

## The categories of God's revelation in Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*

### ABSTRACT

This present work will be focused on presenting various categories of the revelation of God in Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*, a book on the theology of the cross that was first published in 1972. This work is structured to have three segments. The first segment deals with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ in the eschatological parlance of his "coming". The second segment will deal with the Triune identity of God and the relationship to the cross of the crucified God. The final segment will dwell on the identity of God as the compassionate God.

KEY WORDS: Moltmann, Revelation, Trinity, Crucified God, Compassionate.

### RESUMEN

El presente trabajo se centrará en la presentación de varias categorías de la revelación de Dios en *The Crucified God* de Jürgen Moltmann, un libro sobre la teología de la cruz que se publicó por primera vez en 1972. Esta obra está estructurada en tres segmentos. El primer segmento trata de la revelación de Dios en Jesucristo en el lenguaje escatológico de su "venida". El segundo segmento tratará la identidad trina de Dios y la relación con la cruz del Dios crucificado. El último segmento se detendrá en la identidad de Dios como Dios compasivo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Moltmann, Revelación, Trinidad, Dios crucificado, compasivo.

## INTRODUCTION

The term “revelation” is not a strange concept to the Christian faith and specifically to the academic enterprise of Theology. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines revelation in the following manners: “a fact that people are made aware of, especially one that has been secret and is surprising”, “the act of make making people aware of something that has been secret” and “something that is considered to be a sign or message from God”. According to Gerald O’Collins, revelation is the act of revealing and also the act that makes new knowledge available<sup>1</sup>. Christianity is known as the religion of revelation and so, it is an important aspect of its belief in God and the interpretation of its doctrines. Therefore, the Christian idea of revelation points to the self-manifestation of God in history by various events by which men have come to perceive the presence of God<sup>2</sup>, and in a unique way, in the life and person of Jesus Christ who is central and the key to the understanding of the revelation of God in history<sup>3</sup>.

It is important to state that the discourse on the Christian concept of revelation is evidently wide, and so this work intends to delve into the dominant categories of revelation in Jürgen Moltmann’s book *The Crucified God*. The theological enterprise of Moltmann, as one can read from his autobiography, has been nurtured from his life experience, encounters with different people and cultures, and the desire for a theological system that is constantly in dialogue with the society and other creeds. The concept of revelation is evidently found in his *The Crucified God* that was first published in 1972. This present work is structured in three segments. The first segment deals with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ in the eschatological parlance of his “coming”. This will focus on understanding God’s identity in the

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1 O’COLLINS, G., *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology*, Oxford University Press, New York 2011, 57.

2 GONZÁLEZ MONTES, A., *Teología fundamental: De la revelación y de la fe*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 2010, 7ff. In the exposition of the concept of revelation, Adolfo presented various classification or models of the understanding of revelation from the biblical perspective.

3 LATOURELLE, R., “Revelación”, in LATOURELLE, R.; FISICHELLA, R.; PIÉ-NINOT, S. (dirs.), *Diccionario de Teología Fundamental*, San Pablo, Madrid<sup>2</sup> 1992, 1252.

language of promise and Jesus Christ's role in it as the sacrament of the fulfillment of God's promises. The second segment will deal with the Triune identity of God and the relationship to the cross of the crucified God. Since the cross of the resurrected Christ is the central theme of the book *The Crucified God*, it is necessary to evaluate the significance of the cross in the life of the Trinity. The final segment will dwell on the identity of God as the compassionate God. This segment will flow with the intention of presenting God's identity side by side with the reality of suffering.

## 1. THE REVELATION OF GOD FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PROMISE

### 1.1. The theological significance of “Promise” in the Sacred Scripture and the Moltmannian understanding of promise

#### A. *Promise in the Old Testament*

It is accepted that there is no singular formula used in describing the word “promise” in the Old Testament, what we find are “*dābār*, *āmar* or *ne’ūm*” (say, speak or word)<sup>4</sup>. Another word used is *berit*, which means covenant or pact. God's promise in the Old Testament is linked to his faithfulness to fulfill all that he has promised in the covenant (cf. Num. 23:19)<sup>5</sup>.

The promise that was made by God to the people of Israel is traced to the Patriarchs (Gen. 12, 1-3, 17:1-27, 26:4, 28:15-16), Moses and the people at Mount Sinai (Deut. 26:18) and David (2 Sam. 7:25-28). It is important to note that all that Israel perceived of the promise of God is centered more on the promise of land and descendants. The promise made by God to Israel and her Patriarchs points us to the identity of God as the God of promise, the catalyst of hope for man. He promises salvation and fulfills it (cf. Num. 10:29; Deut. 1:11)<sup>6</sup>, and

<sup>4</sup> LODS, M., “Promesa”, in BOGAERT, P.-M., and GALLART, M. (eds.), *Diccionario enciclopédico de la Biblia*, Herder, Barcelona<sup>2</sup> 2003, 1256.

<sup>5</sup> CREMASCHI, L., “Promesa”, in *Diccionario enciclopédico del cristianismo*, San Pablo, Madrid 2009, 820.

<sup>6</sup> PIKAZA, Xavier, *Gran diccionario de la Biblia*, Verbo Divino, Estella<sup>2</sup> 2015, 1069.

it also emphasizes the identity of God as a faithful God whose words are powerful enough to bring about the fulfillment of his promise (cf. Gen. 41:32; 1 Sam. 1:23; Isa. 58:14)<sup>7</sup>.

### B. *Promise in the New Testament*<sup>8</sup>

In the New testament, we have various forms that refer to the term “promise” like *ἐπαγγέλλομαι* which means ‘to announce’, ‘to promise’ or ‘to bind oneself’, and in the noun form we have *ἐπάγγελμα* which means ‘the news’ or ‘the promise’.

The theological significance of promise in the work of St. Luke points out that God the Father is the principal subject who promises (cf. Lk. 24:49) and his promise is key in understanding the salvific plan fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This promise is directed to the Patriarchs, especially to Abraham (cf. Acts. 7:2-17), to the people of Israel (Acts. 13:32) and to the disciples of Jesus Christ (Lk 24:49; Acts. 1:4). The content of this promise is the coming of Jesus Christ as the Saviour (cf. Acts. 13:23.32) and it has become the Good news by virtue of its fulfillment (Acts. 13:32).

In the writings of St. Paul, the power and authority to fulfill the promises made by God resides in God himself (Rom. 4:21). The most effective usage of the category of promise by St. Paul is in his message of the ineffective salvific ability of the law. It is the grace of God that saves, therefore there should be no comparison between law and grace (cf. Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3: 18-21). These promises are linked to Jesus Christ because in him they have all come to fruition (2 Cor. 1:20) and by his death we have received all that has been promised (Gal. 3:14).

From this brief exposition, one can see that there is more than one lexical representation of what promise is, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. On the question of divine promise, the idea that is presented us about God is his unfailing faithfulness to all the promises that he has made, and this opens up a dimension for the future.

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7 LODS, “Promesa”, 1256.

8 HOFFMAN, E., “Promesa”, in CONEN, L.; BEYREUTHER, E., and BIETENHARD, H., *Diccionario Teológico del Nuevo Testamento*, Sígueme, Salamanca<sup>2</sup> 1986, 421-425.

### C. *Moltmannian understanding of Promise*

Moltmann's concept of promise takes off from the perspective that Christian eschatology be treated as the hope of new things to come and not as the doctrine of the last things, and so within this ambience of hope, the theme of divine promise is given an ample consideration.

In order to understand Moltmann's point of view on promise, we must first refer to his claim on the difference between the pagan religions of epiphany and the Israelite religion of promise. This difference originates from the lifestyle of the neighboring nations of Israel that were more agrarian and sedentary and whose relationship with their gods was based on the epiphanies, which are anti-historical and signifies life's contact with changeless eternity. These gods were restricted to the geo-local demarcations where these epiphanies took place. On the other hand, the nomadic lifestyle of Israel made them develop a religion of promise with faith in a God who inspires and protects, a God that is not restricted to a locality but rather moves with his people as they migrate<sup>9</sup>.

The concept of promise, for Moltmann, refers to a declaration that announces the coming of a reality that is yet to arrive<sup>10</sup>, and since it is divine promise, it is a reality that depends on God.<sup>11</sup> This promise links man to the future dimension of his own history<sup>12</sup>. The concept

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9 MOLTmann, J., *Teología de la esperanza*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1969, 126-132; MARTINUS KUITERT, H., "Aclaraciones a la teología de la esperanza", in MARSCH, W.-D., and MOLTmann, J., *Discusión sobre teología de la esperanza*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1972, 165-169.

10 MOLTmann, Jürgen, "Hope and History", in *Theology Today* 25, 378.

11 RATZINGER, J., *Introducción al cristianismo: Lecciones sobre el credo apostólico*, Sigueme, Salamanca<sup>16</sup> 2016, 104.

12 The relation of promise with history does not just remain on a personal-subjective level, it extends also to history in general. Moltmann avers that under the sign of promise, we can experience reality as "history". It is promise that structures history into experience, remembrance and expectation. This is to mean that it is promise that makes history, due to the futuristic movement that promise initiates, that gives the idea that a historic event which has taken place does not close in on itself, rather it points to the future, in expectancy of what has been promised by God. These past (remembered) events point forward to something which does not yet exist in its fullness (MOLTmann, *Teología de la esperanza*, 138-140). Pilar Pena Búa posits that in Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, the

of promise also gives rise to faith in a God who is the subject of the promises made because they come from him<sup>13</sup>.

This idea over the divine promises of God is made evident in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the reality of promise has been validated by virtue of the truthfulness and faithfulness of God for all, because the promise is universal and unconditional by virtue of the eschatological certainty in Christ, of a future that has been promised<sup>14</sup>.

## 1.2. Revelation of God as “the coming God”

The concept of promise presents the opportunity to reflect on the revelation of God, since he is known by virtue of his promise and his faithfulness in fulfilling his promise. As far as revelation is concerned, God reveals himself as he is. He is the subject of his manifestation (cf. Ex. 3:14ff). Moltmann affirms that God reveals himself in proving his faithfulness in history of what is past and what is expected<sup>15</sup>.

Within this scope of promise, sustained by the faithfulness of God, it gives us the opportunity to ask after the central content of the promise of this faithful God. Our hope, according to Moltmann, expects the promised future from the coming of God and all that he brings<sup>16</sup>. This affirms what has been established in the aspect of the revelation of God as self-revelation (by virtue of his faithfulness) and presents the opportunity to highlight Moltmann’s eschatology.

Eschatology is not the future of time nor is it a timeless eternity, it is the future and coming of God<sup>17</sup>. The perception of God as the

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revelation of God is basically the experience of promise and that it is this promise that causes the future to be opened to a new dimension, in expectancy of what has been promised; therefore, revelation is eschatology and eschatology is the key to history: (PENA BÚA, P, “Fundamentación y credibilidad de la revelación en Jürgen Moltmann”, in *Diálogo Ecuménico* 31 (1996) 165-166.188).

13 MOLTMANN, *Teología de la esperanza*, 133-137.

14 *Ibid.*, 191-192.

15 *Ibid.*, 152.

16 *Ibid.*, 156ff.

17 MOLTMANN, J., *La venida de Dios. Escatología cristiana*, Sigueme, Salamanca 2004, 47.

coming one goes in the opposite direction of the Greek idea, for while the gods exist in the eternal present, God's Being is described by his coming (cf. Rev. 1:4) and not in his becoming<sup>18</sup>. He is the coming God and the God of hope (Is. 35:4; 40:5) whose mode of being is the future. In him, the expected future gains an inexhaustible added value in comparison with the past and the present<sup>19</sup>. In this way, the future becomes an expected transformative reality of the past and present<sup>20</sup>.

The coming God indicates that something new is coming with him as affirmed in Is. 43: 18ff. According to Moltmann, the category of the *novum* (the new), in the biblical tradition, was first used in a theological sense by the prophets and it had two major characteristics: firstly, as an object of qualitative distinction between the old creation and the new. Secondly, as a category that indicates a total renewal that is incomparable to what the new signifies<sup>21</sup>. The category of the new is not restricted to the Old Testament. It is found in the New Testament and concretely in the person of Jesus Christ and the event of his resurrection which means that the future of the Resurrected Christ is of the new creation<sup>22</sup>.

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18 *Ibid.*, 48, in *Revelation* 1:4, Moltmann notes that it read: "Peace from him who is and who was and *who is to come*". The point here is that one would expect that it ends with *who will be*, and not *who is to come*. The future is the "coming of God" and as the coming God, he is not only the future of the present but also the future of the past (MOLTmann, "Hope and History", 377).

19 MOLTmann, *La venida de Dios*, 49.

20 *Ibid.*, 52.

21 *Ibid.*, 53. "By future ("advent") we do not mean a faraway condition, but a power which already qualifies the present through promise and hope, through liberation and the creation of new possibilities. As this power of the future, God reaches into the present. As creator of new possibilities, he liberates the present from the shackles of the past and from the anxious insistence on the *status quo*. Thus, God becomes the power of the protest against the guilt that throws us into transiency and produces death, and he becomes also the ground of the freedom that renews life" (MOLTmann, "Hope and History", 376-377).

22 MOLTmann, *La venida de Dios*, 54. According to Moltmann, "The resurrection of Jesus from the dead by God does not speak the 'language of facts', but only the language of faith and hope, that is the 'language of promise'. I have therefore denoted the proleptic structure of the proclamation of Jesus and the Christian resurrection faith by the word 'promise'... My own view is that the expression 'promise event' corresponds more really to the continuing difference between the demonstrably 'unredeemed world' and faith in the coming

### 1.3. The roles of Christ in the revelation of the coming God

The role of Christ in the advent of the coming God is an important aspect of the Christian faith. He is our hope because God is our future; without this hope in Christ, there is no Christian faith<sup>23</sup>. “Jesus re-presents through his own presence and mission, that not-yet-realized future of the kingdom in which God is God”<sup>24</sup>. His resurrection was understood in the light of his future in the coming God who will bring an end to the history of the abandoned world<sup>25</sup>. The Christ event, especially his resurrection, presents us with a reality like no other and faith in him is demonstrated to us as faith in the one who reserves a place for the God who is to come, faith in the Messiah<sup>26</sup>.

In this regard, some points will be highlighted in consonance with the Christological relevance to the eschatological future of the coming God, and this will be done under two categories developed by Moltmann; Jesus Christ as the anticipation and the incarnation of the coming God.

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of reconciliation in the midst of strife than the verbally pacifying talk of the actual anticipation of the end” (MOLTMANN, J., *The Crucified God*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN 2015, 246). This statement of Moltmann of the resurrection not speaking the ‘language of facts’ can be easily perceived as denying the historicity of the fact that Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead, but Randall Otto makes an input in helping us understand what Moltmann’s intention was by that statement and it is, specifically, that Moltmann took a basic nonontological epistemological stance, that is the ontology of the not-yet that features a processive character of reality which is summarized in the words of Christopher Morse (as cited by Otto): “...the resurrection of Jesus is not a concluded event which has become a datum of the past to be appropriated as archaeological fact or as a timeless myth...”. The important thing for Moltmann, according to Otto, as a proponent of hope is “the reappropriation of this Biblical symbol as a heuristic device for the purposes of world transformation” (OTTO, R., “The Resurrection in Jürgen Moltmann”, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (1992) 85-86).

23 MOLTMANN, J., *Experiencias de Dios*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1983, 55.

24 MOLTMANN, “Hope and History”, 379.

25 MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 230.

26 *Ibid.*, 231.

### *A. Jesus Christ as “the anticipation” of the coming God*

Jesus is the anticipation of God, the future of history. This is confirmed by his resurrection from the dead, which signifies that the eschatological future of God, of life, of righteousness and of the new creation occurred in and under the conditions of history through him and in him<sup>27</sup>.

To understand the anticipatory role of Jesus Christ, we need to refer to his title, *Kyrios* (Lord). Moltmann makes us understand that this title meant that Jesus is the mediator between God and us<sup>28</sup>. In the light of the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christians saw the anticipation of what the future holds and what it signifies, a guarantee of the coming glory of God and new creation<sup>29</sup>. His identity as Lord was understood as a provisional and messianic realization of the ultimate lordship of God that makes room for the absolute lordship of God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24)<sup>30</sup>.

### *B. Jesus Christ as “the incarnation” of the coming God*

Moltmann asks that we should not only see the universal future of God from the particular presence of Christ, so as to avoid falling into subordination but that we should also look to the presence of Christ from the future of God. This leads us to seeing Jesus as the incarnation of the coming God<sup>31</sup>.

The Christological title, “Son of God”, plays a role here because the One who was crucified has God as his Father, and in obedience and love offered himself up to the Father. For Moltmann, the incarnation of the coming God in Jesus is made manifest in the meaning of his cross. His pro-existence and his death possess a saving significance for

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27 MOLTmann, “Hope and History”, 380.

28 MOLTmann, *The Crucified God*, 257.

29 *Ibid.*, 255.

30 MOLTmann, “Hope and History”, 380.

31 “Therefore, it is not sufficient to designate Jesus as the “stand-in” and deputy of the coming God. For precisely in such a capacity he is also already the incarnation of the coming God” (*ibid.*).

us by which he brings righteousness and life to the unrighteous and the dying<sup>32</sup>.

Both roles of Jesus Christ, with regard to question of the revelation of the coming God, fit in as two sides of the same reality that Moltmann refers to as the eschatological Christology, which is also ‘messianic’, according to which the beginning of the coming consummation of salvation has already taken place in the coming of Christ, and with Christ the eschatological future has already begun<sup>33</sup>. This position gives active meaning to human history and to life within time. The Christian life perceives history as a process that is ongoing and moving towards the Promised End<sup>34</sup>.

## 2. THE REVELATION OF GOD AND MOLTMANN’S SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

In the task of finding out the principal ideas of God in the thoughts of Moltmann in general and, specifically, in his book *The Crucified God*, one can certainly see and perceive a strong presence of the Trinitarian identity of God. In this segment, I shall dwell on the revelation of God in his Trinitarian identity and the cross of Christ.

### 2.1. The Crucified God and the Blessed Trinity

Moltmann avers that we perceive God from the point of view of the cross in the identity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This doctrine is the distinctive element of Christianity from other religions. Concretely, Moltmann’s perspective on the Trinitarian discourse takes off from the interrogative of whether it was necessary to think of God in Trinitarian terms if we are to understand the ‘human’, the ‘crucified’ God<sup>35</sup>.

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32 MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 266.

33 MOLTMANN, J., *Ethics of Hope*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN 2017, 37ff.

34 HINOJOSA, L. W., “The Kindling of live hopes: Eschatological historiography in Jürgen Moltmann’s Theology of Hope”, in *Fides et Historia* 52 (2020) 104-107.

35 MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 347.

This question is quite radical and requires a response that is radically commensurate. Moltmann stated that in our practice of the implication of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, we are only manifesting a weakly Christianized monotheism that subsumes everything in 'God' without really making the distinction and differentiation of the God-Person referred to<sup>36</sup>.

This perception, according to Moltmann, has its roots in the medieval thought that created a distinction into the doctrine of God, where the existence of God as 'One' *De Deo uno* was first proved by the use of the natural light of human reason, and then later, the inner life of this 'One' God, *De Deo triuno* by the aid of the supernatural light of grace, which was a discourse on his salvation-historical relationship to us<sup>37</sup>.

Moltmann is of the opinion that Trinity is not an exorbitant and impractical speculation about God; it is, rather, a shorter version of the passion narrative of Christ in its significance for the eschatological freedom of faith and the life of oppressed nature<sup>38</sup>. This relationship between the Trinity and the cross is not readily found in the New Tes-

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36 *Ibid.*, 348. It is important to note here that this criticism of Moltmann is similar to what Karl Rahner referred to in the fourth volume of his *Theological Investigations*. Rahner observes that in the history of the devotion to the Blessed Trinity, it is factual that Christians "for all their orthodox profession of faith in the Trinity, are almost just monotheist in their actual religious existence". There exists the tendency that if the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity were considered to be false and erased, there would be little or no substantial change at all of many religious literatures in the change process. He made reference to the general idea about the doctrine of Incarnation that holds that God became man - this is not wrong though, but in his opinion, there is need to always refer to the fact that it was precisely the Word, Logos who became flesh and to ask what it means in particular, that "the Logos, precisely as himself in contradistinction to the other divine persons, became man". The doctrine of Incarnation helps us to deepen our knowledge of the Trinity, but it seems that people are just comfortable with the little understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity without trying to probe deeper and further what the mystery of Trinity is. And so, this leads to an abstract understanding of the Trinity (RAHNER, K., *Theological Investigations*, IV, Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1966, 78-80).

37 MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 353.

38 "The content of the doctrine of the Trinity is the real cross of Christ himself. The form of the crucified Christ is the Trinity" (*ibid.*, 363).

tament, rather, it is found in the traditions of the controversies of the early church over the unity of Christ with God himself<sup>39</sup>.

The cross, Moltmann avers, is an event of love between the Son who suffers, in his love, of being forsaken by the Father and the Father who suffers, in his love, the grief of the death of the Son. But this event of love, enshrined in the act of absolute surrender, is captured in the Spirit that proceeds from this event of love of the Father and the Son and outpours it on men<sup>40</sup>.

The death of the Son is understood not only within the terminology of human-divine nature of the Son, but also in a Trinitarian dimension that shows the implication of the three divine persons at the cross<sup>41</sup>.

## 2.2. The eschatological revelation of God in the Resurrection of the Crucified Christ

In the foregone, it has been stated that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a vital event in the demonstration of the promise of God and that it is an event that gives rise to hope in the future of the coming God. Moltmann understood the resurrection of Christ as ‘resurrection from the dead’ and not ‘resurrection of the dead’<sup>42</sup>, a distinction which helps to buttress the identity of God as One who creates *ex*

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39 *Ibid.*, 356.

40 *Ibid.*, 362.

41 MOLTMANN, J., *Trinidad y Reino de Dios. La doctrina sobre Dios*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1983, 99. The opinion of Moltmann perfectly demonstrates this brilliant interwovenness between Jesus Christ and his relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit and this is the benefit of understanding the event of the cross in Trinitarian terms and not only in the personal terms. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross must underline the severity and the consequence to his person, in totality, as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, but it must go further, as Moltmann avers, to show that what happened on the cross of Christ is a manifestation of the relationship of Jesus, the Son, to his Father and vice versa. “The cross and its liberating effect makes it possible the movement of the Spirit from the Father to us. The cross stands at the heart of the Trinitarian being of God; it divides and conjoins the persons in their relationships to each other and portrays them in a specific way” (MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 296-298).

42 *Ibid.*, 241.

*nihilo* and brings about the new creation<sup>43</sup>. The resurrection of Jesus Christ contains within it, the process of the incarnation of the coming of God and his glory in the crucified Christ<sup>44</sup>.

An attempt at a revelation of the Triune God by virtue of the resurrection of Christ makes us aware that God reveals himself as the Father of Jesus Christ by raising him from the dead<sup>45</sup>. Believing in the resurrection of Christ means to be caught in the Spirit of resurrection and this was what the early Christians experienced, because they based their faith in resurrection not only on the appearances of the risen one but also in the power of the Spirit of God<sup>46</sup>. Faith in the resurrection is faith on the creative act of God. God is the power that gives life, the power that enriches the poor and raises the humiliated. The Pauline perspective in Romans 8:11 connects the resurrection of Jesus with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who opens us up to the dimension of the eventful resurrection of the dead. We possess this experience of the resurrection because of this life-giving Spirit<sup>47</sup>.

Moltmann talks about the revelation of the Triune God in the resurrection of Christ when he refers to the activity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in this resurrection event<sup>48</sup>. He attributes to the Father the symbol of "raising Jesus from the dead", and in this symbol, the Father alone is active while Jesus is passive (1 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 1:20; Rom. 8:11). But the 'rising up' or 'resurrection' comes from Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 4:14, Jn. 11:25) whose action corresponds to the 'raising from the dead' action of God. For Moltmann, this signifies the reciprocal relationship of raising and resurrection, of

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43 "Therefore, his historical crucifixion was understood as the eschatological event of judgement and his resurrection as a hidden anticipation of the eschatological kingdom of glory in which the dead will be raised. The 'future' of which the first real anticipation was seen in his resurrection was not understood as future history and thus as part of transitoriness, but eschatologically as the future of history and thus as the pledge of the new creation" (*ibid.*, 230).

44 *Ibid.*, 240.

45 MOLTMANN, J., *Cristo para nosotros hoy*, Trotta, Madrid 1997, 63.

46 *Ibid.*, 65.

47 *Ibid.*, 70.

48 MOLTMANN, J., *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in messianic dimensions*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN 1993, 247-248.

the act of the Father from above and the responsive act of Jesus Christ from below. The Holy Spirit, as the life-giving agent, envelopes the act of Jesus' offering up of himself on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. Moltmann says that "when Christ dies and lives again, these acts also take place in 'the Holy Spirit'" (Heb. 9:14; 1 Cor. 15:45).

### **2.3. Moltmann and the Triune identity of God**

The quest into the revelation of the Triune identity of God, as far as it is concerned with Moltmann, must be faced with the task of exploring his thought and perspective on the social doctrine of the Trinity, which he strongly defends in his works especially in his book, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios. La doctrina sobre Dios* (1983). It is a fact that Moltmann has been fascinated by this central mystery of the Christian faith and has used it to further his reflection on various discourses.

In his work dedicated to the Trinity, he responds to the question of what the relation is between God's triune history in the New Testament and God's sovereignty. This implies a methodic change in facing the question of Trinity. Moltmann began by asking after distinctiveness of each person before responding to the question of their unity<sup>49</sup>.

It is important to note that Moltmann's discourse on the Trinity criticizes the rigid monotheistic and monarchical interpretation which the early Christian fathers employed in their response to the question of the relationship of Christ with God and the unity between Christ and God which ran the risk of talking about God without Christ like Arius. And on the other hand, it ran the risk of identifying the three divine Persons as one and attributing the same qualities to one as to others without any distinction as in the heresy of Sabellius<sup>50</sup>.

In this section, I will dwell on Moltmann's presentation of the Trinitarian thoughts of Tertullian, Karl Barth, and Karl Rahner. It will end with Moltmann's contribution to the discourse of the Blessed Trinity.

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49 MOLTmann, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios*, 33.

50 *Ibid.*, 145-148.

### A. *Tertullian's concept of the Trinity*

The history of the doctrine of the Trinity has a special place for Tertullian, whose labour went in the line of fighting heretical teachings in the Church. Tertullian's defense of the Trinity came against the patripassianism of Praxeas. Tertullian professed the faith in One God but that this one God actually has a Son, his Word, who proceeds from Him and by whom all things were made. The third person is the Holy Spirit who is the sanctifier of faith<sup>51</sup>.

The Son, the Reason and the Word, proceeds from the Father even before creation and he is distinct from the Father. This he proves by using the analogy of roots-tree, fountain-river and sun-rays to show this distinctiveness and identity between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is described by Tertullian as the fruit of the roots and tree, the stream out of the river that proceeds from the fountain<sup>52</sup>. For Tertullian, the persons of the Trinity are distinct from one another, they differ not by division but by the mode of their being<sup>53</sup>.

Moltmann observed rightly that Tertullian's discourse on the Trinity moves in the balance of monarchy and the state of economy whereby in the first instance, the Father is the one who exercises this monarchy. It is all about Him who is the substance of the Trinity. But in the second part that deals with the plan of salvation (economy), the Son and the Spirit become evident and active in their corresponding roles. It is this double reality of God in his monarchical state as One and God in the plan of salvation as Trinity that Moltmann criticizes<sup>54</sup>. Tertullian's concept of the Trinity presents a situation of subordination of both the Son and the Spirit in the economy<sup>55</sup>, and also it does not guarantee an intrinsic relationship between the Father and the Son<sup>56</sup>.

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51 TERTULLIAN, *Against Praxeas*, II.

52 *Ibid.*, V. VIII.

53 *Ibid.*, IX.

54 MOLTMANN, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios*, 155.

55 SÁNCHEZ TAPIA, M., "El desarrollo inicial y la formulación del dogma trinitario", in *Misterio de Dios-Trinidad* (Unpublished lecture notes), Estudio Teológico Agustíniano, Valladolid 2021, 11.

56 LITFIN, B. M., "Tertullian on the Trinity", in *Perichoresis* 17 (2019) 93-97.

### B. *Karl Barth's doctrine of the Trinity*

The doctrine of the Trinity, for Barth, is knit to the concept of revelation which is contained in the scripture. The question of the Trinity has to depart from how we deal with the question of revelation. From the revelation, to which the scripture serves as witness, there are three questions that are responded to: Who is God that reveals himself? How does this self-revealing God reveal Himself? What is the effect of his revelation? These questions are inseparable, for the response we give to the first leads to the second and the third,<sup>57</sup> given that the first response is that God reveals himself; secondly, He reveals himself through himself and thirdly, He reveals himself. This is to mean that God is identical: as revealer, to his act of revelation and to the effect of his revelation<sup>58</sup>.

The attempt at the concept of revelation, according to Barth, already contains within it the problem of the doctrine of the Trinity,<sup>59</sup> and the content here is that God reveals himself as the Lord and it is in this Lordship that the doctrine of the Trinity is found<sup>60</sup> and by virtue of the unimpaired unity he reveals himself as One essence and three persons or modes of being<sup>61</sup>.

Barth, according to Moltmann, equates the sovereignty of God to God's nature<sup>62</sup>. For Barth, "In God, as there is one nature, so there is

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57 BARTH, Karl, *Church Dogmatics: The doctrine of the Word of God* I.1, T & T Clark, London 2009, §296.

58 *Ibid.*, §303.

59 *Ibid.*, §304.

60 *Ibid.*, §307.

61 *Ibid.*, §333.

62 This idea of three modes of being, according to Moltmann, came as a result of the influence of German Idealism, especially in the topic of the Absolute Subject, in which the individual person is considered to the degree of human subjectivity, absolute personality. And so, with this idea, it is difficult to talk of the Three Persons of the Trinity (MOLTMANN, *Trinidad y reino de Dios*, 155). Barth adopted the use of one essence and three different modes of being" to talk about the Trinity. He founded his non-usage of the word "person", citing St. Augustine's doubt in his *De Trinitate* V, 9; VII, 4 (BARTH, *Church Dogmatics*, §355).

one knowledge, one self-consciousness”<sup>63</sup>. Moltmann interpreted this to mean “God is ‘the one personal God’ in the mode of the Father, in the mode of the Son, in the mode of the Holy Spirit”<sup>64</sup>.

Moltmann’s criticism, therefore, starts off from this point. To think of God as three modes of being does not mean thinking in Trinitarian terms. The use of the idealist perspective to explain the Trinity comes up short because it is only the personhoods of the Father and the Son that are readily confirmed, but that of the Holy Spirit is deficient, hence the problem of pneumatology<sup>65</sup>, and by extension we are faced with a Christological problem in the Trinity if we follow the idealist perspective of Barth, for the Son also loses his personality, since all activity is concentrated in the Father<sup>66</sup>.

### C. *Karl Rahner's understanding of the Trinity*

Rahner presented an understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity that is similar to that of Barth<sup>67</sup>. He begins by pointing out the problem of conceptualization that impedes the right understanding of the Trinity which lies precisely in the terminologies that are used by the Church in her classical trinitarian definition like: “hypostasis”, “person”, “essence” and “nature”, for these terms may have been intelligible in the early catechetical formulation, but today, they evoke misunderstanding. To talk of “persons” in the Trinity in the present historical context, according to Rahner, points to the individual entity in its own free center of conscious and activity that is differentiated from others<sup>68</sup>. This concept of person presents a danger to the dogmatic teaching of the single and unique essence of the God which

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63 *Ibid.*, §358 citing F. Diekamp.

64 MOLTmann, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios*, 158.

65 *Ibid.*, 159-160.

66 *Ibid.*, 161.

67 *Ibid.*, 162.

68 RAHNER, K., *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the idea of Christianity*, Crossroad, New York 1987, 134.

implies and includes “the unity of one single consciousness and one single freedom”<sup>69</sup>.

Added to this emphasis over the unicity in God, is the precaution on the use of the terminology “person”, and this is seen in his effort to underline that God reveals himself as he really is, the identification of the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity. He talks of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the three modes of presence of the One and same God<sup>70</sup>.

Moltmann interprets the postulation of Rahner as a departure from the classical doctrinal definition of the Trinity. The Trinity is, for Rahner, a self-communication act of the Absolute subject, which is concentrated in the Father, and this makes the doctrine of the Trinity superfluous. According to Moltmann, “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, by making this the external illustration of that inner experience”, and this can be termed as modalism<sup>71</sup>.

#### D. *Moltmann’s social doctrine of the Trinity*

Moltmann highlights the problem of the symbol of faith of the ancient Church in its dogmatic formulation of the Blessed Trinity, by trying to answer the two questions that arise at the time of interpreting their significance, concretely on the Council of Nicene’s *Homousios* and the Athanasian thesis of *unus Deus*. The first question is formulated as thus: “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are they one in possession of the same divine substance or identical in the same divine subject?” The second question is postulated thus: “The

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69 *Ibid.*, 135, “When the unity of the salvific and immanent Trinity is thus invoked, another danger may be banished which, when all is said and done, remains the real danger of the doctrine, not so much in the abstract theology of the schools as in the average understanding of the normal Christian. It is that of a crude tritheism” (RAHNER, K., *Theological Investigations IV*, 100).

70 RAHNER, *Foundations*, 136; Cf. SÁNCHEZ TAPIA, “El desarrollo inicial y la formulación del dogma trinitario”, 21.

71 MOLTMANN, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios*, 165-166.

unity of the three distinct persons does it consist in the homogeneity of the divine substance that is common to them or does it consist in the sameness and identity of a unique divine subject?"<sup>72</sup>

The responses he gave to these questions made him arrive at *Drei-einigkeit* Tri-unity, as presented in the biblical testimony of the three persons at work in the life of Jesus Christ. This unity, according to him, is the effect of the union of the three persons, a unity constituted by the perichoresis of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit<sup>73</sup>.

Moltmann will be much more willing than Rahner and Barth to speak of persons, because he does not see tri-theism as the great danger for the modern age. Working from an abstract concept of God, the modern person decides for or against the existence of God rather than attending to the remarkable and unexpected story of the going forth of Father, Son, and Spirit<sup>74</sup>.

In his exposition on the life of the Trinity, Moltmann starts by referring to the concepts, *prosopon* and *hypostasis*, that were developed strongly during the disputes related to the definition of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity and the eventual adoption of Boethius definition of "person". For Moltmann, the personhoods of each one of the Trinity is defined, not by their common nature, rather by their relation to one another. "The three divine persons exist as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their mutual relationship". For Moltmann, therefore, "to be a person means to exist in relationship"<sup>75</sup>.

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72 *Ibid.*, 166.

73 *Ibid.*, 167. "La unidad de las tres personas distintas solo se puede pensar perijoréticamente, como en el evangelio de Juan: "Yo estoy en el Padre, el Padre está en mí. Yo y el Padre somos uno". La unidad se establece en virtud de la mutua inhabitación de las personas" (MOLTmann, J., "No hay dos monoteísmos iguales", in *Selecciones de Teología* 62 (2003) 57ff).

74 LULL, T, "The Trinity in recent theological literature", in *Word & World* 2 (1982) 67.

75 MOLTmann, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios*, 188; ZIZIOULAS, J., *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York 1985, 17-18. Also arrived at the same affirmation as Moltmann, from the patristic point of view (St. Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers) "The being of God is relational being: without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God". He avers that it is unthinkable to speak of

This gave him the ambience to talk about the existence of the divine persons in their relations to one another, precisely, the doctrine of perichoresis, first expounded by St. John Damascene. Moltmann sees in the doctrine of perichoresis, the ability to talk about the Trinity and the unity of the Three persons without fear of reductionism. The unity of the three persons resides, not in one subject, rather, in the living fellowship of the three who are related to one another and exist in one another<sup>76</sup>. It is around this aspect that we can think of Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity, that emphasizes the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, a union based on their *perichoresis* of love<sup>77</sup>.

### 3. THE CRUCIFIED GOD AND SUFFERING

#### 3.1. The revelation of a compassionate God

The intent to study Jürgen Moltmann's presentation of the crucified God and also to unveil the image of God in his Christological presentation brings us to talk about God and suffering in his compassionate identity. As far as the present discourse is concerned, it is important to recognize that the compassionate identity of the Triune God is the ambience of understanding this love in all that it entails, and this is manifested through and in the cross of Jesus Christ<sup>78</sup>.

The identity of God as love takes form not in a world filled with love, rather, in a contradictory reality of hate that thrives on enmity and slavery. The compassionate God shows strength in the way not

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the “One God” before making reference to the Divine Persons; what comes first is the personhood in relation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that this communion that birthed “One God” has its origin in the Father in whose personhood communion and freedom coincide.

76 MOLTMANN, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios*, 191.

77 *Ibíd.*, 193.

78 MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 367; Cf. MLADENOVSKA-TEŠIJA, Julijana, “Crucified as Necessity: The Relevance of Moltmann's Theology for Evangelical Believers and their Social Commitment”, in *KAIROS- Evangelical Journal of Theology* 8 (2014) 10.

imagined. The ability to assume suffering and death demonstrates strength in what is considered weakness, because the suffering proposed by this compassionate God is a protest against suffering, a death that destroys death itself, a life-giving and a hope-filled horizon that is opened to all<sup>79</sup>.

How does Moltmann elaborate his perception of God as a Compassionate One? Moltmann follows the exposition of Abraham Heschel's theology of Pathos<sup>80</sup>. This theology of pathos developed by Heschel starts from the prophets' understanding of God and this understanding is fed by their experience of God in their historical context, "God was not spoke of from a distance, they lived as witnesses". The image of God in the Bible is surpassed by statements referring to God's pathos, and according to Heschel, they have not been accorded proper recognition in the history of biblical theology<sup>81</sup>.

God, according to Heschel, reveals himself in a personal intimate relation to the world. The God of Israel, unlike the God of the philosophers, is a God who loves, a God who is known to man and concerned about him and so, for Heschel, this is what pathos denotes, God's living care, his willingness to be involved in the history of man and a dynamic relation between God and man<sup>82</sup>.

Moltmann adopted this theology to further his idea that God, who is love, has his people at heart and, therefore, is actively involved in all that concerns them<sup>83</sup>. This thought finds a very convincing factor in the historical passion of Christ, to which Moltmann avers that if we follow through with, then we must conclude that "the self-sacrifice of love is God's eternal nature"<sup>84</sup>.

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79 MOLTmann, *The Crucified God*, 366.

80 HESCHEL, A., *The Prophets*, Harper & Row, New York 1962, 285ff.

81 *Ibid.*, 286.

82 *Ibid.*, 289-291.

83 MOLTmann, *The Crucified God*, 407.

84 MOLTmann, *Trinidad y Reino de Dios*, 46. Cf. BAUCKHAM, R., "Only the suffering God can help: Divine passibility in modern theology", in *Themelios* 9 (1984) 8; WONG, K., "The concept of divine suffering and its impact on classical Christian doctrine", in *The Churchman* 131 (2017) 113-114.

The underlining thread of thought which is established here is that God reveals himself as a compassionate love, a fact that has its best evidence in the cross of Christ. The Son of God takes the path of *kenosis*, of self-emptying, and this is qualified by the term, “divine surrender”. For Moltmann, “the inner secret of Christ’s vicarious act “for us” is the vicarious act and self-giving of God”. Taking cue from Origen, Moltmann avers that in order for one to participate in the suffering of the Other, one must have compassion. This leads him to conclude that God shows his solidarity with human beings and creation, intervenes vicariously on our behalf, saving us from our nothingness and finally births a new creation, all of these, through the sufferings of Christ<sup>85</sup>.

### 3.2. The suffering God and the critique against Theism and Atheism

In the foregone, it has been stated that God suffers in solidarity with his people, with his creation and that this suffering is not externally imposed on God, rather, it is by the virtue of his act of self-emptying, *kenosis*<sup>86</sup>. This act is preceded by the concept put in place in identifying God as a loving God, a compassionate God.

In this line of thought, one can see the theological effect on the theistic position about God, on the one hand, that holds fast to the Aristotelian apathetic axiom that God, being perfect and absolute, unlike created entities, cannot suffer and on the other hand, the atheistic position about God that refuses to see God, on the cross, in the experience of the world and eventually turns to nihilism<sup>87</sup>.

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85 MOLTMANN, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 178-181.

86 “The kenotic emptying of Christ not only helps Moltmann define his rethinking of the two-natures of Christ and the inner trinitarian relations, but it also provides the interpretive easel on which he can portray a God of abundant freedom and sacrificial love who is fully revealed in the incarnation and the cross” (YOUNGS, S., “Wounds of the emptied God: The role of Kenosis at the cross in the Christologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Sergius Bulgakov” in *American Theological Inquiry* 2 (2011) 51).

87 MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 299-332; BAUCKHAM, R., *Moltmann: Messianic theology in the making*, Marshall Morgan and Scott, Basingstoke 1987, 76-84.

Against theism, Moltmann argues that “a God who is conceived of in his omnipotence, perfection and infinity at man’s expense cannot be the God who is love in the cross of Jesus... cannot be the Father of Jesus Christ”<sup>88</sup>. And against atheism, the postulation that seeks to dethrone God and enthrone man, due to its inability to perceive God on the cross, where man is divinized and considered the absolute, Moltmann recalls the effect and consequence of this “anthropotheism” which demonstrates that human deities can be man’s wolf, that the dark side of evil still persists when God is denied his place and man is installed on the throne<sup>89</sup>.

Since the theistic and atheistic concepts of God do not really capture the way God relates with the world, Moltmann responds by postulating the Trinitarian theology of the cross which shows, in an unambiguous manner, the identity of God not only in his transcendence as the Other, but also in his presence in the world, his identity as liberating love in the event of suffering<sup>90</sup>.

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Bauckham highlights the aspects of Moltmann’s understanding of protest atheism in the thoughts of Albert Camus. Moltmann’s criticism of theism takes off from Luther’s *theologia crucis* that opposes the natural knowledge of God in that “the knowledge of God does not begin from the visible works of God in order to disclose God’s invisible being, but takes the opposite starting point, ‘that part of God’s being which is visible and directed towards the world’. For him this visible being of God is the passion and cross of Christ”. Moltmann adopts this Lutheran style of thought to put forth a Christian theology of the concept of God against a philosophical theistic idea. At the centre of this, is the ability of Christian theology to embrace the cross of Christ in all that it radically signifies, that Jesus Christ, God the Son, suffered and died on the cross. On the other side of the divide, we find atheism, which doubts whether the world of experience is grounded in a divine being and is guided by it. Atheism makes its inference from the experience of the world that questions if goodness and righteousness exist. This is concentrated in what Moltmann terms “protest atheism”, and to this question, the philosophical theism, in its effort to prove the existence of God, only provokes and makes more valid the interrogations posited by protest atheism. According to Moltmann, “The only way past protest atheism is through a theology of the cross which understands God as the suffering God in the suffering of Christ and which cries out with the godforsaken God, ‘My God, why have you forsaken me?’”.

88 MOLTmann, *The Crucified God*, 370-371.

89 *Ibid.*, 372-373.

90 *Ibid.* Richard Bauckham states that the response of Moltmann to the problem of suffering has two merits. The first is that Moltmann responds to the

Andrew Gabriel<sup>91</sup> helps in understanding this segment. He states that Moltmann counters philosophical theism by suggesting that its understanding of the attributes of God is not consistent with Jesus' death on the cross. In the cross, we find that God is not removed from this world – he is human. Furthermore, he not only rules over the world and its suffering, but he participates in it. God suffers. From this perspective, the objection of protest atheism is dismissed because "God and suffering are no longer contradictions"<sup>92</sup>. God can no longer be accused of being indifferent to suffering.

### 3.3 Criticisms of Moltmann's passibilist idea of God<sup>93</sup>

Moltmann's idea of God who suffers with us and does not remain indifferent to the question of human experience due to his loving and compassionate nature, against a philosophical theism, on the one hand, and the radical interpretation of the significance of the cross, of the death of Jesus Christ against protest atheism, on the other hand, is attractive as it is also provoking, and it has not gone without criticisms. Moltmann postulated a passibilist conception of the identity of God, towing in the line of Abraham Heschel, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Kizah Kitamori, and according to Collin Smith, Moltmann is the most prominent among these voices calling for the *pathos* of God<sup>94</sup>.

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problem of suffering in the particular shape which it has assumed in the modern period and the second, is that he responds to it from the resources offered by the Christological centre of historic Christian faith, that is, from an incarnational understanding of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (BAUCKHAM, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1995, 71).

91 GABRIEL, A, "Beyond the Cross: Moltmann's Crucified God, Rahner's rule and Pneumatological implications for a Trinitarian Doctrine of God", in *Didaskalia* 19 (2008) 95.

92 MOLTMANN, *The Crucified God*, 332.

93 For a general view of the criticisms of God's passibility, Christian Mostert structuralized them in five major points. (MOSTERT, Ch., "Moltmann's Crucified God", in *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013) 175ff).

94 SMITH, C. M., "The protest of Christ and the death within God: An analysis of Moltmann's departure from classical theism in *The Crucified God*", in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 45 (2018) 23.

Dennis Jowers posits that Moltmann's principle of mutability and passibility is the most obvious breach of orthodoxy in the doctrine of the Trinity and that it is due to Moltmann's indifference to the concerns of orthodoxy. He continues by stating that "any theodicy which depends on the axiom of divine passibility undermines the Christian's legitimate confidence in the righteousness and promises of God". This is because denying God's immutability and impassibility also means denying his faithfulness<sup>95</sup>.

Donald Macleod criticizes Moltmann for not doing justice to the anomalousness of the divine pain. To adduce self-sacrifice of love as God's eternal nature gives divine pain a certain degree of inevitability and normality which does not do justice to the perspectives of grace and mercy<sup>96</sup>.

In view of Karl Rahner's trinitarian maxim, "The 'economic' trinity is the 'immanent' trinity and the 'immanent' trinity is the 'economic' trinity", David B. Hart avers that there are dangers at any attempt to translate it (Rahner's maxim) into a fuller theological discourse. One of these dangers is the temptation to abolish any distinction between God's immanence in himself and his presence in history. It is on this temptation that Jürgen Moltmann's passibilist idea is criticized as "loose, rhapsodic and paraenetic"<sup>97</sup>.

Weinandy contends that a God who does not suffer is more loving, compassionate and merciful than a God who does<sup>98</sup>. This is the opposite of what Moltmann holds. The reason for Weinandy's position is founded on the belief that love in itself is good and can be manifested or expressed even after we do away with sin and suffering. Relating this to God, he affirms that the absence of suffering in God does not imply the absence of love. Suffering is evil and love is good

95 JOWERS, D., "The theology of the cross as theology of the Trinity: A critique of Jürgen Moltmann's staurocentric trinitarianism", in *Tyndale Bulletin* 52 (2001) 250-251.

96 MACLEOD, D., "The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann", in *Themelios* 24 (1999) 43.

97 HART, D., *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI 2003, 157.

98 WEINANDY, T. G., *Does God Suffer?*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 2000, 159.

and in God there is no evil, therefore no suffering. God does not need to suffer in order to demonstrate his love for us<sup>99</sup>.

The arguments presented against the passibilist view of Moltmann are interesting to behold, just as equally we can say of Moltmann's perspective. The question of God's ability to suffer with humanity, for Moltmann, is tied to the crucified God but also extends to the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is a strong theological remark which takes in everything that pertains to the act of God in the person of Christ, through the cross. Moltmann's view is basically centred on that cry of Jesus in Mark 15:34. It does not say anything less than that which Moltmann already emphasizes, that God the Son suffered the abandonment of the Father and the Father suffered the death of the Son.

Another angle that should be considered is that Moltmann's knowledge of God takes off from his life experience. He witnessed horror, sickness, fear, loneliness, two near-death experiences and the countless deaths that occurred during the Second World War when he was barely an adult. Taking this into perspective will help us understand why he said "Because this is my personal experience of God, I hold fast to it and am not open for reasoned criticism"<sup>100</sup>. The beauty of the arguments here leaves us with the fundamental truth that God is a mystery and he always reveals himself to us as he really is, that is, as a mystery.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the three different sections of this work, I have presented a discourse on the revelation of God in *the Crucified God*. The first section was built on the eschatological implication of God's identity as it relates to promise. The second continued in the line of presenting the identity of God as triune and perichoretic and the deeper stauro-

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99 *Ibid.*, 160-162.

100 MOLTMANN, J., *A Broad Place. An Autobiography*, SCM Press, London 2007, 195.

centric understanding of the Trinity in the light of the cross of Christ. And the third was built around the identity of God as a compassionate God. All these concepts of revelation are found in *The Crucified God*.

The conclusions that are drawn after discussing some aspects of the identity of God in Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God* will include that Moltmann gives a place of prominence to the concept of promise and God's revelation as the faithful one to his promises. The idea of promise is evident in his *Theology of Hope*, an inspiration he got from Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*. Moltmann sees this category of promise as key in understanding the coming of God, the fulfillment of God's promise which goes beyond Israel and the Church to involve the whole of creation. This line of thought is dealt with in his presentation of the biblical cosmological Christology. The universality of God's coming and its eventual fulfillment is represented in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the revelation of God as Trinity in Moltmann's thought came as a result of his desire to criticize, from a biblical standpoint, the monarchical interpretation of the mystery of God as represented by Tertullian and also the intrinsic dangers of modalism and Sabellianism in the trinitarian thoughts of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. For Moltmann, it is important to highlight the distinctiveness in the persons of the Trinity, that is, to accept that the implication and definition of a person is by its relationship with others. In this way, one can comprehend the doctrinal declaration of the distinction among the three persons. In highlighting the personhood of each of the three, it is important to see them as a unity, thanks to the perichoretic union that exists among them. This Moltmann's understanding led him to a social doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine that highlights the relationship and unity that exists among the three divine persons. It must be said that in the three segments, there are always pointers to the presence of the three divine persons together.

The significance of God's identity as compassionate in Moltmann's thought has possesses the critical role of the cross of Christ in God's own life and mystery. The theodicy question is an opportunity to ask after God's identity and we see that it fully captured in an act

of love that goes beyond human imagination, it shows the extent that God has gone to show his identity as love and as compassion- the *leif motiv* of solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalized in our history. But the perception of God's identity as a victim is still a debate and rightly so.

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