perhaps overstates the social, political power of a trinitarian doctrine of God, his concept of the oneness of God in the perichoretic union of three divine persons can contribute to the creation of a healthy and genuine human society. It can point the way to a 'social program' that enhances human freedom, equality, and mutuality.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LANGUAGE OF THE TRINITY AND GENDER EQUALITY

1-1. Introduction

The Christian Church confesses the triune God, who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This trinitarian confession is biblically based and has been accepted as standard in almost all churches throughout the history of Christianity.¹ Particularly it is almost universally spoken in the sacrament of baptism. Yet in recent times many feminist theologians have questioned the appropriateness of this formula on the ground that it is patriarchal and androcentric. For them its exclusive masculine metaphors of God are hurtful to women, and must be either totally rejected, or balanced with more gender-equal or gender-neutral metaphors of God. Mary Daly, for example, argues that since the symbol of 'God the Father' legitimizes and perpetuates the rule of all earthly fathers, it must be discarded for the sake of the liberation of women.² According to Carol Christ,

¹ A clear biblical expression of this is the baptismal saying of Matthew 28:19, which is attributed to Jesus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

² Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's liberation* (Boston, Beacon press, 1973), 19. Cf. Mary Daly, "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion," *Quest* 1/4 (1975): 20. Mary Daly's assessment of the Trinity is totally negative. For her this doctrine perpetuates

since the exclusively male symbolism for God in the traditional trinitarian formula functions to deny women the possibility of affirming "their own power, their bodies and their sexuality, in short, their own human dignity," it must be completely opposed.³ Elizabeth Johnson, while not arguing for the total nullification of this formula, still contends that by itself it is both oppressive and idolatrous, and thus needs to be balanced with other non-sexist God-language.⁴ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza rejects this formula on a historical observation. According to her, during the first two centuries when women enjoyed a great deal of ecclesiastical power, God was imagined as both male and female. Then cultural and political trends led toward the development of an increasingly

patriarchy and thus must be rejected: "The circle of destruction generated by the Most Unholy Trinity and reflected in the Unholy Trinitarian symbol of Christianity will be broken when women, who are by patriarchal definition objects of rape, externalizes and internalizes a new self-definition whose compelling power is rooted in the power of being. The casting out of the demonic Trinities is female becoming." Citation is from Mary Grey, "The Core of Our Desire: Re-imagining the Trinity," *Theology* 93 (1990): 363.

³ Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds. *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 275. Here she contends, "Religious symbol systems focused around exclusively male images of divinity create the impression that female power can never be fully legitimate or wholly beneficent. This message need never be explicitly stated. . . for its effect to be felt. A woman completely ignorant of the myths of female evil in biblical religion nonetheless acknowledges the anomaly of female power when she prays exclusively to a male god. She may see herself as like God (created in the image of god) only by denying her own sexual identity and affirming God's transcendence of sexual identity. But she can never have the experience that is freely available to every man and boy in her culture, of having her full sexual identity affirmed as being in the image and likeness of God. . . Her "mood" is one of trust in male power as salvific and distrust of female power in herself and other women as inferior or dangerous."

⁴ Johnson argues, "feminist theological analysis makes clear that exclusive, literal, patriarchal speech about God has a twofold negative effect. In stereotyping and then banning female reality as suitable metaphor for God, such speech justifies the dominance of men while denigrating the human dignity of women. Simultaneously this discourse so reduces divine mystery to the single reified metaphor of the ruling man that the symbol itself loses its religious significance and ability to point to ultimate truth. It becomes, in a word, an idol." Johnson, *She Who Is*, 36. Also, see Elizabeth Johnson, "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female," *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 441-465, especially 442-45.

patriarchal Church and the androgynous symbol of God was gradually set aside for the dominance of the masculine. But since our contemporary situation requires a new gender relationship, we need a more proper God-language that increases both women's dignity and a healthy relationship between men and women.⁵

The question of naming God in terms of gender becomes an especially serious theological and pastoral problem in the context of public prayer and baptism. Our faith is expressed through the act of prayer. The Christian church discloses what it believes especially through its public prayer and worship. Thus the naming of God in public prayer is important, not only for theoretical reasons but also for the concrete life of the Church.⁶ In the case of baptism, the problem becomes more serious. The naming of God in baptism has the potential to bring major schism into the Christian community: some churches will not accept other Churches' baptisms, if there is any deviation from the formula of Father, Son, and Spirit as stated in Matthew 28:19.⁷

⁵ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women in the Early Christian Movement," in Christ and Plaskow, 84-92. For a good survey of the early Church's use of female symbols for God, Elaine H. Pagels, "What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity," in the same book, 107-119. For the views of women throughout the Christian tradition, Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson, eds., *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), and George H. Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973).

⁶ On the question of naming God in public prayer, see Mary Collins, "Naming God in Public Prayer" *Worship* 59 (1985): 291-304.

⁷ LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, (ed.) (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 99. For examples of this question in the official Church documents, see *Guidelines for Inclusive Use of the*

Thus an important contemporary trinitarian issue is this: Is the traditional trinitarian formula, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" sexist, and should it be rejected? Or, should it be balanced by other non-sexist symbols of God? And, if we need to balance this formula with other symbols of God, how can we do this, while maintaining both Christian identity and relevance to our changed situation? This chapter will deal with Moltmann's response to these questions and its social implications.

First in order to 'map' the current debate on this issue, we shall examine and evaluate five major responses. These are: 1) Retaining the traditional trinitarian formula, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; 2) Replacing the masculine metaphors of God with the symbol of goddess; 3) Finding and securing gender balance in one of several ways, such as attributing feminine nature to God, understanding one divine person as a female figure, speaking of God with both feminine and masculine symbols, or understanding God as a 'Quaternity'; 4) Desexing God by dropping off both male and female expressions; and, 5) Depersonalizing God by adopting natural metaphors, or through abstraction.⁸ Then

English Language (1990), published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and American Anglican Church's *Supplemental Liturgical Texts* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1988). These two documents reject to use the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier for baptism. Also, see Carl Braaten's contention, "Baptism in any other name than Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not valid Christian baptism." Carl Braaten, "Trinity as Dogma," *Dialog* 29:1 (Winter, 1990), 3.

⁸ For this classification I am indebted to Rebecca Oxford-Carpenter's "Gender and the Trinity" *Theology Today* 41(April 1984): 7-25, Catherine LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, Catherine Mowry LaCugna (ed), (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 101-105, and Thomas R. Thompson, *Imitatio Trinitatis: The Trinity As Social Model in the Theologies of Jurgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff*, 202-213, Oxford-

we shall examine and evaluate Moltmann's response to the issue of gender in trinitarian language. Since Moltmann's way is to secure gender balance in God by finding the feminine aspect of each of the divine persons, we will focus upon his effort to seek the feminine aspects of the each of the divine persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. Then we will argue that Moltmann's response to this gender issue of the Trinity is valid and deserves support, although it needs to be complemented with other ways of expressing God.

1-2. Five Responses to the Question of the 'Gendered' Trinity

1-2-1. Retaining the traditional trinitarian formula, Father, Son, and Spirit

The first response to the question of the gendered Trinity is simply to keep the traditional formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This approach merely denies that any problem exists with this trinitarian formula. A number of theologians across denominations argue that this formula is in its original meaning non-sexist. Besides, it is the revealed name of the God of Christian faith. Therefore, they argue, we have to maintain this formula as such: if we change it, we lose the Christian understanding of

Carpenter sees six major responses to the gendered Trinity: Exclusive use of the masculine metaphor of God; replacing and substituting the masculine metaphor of God with a Goddess symbol; understanding God both feminine and masculine attributes; understanding one divine person as a female figure; desexing the persons in the Trinity; and depersonalizing the divine persons. LaCugna groups six responses to this gendered Trinity: Preserving the traditional formula of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Emphasizing the incomprehensible and unnameable God; Using feminine as well as masculine images; Emphasizing Jesus' understanding of 'Father' as the negation of the patriarchal father image; Conceiving the Holy Spirit as a female figure; Finally, speaking of the triune God with functional language, like Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Thompson divides more simply and sees three responses: resexing God, desexing God, and supplementing divine sexual lopsidedness.

God.

A precedent for this position is found in the thought of Karl Barth, although this was not an issue in his time. According to him, the expression, 'God the Father' is used in the Scripture in a highly specific way: it is a divine self-naming which was made known by Jesus Christ. In Christian usage, it means that God is the Creator.⁹ When people call God 'Father,' they are confessing their dependence on God. Therefore, this is the language that we are forced to use, not that we choose to use.¹⁰ This position has recently been contended in a collection of essays written by several theologians.¹¹ For the contributors of this volume, the name of Father, Son, and the Spirit is not a human invention, but God's own self-determination, as attested in the Bible. To change this formula therefore would bring a new threat of Gnosticism and compromise the integrity of the Christian faith. According to Robert Jenson, we must confess God as Father because God introduced God's self in this way through the history of Jesus Christ. As Israel's salvation is dependent upon the self-identification of the God of Exodus, our

⁹ Barth, CD I/1, 384. Here he writes: "The one God reveals Himself according to Scripture as the Creator, that is, as the Lord of our existence. As such He is God our Father because He is so antecedently in Himself as the Father of the Son." Also, CD I/1, 389: "God our Father means God our Creator. And it should be clear by now that it is specifically in Christ, as the Father of Jesus Christ, that God is called our Creator."

¹⁰ CD I/1, 392, also see 393: "God alone is as He who He is by Himself, and therefore as the eternal Father of His eternal Son, is properly and adequately to be called Father."

¹¹ See, Alvin F. Kimel ed. Speaking the Christian God: the Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992).

salvation is dependent upon the God who raised Jesus from the dead at Easter. Thus the name 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,' occupies the central place in the life of the church, as the name 'Yahweh' was central for the life of Israel. When Jesus addressed Yahweh of Israel as my Father (*Abba*), he permanently settled for us the issue of naming the divine.¹² Alvin Kimel Jr. follows the same logic, arguing that the trinitarian name of Father, Son, and Spirit is "our deity's *proper name*," and thus never to be changed.¹³ In another place he also claims that "Divine paternity is not an arbitrary metaphor chosen by humankind and then projected onto the deity: God is self-revealed as Father in and by his Son Jesus Christ."¹⁴ According to Orthodox theologian Deborah Belonick, 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' are God's self-revealed names and as such immune from conditioning effects of history and culture: they are not the products of a patriarchal structure, male theology, or a hierarchical church. The Christian Church has therefore the

¹² Robert Jenson, "The Father, He. . ." in Kimel, Jr. Speaking the Christian God, 95-109, especially, 102-105. Cf. Robert Jenson, "The Triune God," in Carl E. Braaten and Robert Jenson, eds. Christian Dogmatics, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 16. Here he writes, "God's self-identification with the Crucified One frees us from having to find God by projection of our own perfection. Therefore no argument that depends on the assumption of an unbroken analogy from human worth to divine characteristic can have any place in the church."

¹³ Kimel Jr. "The God Who likes His Name: Holy Trinity, Feminism, and the Language of Faith," in Kimel Jr. Speaking the Christian God, 188-208. Emphasis is original.

¹⁴ Kimel, Jr. "The Holy Trinity Meets Ashtoreth: A Critique of the Episcopal 'inclusive' Liturgies," Anglican Theological Review 71, no.1 (Winter 1989): 26.

obligation to confess God according to this triune name.¹⁵

How do we evaluate this position? Undoubtedly the formula of Father, Son, and Spirit is essential for our understanding of God. It is tied inextricably to the event of revelation and salvation itself, and thus specifically identifies the God of Christian faith. It is explicitly scriptural. Therefore, we have to honor and respect this formula: simply rejecting it or replacing it in favor of some other symbols of God ends up with a misunderstanding and distortion of the God of Christian faith.

Yet honoring and respecting the traditional formula is not necessarily the same as uncritically accepting and repeating it exclusively. Rather, it means articulating and understanding it in our concrete situation, while not losing its original meaning. If this is so, it is surely undeniable that today this formula carries an obvious sexist implication in 'actual' life. Perhaps as Karl Barth and others have maintained, the intention of this trinitarian formula is not sexist.¹⁶ Yet in our time it carries the impression that God is

¹⁵ Deborah Belonick, "Revelation and Metaphors: The Significance of the Trinitarian Names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," Union Quarterly Review 40 (1985): 31-42.

¹⁶ For an argument that the intention of this traditional trinitarian formula has no relationship with sex or sexism, see Roland M. Frye, "Language for God and Feminist Language: Problems and Principles," Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 41 (1988): 441-469, esp. 443-451. Also, see Hans Küng's comment that the symbol of the fatherhood of God in its original intention "has no sexual implications and has nothing to do with religious paternalism." Hans Küng, On Being a Christian, (New York: Garden City, 1976), 311. Indeed already in the fourth century, Gregory of Nazianzus contends that God is not male because God is called Father, nor does God's fatherhood have anything to do with marriage, pregnancy, midwifery, or the danger of miscarriage, Gregory of Nazianzus, Orat.31.8. Citation is in Catherine LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us" in Catherine LaCugna ed. Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective, (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 93.

male, and thus justifies and enhances the dominance of men over women. Thus simply to say again and again that 'Father' and 'Son' are not male terms and thus non-sexist is unconvincing. This approach ignores and evades a very real problem.¹⁷

Furthermore, this expression is, like all the other biblical expressions of God, not a 'literal,' but a 'metaphorical' naming of God. God is ineffable and incomprehensible. God's reality surpasses all human attempts to name or describe God. As Karl Rahner says, God is like the infinite sea surrounding the tiny island of our finite human existence and knowledge.¹⁸ Thus all of the words, images, symbols, concepts, or analogies we use to speak of God are necessarily limited and fall short of the glory and mystery of God. We predicate God's similarity to us, only by affirming God's greater dissimilarity. Therefore, the only way of addressing or speaking of God is the way of analogy or metaphor.¹⁹ Since this is so, we do not need to adhere to the *exclusive* use of Father, Son,

¹⁷ At this moment David Cunningham's comment is instructive. According to him, a word's meaning is not primarily determined by the intention of the speaker or writer but by the hands of its hearers and readers. See David S. Cunningham, These Three are One: The practice of Trinitarian Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 47-48, and the same author's article, "On translating the Divine Name," 427-36. Anne Carr indicates the same point by writing, "no symbol is oppressive in itself but becomes so in the way it is used, in its effects on the lives of people. The overwhelming weight of the demeaning and destructive historical uses and effects of the father symbol suggest that this primary symbol of God may be irretrievable for many women today." Anne Carr, Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 141.

¹⁸ Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," Theological Investigations IV, Trans. Kevin Smith (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 57.

¹⁹ For the ineffability and unnameability of God as a theological theme, see LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us," 102-103; Elizabeth Johnson, "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female"; Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982; and Marcus Borg, The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a

and Spirit in speaking of the triune God. Rather, we need other symbols of God in order to reclaim this formula's original meaning. In fact, as Sallie McFague indicates, the problem is not that God is understood as Father, but that Fatherhood is used literally and exclusively as the root-metaphor for God, thereby replacing the proclamation of God's reign with the institution of patriarchy.²⁰ Therefore, we can and must speak of God as Father, but when we do this, we must recognize that this is metaphorical language and that God is unlike a human father.²¹

How then can we reclaim the original meaning and intent of this traditional trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? One way is to examine the way Jesus understood God when he called God 'Father.' When Jesus named God 'Abba,' he did not

More Authentic Contemporary Faith, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 58. According to Marcus Borg, the biblical images of God can be grouped in three ways: Political leadership: God as king, lord, warrior, judge, lawgiver. Everyday human life: God as builder, gardener, shepherd, potter, doctor, healer, father, mother, lover, wise woman, old man, woman giving birth, friend. Nature and inanimate objects: God as eagle, lion, bear, hen, fire, light, cloud, wind, breath, rock, fortress, and shield and so on. According to him, the fact that the Bible employs a lot of diverse images of God implies that all our God language is metaphorical.

²⁰ McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 45-52. In this context McFague rightly notes that the problem with the Father image is "its expansion, its inclusiveness, its hegemony, its elevation to an idol." *Ibid.*, 190. For a similar view, see Carol Christ's comment that "religious symbol systems focused around exclusively male images of divinity create the impression that female power can never be fully legitimate or wholly beneficent." Carol P. Christ, "Why Women need the Goddess," in Christ and Plaskow, 275. Also, Mary Daly's famous dictum, "If God is male, male is God." Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Bacon Press, 1973), 18.

²¹ In this sense LaCugna's exposition of 'God the Father' is instructive. According to her, there are three aspects of the fatherhood of God when this naming is understood in terms of trinitarian theology. First, God is not male. God surpasses any gendered designation. Second, God the Father must be understood in terms of divine relatedness. 'Father' is a relational name of God. God is Father of Israel by election; God is Father of Jesus Christ by generation. Third, God the Father does not convey androcentrism. See, Catherine LaCugna, "Baptism, Feminists, and Trinitarian Theology," Ecumenical Trends, 17 (May, 1988): 65-68.

intend that God is a father, who possesses male sexuality. Rather, he revealed God as the essence of caring, parental love and merciful advocacy, especially for those on the margins. His Father is, as Catherine LaCugna points out, more like a mother than a father, who does everything, including sacrificing her life, for the sake of her children.²² If this is so, the Father of Jesus is no longer 'father' in the biological or patriarchal sense. Rather, God the Father of Jesus Christ radically renounces and corrects the biological, cultural, and ordinary notion of the fatherhood of his day. Therefore, we should not discard the language of God the Father. Rather, as Sandra Schneider suggests, we need to use Jesus' understanding of God the Father as a norm for transforming the patriarchal image of God.²³ This insight urges us to use some female symbols of God in order to identify the God that Jesus revealed. This approach does not imply disregarding the formula, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but rather balancing and complementing it with other symbols of God.

1-2-2. Replacing the Masculine Metaphor of God with the Symbol of Goddess

A second response to the gendered Trinity is the opposite of the first one, or the

²² Catherine LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us" in LaCugna, ed. Freeing Theology, 104.

²³ For Schneider, "Jesus was able to transform totally the patriarchal God-image. He healed the father metaphor that had been patriarchalized in the image of human power structures and restored to it the original meaning of divine origination in and through love. . . . He delegitimized human patriarchy by invalidating its appeal to divine institution". See, Sandra M. Schneider, Women and the Word: 1986 Madaleva Lecture in Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 20.

other end of a spectrum of possible stances. This is the approach of some radical feminists, who attempt not only to eliminate the masculine Trinity, but also to replace this with ancient Goddess religion. Those who advocate this option are revolutionary in the sense that they not only reject the biblical tradition but also accept ancient, pre-biblical, and heathen tradition.²⁴

Why do some feminist theologians show a strong interest in the revival of ancient Goddess religion? First, according to them, Goddess religion is the oldest and most widespread ancient human perception of divinity.²⁵ It was rooted in the worship of the ancient fertility (mother) Goddesses of Egypt and the Near East, such as Isis and Ishtar, and Hellenic goddesses, such as Demeter, Aphrodite, Athena, and Artemis.²⁶ And if this worship of Goddesses is one of the oldest forms of human religiosity, they argue, it deserves to be revisited and respected as such. Second, if the Goddess religion preceded the male-dominating Judeo-Christian religion, which functioned as an antagonist to the worship of the Goddess, the former can work as a substitute or at least

²⁴ Christ and Plaskow, Introduction, 10.

²⁵ E. O. James, The Cult of the Mother Goddess: An Anthropological and Documentary Study (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1959), 24. Citation is from Reuther, Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 47-8. Starhawk, a witch and one of the most influential leaders of this movement, contends that Goddess worship goes back 35,000 years, terminated only by the last 5,000 years of mainly patriarchal religion. See Starhawk, The Spiritual Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Greek Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 3.

²⁶ Rosemary Reuther, Mary - the Feminine Face of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 13-17. Besides, Sexism and God-Talk, 47-52.

as a catalyst for deconstructing the deep-rooted patriarchalism of the latter. Third, the worship of the Goddess is entwined with nature, in which fertility and the life cycle play a large role, and this nicely corresponds to the nature of women. The power of life in women corresponds to and represents the mysterious powers of fecundity in nature, and this leads not only to the recognition of the specific character of women, but also to their supremacy over men.²⁷

Yet, Goddess religion is not an organized, coherent belief system. There are two different groups that advocate this new religious movement. The first supporters of Goddess religion believe that the Goddess is superior to the (male) God, arguing that "the male principle or God remains secondary, the son or lover, but not the equal of his mother."²⁸ Starhawk contends that the male God, if there is one, often dies in the

²⁷ Reuther, *Sexism and God-Talk*, Ibid. Also see Carol Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," in Christ and Plaskow, Ibid., 273-287. Here Christ sorts out four important aspects of Goddess religion: The affirmation of female power as opposed to patriarchy; the celebration of female body and the life cycle; the female will as ritualized in magic and spell-casting; and women's heritage and the bonding among women. According to Starhawk, "Witchcraft takes its teachings from nature, and reads inspiration in the movements of the sun, moon, and stars, the flight of birds, the slow growth of trees, and the cycles of the seasons. . . . Mother Goddess is reawakening, and we can begin to recover our primal birthright, the sheer intoxication, joy of being alive. We can open new eyes and see that there is nothing to be saved from, no struggle of life against universe, no God outside the world to be feared and obeyed; only the Goddess, the Mother. . . whose winking eye is the pulse of being-birth, death, rebirth. See, Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, 9.

²⁸ Starhawk, 98. She also argues for the primacy of the female principle or Goddess over the male principle or male God with very figurative language: "The Goddess is the Encyclopaedia, the Ground of Being; the God is That-Which-Is Brought-Forth, her mirror image, her other pole. She is the earth; He is the grain. She is the all-encompassing sky; He is the sun, her fireball. She is the Wheel; He is the traveler. His is the sacrifice of life to death that life may go on. She is Mother and Destroyer; He is all that is born and is destroyed." Ibid., 95.

service of the Goddess or life- force.²⁹ Yet those who belong to the second group attempt to use the symbol of the Goddess as a female supplement to the male image of God.³⁰ The contrast between these two groups can be most sharply drawn if we look at their core symbolism. Those who advocate the superiority or dominance of women and the female principle usually contend that the female metaphor of God needs to be the primary symbol. Yet those who advocate equality usually propose to use both the masculine and feminine metaphors of God. When they advocate Goddess religion, they argue that God-She must be introduced alongside the Biblical God-He.³¹

How do we evaluate this response? First, the emergence of Goddess religion and its stress upon the female metaphor of God reflects the oppression of the patriarchal society and thus this movement is understandable in its intention. Indeed, if properly understood, it can function as a welcome challenge for countering and deconstructing patriarchalism. Furthermore, it teaches us about the importance of the feminine aspect of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ For the two different trends within Goddess religion, see Christ and Plaskow, 13-15.

³¹ Marcia L. Keller, "Political-Philosophical Analysis of the U.S. Women's Liberation Movement," In Christ and Plaskow, 13-15. According to Keller, recent feminist movements in the United States have at least one common goal, that is, the termination of patriarchy and male domination. Yet feminists may be divided into those who favor full equality between the sexes and those who favor temporary or permanent superiority of women and the female principle. The line between these two groups is not easy to draw. But, according to her, those feminists who work within the biblical traditions tend to call for equality in religious rituals and symbols, while those whose theological or spiritual reflection is primarily rooted in the women's movement, more often call for the superiority or dominance of women and the female principle.

divinity. Yet the radical form of Goddess religion, which focuses on feminine exclusivity or supremacy cannot be a form of Christian faith. It is a movement toward a new religion that departs fundamentally from the traditional Christian confession. It is not normed either by Christ or Scripture. Besides, radical forms of Goddess religion carry the danger of creating a new kind of sexism and hierarchy - in this case, the hierarchy of female sex and matriarchalism. As Oxford-Carpenter points out, this reverse sexism is not only oppressive to men but also oppressive to women by stereotyping feminine qualities.³² Therefore, to replace the male symbol of God with an exclusive female symbol cannot be a helpful response to the gendered Trinity. We need a more balanced imagery of God that includes both male and female, as Walter Wink indicates: "God as Mother needs to be supplemented with the positive qualities of God as Father. Negative father qualities must be expunged from our God-image, and perhaps negative mother qualities as well. What we need are images that encompass the positive aspects of both."³³

1-2-3. Finding Gender Balance in God in Several Different Ways

The third option in the question of gender and the Trinity is to find gender balance in our concept of God. This is the most widely used and accepted option, and

³² Oxford-Carpenter, 16.

³³ Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 48.

thus includes several variant ways. The first is to attribute to God gentle, nurturing traits that have been traditionally associated with women. William Visser't Hooft, for example, contends that, while the fatherhood of God is the predominant Christian symbol, we should be open to other symbols like mother.³⁴ The reason is that God the Father in Christian understanding is the one who has many 'feminine' traits such as gentleness, compassion, unconditional love, care for the weak, sensitivity, desire to be an intimate and compassionate friend. He observes that the Bible allows us to speak of these feminine traits in God.³⁵ According to O'Hanlon, our God-language is so male-dominating that it has departed from the biblical understanding of God, which describes God not only as masculine but also as a nurturing feminine figure. Thus, for an adequate biblical understanding of God, we have to rediscover feminine traits of God.³⁶ Yves Congar also contends that while the main symbol of God in the Bible is masculine, this God has 'feminine' traits such as tenderness.³⁷ According to Hans Kung as well, God is

³⁴ William Visser't Hooft, The Fatherhood of God in an Age of Emancipation, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 133.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Daniel O'Hanlon, "The Future of Theism", Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings, 38(1983): 9. Citation is from Johnson, She Who Is, 48.

³⁷ Congar, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, 3: 155-64.

not simply male but also has maternal traits.³⁸

This approach has its own advantage. It rightly indicates that God is more than a 'male,' and by doing so helps us to overcome to some degree the androcentrism and misogyny that has afflicted the Christian Church. Yet, as many feminist theologians point out, this approach is problematic in that it speaks with culturally based, questionable stereotypes of 'maleness' or 'femaleness' or 'masculinity,' and 'femininity.' Furthermore, this is still androcentric in the fact that God is understood as a 'male,' who has some feminine characteristics. Since the primary symbol for God is still masculine, this is not a fully satisfying response to the establishment of gender equality in our concept of God.³⁹

A second response within this option is to understand one divine person in the Trinity as a female figure. The most frequent way of doing this is to consider the Holy Spirit as a female figure. There are some reasons for this understanding. First, the grammatical gender of the term *ruach* is feminine. Besides, early Semitic and Syrian Christians did construe the divine Spirit in female terms, attributing to the Spirit the

³⁸ Hans Küng, Does God Exist? An Answer for Today, trans. Edward Quinn. (Garden City: New York: Doubleday, 1980), 673.

³⁹ Elizabeth Johnson succinctly addresses this by saying, "Adding 'feminine' traits to the male-imagined God furthers the subordination of women by making the patriarchal symbol less threatening, more attractive. This approach does not, then, serve well for speech about God in a more inclusive and liberating direction." See Johnson, She Who Is, 49.

motherly character that certain parts of the Scriptures had already found in Israel's God.⁴⁰ The Spirit is depicted as the creative, maternal God who brings about the incarnation of Christ, and who builds the body of Christ through baptism and Eucharist. Yves Congar, while depending upon some historical precedents for understanding the Spirit as a feminine figure, proposes to regard the Spirit as the feminine person in God, or God's femininity.⁴¹ Leonardo Boff suggests conceiving the Holy Spirit as a female figure who has feminine, maternal traits. For him the Holy Spirit can be described as a loving, self-giving mother and this characterization corresponds to the very nature of women.⁴² As we will see later, this is also one of Moltmann's ways of challenging exclusively masculine metaphors of God.⁴³

This is in some ways a more desirable approach than merely attributing stereotyped feminine qualities to a 'male' God. But this approach is also androcentric. In this approach the male principle is still dominant and sovereign: In God there are two

⁴⁰ Robert Murray, "The Holy Spirit as Mother," in Symbol of Church and Kingdom (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 312-20. Citation is in Johnson, She Who Is, 50.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴² What is unique in Boff's argument is his hypothesis that the Holy Spirit as a female figure is closely related to the person of the Virgin Mary. Like the incarnation of the Word in Jesus, the Spirit divinizes the feminine in the person of Mary, who in turn is to be regarded as hypostatically united to the third person of the Trinity for the benefit of all women. See Leonardo Boff, The Trinity and Society, 210-211.

⁴³ Moltmann, Humanity in God, 101 ff.

masculine persons, the Father and the Son, and one feminine person, the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, unlike the Father and the Son, does not enjoy her own distinct personal identity: she is hidden behind the two masculine divine persons and thus 'faceless'.⁴⁴ She is not always described as a personal figure: rather she is portrayed in Christian history as a dove.⁴⁵ The result is, therefore, two clear masculine metaphors and one formless and obscure feminine metaphor. This gender unbalance in the symbol of God becomes more serious when we consider the biblical witness that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (and the Son) and mediates and completes what the two divine persons have initiated. Here the Holy Spirit does not have her own unique identity. She is identified only in her relationship with the Father and the Son. If this idea is applied to the gender relationship, the masculine principle (Father and the Son) dominates the feminine principle (the Holy Spirit). The latter exists only to serve the former. Since this is the case, identifying the Holy Spirit as a female figure is not sufficient to the establishment of equal and healthy gender equality.

A third way of finding gender balance in God is to speak of the triune God with both feminine and masculine symbols. Theologians who belong to this group often

⁴⁴ Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, 223.

⁴⁵ What is illuminating in this matter is Sandra Schneider's title, "God is More than Two Men and a Bird." U.S. Catholic, (May 1990): 20-27.

point out that the Hebrew and Christian traditions provide many metaphors of God as both masculine and feminine. Phyllis Trible, for example, indicates that the first Genesis creation story, wherein both man and woman are created in the image of God, implies that God encompasses both masculine and feminine elements.⁴⁶ Besides, Israel's experience of God included the loving relationship of mother and child: God conceived Israel, gave birth. God was a mother whose comfort never ceased (Isa. 66:13). God is the one who quieted the child at her breast (Ps. 131:2). God's womb carried the people of Israel (Isa. 46:3) and gave birth to them (Deut. 32:18). In addition to this, throughout the Psalms God is often shown as a mother bird sheltering her young and protecting them (Ps. 17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 91:1,4). The same image is used in Deut. 32:11-12 and Isa 31:5.⁴⁷ Trible continues to argue that even though the New Testament's feminine imagery is not as plentiful as that of the Old Testament, many divine feminine elements can be found there, particularly in the parables of Jesus. The parables describe the housewife looking for her lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), the shepherd rejoicing at the finding of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7), and the father waiting for a lost child (Luke 15:11-24). While the subjects of these parables are not always female, the images are stereotypically feminine in

⁴⁶ Phyllis Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 78.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

quality, in terms of the traditional gender role in family and society.⁴⁸ Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel also argues that the Scripture understands God as both male and female. Especially she contends that since Jesus' understanding of God is both male and female, we need to allow the female and male metaphors to be integrated in our understanding of God.⁴⁹

This is a much more desirable approach to the gender issue of the Trinity: It is based upon the Scripture and open to genuine gender equality. Yet it has its own limit. Since the female metaphors of God in the Bible are comparatively few and no female metaphor of God is strong enough to compete with the traditional trinitarian formula, Father, Son, and Spirit, this approach cannot be the sole alternative for gender balance in God. Like other approaches it needs to be complemented by other alternatives.

The fourth way of achieving gender balance in our language of God is to add another member to the Trinity, thus making the trinity a 'quaternity'. The originator of this idea is the psychologist Carl Jung, who during his lifetime pursued the relationship of psychology to religion.⁵⁰ According to him, the traditional Christian symbol of God

⁴⁸ Ibid., 78-83.

⁴⁹ Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, Humanity in God, 20.

⁵⁰ For example, Carl Gustav Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven: Yale University, 1938); Carl Gustav Jung and M. L. von-Flans, eds., Man and His Symbols (New York: Doubleday, 1964).

lacks elements of femininity and evil. Yet, since these elements are essential to the human psyche, he argues, we have to include them in our understanding of God, and thereby let them function as primary symbols of human unconsciousness. Thus, instead of trinity, he proposes quaternity. The identity of the fourth persona in the quaternity varies in Jung's writings. Sometimes it is the devil, sometimes it the Virgin Mary, and sometimes it is a combination of the two - a merger of femininity and evil.⁵¹

How can we evaluate this response? First, as Oxford-Carpenter indicates, Jung is right in maintaining the need to recognize the feminine aspect of the divine.⁵² But his concept of quaternity does not seem to fulfil its original intention. His proposal carries several problems. First, it lacks scriptural support. Besides, it has no roots in the Christian tradition, which has confessed three persons in God. Second, what Jung is actually assuming is the 'archetype' in the human collective unconsciousness, and not a fourth Person in God's real existence. Thus it cannot be used in a trinitarian theology. Third, even if Jung's argument for the shift from three (trinity) to four (quaternity) were totally convincing, a quaternity with only one feminine element is inherently sexist. Three male symbols and one female symbol in the quaternity results in the inferiority of

⁵¹ Joan C. Engelsman, The Feminine Dimension of the Divine (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 154.

⁵² Oxford-Creenter, 20.

the feminine element.⁵³ Furthermore, it is also obviously sexist to consider that femininity and evil are united in the fourth persona, while the other three are, as Engelman states, 'light, clear, positive, and masculine.'⁵⁴ Consequently, this response is not helpful for providing a satisfying gender balance to our understanding of God.

1-2-4. Desexing the Divine Persons

A fourth option to the question of gender and our understanding of God is 'desexing' the divine persons, by referring to God with certain gender-neutral or gender-free expressions.⁵⁵ Letty Russell, for example, once proposed to call the divine persons "Creator, Liberator, and Comforter (Advocator)."⁵⁶ Likewise, Sallie McFague proposes to address God as mother, lover, and friend.⁵⁷ Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt speaks

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Engelsman, 150.

⁵⁵ In the history of trinitarian thought, there are many theologians who understand the mystery of the Trinity with 'desexed' images. St Augustine, for example, presents diverse images of the Trinity, many of which are personal in the sense that they have human attributes. But sometimes he uses 'desexed,' gender-neutral images like Lover, Loved, Love itself, and Speaker, Hearer, and the Word. Also, Karl Barth's Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness are examples of 'de-sexed' ways of speaking about God.

⁵⁶ Letty M. Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective- a Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 102.

⁵⁷ In Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language McFague provides a compelling exposition of the metaphor of God as Friend. While accepting the necessity of such 'root-metaphors' as God the Father and the Mother, she argues that parental metaphors have a danger of establishing a hierarchy and thus cannot fully express mutuality, cooperation, responsibility, and other aspects of an 'adult' relationship with God. Friendship, on the other hand, expresses an ideal kind of relationship among people of all ages, races, and religions and of both sexes. Yet McFague also recognizes that the model of God as Friend has several limitations. It can be too individualistic and is unable to express awe, ecstasy, fear, silence, and other states and emotions that are naturally related to our experience of God. Thus it needs to be complemented with other models. Another problem for the image of God as friend lies in the fact that it does not clearly relate to the Trinity. Which of the three divine persons is the Friend? Is it the Father, or the Son or the Spirit? The historical Jesus and the Holy Spirit are

of Abba –Servant - Paraclete. Mary Rose D'Angelo proposes the formula of Wise God - Wisdom of God - Spirit of Wisdom: and God, source of Being - Christ, Channel of Life - Spirit, Living Water.⁵⁸ Besides these, there are several other non-sexed ways to address the divine persons - Friend, Comforter, Redeemer, Savior, Liberator, Lover, Teacher, Sustainer, Comrade, Creator, Messiah, Maker, Advocate, and so on.

In fact, this approach of desexing God has its advantage. It can help us to escape the exclusive use of the masculine metaphor of God. Yet it is limited in that it runs the danger of misidentifying the God of Christian faith, who is introduced as an eminently personal being. Furthermore, it is extremely hard to imagine a person without connoted gender, as Barbara Brown Zikmund rightly says, " . . . I had never met a 'person' who was not male or female."⁵⁹ Further, this approach focuses upon what God does rather than who God is, and thus ends up with a functional understanding of

both seen in 'friendly' terms in the Bible. Possibly the Father can be called Friend. Perhaps it is up to the individual decision to determine which person is the 'friend'. But if we call all of the three divine persons Friend, then we cannot differentiate them from one another. Faced with these problems with the image of friend, in her next book, *Models of God*, McFague presents her models of God in a clear trinitarian pattern. She observes that the traditional biblical model of God as king, ruler, lord, master, and father are so androcentric and hierarchical that they cannot enhance the gender equality between men and women. Besides, since they are triumphalistic and oppressive they do not help us to survive in this time of nuclear and ecological crisis. Thus, instead of these images she proposes the models of God as mother, lover, and friend, and the world as God's body. She argues that these are more appropriate metaphors of God for our age. For her, the three models of God - God as mother, lover, and friend, fall into the categories of creator, savior, and sustainer and correspond to the traditional trinitarian formula, God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

⁵⁸ LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us," 113.

⁵⁹ Barbara Brown Zikmund, "The Trinity and Women's Experience," *Christian Century* 104 (1984): 354.

God.⁶⁰ Besides, as LaCugna points out, it does not correspond to the biblical witness that God creates and redeems us *through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit*.⁶¹ Therefore, although this response offers some promise, it is not sufficient in itself.

1-2-5. Depersonalizing the Divine Persons

The last response to the question of gender and God is to depersonalize the divine persons. This is done in two ways: by adopting 'nature imagery' or by using 'abstract concepts and ideas.'⁶² Nature imagery is used frequently in the Bible and appears also in the history of trinitarian theology. The Bible frequently associates the Spirit with a dove (Matt 3:16, Luke 3:22, John 1:32), with fire (Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16), and of course with 'wind' or 'breath'. Tertullian used nature imagery for all persons in the trinity: ice, liquid, and steam; sun, ray, and light.⁶³ Medieval mystics sometimes used pictures from nature to represent God.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ In this sense Patricia Wilson-Kastner rightly points out that "creator, redeemer, sanctifier only "indicate only the relationship of God to us, rather than the inner life of the trinitarian God, in which we are to participate." Patricia Wilson-Kastner, *Faith, Feminism, and the Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 122.

⁶¹ Catherine LaCugna, "The Baptismal Formula, Feminist Objections, and Trinitarian Theology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 26/2 (Spring, 1989), 243.

⁶² Oxford-Carpenter, 22.

⁶³ Leonard I. Sweet, *New Life in the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 51-52.

⁶⁴ For example, McLaughlin, "Christ My Mother," 381: "thou art an immense ocean of all sweetness . . . lose myself in the flood of thy living love as a drop of sea water. . . let me die in the torrent of thy infinite compassion as a burning spark dies in the rushing current of the river. Let the rain of thy boundless love fall round about me." Citation is from McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 192.

While nature imagery is a useful way of describing the divine, it has its own problems. Especially if God is expressed with only images from nature, then God can easily be identified with the forces and laws of nature and thus lose divine freedom in relation to God's creation.

The other way to depersonalize God is to describe God with certain abstract concepts and ideas. There are many examples of this tendency in Christian history.⁶⁵ In the current situation we might mention Mary Daly's God as the 'great verb' or the 'verb of verbs,' or the 'Most Holy and Whole Trinity' as "Power, Justice, and Love."⁶⁶ Leonard Sweet cites some other examples of trinitarian abstraction: Trueblood's "God in creation, God in history, and God in present tense," Reader's "God everywhere and always, God there and then, and God here and now,"⁶⁷ Dorothy Sayers proposes to understand the Trinity as "book-as-thought, book-as-written, and book-as-read."⁶⁸ For John Macquarrie, the Trinity consists of "the father as primordial being (letting be), the

⁶⁵ St. Augustine's memory, understanding, and will; Thomas Aquinas' love originating, love responding, and love uniting; Schleiermacher's God in the world, God in Christ, and God in the Church; Paul Tillich's understanding of God as 'being itself' or 'the ground of being,' and Karl Rahner's God as 'holy mystery' are some examples of abstraction.

⁶⁶ Daly, Beyond God the Father, 127ff.

⁶⁷ Sweet, 31-32.

⁶⁸ Dorothy Sayers, The Mind of the Maker (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 122-123. Cited in Oxford-Carpenter, 23.

son as expressive being, and the spirit as unitive being.”⁶⁹

How do we evaluate this response? First, describing God with some abstract concepts or ideas has the merit of referring to the ineffability and mystery of God that has always been a central affirmation of the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, such forms of abstraction can appear detached and irrelevant to concrete Christian life; no one can pray to or give glory to ‘being itself’, ‘the power of the future,’ ‘primordial being,’ or ‘book-as-thought’. The language of abstraction is a language for academic purposes but not for the language of liturgy, preaching, or prayer. Thus this approach has its limits as well as promise. Depersonalizing the Trinity may point to certain dimensions of the divine, while enabling us to avoid some of the difficulties of more anthropomorphic, gender-related metaphors. Yet it also has the danger of identifying God with created realities. Though depersonalized metaphors may enrich our understanding of God, they cannot replace personal metaphors.. Rather, both personal and impersonal symbols complement each other and together illustrate the profound mystery of God.

* * *

We have seen five different responses to the gender issue of God as it is

⁶⁹ John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology (New York: Scribners, 1977), 198-201.

formulated in the trinitarian formula, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The first response, which argues for the exclusive use of the traditional trinitarian formula, Father, Son, and the Spirit, is limited and oppressive because of its sexist connotation. The second response of using only feminine metaphors of God or Goddess departs from the Scripture and Christian tradition and runs the danger of reversed sexism. The third response that attempts to establish gender balance in several different ways and the fourth and fifth responses of using 'desexed' and 'abstract' metaphors of God have their own limits, but at the same time retain and offer promise for a more desirable gender relationship. The Bible uses both masculine and feminine metaphors in understanding God. Furthermore, it sometimes understands one of two persons of the Trinity as female figures. At the same time the Bible offers personal, but non-sexual metaphors, such as Friend, Redeemer, Savior, Advocate, Christ, Messiah, and Comforter. Likewise, it uses many non-personal metaphors of God, like shield, dove, fire, rock, and so on. Although these diverse metaphors of God cannot replace the essential trinitarian formula of Father, Son, Spirit, they together bring new possibilities for establishing a more gender-equal concept of God. With these observations we now turn to Moltmann's response to this question of the gendered Trinity.

2. Moltmann's Response to the Gender Issue regarding the Trinity

Moltmann seriously considers the feminist claim that the doctrine of the Trinity has a sexist connotation.⁷⁰ He accepts this claim as valid and shows a considerable effort to provide a trinitarian theology that challenges patriarchy, recognizing and promoting the full equality of men and women. He writes, "it goes without saying that there should be criticism of patriarchal and androcentric images of God by women. . . . That needs no further discussion here."⁷¹ For Moltmann, the success of countering and overcoming patriarchy brings not only the liberation of women but at the same time the genuine liberation of men as well.⁷²

Moltmann challenges patriarchy by revisiting one of his basic claims:

⁷⁰ In the introduction to History and the Triune God, Moltmann writes that the question of gender issue and the Trinity has gradually become a crucial issue in his trinitarian theology. See HT Introduction, xiii- xvii. Furthermore, in The Way of Jesus Christ he indicates that it is mainly thanks to his wife, Elisabeth Wendel-Moltmann, that he has learned the currency of feminist issues, as well as the "psychological and social limitations" of his own "male point of view." See, The Way of Jesus Christ, xvii. In any case, Moltmann's effort to consider this issue as seriously as possible is exceptional among German male theologians and clearly illuminates the dialogical nature of his theology. Compared with other major German theologians like Jungel and Pannenberg, with whom he has pursued a continued dialogue, Moltmann's attitude appears remarkable. Jungel, for example, shows no interest in the gender issue of the Trinity. He uses the personal pronoun, 'he' without any reservation for designating the divine Three. Pannenberg, while he shows a more nuanced position, still does not give much attention to the gender issue and the Trinity. This ignorance of the eminent German theologians is in part derived from their theological context, which is different from that of North America. For a short but illuminating examination of the contextual difference between Germany and North America, see, William Placher's review of Pannenberg's Systematic Theology Vol. 1, "Revealed to Reason: Theology as 'Normal Science.'" Christian Century 109-19. (Fall, 1992): 192-195.

⁷¹ HT xiii.

⁷² HT 112. A recurrent theme in Moltmann's theology is the two-way effects of oppression: Oppression destroys not only the oppressed but the oppressor as well: "Oppression destroys humanity on both sides. The oppressed person is robbed of humanity, and the oppressor becomes an inhuman monster. Both suffer alienation from their true nature." See Moltmann, HG 113. Accordingly, patriarchy destroys both female and male together. The way back to the full humanity of men and women is therefore to cooperate together for the liberation of women. HG 112-14.

'monotheism is monarchianism.' For him classical monotheism and patriarchy are closely related with each other: they emerge together and go hand in hand: "Wherever the religion of patriarchy established itself, there was a tendency towards monotheism in religion and the development of monarchical rule in politics."⁷³ In Western culture, he writes, the predominant conception of God as "Lord and Father" has justified the domineering rule of the father in the family, the state and the church.⁷⁴

This God is the Almighty, the Ruler, the Absolute. This God determines everything and is not influenced by anything. This God is incapable of suffering. . . If God is assigned human traits, they are male traits. Knowledge of this God ascends from the family patriarch (*pater familias*) to the national patriarch (*pater patriae*), from the national patriarch to the patriarch of the church, and finally reaches the greatest patriarch, the Father of all heaven (*omnipater*). And in the legitimation of authorities, one then descends from the heavenly Father of all downward.⁷⁵

To be sure, according to Moltmann, Christianity did not introduce patriarchy into the world. This ancient male-dominating system was already pervasive when

⁷³ HT 4. Also, HG 93: "Monotheism, by contrast, is the religion of patriarchy. . . The monotheistic Lord-God was always, and remains, the masculine God, the almighty." God - His and Hers, 5: "The God of patriarchy . . . he is the Omnipotent, the Lord, the Absolute. He determines everything, and nothing influences him. He is incapable of suffering. . . If he is given human features, then these are male. To know him, one goes up from the father of the family to the father of the people, from the father of the people to the church father, and gets to the Father of All in heaven."

⁷⁴ God - His and Hers, 2.

⁷⁵ HG 114.

Christianity began.⁷⁶ Regretfully, however, the Christian Church failed to overcome this oppressive social system. Especially by the time of Constantine, the Christian Church had fully assimilated to the Roman patriarchal culture and justified patriarchy - the domination of fathers.⁷⁷ God was therefore conceived primarily in terms of stereotypical masculine traits, and males represented divine authority, whether in family, society, state or Church.⁷⁸ But there is nothing Christian about this patriarchal ordering of life, claims Moltmann: "This is to think in Roman terms, not Christian ones."⁷⁹ Such thinking reflects a theistic order or arrangement of the world and not a trinitarian one. Furthermore, it perpetuates the sort of father religion that has caused atheistic rebellion.⁸⁰

Moltmann believes that the Christian tradition has the resources to counter and overcome this long-standing domination of fathers that has distorted every human relationship. And he finds in the doctrine of the Trinity the necessary and primary source: "It is only the doctrine of the Trinity, . . . which makes a first approach towards

⁷⁶ God - His and Hers, 4.

⁷⁷ Moltmann, HT 6: "This fusion of the Christian and the Roman concept of God gave Christian history in Europe a fundamentally patriarchalist stamp: the one God is "Lord" and "Father" at the same time. The political and family rule which is legitimated by him and is to be exercised in his name is the rule of the fathers."

⁷⁸ HT 6.

⁷⁹ Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, 240. Cf. HT 4.

overcoming sexist language in the concept of God.”⁸¹ What then is Moltmann’s answer to counter the long-standing androcentric and patriarchal system that has rejected the full equality of women? His first response is to revisit his social doctrine of the Trinity as criticism of all human inequality and oppression. If God is the divine community of freedom, equality, and mutual fellowship, this undermines the hierarchy of fathers, while enhancing the equality and emancipation of women in our contemporary world. In fact, he recognizes, his social Trinity can be complete only when it is able to address and promote a healthy men-women relationship.⁸²

Moltmann’s claim is supported by a number of feminist theologians who see the social doctrine of the Trinity as an ally for the deconstruction of patriarchy.⁸³ Yet he recognizes that his social doctrine of the Trinity is not enough in itself to counter patriarchy and promote the full equality of women. The reason is that his social Trinity describes a ‘general’ model for human relationship and does not offer a ‘specific’

⁸⁰ HT 20.

⁸¹ TK 165.

⁸² HG 100ff.

⁸³ For example, Patricia Wilson-Kastner, Faith, Feminism, and the Christ, ch. 6; Anne Carr, Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women’s Experience, (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1990), 156-57; Catherine LaCugna, God for Us, esp. ch. 8; Barbara Brown Zigmund, “The Trinity and Women’s Experience,” Christian Century 104 (1984); and Maria Clara Bingemer, “The Trinity from the Perspective of the Woman,” Dow Kirkpatrick, ed. Faith Born in the Struggle for Life (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 116-36. It is notable that all these theologians find in the perichoretic union of the three divine persons the ground for the dignity and equality of women. Certainly one cannot say that these theologians are primarily influenced by Moltmann. Yet his influence is discernable in their writings.

answer to the question of gender and the doctrine of God. Thus he articulates a more specific response to this question, especially to the charge that the traditional trinitarian formula is sexist and thus legitimizes patriarchy.

Moltmann's second response to the question of gender and the doctrine of God is in finding 'feminine' traits and features in each of the divine persons and thereby securing gender balance in God. In other words, he attempts to overcome the masculine and patriarchal connotations of the traditional trinitarian formula of 'Father, Son, and Spirit' by finding the feminine aspects of each divine person. Especially in the case of the Holy Spirit, the feminine qualities are so striking that he even suggests that we might consider the third person as a feminine person within the Trinity. Now we will turn to Moltmann's reinterpretation of each of the divine persons as a response to the gendered issue of the Trinity.

2-1. God the Father as Motherly Father

Moltmann treats the notion of God the Father first and in greater detail. The reason is that it is this understanding of God that occupies the primary place in the monotheistic and patriarchal distortion of the Christian understanding of God.⁸⁴ And

⁸⁴ Moltmann treats this especially in his articles, "I believe in God the Father," "Patriarchal or Non-Patriarchal Talk of God?," "The Motherly Father and the Power of His Mercy," in HT and "Our Image of God" in God - His and Hers.

Moltmann's basic logic is to find the feminine, motherly aspect of God the Father by reinterpreting this symbol primarily in a trinitarian sense.

Moltmann agrees with many feminist theologians that the concept of God as "Lord and Father" has functioned to undermine the full dignity of women.⁸⁵ For him, in this understanding "the intention has been inclusive, but the effect has been exclusive."⁸⁶ But he does not believe that we can simply discard this notion of God. The reason is that it is rooted in the Christian revelation of God and is therefore non-changeable.⁸⁷ Indeed the notion of God the Father cannot be "stripped away, like the garb of a particular time."⁸⁸ Furthermore, he believes that in a practical manner we must hold fast to the language of God as Father. For him modern industrial society has been developed into a "fatherless society" in which the father has long disappeared and failed to provide a positive role model to their children, especially to their sons.⁸⁹ Thus the symbol of Father is essential in order to learn a 'healthy' masculinity that is

⁸⁵ HT 2.

⁸⁶ HT 2.

⁸⁷ HT 21. Cf. HT 10: Jesus always addressed God only as 'Abba', and spoke of him always only as 'my Father.' That is no coincidence, but points to the revelatory name of God which Jesus proclaimed along with the advent of the kingdom of God."

⁸⁸ HT 2.

⁸⁹ HT 3.

necessary for both male and female.⁹⁰ For, "There is nothing wrong with becoming and being a father."⁹¹

Since this is so, Moltmann rejects the attempt to replace the 'masculine' language of Father with feminine symbols like mother or Goddess.⁹² For him, the "God the Mother" or "Goddess" movement is in fact too much a human construction and thus falls prey to Feuerbachian suspicions: "The justifications for it [that is, substituting Father with Mother or Goddess] seemed to me to be so naively religious that they immediately collapsed in the face of Feuerbach's criticism: if men call God 'Father' in order to be able to find an identity and now women call God "Mother" in order to discover themselves in religious terms, what would donkeys call God? Is the Godhead just a screen for all possible projections with the slogan 'What is your fancy?'"⁹³ In the same way, he does not accept the attempt to replace God the Father with some desexed or impersonalized symbols, whether in the fashion of Tillich's ontological designations or Mary Daly's more feminist attempt.⁹⁴ He believes that the ontological

⁹⁰ HT 4.

⁹¹ HT 4.

⁹² HT xiv.

⁹³ Moltmann, God - His and Hers, 35-36.

⁹⁴ HT xiii.

understandings of God, like "supreme being," "the depth of being," "being beyond being," or "beyond God the Father," may be helpful for overcoming the limits of the personal concept of God, but they do not do justice the God of the Christian faith.⁹⁵ Likewise, for him, the attempt to understand God in androgynous way ends up with "an individualistic solution" that understands "each divine person as perfect in him/herself, neither needing the other."⁹⁶ Rather, Moltmann's way of handling this issue is to set up the theological ground for gender equality by reinterpreting 'God the Father' in a trinitarian sense.

According to Moltmann, there are two different ways of conceiving God's fatherhood. The first emerges from the theistic and patriarchal world-view and understands God's fatherhood from the created world. This understands God as Father because God is the Creator and Lord of all. Another way is to conceive God's fatherhood in the trinitarian scheme and understands this primarily in God's relationship to his Son Jesus Christ. Thus in the first case Father means a way of expressing kingly rule over God's creation. In the second it means the fundamental relationship of love.⁹⁷

Moltmann contends that God's Fatherhood does not mean firstly and primarily

⁹⁵ HT xiii-xiv.

⁹⁶ HT xv.

⁹⁷ HT 19.

the almighty Creator and Lord of all things. Metaphysical and patriarchal theism may understand God in this way, but this is not that of the Christian concept of God. If God's Fatherhood is understood primarily from the cosmological context, one cannot speak of the merciful and gracious God. Instead, one has to speak of the Lord in heaven that inevitably causes the rebellion of atheism.⁹⁸ Indeed, "In view of the senseless suffering of creatures on the earth there is no natural reason for calling God 'Father.'⁹⁹ Rather, from the Christian perspective, God's Fatherhood is defined preeminently in relationship to Jesus the Son. God is called Father because God is the Father of his Son Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁰ In fact, "His Fatherhood is determined exclusively by his relationship to the Son. . . . So anyone who wants to understand God in trinitarian terms as Father must forget the conceptions of the patriarchal Father-religion and look to the life and message of the firstborn brother Jesus Christ."¹⁰¹

For Moltmann this distinction is crucial: God is primarily known as Father in the light of relationship with the Son: only secondarily might God be regarded as the

⁹⁸ HT 20.

⁹⁹ God - His and Hers, 35.

¹⁰⁰ HT 21.

¹⁰¹ HT 21. See also, God - His and Hers, 35: "For Christians, God is solely and exclusively the 'Father of Jesus Christ, Jesus' divine mystery which he called 'Abba'."

universal Father of creation through the Father's relationship to the Son.¹⁰² Therefore, he concludes, "Only the Christ who endures all this suffering makes this address to God possible and meaningful."¹⁰³ Once this distinction is granted, one can discern the true nature of Fatherhood that Jesus introduced when he called God 'Abba.'

What then is the nature of Fatherhood that Jesus introduced? According to Moltmann, Jesus' Father meant not a distant and authoritative father, but the one who is intimately near, just like a mother. The original meaning of the Aramaic word *Abba* is the "Mama, Papa" with which children express their basic trust, security, and intimate love.¹⁰⁴ It is a "tender, intimate word full of nearness, warmth, and everydayness and confidence," and thus what it implies is closer to mother than father.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, "When Jesus addresses God himself by this name, the accent is certainly not on the masculinity of the Father God or on the exalted nature of the Lord, but on the unprecedented

¹⁰² TK 164: "God is Father solely in respect of the only begotten Son. No fatherhood in the literal sense can be detected from the creation of the universe, or from providence. When the Creator is called "Father," what is meant in Christian terms is that creation proceeds from the Father of the Son - that is to say, from the first Person of the Trinity: the Father creates heaven and earth through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Factually, the trinitarian definition of the Father precedes the cosmological one. . . . Through the doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, God's name of Father is indissolubly linked with Jesus the Son, and is in that way Christianized."

¹⁰³ God - His and Hers, 35.

¹⁰⁴ HT 11. Cf. The Way of Jesus Christ, 142.

¹⁰⁵ God - His and Hers, 30.

intimacy of Jesus' own relationship to God's divine mystery."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, for Moltmann, the Christian tradition that has understood the Father as the one who begets or gives birth to the Son has rich implications for the motherly nature of God the Father.¹⁰⁷ If the Father is the one who begets or gives birth to the Son, this Father is "not just a 'male' Father."¹⁰⁸ Rather he has to be understood as a "Motherly Father."¹⁰⁹

Moltmann maintains that God's motherliness is clearly revealed on the cross of Jesus Christ. The most moving expression of God's compassion and piety is God's intimate participation in the passion of the Son. The suffering love of God on the cross that opens itself both to the Son and to all of the suffering creation is the very evidence that God the Father has a motherly nature. And if God is a motherly Father, who is characterized as compassion and love for creation, then the kingdom of God is no longer understood as divine lordship over creation. Rather it is the kingdom of freedom in which women and men experience mutual support and equal opportunity. Indeed, "In this kingdom God is not the Lord: he is the merciful Father. In this kingdom there are no

¹⁰⁶ HT, 11.

¹⁰⁷ As example of this Moltmann cites the Council of Toledo (675): "We must believe that the Son was not made out of nothing, nor out of some substance or other, but from the womb of the Father, that is, that he was begotten or born from the Father's own being." See Moltmann, HT 22.

¹⁰⁸ HT 22.

¹⁰⁹ HT 19.

servants: there are only God's free children. In this kingdom what is required is not obedience and submission: it is love and free participation."¹¹⁰ Thus understood, God the Father has absolutely no relationship with the God of patriarchy. Rather God the Father calls for the radical rejection of patriarchy, while affirming the full dignity and equality of women. Indeed, in this God the Father, men and women together find the ground for a genuine gender relationship characterized as freedom, equality and mutual respect.¹¹¹

2-2. God the Son as a Brother among Us

Moltmann recognizes that, like God the Father, the maleness of Jesus Christ as the second person of the Trinity is also a great stumbling-block for women: "How can a woman who is becoming aware of herself find access to a male redeemer without becoming a male in spirit and subjecting herself to masculine patterns of thought?"¹¹² He also recognizes that it is because of the maleness of Jesus Christ that many churches

¹¹⁰ TK, 70. Cf HT 35. Here he writes, "The kingdom of God . . . is "the rule of Jesus" 'Abba' God and is no 'Lord'-ship but the life-giving world of the divine mercy."

¹¹¹ HG 89. But it must be noted that although Moltmann understands God as 'motherly father,' he does not recommend that we call God 'Mother,' nor understand God both as Father and Mother. He holds the ontological priority of the notion of 'Father,' although he continues to stress that this Father has a feminine aspect that denounces the patriarchal understanding of 'father.' The reason he maintains the language of Father is again that he believes that it is rooted in the revelation of God and is thus non-substitutable. We will come back to this point later.

¹¹² HT, 32.

still deny the ordination of women.¹¹³ Yet he believes that if properly understood, the fact that Jesus was a man cannot be a problem. Rather, as the Father reveals himself as the compassionate, motherly Father, so the Son in his incarnation and ministry manifests the same character of compassion and mercy and thereby counters any form and structure of gender inequality.¹¹⁴

Moltmann responds to the claim that the maleness of Jesus Christ is problematic to women by contending that what is important in the life of Jesus Christ is not his maleness, but his *brotherly life*, which primarily characterizes his Sonship.¹¹⁵ He argues that in contrast to the idea of “Christ the Lord” that has dominated Christian tradition, the idea of *Christ as a brother among us* brings and guarantees a genuine mutuality and deep fellowship between men and women.¹¹⁶ In fact, according to him, it was the confession of this “brotherly Christ,” who in the depth of his humanity suffered in solidarity with us, that paradigmatically shaped the spirit of the first Christian community: “From an early stage the Christian community understood itself as a “fellowship of brothers. . .it was held that women and men were equally and together

¹¹³ HT 32ff.

¹¹⁴ TK 70.

¹¹⁵ HT 40ff.

¹¹⁶ HT 41.

children of God, so that talk of fellowship is meaningful only as a fellowship of "brothers and sisters."¹¹⁷

Moltmann writes that the nature of the brotherly life of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is revealed especially through Jesus' relationship with women. Based upon his wife's research,¹¹⁸ he notes the importance of Jesus' recognition and respect of women and their roles in his community. In fact, Jesus met and respected women as independent persons and daughters of God. He accepted them as full members of his community, which was untypical and even scandalous in his time. Conversely, it was women who followed him as close friends and disciples during his whole ministry and finally became the "last witnesses of his death and the first witnesses of his resurrection."¹¹⁹ Thus understood, he contends, in Jesus' relationship with women "the fact that Jesus was a man is irrelevant."¹²⁰ Rather, "The community of Jesus and the women manifests the truly human existence which the new creation of all things and all conditions sets free."¹²¹ If this is so, the new messianic community established by Jesus

¹¹⁷ HT 41.

¹¹⁸ Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey, trans. John Bowden. (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 117ff.

¹¹⁹ Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 146.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 147.

¹²¹ Ibid.

means the end of patriarchy.¹²² Jesus puts in place of family ties a new messianic community of the heavenly Father. (Matt.12: 50). This messianic community includes and embraces brothers, sisters, and mothers, but not fathers.¹²³ It undercuts all the dominating authorities of earthly fathers. What is left is instead the brotherly and sisterly love in a new messianic community: "because God is the Father, Jesus' community is 'the end of fathers.'"¹²⁴ Therefore, Moltmann concludes, the Christian Church has no relationship with patriarchy. It has to challenge and counter patriarchy in the name of the Father of Jesus Christ. The Church as the messianic community must be a counter-cultural community, a "society of contrast" that goes against the patriarchal society of our time.¹²⁵ Christians are called to establish "brotherly and sisterly forms of life" in God and thereby achieve full human equality and freedom.¹²⁶ As "Jesus Christ was the brother of the poor, the comrade of the people, the friend of the forsaken, the

¹²² HT 13.

¹²³ Moltmann bases this claim by interpreting Mark 10:29-30: "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." He contends that in this passage "the fathers" are intentionally omitted from Jesus' list of gains. For him this omission parallels Jesus' command not to call anybody "father", since we have but one Father in heaven (Matt 23:9). What this implies for him is that in Jesus' messianic community "the function and authority of the earthly fathers vanishes." See, HT 12-13.

¹²⁴ HT13.

¹²⁵ HT 12-13.

¹²⁶ HT 32.

sympathizer with the sick.” so being a Christian means to recognize others as “*the brotherly and sisterly human being*.”¹²⁷

2-3. Holy Spirit as a Feminine, Motherly Figure

As we have seen, Moltmann contends that the trinitarian language of Father and Son is not the language of patriarchy. Rather, the Father and the Son have clear feminine traits, which effectively counter the gender imbalance in God that functions as the religious ground of patriarchy. Yet according to Moltmann, it is especially the Holy Spirit that possesses the clearest feminine aspect. Indeed for him the feminine aspect of the Holy Spirit is so obvious that we might even consider her as a feminine, motherly figure in the Trinity. He writes: “The personality of the Holy Spirit can be grasped more precisely with the image of the Mother than with other images.”¹²⁸ For Moltmann, considering the Spirit as a motherly figure offers “interesting corrective possibilities” for understanding the trinitarian life and work of God.¹²⁹

According to Moltmann, the motherly nature of the Spirit is clearly attested in the Bible. The Bible describes the Spirit as a continually engendering, renewing and nurturing being. Creation itself, for example, is conceived to occur in the power of the

¹²⁷ The Way of Jesus Christ, 149. Emphasis is original.

¹²⁸ HT 65.

¹²⁹ Spirit of Life, 160.

Spirit. The creation was possible through the Spirit's "brooding" over the chaos (Gen 1: 2), and this is a clear maternal image.¹³⁰ Similarly, it is the Spirit that brings regeneration or rebirth, which are expressed in a maternal metaphor.¹³¹ These vivifying and revitalizing activities of the Spirit, Moltmann notes, are addressed by the Nicene Creed when it calls the Spirit "The Lord and Giver of Life."¹³² This nurturing character of the Spirit is also expressed in another maternal metaphor, as expressed by its sympathetic groaning with creation (Rom. 8:18-27) or by its comforting advocacy as Paraclete (John 14 15ff., 16:ff). But it is especially found in some parts of the Wisdom Literature, such as in the didactic poems of Proverbs 8 and Ecclesiastes 24, and in the *Shekinah* of God. For him the former emphasizes the personal immanence of God in creation, the latter the divine empathetic presence in redemption.¹³³ Furthermore, for him the feminine gender of the words, *Ruach*, *Hokma*, and *Shekinah*, which name the Holy Spirit, are also evidence to support this argument.¹³⁴

Moltmann further contends that it is especially in extra-canonical writings that

¹³⁰ Moltmann, GIC 86ff.

¹³¹ Spirit of Life, 157ff.

¹³² GIC 11.

¹³³ Spirit of Life, 46-51. Cf. TK 68, 104-05.

¹³⁴ HT 101.

the motherhood of the Holy Spirit is explicitly expressed. He cites the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel to the Hebrews, and the Acts of Thomas, all of which identify the Holy Spirit as the Mother of Jesus the Son.¹³⁵ For him the fact that these writings are all extra-canonical is no accident. Adopting Elaine Pagels' argument, he suspects that the ancient Church first used freely a lot of female metaphors for describing God. But during its struggle with Gnosticism, the female metaphors of God were largely erased and remained only in some extra-canonical materials.¹³⁶ As a result, he writes, the mainstream of Western Christianity has conceived the Spirit largely as a masculine figure. The Spirit as a female figure, or a nurturing Mother, has been a "suppressed" and "forgotten idea."¹³⁷ But in this suppressed tradition of the feminine metaphor of the Holy Spirit, Moltmann notes, some churches have kept the idea of the motherhood of the Holy Spirit. For example, Ethiopian icons of the Trinity picture the Spirit as mother. And the Greek church fathers often saw the nuclear family - Adam, Eve, and Seth - as the image of the triune God, which understands the Holy Spirit according to the primal

¹³⁵ From the Gospel of Thomas Moltmann cites this saying of Jesus: "He who will not love his Father and his mother as I do, cannot be my disciple. For my mother gave me life." Likewise from the Gospel to the Hebrews: "then my mother, the Holy Spirit, seized me by the hair and bore me away to the great mountain Tabor." From Syrian version of the Acts of Thomas, Moltmann notes the prayers: "Come merciful Mother" and "Come, giver of life" in a context that calls the Holy Spirit "Mother of all created being." See, Spirit of Life, 158.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 330. Cf. Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), Ch. III: "God the Father/God the Mother," 57ff.

¹³⁷ HT 116-17.

metaphor of mother.¹³⁸ Especially it is in Syrian Christianity that the motherhood of the Spirit found special development, as is shown in Aphraates' writings and Markarios' The Fifty Homilies.¹³⁹ The latter book was especially translated into German in the seventeenth century, had great impact on Pietist thinkers, such as John Wesley, August Hermann Francke, and Count Zinzendorf. Zinzendorf made an official proclamation of the "motherly office of the Holy Spirit" by understanding the Trinity as a family-like community.

This is the. . . divine family on earth: The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our true Father, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ is our true Mother, because the Son of the living God is. . .our true Brother. The Father must love us and can do no other. The Mother must guide us and can do no other, and the Son, our brother must love our soul as his own soul, our body as his own body, because we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, and he can do on other.¹⁴⁰

Based upon this biblical and historical observation, Moltmann suggests that we should understand the Holy Spirit as a feminine, motherly figure. And if the Holy Spirit is understood metaphorically as a mother, then God can be conceived primarily as the

¹³⁸ God - His and Hers, 8-9.

¹³⁹ Spirit of Life, 158.

¹⁴⁰ Nikolaus Graf Zinzendorf, "Die erste Rede in Pennsylvanien," Hauptschriften 2 (1963): 33f. Moltmann cites this in HG 103, God - His and Hers, 9, and The Spirit of Life, 159.

community of male and female, as that of Father, Mother, and Son. For Moltmann this idea carries rich implications for human relationship. Negatively, this helps us to overcome our exclusively masculine and paternal understanding of God and thereby counter the religious ground of patriarchy. Indeed, understanding God as the community of Father, Mother, and Son "justifies the full and independent integration of femininity into the dignity of the image of God."¹⁴¹ It undercuts the myth of patriarchy that women are inferior to men and must be subjugated. Second, and positively, this understanding of God helps to bring a genuine and healthy gender relationship. If God is conceived primarily with the image of nuclear family of Father, Mother, and Son, that includes both male and female, this idea urges us to accept the equality of men and women, and consequently leads to an equal and friendly community of brothers and sisters.¹⁴² It leads to "Not a society under male domination, but only a human fellowship free from sexism and class rule [that] can become the image of the Triune God on earth."¹⁴³ Third, according to Moltmann, understanding God especially as the community of Father, Mother, and Son helps us to overcome what he calls the

¹⁴¹ HT 64.

¹⁴² HT 64.

¹⁴³ HG 89.

“psychological monotheism.” that is introduced by Augustine.¹⁴⁴ Having understood the *imago dei* in a neo-Platonic fashion as the rational soul, Augustine helped to perpetuate the anthropological dualism that identifies female with body, emotion, nature, (thus inferior), but male soul with intelligence and spirit (thus superior). And this dualistic understanding of *imago dei* in turn has helped to justify the domination of men over women. But if God is conceived with the metaphor of the nuclear family of Father, Mother, and Son, then the *imago dei* means the communal nature of God that is imprinted on human persons. Indeed, “What corresponds to the triune God is not the human individual *per se*, but this primal cell of the human community. . . The triune God can be recognized again in the original human community of husband, wife, and child.”¹⁴⁵

In fact what Moltmann is doing here is to reclaim his social doctrine of the Trinity and develop it more specifically in the light of the question of gender. If the doctrine of the Trinity is to serve as a social model of freedom and equality, it should be able to address and adjudicate the conflict of the sexes that causes perhaps the most fundamental human division. He recognizes this and attempts to understand the Trinity

¹⁴⁴ HG 94.

¹⁴⁵ HT 60.

as the divine community with the image of Father, Mother, and Son. Indeed, for him, "The discovery of the Motherhood of the Holy Spirit leads to a social understanding of the image of God. . . it will be possible to arrive at a real social understanding of the image of God only when the feminine character of the Spirit is recognized."¹⁴⁶

2-4. Evaluation of Moltmann's Interpretation of the Trinitarian Formula of Father, Son, and Spirit.

As we have seen, Moltmann accepts the feminist claim that the patriarchal and androcentric images of God have historically legitimized men's domination over women. Specifically he accepts the charge that the traditional trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Spirit carries an explicit sexist connotation, which is contrary to its innermost meaning. Yet he does not want to substitute this formula, because of its revelatory character. He believes that it must be maintained in the Christian confession of God. This is evident in the fact that although he describes God the Father as 'motherly father,' who is characterized as compassion, self-sacrifice, and love, he does not explicitly speak of God as Mother, or replace God the Father with God the Mother. Furthermore, while he understands Jesus as 'brotherly figure,' he does not identify Jesus as a female figure, although he stresses that Jesus' brotherly life includes both

¹⁴⁶ HG 103. Also, HT 62-63.

brotherhood and sisterhood. Finally, although he believes that the feminine nature of the Holy Spirit is so striking that she can be properly seen as a feminine figure, he does not explicitly identify her as female. He refers to the Spirit as 'he,' 'him,' or in the possessive, 'his,' rather than 'she' or 'her.' This may be because of the fact that in German the grammatical gender of the Spirit (*der Geist*) is male. Yet this is not enough to explain his exclusive use of masculine pronouns for the Holy Spirit, for as Thompson indicates, if he really wanted to do so, he could easily subvert his mother tongue in this respect.¹⁴⁷ His reluctance to describe the divine persons as female is therefore due to the fact that he believes that the trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Spirit as something rooted in the divine revelation, and thus non-changeable.

Basically, we agree with Moltmann that the trinitarian names of Father, Son, and Spirit are non-changeable. There is indeed something revelatory and 'given' in this traditional trinitarian formula. If God's self is most explicitly and personally revealed through the names of Father, Son, and Spirit, one has to be faithful to this formula: In divine revelation, form and content are inseparable. This does not mean, however, that the trinitarian name of Father, Son, and Spirit is the proper name of the divine Three. Like all the other symbols of God, they are in their nature metaphorical and thus

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, *Imitatio Trinitatis*, 226.

functional.¹⁴⁸ But this does not mean these trinitarian names have the same status as other metaphors for God. In fact, not every metaphor has the same status. Some metaphors have privileged status in the fact that they are inseparably tied to the nature of the things or events that they describe.¹⁴⁹ This is exactly the case of the trinitarian names of Father, Son, and Spirit. These names are the 'given' metaphors that correctly identify the God of Christian faith who defines him/herself definitely in Jesus Christ, and who now binds us and all God's creation to God's triune life. Thus, if we do not keep this formula, we lose the biblical understanding of the triune God and subject the particularity of God's self-revelation to some more general notion of deity, whether a strict philosophical theism, or process panentheism, or feminist monism. The trinitarian names, therefore, while they may be descriptively supplemented, may not be replaced: They are metaphorical names but the most proper metaphorical names for identifying

¹⁴⁸ At this point Ted Peters' distinction between 'proper' and 'metaphorical' names is helpful. For him, the names 'Yahweh,' or 'Jesus' are proper names and thus must be kept as they are. And if necessary, they must be 'transliterated.' But the name of Father, Son, and Spirit are 'metaphorical' in the sense they work "primarily as titles used in address." Thus, "it seems plain that the terms "Father" and "Son" when ascribed to God are in fact metaphors. . . . Holy Spirit is as well." See, Ted Peters, "Is Trinitarian Language Hopelessly Sexist?" Peters, God as Trinity, 53.

¹⁴⁹ In this sense I disagree with Sallie McFague who contends that all metaphors are human constructs and thus have the same status. Her pragmatic and heuristic approach to divine metaphors fails to respond to the Feuerbachian charge that the image of God is in fact human projection. For this matter, see, McFague, Metaphorical Theology (1982). Also, see Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age (1987). For a critical reflection on McFague's metaphorical concept of God that reflects ideas similar to mine, see Carroll, Gill "Models of God or Models of Us?" Encounter 52:2 (Spring, 1991): 183-195.

the God of Christian faith.

As we have seen, Moltmann responds to the question of gender and the doctrine of the Trinity by finding feminine aspects of each trinitarian person and by doing so holds the gender balance in God. And at this point I contend that he gains a considerable success. He rightly interprets the trinitarian sense of divine Fatherhood, Sonship, and the femininity of the Holy Spirit, in a way that counters the explicit masculine understanding of God associated with this formula. Indeed, his notions of the 'motherly Father,' 'The Son as brotherly figure,' and 'the Spirit as a feminine, motherly figure' is biblically reliable and historically sound. It functions well as a response to the charge that the traditional trinitarian formula is sexist and thus should be replaced.

Yet it is also true that with his reinterpretation of the divine names, Moltmann does not 'fully' achieve gender balance in the concept of God. For him, the Father and the Son are still understood as masculine figures, although they have explicit feminine characteristics that compensate and balance their masculinity. Furthermore, although he proposes to see the Holy Spirit as a feminine figure, he does not identify the Holy Spirit as a 'perfect' female figure: He calls the Holy Spirit 'he' and thus retains the masculine side of this person of the Trinity. Therefore the balance is still on the masculine side of God. In fact this result is already anticipated when he accepted the traditional trinitarian

formula of Father, Son, and Spirit as non-changeable and non-substitutable. Indeed, this formula is indispensable for the identification of the triune God. But holding this formula makes it extremely difficult to keep a perfect gender balance in God. We may elaborate our dilemma as follows: if we want to find feminine aspects of each of the divine persons, while keeping the formula of Father, Son, and Spirit, as Moltmann does, then we cannot establish a 'perfect' gender balance in God. But if we give up this formula for the sake of perfect gender equality in our concept of God, we lose something crucial to Christian identity and faith.

How then can we overcome this dilemma? Here I suggest that a good way is to use in Christian worship and prayer feminine, desexed, and depersonalized symbols of God, as complementary to the formula of Father, Son, and Spirit. Indeed the Bible has many good examples of feminine metaphors of God. Furthermore, it employs non-sexual personal symbols, such as Friend, Redeemer, Saviour, Advocate, Christ, Messiah, and Comforter and non-personal symbols, such as Rock, Shield, Dove, Fire, and the like. To be sure, feminine, desexed, and depersonalized metaphors of God do not replace the essential, archetypal metaphors of Father, Son, and Spirit, as demonstrated in the traditional formula. But they add many rich facets to our understanding of the deity, and thus bring us to a more balanced understanding of God. Indeed by using these other

biblically warranted metaphors and the trinitarian formula together, we could confess and confirm that God is more than a 'male,' overcoming much of the sexist connotation of this formula.

Now we return to our original question: how can we solve the question of the gender and the concept of God? The answer might be to use the traditional formula of Father, Son, and Spirit, while supplementing this with other feminine, non-sexual, and non-personal metaphors of God. Moltmann's contribution lies in the fact that he moves toward gender balance in God, overcoming the overwhelming dominance of the masculine in traditional trinitarian talk, while maintaining the biblical, revelatory formula of Father, Son, and Spirit. This is not likely to be persuasive to trinitarian feminists, however, unless it is complemented further with feminine, non-sexual, and non-personal metaphors that point to the mystery of God's transcendent otherness.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Moltmann's response to the feminist claim that the traditional trinitarian formula, "Father, Son, and Spirit," is sexist, and thus must be rejected or balanced with other metaphors of God. Moltmann responds to this claim by seeking gender balance in our concept of God, finding feminine aspects of each of the divine persons. And in this attempt he shows a considerable success. His

contribution lies especially in his articulation of the trinitarian sense of the Fatherhood, Sonship, and Holy Spirit, thereby refuting any patriarchal understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet at the same time, since he holds the trinitarian formula as something revelatory and thus non-changeable, the weight is still lies on the 'masculine' side of God. Thus for greater gender balance in God, his trinitarian reinterpretation of the formula Father, Son, Spirit needs to be supplemented with some degendered, depersonalized metaphors of God. Using these metaphors together with the traditional trinitarian formula helps us to express the inexpressible mystery of the triune God, as well as securing a more balanced understanding that might engender for a more healthy and desirable gender relationship. To be sure, changing our language of God does not always change our hearts. Yet it helps us to see the problem clearly and opens us the way to a more inclusive and genuine human relationship. Since this is so, an important task for theologians is to develop a non-sexist, inclusive, and emancipatory God-language that empowers and sustains relationships of equality, especially those of men and women. Moltmann has made a considerable contribution in this matter.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis we have explored Jürgen Moltmann's theology of the Trinity and its significance for contemporary social questions, in dialogue with other trinitarian theologians. He has not, of course, revitalized the doctrine of the Trinity single-handedly, but has participated positively and critically in a larger theological movement pursued by many theologians. In this thesis we have attempted to see him within this larger context, as a dialogue partner with others. Especially we have studied his theology of the Trinity in the light of four major trinitarian issues that have been widely discussed in recent years. Now I shall briefly summarize our discussions and then present the contributions of Moltmann's trinitarian theology that will become valuable resources for further reflection.

Summary

As we have seen in preceding chapters, Moltmann attempts to reject any *merely abstract or speculative thought about the Trinity*. He adopts the widespread current stress upon the importance of salvation history for the doctrine of the Trinity. He understands this doctrine particularly out of the cross of Jesus Christ. For him, "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 formal principle of knowledge of the cross is the doctrine of the Trinity.”¹

Moltmann’s basic decision to find God on the cross characterizes his whole trinitarian theology. The cross takes a central place in his handling of the four major trinitarian issues that we have dealt with in this thesis. First, as we have seen in chapter one, it leads him to understand God as the ‘suffering’ God, thereby negating traditional theism and humanist atheism. According to him, the triune God who is open to suffering is not identical with the God of traditional theism, that is, the impassible, immutable, and infinitely self-sufficient one in heaven. Rather the triune God rejects and nullifies this concept as a misidentification of God. Furthermore, faith in the triune God who is open to suffering allows Moltmann to provide a critical response to both protest atheism and postulate atheism by offering viable responses to the questions of human suffering and liberation. The doctrine of the Trinity demonstrates that the God of Christian faith is the one who participates in human suffering through the cross of Jesus Christ and overcomes this suffering through his resurrection as the anticipation of the eschatological victory of God. Further, this doctrine presents a God who opens God’s

¹ CG 240f. TK 83: “The Cross is at the center of the Trinity.” Also The Church in the Power of the Spirit, 95.

self and makes room for genuine human freedom and dignity, while calling people to join in for the transformation of an unjust world. The doctrine of the Trinity is therefore a quite 'practical' doctrine that enables us to respond to the reality of human suffering and answer the question of genuine human freedom.

Also, as we have seen in chapter two, Moltmann's decision to find God at the cross leads him to stress the genuine historicity of God. If God is found at the cross, then the doctrine of the Trinity has nothing to do with "impractical speculation" about the nature of God, but is "a short version of the passion narrative of Christ."² It is the explanation of the salvation history of God. Based upon this conviction Moltmann reformulates the relationship of the immanent to the economic Trinity by understanding the former as the eschatological fulfillment or *telos* of the latter. While the traditional understanding of the immanent-economic Trinity emphasizes the immanent Trinity, the eternal divine life in God's self, Moltmann reverses this and focuses upon God's radical historicity, yet, at the same time, he secures the divine transcendence by maintaining that God is already triune before God enters into creation.

Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity, which understands God in God's activity in the world centered on the cross has important social implications. Especially it offers

² CG 246.

a helpful theological response to our ecological crisis. His trinitarian theology, stressing God's radical historicity and communal nature, challenges us to see God's creation as that with which we live together in love and respect. Besides, it encourages us to see the human-nature relationship as one of love and respect and thus inspires us to appreciate the natural world as it is. Consequently, we may say that Moltmann's trinitarian theology presents a helpful theological response to the current exploitation of nature and the ecological crisis.

Moltmann's basic decision to find the triune God at the cross of Jesus Christ leads him into his social doctrine of the Trinity. As we have seen in chapter three, Moltmann contends that if the doctrine of the Trinity is perceived out of the Biblical narrative centered on the cross of Jesus Christ, then God is identified as three distinct persons in unique community. Thus for him the unity of God is constituted not in a homogenous divine nature, or in one divine subjectivity but in the perichoretic unity of the three distinct divine persons characterized by mutual love and fellowship. Further, his social doctrine of the Trinity functions as a practically relevant doctrine of God. Perhaps Moltmann overstates the social, political power of a trinitarian doctrine of God, yet his concept of the perichoretic unity of God can, in the long term, contribute to the creation of a healthy and genuine human society. It can point the way to a 'social program' that

enhances human freedom, equality, and mutuality.

Moltmann applies his social doctrine of the Trinity to the question of gender, especially to the claim that the traditional trinitarian formula, "Father, Son, and Spirit," is sexist. As we have seen in chapter four, he accepts this claim as valid and responds by establishing gender balance in our concept of God, while finding and supplementing the feminine aspects of each of the divine persons. And in this attempt he achieves a considerable success. His contribution lies especially in that he successfully articulates the trinitarian sense of the notions of 'Father,' 'Son,' and 'Holy Spirit,' thereby refuting any patriarchal or androcentric understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet, since he holds the trinitarian formula as something revelatory and thus unchangeable, the weight lies still on the masculine side of God. Thus for a more genuine gender balance in God, we have argued that his trinitarian reinterpretation of the 'Father, Son, Spirit' needs to be supplemented with some other images of God, i.e., feminine, degendered or depersonalized images. By using these together with the traditional trinitarian formula, we can express the inexpressible mystery of the triune God, as well as secure a balanced understanding of God that might function for a more healthy and desirable gender relationship.

Moltmann's Trinitarian Theology as a Resource for Further Reflection

Moltmann presents one of the most important contemporary understandings of the doctrine of the Trinity. It appears that especially in four points he provides valuable and greatly needed resources for further reflection on this doctrine. First, he successfully presents a more biblical, dynamic, and trinitarian concept of God that can substitute for the static, philosophical and theistic concept, which is still common to many people in and outside of the Church. Indeed the effort to overcome the theistic concept of God with a more dynamic and trinitarian understanding of God is one of the most important aspects of current trinitarian thought. This is clear in that what lies at the center of the four major trinitarian issues that we have dealt here is the attempt to articulate a concept of God that rejects and replaces the theistic concept of God as the eternal, omnipotent, impassible, and especially 'male' Lord in heaven. For example, the current trinitarian move to meet the atheist charge against Christian faith with a more trinitarian understanding of God is mostly distinguished by its attempt to overcome the theistic idea of God as 'omnipotent' and 'impassible.' The second trinitarian move that attempts to reshape our understanding of the relation of the economic and the immanent Trinity can be understood as a rejection of traditional theism's undue emphasis upon the divine transcendence that bears no special relevance to human life. Likewise, the third trinitarian debate concerning the unity-trinity in God is also characterized as an attempt

to overcome the theistic conception of God as Lord or Subject who stands in opposition to the world. Finally, the fourth trinitarian issue, overcoming the sexist connotation of the trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Spirit is also conceived as a rejection of the theistic concept of God as merely male and Father. In short, at the center of recent trinitarian theology lies dissatisfaction with the traditional theistic concept of God. Moltmann's achievement lies in that he successfully provides a more dynamic, biblical, and trinitarian understanding that overcomes the theistic concept of God, while presenting helpful contributions to each of these trinitarian debates.

Another important contribution of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity that can be used for further reflection is his due stress upon the historicity of God. As it is known, the traditional distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity was first introduced, in part, in order to secure God's freedom and transcendence over creation. Yet in the history of Christian thought the immanent Trinity was often understood (under the influence of Greek metaphysics) as God's inner life, that has no special relationship to the salvation history of God. As a result, the doctrine of the immanent Trinity was turned into a purely speculative investigation into the inner mystery of God, divorced from any direct Scriptural foundation, and as Jüngel writes,

finally leading into a theistic concept of God.³ This problematic understanding of the divine transcendence became more serious with the rise of the Enlightenment and modern science, wherein the criterion of reference is no longer other- worldly reality but rather this world itself. The idea of a divine transcendence independent from this worldly reality became superfluous: theistic understanding of the world was replaced by humanistic and atheistic world- views.

Since this is so, what is urgently needed is a new paradigm that recognizes the importance of the historicity of God, while not losing God's transcendence. In other words, what is required is a viable conceptual device for speaking both of God's radical historicity, and God's absolute freedom. And in this context, Moltmann's trinitarian theology, which understands the immanent Trinity as the eschatological fulfillment or *telos* of the economic Trinity, is an important contribution. It provides a proper distinction between God's immanent trinitarian life and God's economic or trinitarian activity in the world, while not sacrificing either God's freedom or historicity. And as such it will serve as an important resource for further trinitarian reflection.

Moltmann's third contribution for further reflection on the doctrine of the

³ Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World, 232-3.

Trinity lies in his recognition of 'relationality,' as a fundamental category in understanding God. As we have seen, for him God is not a divine monarch but a trinitarian community of persons, who relate to each other in a perichoretic relationship. For him, 'relationality' or 'mutuality,' rather than 'substance' is what characterizes God: God is understood primarily as person in relationship rather than as 'substance.' This indeed is an important contribution when we consider that in the western trinitarian tradition the emphasis is too much on the substantial understanding of God. Of course Moltmann is not the only, or the first theologian to advocate this relational understanding of God. Many current trinitarian theologians accept 'relationality,' or 'mutuality' as the primary symbol for God. Yet it is Moltmann who most explicitly and successfully challenges the traditional substantial understanding of God, while providing a coherent relational understanding of God with his social doctrine of the Trinity.

Finally, Moltmann's contribution lies in the effort to seek practical implications in the doctrine of the Trinity. This is certainly praiseworthy, especially when we consider that this doctrine has long been criticized because of its speculativity. Again, Moltmann is not the only theologian who shows this concern. Furthermore, his attempt to find practical implications in this doctrine is perhaps excessive and overly optimistic.

and needs to be qualified. Nevertheless, this does not dismiss the beauty and freshness of his contributions both to a contemporary theology of the Trinity, and to our own practical participation in the mission of the triune God.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The sources listed in this bibliography are divided into two sections: Moltmann's works and other authors' works. The second section is further divided between books and articles.

Moltmann's Works

- Moltmann, Jürgen. "A Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann." In T. Gabestrero, Faith: Conversations with Contemporary Theologians. Translated by D. Walsh. Maryknoll: Orbis. 1980.
- , "Antwort auf die Kritik an Der Gekreuzigte Gott." In Diskussion über Jürgen Moltmanns Buch Der Gekreuzigte Gott, ed. M. Welker. Munchen: Chr. Kaiser. 1979.
- , The Church in the Power of the Spirit. Translated by Margaret Kohl. New York: Harper and Row. 1977.
- , "The Cross and Civil Religion." In Religion and Political Society, Ed. and trans. Institute of Christian Thought. New York: Harper and Row. 1974.
- , The Crucified God: The Cross as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology. Translated by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden. New York: Harper and Row. 1973.
- , Der Gekreuzigte Gott: Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik Christlicher Theologie. Munchen: Kaiser Verlag. 1973.
- , "'The Crucified God': a Trinitarian Theology of the Cross." Interpretation 26/3 (1972): 278-99.
- , The Experiment Hope. Edited and translated by M. Douglas Meeks. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1975.

- , Experiences of God. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1980.
- , "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit-Trinitarian Pneumatology." Scottish Journal of Theology 38 (1984): 287-300.
- , The Future of Creation. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1979.
- , and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel. God- His and Hers. Translated by John Bowden. New York: Crossroad. 1991.
- , God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press. 1985.
- , Gott in der Schöpfung: Ökologische Schöpfungslehre. München: Kaiser Verlag. 1985.
- , The Gospel of Liberation. Translated by H. Wayne Pipkin. Waco: Word Books. 1979.
- , History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology. Translated by John Bowden. New York: Crossroad. 1992.
- , In der Geschichte des dreieinigen Gottes: Beiträge zur trinitarischen Theologie. München: Kaiser Verlag. 1991.
- , Hope and Planning. Translated by Margaret Larkson. London: SCM Press. 1971.
- , and Moltmann-Wendel Elisabeth. Humanity in God. London: SCM Press. 1984.
- , "The Inviting Unity of the Triune God." Concilium 177 (1/1985).
- , and Lapide. Pinchas. Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine. Translated by Leonard Swindler. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1981.

- , "The Lordship of Christ and Human Society." In Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer. Translated with an Introduction by Reginald H. Fuller. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1967.
- , "The Motherly Father: Is Trinitarian Patripassianism Replacing Theological Patriarchalism?" Concilium 143 (1981).
- , The Open Church: Invitation to a Messianic Lifestyle. Translated by M. D. Meeks. London: SCM Press. 1978.
- , On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics. Translated by M. D. Meeks. London: SCM Press. 1984.
- , The Power of the Powerless. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press. 1983.
- , Religion, Revolution, and The Future. Translated by M. D. Meeks. New York: Charles Scribners. 1969.
- , The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1997.
- , The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press. 1992.
- , Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology. Translated by J. W. Leitch. London: SCM Press. 1967.
- , Theology Today: Two Contributions Towards Making Theology Present. Translated by J. Bowden. London: SCM Press. 1988.
- , The Trinity and the Kingdom of God. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press. 1981.
- , Trinität und Reich Gottes. Munchen: Kaiser Verlag. 1980.

-----, "The Unity of the Triune God." St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, 28.
(1984): 157-171.

-----, The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions. Translated by
Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press. 1990.

Works by Other Authors

Adorno, Theodore. Negative Dialectics. New York: Seabury Press. 1973.

Aquinas, Thomas. Summa Theologica. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican
Province. Vol. 1. Westminster: Christian Classics. 1948.

Augustine, St. On the Trinity. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. A Select Library of
the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Vol. 3. Ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans. 1988.

Barth, Karl. Church Dogmatics. I/1. I/II. II.1. II/II. IV/I. Geoffrey W. Bromiley.. and
Thomas Torrance. Eds. Various Translators. Edinburgh: T and T. Clark. 1975.

-----, Dogmatics in Outline. Translated by C. T. Thompson. London: SCM Press.
1949.

-----, The Humanity of God. Translated by John Newton Thomas and others.
Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1974.

Bauckham, Richard. Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making. Basingstoke:
Marshall Pickering. 1987.

-----, The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann. Edinburgh: T and T. Clark. 1995.

Bettenson, Henry. The Later Christian Fathers. London: Oxford University Press. 1977.

Bingemer, M. Clara. Gender and Grace. Downers Grove: Intersersity Press. 1990.

- Bloch, Ernst. Das Prinzip Hoffnung. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. 1959.
- Bloesch, Donald. The Battle for the Trinity: The Debate over Inclusive God Language. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications. 1985.
- , Essentials of Evangelical Theology. Vol. 2. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 1979.
- , Is the Bible Sexist? Beyond Feminism and Patriarchalism. Westchester: Crossway Books. 1982.
- Boff, Leonardo. Trinity and Society. Translated by Paul Burns. Maryknoll. 1988.
- Borg, Marcus. The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a More Authentic Contemporary Faith. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. 1997.
- Borne, Etienne. Atheism. New York: Harthorn Books. 1961.
- Bracken, Joseph. The Triune Symbol: Persons, Process and Community. Lanham, MD.: University of America Press. 1985.
- Braaten, Carl E. and Robert W. Jenson, ed. Christian Dogmatics. 2 Vols. Minneapolis: Fortress. 1984.
- The British Council of Churches Study Commission. The Forgotten Trinity. London: Inter-Church House. 1989.
- Brown, David. The Divine Trinity. London: Sheldon Press. 1969.
- Brown, Joanne Carlson, and Bohn, Carole R. Eds., Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique. New York: Pilgrim. 1989.

Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus. Translated by Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books. 1955.

-----, The Plague. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. London: Hamilton. 1962.

Carr, Anne. Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. 1990.

Chamberlain-Engelsman, Joan. The Feminine Dimension of the Divine. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. 1979.

Christ, Carol P., and Plaskow, J. eds., Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 1979.

Clark, Elizabeth, and Richardson, Herbert. Eds., Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought. New York: Harper and Row. 1977.

Cole-Turner, R. S. God's Experience: The Trinitarian Theology of Jurgen Moltmann in Conversation with Charles Hartshorne. Ph.D. Thesis. Princeton Theological Seminary. 1983.

Congar, Yves. I Believe in the Holy Spirit. 3 Vols., Translated by David Smith. New York: Seabury. 1983.

Conyers., A. J. God, Hope, and History: Jurgen Moltmann and the Christian Concept of History. Macon: Mercer University Press. 1988.

Crowe, Fred. The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity. Willowdale: Regis College. 1970.

Cunningham, David. These Three are One. The Practice of Trinitarian Theology. Malden: Blackwell Publishers. 1998.

- Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation. Boston, Beacon Press, 1973.
- Davis, Charles. Theology and Political Society. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- De Margerie, Bertrand. The Christian Trinity in History. Translated by Edmund J. Fortman. Still River: St. Bede's Publications, 1982.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. The Brothers Karamazov. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: Modern Library, 1970.
- Downey, Michael. Understanding Christian Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1997.
- Duck, Ruth. Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991.
- Engelsman, J. C. The Feminine Dimension of the Divine. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979.
- Esclarin, Perez. Atheism and Liberation. New York: Orbis Books, 1979.
- Feenstra, Ronald J., and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., ed. Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.
- Feuer, Lewis S. ed. Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy. New York: Doubleday, 1959.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. The Essence of Christianity. Translated by George Eliot. New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1957.
- Ford, David, ed. The Modern Theologians. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- Forte, Bruno. The Trinity as History: Saga of the Christian God. Translated by Paul Rotondi. New York: Alba House, 1989.

- Fortmann, Edmund J. The Triune God. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.
- Garaudy, Roger. From Anathema to Dialogue. Translated by Luke O'Neill. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966.
- Gelpi, Donald. The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.
- Gilkey, Langdon. Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969.
- Grillmeier, Aloys. Christ in Christian Tradition. Vol. 1. 2d rev. ed. Translated by John Bowden. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975.
- Grenz, Stanley. Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Gunton, Colin. Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- , The Promise of Trinitarian Theology. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1991.
- Hall, Douglas John. God and Human Suffering. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.
- Hall, Francis J. The Trinity. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910.
- Hamerton-Kelly, R. God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1979.
- Harnack, Adolf von. History of Dogma. Translated by E. B. Speirs and James Millar. 7 Vols. London: William and Norgate, 1898.
- Hartmann, Nicolai. Ethik. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1962.

- Hartshorne, Charles. and Reese, William L. Philosophers Speak of God. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1963.
- Helwig, Monica. Jesus. The Compassion of God. Wilmington: Michael Glazier. 1983.
- Hill, Edmund. The Mystery of the Trinity. London: Geoffrey Chapman. 1985.
- Hill, William J. The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation. Washington, D. C.: Catholic University Press. 1982.
- Hodgson, Peter C. God in History: Shapes of Freedom. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1989.
- Kant, Immanuel. The Conflict of Faculties. Translated by Mary J. Gregor. New York: Abaris Books. 1979.
- James, E. O. The Cult of the Mother Goddess: An Anthropological and Documentary Study. New York: Barnes and Noble. 1959.
- Jenson, Robert. The Triune Identity. Philadelphia: Fortress. 1982.
- Johnson, Elizabeth. She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse. New York: Crossroad. 1994.
- Jung, C. Gustav.. Psychology and Religion. New Haven: Yale University. 1938.
- Jung, C. Gustav.. and von-Frans, M. L. eds.. Man and His Symbols. New York: Doubleday. 1964.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming. Translated by Horton Harris. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press. 1976.
- , God as the Mystery of the World. Translated by Darrell L. Guder. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. 1983.

- Kasper, Walter. The God of Jesus Christ. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. New York: Crossroad, 1984.
- Kaufmann, Gordon. God the Problem. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- Kelly, Anthony. The Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989.
- Kelly, J. N. D. The Athanasian Creed: The Paddock Lectures for 1962-3. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1964.
- Kimel, Alvin F. Jr., Speaking the Christian God: the Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992.
- Kirkpatrick, Dow, ed. Faith Born in the Struggle for Life. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- King, A. The Question of 'Person' and 'Subject' in Trinitarian Theology: Moltmann's Challenge to Rahner and its Implications. Ph.D thesis. Fordham University, 1986.
- Kung, Hans. Does God Exist? An Answer for Today. Translated by By Edward Quinn. Garden City: Doubleday, 1980.
- Lacroix, Jean. The Meaning of Modern Atheism. Translated by Garret Barden. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965.
- LaCugna, Catherine M. God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.
- Lasmusson, Arne. The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jurgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.
- Leech, Kenneth. The Social God. London: Sheldon Press, 1981.

- Lee, Jung Yong. The Trinity in Asian Perspective. Nashville. Abingdon Press. 1996.
- Lossky, Vladimir. In the Image and Likeness of God. Ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird. Crestwood: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press. 1974.
- , The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. 1976.
- Mackey, James P. The Christian Experience of God as Trinity. London: SCM Press. 1983.
- Macquarrie, John. Principles of Christian Theology. New York: Scribners. 1977.
- , Thinking about God. London: SCM Press. 1975.
- Marsh, Thomas. The Triune God: a Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study. Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications. 1994.
- Marty, Martin. Varieties of Unbelief. New York: Doubleday and Co.. 1966.
- McFague, Sallie. Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language. Philadelphia: Fortress. 1982.
- , Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age. Philadelphia: Fortress. 1982.
- McWilliams, W. Divine Suffering in Contemporary Protestant Theology. Macon: Mercer University Press. 1985.
- Meeks, M Douglas. God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1989.
- , Origins of the Theology of Hope. Philadelphia: Fortress. 1974.
- Metz, Johannes B. New Questions on God: Concilium. Vol. 76. New York: Herder and Herder. 1972.

- Meyendorff, John. Byzantine Theology. New York: Fordham Press, 1974.
- Migliore, Daniel L. Called to Freedom: Liberation Theology and the Future of Christian Doctrine. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980.
- , Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- , The Power of God. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983.
- Miller, Alice. The Untouched Key: Tracing Childhood Trauma in Creativity and Destructiveness. Doubleday, 1990.
- Morey, Robert A. The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom. Minnesota: Bethany Press, 1986.
- Morris, Thomas V. The Logic of God Incarnate. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- Morse, Christopher. The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.
- Mühlen, Heribert. Der Heilige Geist als Person. In der Trinitat bei der Inkarnation und im Gnadenbund: Ich-Du-Wir. Munster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1966.
- Nouwen, Henri. The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1972.
- O'Donnell, John. The Mystery of the Triune God. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.
- , Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Olson, Roger. Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. Ph. D thesis. Rice University, 1984.
- Otto, Randal E. The God of Hope: The Trinitarian Vision of Jurgen Moltmann. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991.

- Pagels, Elaine. The Gnostic Gospels. New York: Vintage Books. 1981.
- Panikkar, Reimundo. The Trinity and the Experience of Man. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1973.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. Basic Questions in Theology. Vol. I. II. III. London. SCM Press. 1971. 1973.
- Ed. Revelation as History. Translated by David Granskou. New York: Macmillan. 1968.
- , Systematic Theology. Vol.1. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1991.
- , Theology and the Kingdom of God. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. 1969.
- , What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective. Translated by D. A. Priebe. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1970.
- Peters, Ted. God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. 1993.
- Pittenger, Norman. The Divine Triunity. Philadelphia: United Church Press. 1977.
- Prestige, G. L. God in Patristic Thought. London: S.P.C.K., 1952.
- Rahner, Karl. Foundations of Christian Faith, an Introduction to the Idea of Christianity. London: Herder and Herder. 1978.
- , Ed. Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology. New York: Herder and Herder. 1968.
- , The Trinity. Translated by Joseph Donceel. London: Herder and Herder. 1970.

- , and Lehmann, Karl. Mysterium Salutis. Translated by Feiner Johannes. New York: Herder and Herder. 1969.
- Reid, W. Stanford, ed. John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Press. 1982.
- Reuther, Rosemary. Mary- the Feminine Face of the Church. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. 1979.
- , Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology. Boston: Beacon Press. 1983.
- Ricoeur, Paul. The Conflict of Interpretations. Don Ihde ed. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. 1974.
- Richard of St. Victor. The Trinity. (Classics of Western Spirituality). Vol. 3. London and New York. 1979.
- Rolheiser, Ronald. The Shattered Lantern: Rediscovering a Felt Presence of God. New York: Crossroad. 1995.
- Rubinstein, Richard L. After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism. Indianapolis :Bobbs-Merill. 1966.
- Rusch, William. The Trinitarian Controversy. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1980.
- Russell, Bertrand. Why I am not a Christian. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1957.
- Russell, Letty M. Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective- a Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster. 1974.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology. Translated by Hansel Barnes. New York: Washington Square. 1966.
- Sayers, Dorothy. The Mind of the Maker. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 1979.
- Schaedel, Erwin. Bibliographia Trinitaria: Internationale Bibliographietrinitarischer

Literatur/International Bibliography of Trinitarian literature. Vol. 1:
Autorenverzeichnis/ Author Index: Vol. 2: Registerunde Ergaenzungsliste/
Indices and Supplementary List. Munich: K. G. Sauer. 1984, 1988.

Schilling, Paul. God in an Age of Atheism. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1969.

Schneider, M. Sandra. Women and the Word: 1986 Madaleva Lecture in Spirituality.
New York: Paulist Press. 1986.

Sloyan, Gerhard. The Three Persons in One God. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. 1964.

Soelle, Dorothee. Suffering. Translated by Everett R. Kalin. Philadelphia: Fortress.
1975. 1984.

Spender, Dale. Man Made Language. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1980.

Starhawk. The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Greek
Goddess. San Francisco: Harper and Row. 1979.

Sweet, L. I. New Life in the Spirit. Philadelphia: Westminster. 1982.

Swinburn, Richard. The Coherence of Theism. Oxford: Clarendon. 1977.

Tang, S. K. God's History in the Theology of Jurgen Moltmann. Ph.D. thesis.
University of St. Andrews. 1994.

Tavard, George H. The Vision of Trinity. Washington, D. C.: University Press of
America. 1981.

-----, Woman in Christian Tradition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
1973.

Thompson, John. Modern Trinitarian Perspectives. New York: Oxford University Press.
1994.

- Thompson, Thomas R. Imitatio Trinitatis: The Trinity as Social Model in the Theologies of Jurgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff. Ph. D. thesis. Princeton Theological Seminary. 1996.
- Tillich, Paul. Systematic Theology. Vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1957.
- Torrance, Thomas F. The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons. Edinburgh: T and T Clark. 1996.
- , Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement. Edinburgh: T and T. Clark. 1994.
- Trible, Phyllis. God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality. Philadelphia: Fortress. 1978.
- Visser't Hooft, William. The Fatherhood of God in an Age of Emancipation. Geneva: World Council of Churches. 1982.
- Weil, Simone. Gravity and Grace. Translated by Ema Crauford. London: Routledge and K. Paul. 1952.
- Weinandy, Thomas G. The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. 1995.
- Weinwright, A. W. The Trinity in the New Testament. London: SPCK. 1962.
- Welch, Claude. In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1952.
- Welker, Michael, ed. Diskussion uber Jurgen Moltmanns Buch "Der Gekreuzigte Gott." Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag. 1979.
- Willis, W. W. Jr. Theism, Atheism, and the Doctrine of God: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jurgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism. Atlanta: Scholars Press. 1987.

Wilson-Kastner, Patricia. Faith, Feminism, and the Christ. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

Wink, Walter. Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Zizioulas, John. Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.

Articles and Essays by Other Authors

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. "Exchanging God for 'No Gods': A Discussion of Female Language for God." In Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Ed. Alvin F. Kimmel, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

Allen, Prudence. "Integral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion." Communio 17 (1990): 523-44.

Attfield, D. G. "'Can God be Crucified?' A Discussion of J. Moltmann." Scottish Journal of Theology 30 (1977): 47-57.

Bauckham, R. J. "In Defense of the Crucified God." in N. M. de S. Cameron ed. The Power and Weakness of God: Impassibility and Orthodoxy. (Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology Special Study 4). Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990.

-----, 'Jürgen Moltmann.' In One God in Trinity. Eds. P. Toon and J. D. Spiceland. London: Bagster, 1980.

-----, "Jürgen Moltmann." In D. F. Ford (ed.), The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology of the Twentieth Century. Vol. 1. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.

- Bartel, Timothy W. "The Plight of the Relative Trinitarianism." Religious Studies 24 (1988): 129-55.
- Belonick, Deborah M. "Revelation and Metaphors: The Significance of the Trinitarian Names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Union Seminary Quarterly Review 40. (1985): 31-42.
- Berner, Ulrich. "Trinitrische Gottesvorstellungen im Kontext theisticshcer Systembildungen." Saeculum 31 (1980): 93-111.
- Bingemer, Maria C. "The Trinity from the Perspective of the Woman." In Faith Born in the Struggle for Life. Translated by Lewistine McCoy. Ed. D. Kirkpatrick. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1988.
- Boroboy, V. "The Trinitarian Basis of Christian Unity." Dialogue and Alliance 4 (Fall, 1980): 28-36.
- Braaten, Carl E. "Trinity as Dogma." Dialog 29/1 (Winter, 1990): 3-9.
- , "The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission." Missiology 18(1990): 415-27.
- Bracken, Joseph. "The Holy Trinity as a Community of Divine Persons." Heythrop Journal 15 (1976): 166-182, 257-270.
- , "Panentheism from a Trinitarian Perspective" Horizons 22 (Spring, 1995): 7-28.
- , "Process Theology and Trinitarian Theology." Parts 1, 2. Process Studies 8 (1978): 217-230; 11 (1981): 83-96.
- , "Subsistent Relation: Mediating Concept for a New Synthesis?" Journal of Religion 64 (1984): 188-204.
- Bradshaw, Timothy. "God's Relationship to History in Pannenberg." in Issues in Faith and History. Ed. Nigel M. Cameron. Edinburgh: Rutherford House. 1989.

- Brown, David. "Trinitarian Personhood and Individuality." In Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays. Ed. Ronald J. Feenstra, and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 1989.
- Brown, Joanne Carlson. "Divine Child Abuse?" in Daughters of Sarah. 18 (Summer 1990): 18:24-28.
- Cannon, William R. "The Holy Spirit in the Godhead." One in Christ 16/3 (1980):169-184.
- Carr, Anne. "The God Who is Involved." Theology Today 38 (October 1981): 314-28.
- Carrol, B. Jill. "Models of God or Models for Us? On the theology of Sallie McFague." Encounter 52/2 (1991): 183-95.
- Christ, Carol P. "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections." In Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion. Ed. Carol Christ, and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.
- Clarke, Norris. "Christian Theism and Whiteheadian Process Philosophy: Are they Compatible?" in The Philosophical Approach to God. Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Wake Forest University Press. 1979.
- Collins, Mary. "Naming God in Public Prayer." Worship 59 (1985): 291-304.
- Congar, Yves. "Motherhood in God and the Femininity of the Holy Spirit." In I Believe in the Holy Spirit. New York: Seabury Press. 1983. Vol. 3:155-64.
- Cousins, Ewert. "A Theology of Interpersonal Relations." Thought 45(1970): 56-82.
- Cunningham, David. "Trinitarian Theology since 1990." Religious Studies Review 13/2 (April 1987): 9-16.
- D'Angelo, Mary Rose. "Beyond Father and Son." in Justice as Mission: An Agenda for the Church. Ed. Terry Brown and Christopher Lind. Burlington, Ontario: Trinity Press. 1985.

- Dart, John. "Balancing Out the Trinity." Christian Century 199 (1983): 16-23.
- Daly, Mary. "The Qualitative Leap Beyond Patriarchal Religion." Quest 1/4 (1975): 18-22.
- Deneffe, August. "Perichoresis, Circumincessio, Circuminsessio. Einer Terminologische Untersuchung." Zeitschrift für Katolische Theologie 47 (1923): 497-532.
- DiNoia, J. A. "Knowing and Naming the Triune God: The Grammar of Trinitarian Confession." In Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Ed. Alvin Kimel, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Ford, Lewis. "Process Trinitarianism." Journal of the American Academy of Religion 43, no. 2 (1975): 199-213.
- Frye, Roland. "Language for God and Feminist Language: Problems and Principles." Scottish Journal of Theology 42 (1988): 462-69.
- Gill, Carroll. "Models of God or Models of Us?" Encounter 52/2 (Spring, 1991): 183-195.
- Goldenberg, Naomi R. "A Feminist Critique of Jung." Signs 2:2 (1976): 443-49.
- , "Dreams and Fantasies as Sources of Revelation: Feminist Appropriation of Jung." In Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion. Ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.
- Green, Garrett. "The Gender of God and the Theology of Metaphor." In Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Ed. Alvin Kimel, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Grey, Mary. "The Core of Our Desire: Re-Imaging the Trinity." Theology 93 (1990): 363-72.
- Grindal, Gracia. "Reflections on God 'The Father.'" Word and World 4 (1984): 78-86.

- Gunton, Colin. "Barth, The Trinity, and Human Freedom." Theology Today 43/3 (1986): 316-30.
- Harrison, Verna. "The Fatherhood of God in Orthodox Theology." St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 37 (1993): 183-213.
- , "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers." St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 35 (1991): 53-65.
- Harvey, Susan A. "Feminine Imagery for the Divine: The Holy Spirit, the Odes of Solomon, and Early Syrian Tradition." St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 37 (1993): 111-140.
- Havrilak, Gregory. "Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity." St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 34 (1990): 61-77.
- Hebblethwaite, Brian. "Perichoresis - Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity." Theology 80 (1977): 255-61.
- Hendry, George S. "The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth." Scottish Journal of Theology, 31(June, 1978): 229-244.
- Hopko, Thomas. "God and Gender: Articulating the Orthodox Theology." St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 37 (1993): 141-182.
- Hunsinger, George. "The Crucified God and the Political Theology of Violence: A Critical Survey of Jurgen Moltmann's Recent Thought I/II." Heythrop Journal 14 (1973): 269-79, 375-95.
- Jacob, P. J. "The Motherhood of the Holy Spirit." Journal of Dharma 5 (1980): 160-74.
- Jenson, Robert W. "The Father, He. . ." In Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Ed. Alvin Kimel, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- , "Jesus in the Trinity." In The Theology of Wolfart Pannenberg. Ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton. Minneapolis: Augus Publishing House, 1988.

- , "The Logic of the Doctrine of the Trinity." Dialog 26 (Fall 1987): 245-49.
- , "The Triune God." in Christian Dogmatics. Ed. Braaten, Carl and Jenson, Robert. 2 vols.: Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1982.
- John. Meyendorff. "Reply to Jurgen Moltmann's 'the Unity of the Triune God.'" Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 28/3 (1984): 183-188.
- Johnson, Elizabeth. "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female." Theological Studies 45 (1984): 441-65.
- Jung, Carl G. "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity." In The Collected Works of C. G. Jung. Vol. II. 107-200. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Ed. Herbert Read, et al. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1958.
- Kadandavil, K. T. "Jungian Concept of Quartertnity and the Feminine Aspect in the Trinity." Journal of Dharma 5 (1980): 199-211.
- Kaiser, C. "Discerning the Trinity on the Basis of Empirical Situations." Scottish Journal of Theology 28 (1975): 449-60.
- Kimel, Alvin F. Jr. "The God Who likes His Name: Holy Trinity, Feminism, and the Language of Faith." In Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Ed. Alvin Kimel, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1992.
- , "The Holy Trinity Meets Ashtoreth: A Critique of the Episcopal 'Inclusive' Liturgies." Anglican Theological Review 71/1 (Winter 1989).
- LaCugna, Catherine M. "The Baptismal Formula, Feminist Objections, and Trinitarian Theology." Journal of Ecumenical Studies 26 (1989): 235-50
- , "Baptism, Feminists, and Trinitarian Theology." Ecumenical Trends 17 (May, 1988): 65-68.
- , "Current Trends in Trinitarian Theology." Religious Studies Review 13/2 (April, 1977): 141-146.

- , "God in Communion with Us." in Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective. Ed. Catherine LaCugna. New York: Harper Collins. 1993.
- , "Reconceiving the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation." Scottish Journal of Theology 38 (March 1985): 1-23.
- , and K. McDonnell. "Returning from 'The Far Country': Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology." Scottish Journal of Theology 41 (1988): 192-215.
- , "The Practical Trinity." Christian Century Vol. 109. (July 1992): 678-682.
- , "The Trinitarian Mystery of God. " In Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives. Ed. Francis Schussler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1991.
- Lash, Nicholas. "Considering the Trinity." Modern Theology 2:3 (1986): 183-96.
- Layman, C. Stephen. "Tritheism and the Trinity." Faith and Philosophy 5 (1988): 291-98.
- Letter, P. De. "The Theology of God's Self-Gift." Theological Studies 24 (1963): 402-422.
- Little, Joyce. "Sexual Equality in the Church: A Theological Resolution to the Anthropological Dilemma." Hexthrop Journal 28 (1987): 165-78.
- Lochman, Jan M. "The Trinity and Human Life." Theology 78 (1975): 173-83.
- Marinich, A. "Identity and Trinity." Journal of Religion 58 (April. 1978):169-181.
- Meeks, M. Douglas. "Jürgen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions to Theology:" Religious Studies Review vol. 22:2 (April. 1996): 95-102.

- Mühlen, Heribert. "The Person of the Holy Spirit" in Kilian McDonnell." in The Holy Spirit and Power: the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. New York: Doubleday. 1975.
- Molnar, Paul. "The Function of the Immanent Trinity in the Theology of Karl Barth: Implications of Today." Scottish Journal of Theology 42 (1989): 367-399.
- , "The Function of the Trinity in Moltmann's Ecological Doctrine of Creation." Theological Studies 51 (1990): 673-697.
- , "Some Problems with Pannenberg's Solution to Barth's 'Faith Subjectivism.'" Scottish Journal of Theology 48 (1995): 315-339.
- , "Toward a Contemporary Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: Karl Barth and Current Discussion" Scottish Journal of Theology 49 (1996): 311-357.
- Miell, David K. "Barth on Person in Relationship: A Case for Further Reflection?" Scottish Journal of Theology 42 (1989): 541-55.
- Milbank, John. "The Second Difference: For a Trinitarianism without Reserve." Modern Theology 2/3 (1986): 213-34.
- Murray, Robert. "The Holy Spirit as Mother." in Symbol of Church and Kingdom. London: Cambridge University Press. 1975.
- Neuhaus, Richard J. "Moltmann vs. Monotheism." Dialog 20 (1981): 234-43.
- Nomikos, Vapouris M. ed. "Ecumenical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit [Papers, NCCCUSA Consultation]." Greek Orthodox Theological Review 31/3-4 (Fall-Winter, 1986): v-xi, 231-427.
- O'Donnell, John J. "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology." Hevthrop Journal 23 (1982): 153-67.
- , "The Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection upon Recent Theological Developments." Gregorianum 69 (1988): 5-34.

- O'Hanlon, Daniel. "The Future of Theism." Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings 38. 1983.
- Olson, Roger. "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jurgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg." Scottish Journal of Theology 36 (1983): 213-227.
- , "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity [Rahner's Rule and 'Pannenberg's Principle']" Scottish Journal of Theology 43: 2. (1990): 175-206.
- Oxford-Carpenter, Rebecca. "Gender and the Trinity." Theology Today 41 (1984): 7-25.
- Peters, Ted. "The Battle over Trinitarian Language." Dialog 39 (1991): 44-49.
- Peterson, Erik. "Der Monotheismus als Politisches Problem." In Theologische Traktate Munch (1951): 48-147.
- Phan, Peter C. "The Trinitarian Basis of Christian Unity." Dialogue and Alliance 4 (1990): 1-85.
- Placher, William C. "The Present Absence of Christ: Some Thoughts on Pannenberg and Moltmann." Encounter 60 (Spring, 1979): 169-79.
- , "Revealed to Reason: Theology as 'Normal Science.'" Christian Century 109/19 (Fall 1992): 192-195.
- Plantinga, Cornelius Jr. "Images of God." in Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World: Theology from an Evangelical Point of View. Ed. Mark A. Knoll and David F. Wells. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1988.
- , "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity." The Thomist 50 (1986): 325-52.
- , "Social Trinity and Tritheism." In Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays. Ed. By Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 1989.

- , "The Threeness/ Oneness Problem of the Trinity." Calvin Theological Journal 23 (1988): 37-53.
- Porter, Lawrence. "On Keeping 'Persons' in the Trinity: A Linguistic Approach to Trinitarian Thought." Theological Studies 41 (1980): 530-48.
- Rahner, Karl. "Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam." Theological Investigations XVIII. New York: Crossroad Publishing. 1983.
- , "On the Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology." Theological Investigations. Vol. 4. Translated by Kevin Smith. New York: Crossroad. 1982.
- , "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate.'" Theological Investigations. Vol. 4. 77-102. Translated by Kevin Smyth. New York: Crossroad. 1982.
- Ramshaw, S. Gail. "De Divinis Nominibus: The Gender of God." Worship 56 (1982): 117-131.
- , "Naming the Trinity: Orthodox and Inclusivity." Worship 60 (1986): 491-98.
- Russell, Letty. "Inclusive Language and Power." Religious Education 80 (1985): 582-602.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. "The Image of God in the New Testament." In Sacramentum Verbi. Ed. J. B. Bauer. London: Sheed and Ward. 1970.
- Schneiders, M. Sandra. "God is More than Two Men and a Bird." U.S. Catholic (May 1990): 20-27.
- Schoonenberg, Piet. "Trinity-The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God." Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses 5 (1975): 111-116.
- Smith, Janet E. "Feminism, Motherhood and the Church." in The Catholic Woman. Ed. Ralph McInerny. San Francisco: Ignatius. 1990.

- Stemmer, Peter. "Perichorese. Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs." Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte 27 (1983): 9-55.
- Suchocki, Marjorie. "The Unmale God: Reconsidering the Trinity." Quarterly Review 3 (1983): 34-49.
- Swinburne, Richard. "Could There Be More Than One God?" Faith and Philosophy 5 (1988): 225-41.
- Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks. "Comments on Jurgen Moltmann's 'The Unity of the Triune God'." Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 28/3 (1984): 179-182.
- , "On the Trinity." Interpretation 45 (1991): 159-71.
- Thurmer, J. A. "The Analogy of the Trinity." Scottish Journal of Theology 34 (1981): 509-515.
- Torrance, Thomas F. "Toward an Ecumenical Consensus on the Trinity." Theologische Zeitschrift 31 (November-December, 1975): 337-350
- , "The Christian Apprehension of God the Father." In Speaking the Christian God: the Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Ed. Alvin Kimel, Jr. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992.
- Tracy, David. "Analogy and Dialectic: God-Language." Talking about God. By David Tracy and John Cobb, Jr.. New York: Seabury, 1983.
- Wainwright, Geoffrey. "The Doctrine of the Trinity: Where the Church Stands or Falls." Interpretation 45 (1991): 117-32.
- Walsh, Brian. "Theology of Hope and the Doctrine of Creation: an Appraisal of Jurgen Moltmann." Evangelical Quarterly 59 (January, 1987): 53-76.
- Ware, Kallistos. "The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity." in Sobornost 8-2 (1986): 6-23.

- Webster, John B. "The Identity of the Holy Spirit: a Problem in Trinitarian Theology." Themelios 9/1 (Summer, 1983): 4-7.
- Wells, Harold. "Trinitarian Feminism: Elizabeth Johnson's Wisdom Christology." in Theology Today 52 (1995): 330-343.
- , "Theology for Reconciliation." In The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches. Ed. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells. New York: Orbis, 1997.
- , "The Trinity and Good News. I. II." Touchstone Vol.8/1 (Jan. 1990): 17-29. and Vol. 8/2 (May 1990). 4-13.
- Wendebourg, Dorothea. "From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: The Defeat of Trinitarian Theology." Studia Patristica XVII/1 (1982): 194-97.
- Werner, Beierwaltes. "Unity and Trinity in East and West." Eriugena. Ed. B. McGinn and others. 1987.
- Wesche, Kenneth P. "Man and Woman in Orthodox Tradition: The Mystery of Gender." St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 37 (1993): 213-252.
- Williams, R. D. "Barth on the Triune God." in Karl Barth: Studies in His Theological Method. Ed. S. W. Sykes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. "Divine Simplicity." In Our Knowledge of God: Essays on Natural and Philosophical Theology. Ed. Kelly James Clark. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992.
- Woolcombe, Kenneth J. "The Pain of God." Scottish Journal of Theology 20 (1967): 129-48.
- Young, Pamela Dickey. "Beyond Moral Influence to an Atoning Life." Theology Today 52 (1995): 344-355.
- Weigler, Leslie. "Christianity or Feminism?" In Speaking the Christian God: the Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism. Ed. Alvin Kimel, Jr. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992.

Zikmund, Barbara Brown. "The Trinity and Women's Experience". Christian Century 104 (April 15, 1987): 354-56.

Zimany, Roland D. "Moltmann's Crucified God." Dialog XVI (Winter, 1977): 48-55.b