

**THE VINDICATION OF CHRIST:  
A CRITIQUE OF  
GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ,  
JAMES CONE  
AND  
JURGEN MOLTMANN**

by

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### SUMMARY

The problem of universal oppression has caused Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann to advocate that God is orchestrating an historical programme of liberation from socio-economic, racial and political suffering. They feel that God's liberating actions can be seen in the Abrahamic promise, the exodus and the Christ-event. Moltmann, especially, has emphasized both the trinitarian identification with human pain and the influence of the freedom of the future upon the suffering of the present. According to our theologians, Jesus Christ identified with us, and died the death of a substitutionary victim. Through the resurrection, Jesus Christ overcame the problem of suffering and death, and inaugurated the New Age. The cross and resurrection were the focal point of God's liberating activity. Liberation, or freedom, from sin and suffering is now possible, at least proleptically. We are to understand the atonement as having been liberative rather than forensic or legal, although judgement is not ignored. Both the perpetrators of injustice and their victims are called upon to identify with, and struggle for, freedom, with the help of the liberating Christ.

We agree with our theologians that God has historically indicated his desire for justice and freedom. The magnitude of evil and suffering still existing, however, forces us to abandon the idea that God is progressively liberating history. Nevertheless, we affirm the idea that the Trinity has absorbed

human suffering into its own story through the incarnate Son. Jesus identified with suffering in a four-fold way, namely: its existence, the judgement of it, the overcoming of it, and the need to oppose it. This comprehensive identification gives Christ the right to demand the doing of justice, because the greatest injustice in history has happened to him. The atonement was forensic, rendering all people accountable to Christ; but it was also liberative, validating the struggle against oppression. Furthermore, at his second coming, Christ will be vindicated in whatever judgement he will exact upon the perpetrators of injustice or oppression. For today the resurrection still gives hope and faith to those who suffer and to those who identify with them.

**KEY TERMS:**

Suffering; Oppression; Perpetrators; Victim; Divine Option; Atonement; Identification; Salvation; Judgement; Freedom; Liberation; Doing Justice; Hope; Vindication; Passibility of God.

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

One of the most troubling aspects of human existence is the problem of social suffering. Indeed, the human story is tragically marred by various manifestations of evil. Some would try to deny or down-play the magnitude of the problem or claim that it is not the church's concern. We are going to proceed on the basis that God takes the problem of suffering seriously, and so should we. It must be understood that in this present study we are concerning ourselves with *systemically*-caused suffering in the form of racial, political and socio-economic oppression. We are not suggesting that evil and suffering are all there is to life; one surely finds streams of goodness and freedom. It is the sheer force of suffering, however, that attracts our urgent attention.

### 2. IS FREEDOM FROM SUFFERING POSSIBLE?

Liberation, Black and Hope theologians have committed themselves to the possibility of actual social freedom. We shall observe this in the first three chapters of this present study as we consider the theologies of Gutierrez (Latin American liberation theology), Cone (North American black political theology), and Moltmann (European political theology of hope) respectively. Moltmann's theology has a different point of departure from the praxis oriented theologies of Gutierrez and

Cone. However, all three share parallel concerns when it comes to the problem of suffering and oppression. While these theologians are concerned with suffering and freedom, Moltmann's emphasis on God's trinitarian identification with human pain gives a unique dimension to the discussion.

Our primary concern will be to observe how these theologians relate the problem of oppression to the cross and resurrection of Jesus. In the first three chapters, we will see what these theologians think about suffering, the divine response to it, the nature of freedom, and our responsibility as human beings. For Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann, the above concerns express the meaning of the cross and resurrection. Chapters four and five will deal respectively with our response to these theologians and our own ideas on the relationship between social suffering and the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### 3. WHAT IS OUR THESIS?

The thesis we wish to establish is simply that God, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, has comprehensively identified with, and overcome, human social suffering. Christ now demands that we in turn strive for social justice or freedom.

For the theologians under consideration, God's answer to the human predicament of suffering is the promise of liberation, or freedom. God has chosen or opted to be on the side of the poor and oppressed. In fact, from creation onwards, God has indicated in one way or another his desire for our freedom. The Abrahamic promise and the exodus illustrate this, and, of course, the very life, death and resurrection of Jesus took place to bring about

the possibility of liberation. For Gutierrez and Cone, there has been an ongoing 'historical flow of liberation', and the cross and resurrection were the focus or central point of this flow. Moltmann is similar in his thinking, although he emphasizes the future as it influences the present.

For Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann the atonement became the mechanism which assures the presence and possibility of liberation or freedom in history. Furthermore, these authors maintain that the atonement is not to be understood in forensic (legal) terms. The central meaning of the atonement is deliverance from sin and its consequences, rather than a legal judgement for breaking God's laws. As the Risen One, Christ is the Liberator, who is present now with the oppressed, and who also calls upon us to live justly and fight for freedom.

We are in total agreement with the view that God is against evil and oppression. However, we doubt that God has set up a specific programme of historical liberation as such. To be sure, the exodus illustrates Yahweh's compassion and covenant faithfulness as he liberated the Israelites from Egyptian overlordship. Furthermore, the prophetic message strongly emphasizes the 'doing' of justice. Also, the life and death of Jesus reflected his concern for the poor and oppressed. He identified with them, amongst other things. Yet none of the preceding necessitates an ongoing and identifiable history of liberation. This is not to deny that God 'works' in history; it is merely to question whether there is really a divinely orchestrated pattern of political or social liberation in

operation. For us, the sheer weight of evil and social suffering today speaks against any such idea.

Nevertheless, we believe God has responded to the problem of suffering or oppression. Apart from his verbal pronouncements against oppression and all forms of injustice, God, in Jesus, has encountered the problem in a deeply personal way. The Son of God was incarnated into humanness with all of its alienation and suffering. Jesus experienced human pain and victimization. He then became the *Crucified One* (Moltmann), the Suffering Servant or Lamb, bearing the Father's wrath and judgement on evil and oppression. The Crucified One also became the *Abandoned One* for a while. Jesus was experiencing this as our representative and substitute.

The resurrection signalled Jesus' own victory over oppression, evil, death and Satan. This victory can be shared by those of us who wish to fight against evil and suffering. Jesus therefore calls us to do justice and he can rightfully judge those who do not. Furthermore, Jesus will be vindicated in his eschatological (future) judgement on us because he has *personally* experienced and overcome the evil of oppression. We can place our faith and hope in Christ, the Resurrected One.

For us, *identity*, rather than liberation as such, is the key concept here. After looking at Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann, we will be proposing a four-fold level of identity between Jesus Christ and ourselves, especially those of us who are the victims of evil and oppression. The scheme is as follows:

- First Level - Jesus Christ identified with the problem of evil and sin-caused suffering. (The trinity took in, and still takes in, our pain.)
- Second Level - Jesus Christ identified with judgement on evil and suffering. (This is based on the judgement he took in our place.)
- Third Level - Jesus Christ identified with victory over evil, suffering and death.
- Fourth Level - Jesus Christ today identifies with the struggle against evil and suffering. (Even though there is no flow of liberation, as such, we are still mandated to fight against oppression. Christ shares this struggle with us.) Ultimate victory, already proleptically achieved at the cross and resurrection, will be fully realized at the eschaton (second coming of Christ).

It is to be noted that this thesis concerns itself primarily with the problem of suffering, as over against the issue of one's personal destiny. From time to time, however, we will make reference to the themes of creation, sin and personal salvation in order to discuss certain points. Obviously the concerns of physical suffering and liberation are the same, experientially, for Christian and non-Christian. Jesus Christ can identify with the pain and suffering of either.

In our view, Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann run the risk of offering too much to the victim of today. If Jesus Christ as Liberator is supposed to have been bringing in freedom (liberation) then we would adjudge his work as having been very ineffective. The history of human suffering up to this point does not offer positive evidence for a universal liberating work of God, even if it is argued that we must participate in our own destiny. We nevertheless will be indicating that these authors' concern for doing justice is commendable, as is their idea of the divine 'option' for the poor. However, we will be opposing the idea of the cross and resurrection as being the focal point of ongoing historical liberation. It is indeed a focal point, but it is so in the sense of demonstrating the total identity of Jesus with the problem of suffering. Jesus Christ still offers good reason for faith and hope, and the doing of justice. The good reason is his own life, death and resurrection. Gutierrez and Cone also emphasize the centrality of Jesus, but not in the same way as we will be doing. Actually, we find ourselves indebted to Moltmann for his emphasis on God's trinitarian identification with us through Jesus.

To sum up, our central thesis which we wish to advocate is as follows: in the cross and resurrection Jesus Christ has fully identified with human suffering. As the Suffering Servant and our substitute, Jesus experienced divine judgement on evil and suffering. This judgement was highlighted in his rejection by the Father and in his death. The resurrection signalled his victory over death and evil. Accordingly, Christ, who continues to personally identify with our pain today, calls for the doing

of justice and will be vindicated in his own eschatological judgement on perpetrators of evil and oppression. One can at least experience spiritual and psychological liberation now, should social freedom not materialize.

#### 4. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Firstly, we, like our authors, shall be using the terms *poor, weak, powerless, oppressed, victim* and *sufferers* interchangeably to describe those suffering from social injustice. These people are those who are systemically prevented from controlling their own circumstances; they are trapped by forces opposed to their well being. In contradistinction to the above group, we have the terms *perpetrator, or oppressor*, which refer to individuals or political and social systems (including ecclesiastical indifference) which bring about pain or suffering on others. We will be using the term *evil* in its connection with the problem of socially-caused suffering.

Secondly, in our discussion, we shall be using the term *Christ-event* to refer to the actual cross and resurrection of Jesus. At the same time we shall normally be using the term *Jesus* to refer to the historical person of Jesus and the term *Christ* in connection with his resurrection and post-resurrection activity. In actuality we regard the historical and resurrected Jesus to be one and the same person. Nevertheless we are sensitive to the debate over the continuity and discontinuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. From time to time we shall use the term *Jesus Christ* when referring to Jesus in a general way.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ: SOCIETY AND LIBERATION**

At the time of writing, Easter has been celebrated throughout the Christian world. For Gutierrez, the events of the cross and the resurrection are pivotal for human hope of liberation from oppression of any kind. In this chapter, we shall attempt to understand Gutierrez by looking at the historical context and impact of the cross and resurrection as he sees it. Depending on the theme in hand, Gutierrez treats the cross and resurrection either singly or as a unified event.

#### **1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION**

In this section we will note Gutierrez's understanding of Yahweh's general historical relationship to humanity, including the problem of oppression, which led up to the Christ-event.

##### **1.1 The Unity of History**

We begin here because this helps us to comprehend Gutierrez's understanding of oppression and liberation. He maintains that Yahweh relates to history as a whole, rather than selectively. The 'distinction of planes' model<sup>1</sup> is inadequate because it does not properly account for an ongoing interrelationship, rather than functional separation, between the human and the divine in history (1974:53-77). The idea of salvation-history within general history does not appeal to

Gutierrez. He states that: 'there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history. His redemptive work embraces all the dimensions of existence and brings them to their fullness. The history of salvation is the very heart of human history' (1974:153). History, then, is already salvific. In a later defense of this position, Gutierrez (1990b:126) states:

*in the actual order of the economy of salvation there is not a history of nature and another history of grace, a history of fellowship and another of sonship and daughterhood. Rather, the connection between grace and nature, between God's call and the free response of human beings, is located within a single Christo-finalized history.*

Man's historical experience is actually the continuing of creation. In fact man 'is the crown and centre of the work of creation and is called to continue it through his labour' (1974:158). Gutierrez says this in reference to Gen 1:28 and in the context of linking creation, the Exodus and liberation together (1974:154-160). We shall observe how Gutierrez relates liberation to the cross and resurrection later. Here, we are merely emphasizing that the two are part and parcel of the unified historical flow, significant for man's historical, creative, and liberative efforts. For Gutierrez, then, God, through Jesus Christ, participates in history and is identified with the human situation, especially that of oppression. The cross and resurrection are not isolated events within an isolated salvation-history. They are Yahweh's way of responding to the need of human liberation, the liberation of history (1990b:117,120). Let us move on to the problem of history - man's inhumanity to man.

## 1.2 The Human Condition

For Gutierrez, the existence of oppression cannot be denied. Liberation and political theology are primarily concerned about the problem of avoidable human suffering. Gutierrez is of course writing from within the context of the Latin American situation, but he means to relate his concerns to humanity in general. In the introduction we emphasized the existence of oppression, but here we are seeing it as an historical adjective. Gutierrez addresses himself to economic and social oppression and relates his understanding of liberation and salvation to the conflictual nature of history. Concerning the relation of Christianity to this, Gutierrez (1974:174) states: 'Christianity, rooted in Biblical sources, thinks in terms of history. And in this history, injustice and oppression, divisions and confrontations exist. But the hope of liberation is also present'.

Gutierrez takes the existence and effects of sin very seriously. Some might question his understanding of the actual depth of human depravity,<sup>2</sup> but he cannot be accused of downplaying the problem of sin. Gutierrez (1974:35) states that: 'Sin - a breach of friendship with God and others - is according to the Bible the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which men live'. Gutierrez (Ibid) advocates the systemic nature of sin, but makes the point that: 'things do not happen by chance and that behind an unjust structure there is a personal or collective will responsible - a willingness to reject God and neighbor'. Again, in discussing the relationship between social and personal sin, Gutierrez (1990b:137) states that 'the importance of the social consequences of sin does not mean

forgetting that sin is always the result of a personal, free act'. For Gutierrez (1990b:136), sin involves the rejection of the love and Fatherhood of God and the consequent lack of love towards the neighbour. It is a rejection of love as a gift from God. Sin, then, is the negation of love (1990b:138). What is more, 'because sin is a radical evil, it can be conquered only by the grace of God and by the radical liberation that the Lord bestows' (Ibid).

### 1.3 The Response of Yahweh

Within the context of an historical oneness, the problem of human oppression, and the root cause of sin, Yahweh responds. For Gutierrez, as with other liberation theologians, the exodus is paradigmatic. Gutierrez (1990b:118,119) is careful to point out that the exodus is the result of Yahweh's covenant with Israel. It is at the same time, however, a 'social and political liberation'. Gutierrez thus sees the exodus as both a comprehensive and paradigmatic event. He states: 'The sense is not that the event must be repeated as such in the history of the Christian community but rather that the deeper meaning of the event - the liberating intervention of God - is permanently valid' (1990b:119).

For Gutierrez this intervention reveals that Yahweh opted for the 'poor'. Yahweh liberated (freed) the Jews from Egyptian oppression but this is also a picture of the divine response to universal human oppression. Gutierrez (1974:158) calls upon Andre Neher to make his point:

the first thing that is expressed in the Jewish passover is the certainty of freedom. With the Exodus a new age has struck for humanity: redemption from misery. If the Exodus had not taken place, marked as

it was by the twofold sign of the overriding will of God and the free and conscious assent of men, the historical destiny of humanity would have followed another course.

In quoting Neher, Gutierrez is supporting the 'historical dialectic approach', that is, Yahweh liberates the oppressed while calling on them to participate in their own liberation. For Gutierrez, we are to learn from the exodus paradigm that those liberated are expected to be in communion with the Liberator. In the concrete illustration of Israel, Yahweh belongs to the freed, and they in turn belong to Yahweh - a 'double belonging' (Gutierrez 1983:9). This double-belonging, then, implies reciprocal action between Yahweh as Liberator and the Jews as victims. Gutierrez does not seem to want to demythologize the text and place the emphasis of action on the Israelites who would have later theologized Yahweh into the incident.

Gutierrez (1983:7-11) also supports his belief in the Old Testament divine 'option-for-the-poor' by referring to those prophetic passages (Deut 24:17-18; Jer 7:1-7, 22:13-16; Amos 4:1-3; Mic 3:9-12) that speak of Yahweh's anger at oppression and his call to 'do justice'. For Gutierrez (1974:160, 1983:15), however, one must also consider the Abrahamic and New Covenants which contain liberative historical promise. We will return to these later when we consider the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus. Our point here is that Gutierrez sees a continual historical flow of divine response in favour of the oppressed. If one believes in a unified (albeit complex) history, then the problem of universal oppression elicits an ongoing universal and historical response from the Yahweh of justice. The historical

context leads us to consider now the event of Jesus Christ. This event is the supreme response of God to human suffering.

## **2. THE HISTORICAL IMPACT OF THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION**

The phrase 'historical impact' is, of course, a continuation of the idea of 'historical context'. We are dealing here, however, with that short historical time period in which Jesus Christ impacted human history. The suffering and rising of Jesus of Nazareth (historical Jesus) is, for liberation theologians such as Gutierrez, the very foundation of human hope and liberation from suffering. Two main themes appear in the writing of Gutierrez on this point: identity and freedom.

### **2.1 Christ Identifies with the Poor**

The idea of identity dramatizes the belief in Yahweh's option (choice) for the victim. It is not merely Yahweh 'knowing about' human suffering, rather it is divine participation in that same suffering. For Gutierrez this is demonstrated in the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. The concept of the incarnation becomes important. It is more than just the time when Jesus was born - it refers to all that Jesus Christ did and does. The incarnation fulfils the New Covenant (1974:192) and brings all people into Yahweh's concern: 'Since God has become man, humanity, every man, history, is the living temple of God. The "pro-fane", that which is located outside the temple, no longer exists' (1974:194). Gutierrez emphasizes that one encounters God in the historical poor, and this is because of the divine option for them. This does not mean that Gutierrez is an objective universalist a la Rahner's 'anonymous christianity', as he does

admit to the need for 'conversion' (1984:95-106, 1990b:56). It does mean, however, that Yahweh is subjectively present in human history, with special preference for the oppressed. Gutierrez, we note, does not greatly emphasize the relation of the incarnation to human sin in general, which comprises the guilt of both the perpetrator and victim. This would be because of Gutierrez's problem with the quantitative notion of salvation in the light of his unitary view of history (1974:150-152).

For Gutierrez the incarnation meant that God the Son came from glory into human poverty. In fact Jesus

was poor indeed. He was born into a social milieu characterized by poverty. He chose to live with the poor. He addressed his gospel by preference to the poor. He lashed out with invective against the rich who oppressed the poor and despised them. And before the Father, he was poor in spirit. (1983:13.)

Gutierrez is saying, then, that Yahweh deliberately entered into human suffering. Jesus did not walk alongside sufferers - he became one. He both lived as, and spoke up for, the social victim. The 'living as' means Jesus was in solidarity with the poor. For Gutierrez this was a real, existential solidarity, and it carries through into the liberative event of the cross and resurrection, which we shall observe later. It is in this chosen poverty that, for Gutierrez, we see the divine-human meeting; that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God; and that the disciples of Christ (essentially the poor) should understand and follow Christ (1983:13,142-3).

Jesus' historical poverty was, for Gutierrez, an existential statement. This statement was conflictive. The Zealots, who found Jesus mysterious, the Jewish leaders, who felt their security threatened, and the political leaders all had problems

with Jesus. To the authorities he was a traitor (1974:231). Gutierrez (1984:49-50) talks about Peter's rejection of the conflictual nature of the Messiah's mission, a conflict that was and is unavoidable. Peter had to understand that the reasons for Jesus' confrontation with the rulers were to be found 'in the proclamation of the good news of the Father's love of all humankind, especially the poor. This marks the character of Jesus' messiahship. What was rejected in him, and led to his death on the cross, was the same nucleus of his teaching: the kingdom of God' (1984:50). Jesus' kingdom preaching was reflecting the divine option for the oppressed.

Gutierrez (Ibid) adds that Jesus experienced hostility not because of pure political grounds, but 'precisely because it was a religious teaching that affected all human existence'. In fact Jesus, as God, died as a subversive for the poor (1983:61). The link between Jesus' words and deeds led to his death on the cross (1983:104). If we read Gutierrez correctly, then, Jesus was addressing history, unitary history, with the poor as the effective target. This created immediate historical conflict, as the divine identity with the poor enunciated the divine option. In fact, the coming of the kingdom into history is heralded by historical manifestations of human liberation (1974:167), and the cross is foundational in this. For Gutierrez (1983:61) Jesus' historical actions show him (Jesus) to be the hermeneutical principle in understanding Christian reality.

## **2.2 Christ Frees the Poor**

Following the method of Gutierrez, we will start with what he says about the cross (on liberation) and then see what he says about the cross and the resurrection together.

### **2.2.1 Freedom and the Cross**

As implied earlier, for Gutierrez, the themes of identity and freedom, or liberation, are intertwined. Speaking of the need for the church to adopt a liberative evangelical poverty, Gutierrez (1974:300, 1979:14) refers to Christ's kenosis (Ph 2:6-11) and suggests:

He does not take on man's sinful condition and its consequences to idealize it. It is rather because of love for and solidarity with men who suffer it. It is to redeem them from their sin and to enrich them with his poverty. It is to struggle against human selfishness and everything that divides men and enables there to be rich and poor, possessors and dispossessed, oppressors and oppressed.

Gutierrez is urging the church to adopt the Christlike attitude of humility. Our interest here is what Gutierrez says about Christ. The formula seems to be: Jesus, who is God, identifies with man's sinful condition and thus enters into solidarity with the oppressed, and that this is a redemptive (liberative) mechanism. Again, Gutierrez (1983:96) declares that Jesus' 'de-facto practice - a messianic practice' of identification with the weak ended so that 'he died in solidarity with the violent death of the oppressed in this world ... No, Jesus did not die "at the end of his days". He died before his time, by execution'.

Jesus, then, identified with and assumed the sinful condition of men, especially the oppressed. This inevitably led him to the cross as a victim. We say 'victim' because Gutierrez says he died 'before his time'. All of this, however, is

liberative. Gutierrez teaches that Jesus died for sinful mankind which has inherited the consequences of sin, but the primary beneficiaries of his death are the oppressed, those who suffer. As we said earlier, for Gutierrez 'Christ as liberator' is the hermeneutical key to understanding reality. The cross, then, was a liberative or freeing event more than anything else. However, Gutierrez (1990b:138) does maintain that this liberation is for the purpose of communion:

Liberation from sin is one side of the coin; the other is communion with God and others. According to a classic distinction, *freedom from* is directed toward *freedom for*. It is to this *freedom for* that Christ's saving work is also directed. By nailing sin to the cross, Jesus opened the way for us to full communion with the Father.

Gutierrez argues that our lives, touched by God's communion with us, must be marked by communion (loving giving) with others. The cross is Yahweh's way of experiencing the oppressed status of 'victim' due to the consequences of sin. It frees people, especially the oppressed, to relate as Yahweh wants us to. It also calls the non-victim to identify with the victim.

Gutierrez can be asked just how the cross forms part of a liberative mechanism? To this point, Gutierrez has shown Jesus to be God who identifies with human suffering by suffering himself. Sin is 'nailed to the cross': this opens up freedom for communion, and has historical significance. In all of this Jesus is exemplary to man. But how does this free people from suffering? Gutierrez's immediate answer would be along the lines of resurrection hope, divine intervention and creative human participation in historical destiny. Gutierrez does not seem to offer, however, an explanation of the historical-divine mechanism

of liberation in relation to the actual cross and resurrection event. To be fair to Gutierrez, we wonder if it is possible to derive such an explanation.

For Gutierrez (1984:46) Christ, as crucified, is the Messiah, and the suffering Son of God. Also, this declaration 'is the nucleus of christological faith', and by believing in Christ we have life (Ibid). Interestingly, Gutierrez (1984:49-51) uses Jesus' rebuke of Peter, who balked against the impending death of the Messiah, as a way to illustrate obedient discipleship. As Jesus could not be hindered in his messianic mission, so we today must 'get behind' Christ.

In reference to Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the Synagogue (Lk 4:16-21), Gutierrez (1983:14) maintains that Christ is proclaiming a 'kingdom of liberation and justice' and states:

This proclamation of the kingdom, this struggle for justice, leads Jesus to death. His life and death give us to know that the only possible justice is definitive justice. The only justice is the one that goes to the very root of all injustice, all breach with love, all sin. The only justice is one that assaults all the consequences and expressions of this cleavage in friendship. The only justice is the definitive justice that builds, starting right now, in our conflict-filled history, a kingdom in which God's love will be present and exploitation abolished ...

Gutierrez goes on to refer to Isaiah 65:17-22 which talks about the conditions of the new heavens and earth. The death of Jesus, then, is a liberative, justice-bringing event, which confronts sin and reflects the presence of the ever-growing kingdom of God. Jesus really does say that he is going to bring justice and freedom (Lk 4), so the cross must indeed be linked to his self-proclaimed mission.

One can, of course, spiritualize the Lukan passage into its purely spiritual 'injustice', 'poverty', 'captivity' or 'blindness' terms. Or, like Gutierrez, one can interpret the passage at face value - literally. For Gutierrez (1974:167), 'Christ does not "spiritualize" the eschatological promises; he gives them meaning and fulfilment today. (cf Luke 4:21)' and, the 'grace-sin conflict, the coming of the kingdom, and the expectation of the parousia, are also necessarily and inevitably historical, temporal, earthly, social, and material realities'. Gutierrez is here actually not excluding the spiritual life. He is merely reflecting his view that the gospel pertains to all dimensions of existence (1974:166-168). One often comes across the debate over whether redemption is spiritual or temporal. This debate bothers Gutierrez (1974:166-167), who insists that there should not be a dualism between the two in the first place. For Gutierrez there is no hidden spiritual sense to be found in the biblical promises. In actuality:

The hidden sense is not the "spiritual" one, which devalues and even eliminates temporal and earthly realities as obstacles; rather it is the sense of a fullness which takes on and transforms historical reality. Moreover, it is only *in* the temporal, earthly, historical event that we can open up to the future of complete fulfillment. (1974:167.)

### **2.2.2 Freedom and the Resurrection**

In this section, we will observe those concepts which Gutierrez relates to both the cross and resurrection together, as well as to the resurrection only, as there is overlapping in these areas. Let us begin with Jesus himself.

### **2.2.2.1 The Resurrection of Christ**

Obviously the first effect on Christ is that through the resurrection he overcame his own death. Gutierrez (1984:68) reminds us of Romans 6:9: 'For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him'. For Gutierrez, a resurrected Christ is vital as it forms the basis of death to life spirituality. Gutierrez does not seem to be encumbered with doubts about the real resurrection (physical) of Jesus Christ.

Earlier we mentioned Gutierrez's statement that Jesus died 'before his time' rather than 'at the end of his days'. Gutierrez (1983:96) then goes on to say: 'Nor were his days thereby ended, for his resurrection is an affirmation of life, confirming him as the Christ, the messiah, and setting the seal of God's approval on his message of justice and life, the message that defied a homicidal society'. For Gutierrez (Ibid) the messianic practice of Jesus must become our own. The death and resurrection of Jesus qualify him to be our means to share his 'denunciation of injustice, his sharing of bread, his hope for resurrection'. We learn from Gutierrez's words, then, that the meaning of the Christ-event, for Christ as well as us, was not concentrated only on the cross. The resurrection signals a trinitarian salvific economy in that the Father raised Christ by the Spirit for the liberation of the oppressed (1984:67).

### **2.2.2.2 The Resurrection and Liberation**

For Gutierrez (1974:175-176, 1983:62), sin 'cannot be touched in itself, in the abstract. It can be attacked only in concrete historical situations - in particular instances of

alienation'. Radical liberation is thus called for, including political liberation. Gutierrez (1983:63) states:

Only in aggressive, efficacious participation in the concrete historical process of liberation shall we be able to put our finger on the basic alienation present in all partial alienation. This radical liberation is the gift Christ brings to us. By his death and resurrection he redeems the human being from sin and all its consequences.

In his writings, Gutierrez adds that all this is gratuitous, an act of divine grace (for example 1984:107-113). Sin and all its consequences means that we are in slavery to sin, and Gutierrez often quotes Medellin on this. Liberation from slavery is freedom. This freedom is redemption.

We mentioned earlier that for Gutierrez liberation is for freedom or communion of man with Yahweh and neighbour. This liberation is integral (1983:144-145), in relation to the three planes from which people need liberation, namely: alienation from God, society, and neighbour. For Gutierrez, then, radical liberation is complex, a unity. Concerning the levels of salvation Gutierrez (1990b:122) states:

The stress, therefore, is on the third level: the work of Christ that liberates us from sin and brings us into communion with him. The changes that may take place in the social sphere are important, but they are also inadequate from the Christian viewpoint. For a "social transformation, no matter how radical it may be, does not automatically achieve the suppression of all evils".

This stress on the third level does not obviate the unity between the levels or planes. Interestingly (and against Moltmann), Gutierrez (Ibid) affirms the view expressed by the Council of Chalcedon, in relation to the nature of Christ. Chalcedon speaks of the distinction as well as of the unity between the human and divine natures of Christ. Gutierrez (Ibid) states: 'Furthermore

the profound unity given by the divine person in virtue of being the Son does not suppress the human nature of Christ. My treatment of "total or integral liberation" is inspired by this Chalcedonian principle'.

Christ's death and resurrection make this possible. The dynamic we have, then, is liberation from oppression along with communion with God (via Christ) resulting in freedom to love the neighbour. Gutierrez, to be sure, does not reduce liberation to purely the political-social level.

Gutierrez proposes the complex salvation-liberation model in order to attack sin at the concrete level. Without denying the personal element Gutierrez nevertheless formulates the sin-liberation (slavery-freedom) model because of the historical manifestation of human suffering. Gutierrez would surely not deny that human suffering is not the only historical arena in which sin is confronted. However, for Gutierrez the primary purpose of the cross and resurrection is of a radical freedom from alienation and suffering.

#### **2.2.2.3 The Resurrection and Life**

Gutierrez is fond of using the 'death to life' motif in his discussion of liberation. Death would refer to both existential deprivation and physical demise; whereas life would refer to salvation or liberation, newness, hope, and eschatological resurrection. For Gutierrez (1974:300), the incarnation, as it is worked out in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, results in our freedom: 'To die and to rise again with Christ, is to vanquish death and to enter into a new life (cf Rom 6:1-11). The cross and resurrection are the seal of our liberty'.

This liberating experience implies one's solidarity with the poor. New life is not merely a state of being: it is a way of being. We note that Gutierrez calls for a union with Christ in the act of dying and rising. The cross and resurrection effectuate this possibility. Any acceptance of a saviour means the following of that saviour.

This following is worked out, according to Gutierrez (1984:30), in the '*dialectic of death followed by life*'. In fact in this '*dialectic and in the victory of the risen Jesus, the God of our hope is revealed*'. Gutierrez (Ibid) categorizes this as a '*paschal spirituality*', one in which oppressive death occurs. However,

it embodies the conviction that life, not death, has the final word. The following of Jesus feeds upon the witness given by the resurrection, which means the death of death, and upon the liberating efforts of the poor to assert their unquestionable right to life. (Ibid.)

We see that in Gutierrez, then, the dialectic of death followed by life expresses the dialectic of the divine-human effort in the liberation of history. The dynamic seems to be that the cross and resurrection set in motion the liberative effort, while in the historical present the oppressed, and those in solidarity, participate in their own freedom. Christ is with and in them, but he calls on them to act.

In relation to freedom from suffering, then, the cross and resurrection provide the means and motivation to overcome, to go from death to life. Earlier we noted the idea of Christ liberating people from sin and its consequences. In connection with this, Gutierrez (1974:176) says: '*This is why the Christian life is a passover, a transition from sin to grace, from death*

to life, from injustice to justice, from the subhuman to the human. Christ introduces us by the gift of his Spirit into communion with God and with all men'. The idea is that as Christ identified with and liberates the oppressed in his actions, so we can now identify with Christ as liberator. Our identifying (part and parcel of our liberation from suffering), of course, means a life of seeking justice, or life, for others. In line with Gutierrez's notion of the three planes model of liberation, it can be asked how this identification can occur. Gutierrez (1983:148), in stressing the avoidance of purely 'verticalist' (pietism) or 'political-horizontalist' notions of salvation, perhaps answers the question in his approving quotation of John Paul II at Puebla: 'We are liberated by our participation in the new life brought to us by Jesus Christ, and by communion with him in the mystery of his death and resurrection'. Gutierrez (Ibid) is making the point that the poor can enter into 'communion with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ' and thus be influential in the historical process. Gutierrez insists on integral liberation to counter charges of political reductionism, and falls back on the cross and resurrection to do so.

Some might say that it is not clear what is meant by the mystery of the death and resurrection, and just how we engender communion with them. Gutierrez, as we saw earlier, speaks of the 'gift of the Spirit of Christ' as the means of entering this communion. Gutierrez develops this line when dealing with 'walking in the spirit'. In his treatment of the matter, Gutierrez (1984:65-71) opts for a kind of realized eschatological approach to our resurrection, or spiritual bodies. Paul's words

(Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 15:35-49; Ph 1:20, for example) are contemporized to the present. Our spiritual body is actually the giving of ourselves unreservedly to the control of the Spirit, assuming we have been baptised and that 'we live even now the resurrection of the Lord', inchoately possessing 'fullness of life' and appropriating the fact of our being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1984:66-67).

The Spirit gives spiritual life (Rom 6:6, 8:11), and we are freed from death, sin and law by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor 3:17). The Spirit brings about the death-life dialectic (1984:67-68). Gutierrez (1984:68) says that death 'has been overcome in the body of Christ Jesus that was nailed to the cross, whereas life proclaims its final victory in the risen body of the Lord'. In fact Gutierrez (1984:68-69) goes on to assert that one's membership in the body of Christ, as the church, is so because of membership in Christ's actual risen body. Gutierrez's logic at this point seems to point towards a semi-pantheistic identification. Gutierrez (1974:151,158, 193-194) would of course think along these lines in the light of his view that Christ is now present in all men who are the temple of the Spirit, *whether they know it or not*. For Gutierrez people can still say 'no' to Yahweh, but it is a 'no' to a Christological presence already within their experience (1974:151).

For Gutierrez (1984:70-71) one has to decide between death and life (flesh and spirit), to realize that being Christian is to 'be free from all external coercion', and to realize the gift which is our human body. Further, we must understand that:

it is important not to miss the profound continuity of the entire process. The resurrected body of the Lord

is the body of flesh and the crucified body that were the medium of his presence in history. We are in the same situation through our belonging to the body of Christ. Our own bodies, freed from the flesh with its death-dealing power, become spiritual and a means of life and solidarity. (1984:70-71)

Gutierrez (1984:71) is careful to add that Christians (those who have chosen to go from death to life) will still face the 'powers of death and life'. However, the Spirit is there to help us in our filiation (sonship). In fact:

the fact that God is a father, the gift of filiation, the fellowship that filiation demands - these constitute "the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but now is disclosed" (Rom 16:25-26) in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Ibid.)

The eucharist is important for Gutierrez who sees it as demonstrating the work of Christ and the sacramental (liberative) task of the church in history (1974:262-264). For Gutierrez (1974:263) the eucharist celebrates 'the cross and the resurrection of Christ, his Passover from death to life, and our passing from sin to grace'. Christ was (and remains) the Paschal sacrificial 'Lamb of God' in line with the exodus Passover lamb and shed blood; he is also the victorious Apocalyptic lamb (1984:39-40). For Gutierrez (1983:107):

[in] "the breaking of the bread" - that staple lacking to the disinherited of the earth - the life of the resurrected Christ becomes present reality. This life of his assures us that death is not to triumph, and that sin and injustice will be abolished.

(cf 1990b:80-81.) We see, then, that for Gutierrez the eucharist is at once celebratory and catalytic in historical liberation from suffering.

In the midst of contemporary historical suffering, then, a suffering worshipper can appropriate the idea that the cross and resurrection have counteracted his very suffering. Admittedly,

if the eucharist contemporizes the actual victory of the resurrection, then it at best can be only a proleptic victory. However, Gutierrez would himself maintain that liberation is a protracted affair. It is one thing to claim that Yahweh is, on the basis of the cross and resurrection, working in the ongoing historical dialectic to *overcome* suffering. It is another thing to emphasize Yahweh's ongoing *judgement* on oppression. Gutierrez speaks of both elements (overcoming, judging), but he strongly emphasizes the former.

We return to the earlier question of how Gutierrez suggests we understand communion with the 'mystery' of Christ's death and resurrection. We have so far pointed out the following: communion with the death and resurrection event; participation in the new life proffered by the event; the submission to the Spirit of Christ who gives spiritual (liberated, freed) life; the identity with the body of Christ (corporate and literal); and finally the celebration and continuing appropriation of this all in the eucharist (and baptism). If all of this happens because of our conscious assent to the divine initiative to liberate, then according to Gutierrez, we will pass from death to life, we will appropriate the gift of Christ, that is, radical liberation. One might ask Gutierrez how this radical liberation, or the act of passing from death to life is applied to the non-christian poor. Gutierrez approaches this issue from the point of view of the parables of the sheep and goats (Matt 25:31-46) and of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). For Gutierrez (1974:201) the term 'least' can refer to christian or non-christian. The issue to be realized is that 'God's temple is human history; the 'sacred'

transcends the narrow limits of the places of worship' (1974:201). However it is not merely human history; it is rather the human history of the oppressed.

For Gutierrez the issue revolves not so much around who is christian or not, as it does the act of encountering the Lord. As Gutierrez (1974:202-203) puts it:

Our encounter with the Lord occurs in our encounter with men, especially in the encounter with those whose human features have been disfigured by oppression, despoilation, and alienation and who have "no beauty, no majesty" but are the things "from which men turn away their eyes" (Isa 53:2-3). These are the marginal groups, who have fashioned a true culture for themselves and whose values one must understand if he wishes to reach them. The salvation of humanity passes through them; they are the bearers of the meaning of history and "inherit the kingdom" (James 2:5).

Gutierrez would agree that, given enough time, more and more oppressed, as the oppressed, will respond to liberative evangelism. We recall that for Gutierrez (1974:151), anyone who consciously or unconsciously participates in liberation is part and parcel of the saving process. Further, all things have been created and saved in Christ (1974:158). It is not clear how Gutierrez relates the above to the previously mentioned idea of 'conscious assent' to the dialectic of liberation. As Gutierrez calls for conversion, faith and hope, it cannot be said that he interfuses faith with ethics.

### **3. ESCHATOLOGICAL IMPETUS AND THE CHRIST EVENT**

#### **3.1 The Place of Creation**

Earlier we noted Gutierrez's view on unitary history. Now we return to history as it is beholden to the cross and resurrection. In a similar vein to the theologies of hope, Gutierrez understands history to be a continuous flow. The end

of history may be open, but there is an eschatological framework beginning from even before creation. For Gutierrez (1974:154): 'The creation of the world initiates history, the human struggle, and the salvific adventure of Yahweh'. Israel is called to faith in creation as the means and the arena of redemption. Gutierrez refers to the Psalms and Prophets to establish this. For example, Gutierrez (Ibid) states:

The stress [on faith in creation], however, is on the saving action of Yahweh; the work of creation is regarded and understood only in this context: "But now this is the word of the Lord, the word of your creator, O Jacob, of him who fashioned you, Israel: Have no fear; for I have paid your ransom; I have called you by name and you are my own" (Is 43:1 cf 42:5-6)

This faith in creation and Yahweh is the same as faith in Yahweh's goal of history, that is to say, a totally free humanity. The exodus illustrates this. Gutierrez (1974:155) says that for Israel the 'creative act is linked, almost identified with, the act which freed Israel from slavery in Egypt'. Israel, as the subjected ones, had to see that Yahweh is at once creator and liberator. For Gutierrez (1974:156-157), creation 'is regarded in terms of the Exodus, a historical-salvific fact which structures the faith of Israel'. Yahweh, then, calls Israel to witness to the Creator-Liberator God. In fact, the 'eschatological horizon is present in the heart of the Exodus' (1974:157). Earlier we noted the divine-human dialectic demonstrated (as Gutierrez posits) in the exodus. Here, we are emphasizing Gutierrez's idea of the historical continuum or movement.

This continuum is culminated in Jesus Christ. For Gutierrez (1974:158):

The work of Christ forms a part of this movement and brings it to complete fulfillment. The redemptive action of Christ, the foundation of all that exists, is also conceived as a recreation and presented in a context of creation (cf Col 1:15-20; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2; Eph 1:1-22).

Gutierrez further maintains that Christ's work is a new creation, in which Christ gives meaning and liberation to history (creation), to all humanity. For Gutierrez (1974:158), then: 'Creation and salvation therefore have, in the first place, a Christological sense: all things have been created in Christ, all things have been saved in him (cf Col 1:15-20)'. The cross and resurrection, then, form part of, and culminate, Yahweh's eschatological plan for humanity. Creation throws us into existence, the exodus demonstrates Yahweh's option for the oppressed, and the Christ-event impacts history with eschatological freedom. Humanity, especially the oppressed and those in solidarity with them, are called upon to appropriate the benefits of the cross and resurrection and participate in the historical movement towards freedom from suffering.

So what we have, then, is radical liberation (that is to say all-embracing, the possibility of passing from death to life), being made the impetus of the historical flow. The basis for this is Yahweh's initiative in creation, exodus, and Christ. Participation, that is entering into communion with the cross and resurrection and thus working for freedom, completes the flow of the divine-human dialectic.

### **3.2 The Place of Promise**

The concept of promise appeals to Gutierrez. For him the 'Bible is the book of the Promise, the Promise made by God to men which is the efficacious revelation of his love and his self-

communication; simultaneously it reveals man to himself'. (1974:160). In simpler terms, the Promise is all about love and redemption (1984:95), which is worked out in Yahweh's goal of historical freedom (therefore freedom from suffering) for man. Man participates in the promise. Abraham becomes the father of believers because the promise was first made to him (Gen 12:13, 15:1-6) in that he and his descendants are 'heirs of the world' (Rom 4:13) (1974:160). For Gutierrez (1974:161) the promise is realized in the various promises relating to the Old Covenant, the Kingdom of Israel, the prophets, and the eschatological Kingdom of God. The promises are partial fulfilments of the Promise. In fact: 'There exists a dialectical relationship between the Promise and its partial fulfillments' (Ibid). There is ultimate meaning in the Promise. Actually, the 'Promise is gradually revealed in all its universality and concrete expression: it is *already* fulfilled in historical events, but *not* yet completely; it incessantly projects itself into the future, creating a permanent historical mobility' (Ibid).

For Gutierrez (1990b:95) Christ fulfils the Father's loving promise in a 'sovereign and unparalleled way'. Jesus' being 'The Truth' is to be seen as his fulfilling the Promise, establishing Yahweh's fidelity. As Gutierrez (1990b:97) puts it:

In Jesus Christ, who is the full and unexpected fulfillment of the Father's promise, history and eschatology are tied together, the present and the ultimate meaning of time. All this is expressed in the words "I am the truth." Jesus Christ is the first and last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end (Rev 22:13).

Concerning the dialectical relationship mentioned above, the 'resurrection itself is the fulfillment of something promised and

likewise the anticipation of a future (cf Acts 13:23); with it the work of Christ is "not yet completed, not yet concluded", the resurrected Christ "is still future to himself" (1974:161).

Gutierrez's discussion on the Promise (liberative-redemption) is for the purpose of rejecting what he sees as a false dilemma between either spiritual or temporal redemption (1974:168). We will recall that Gutierrez opts for a unified view of history in relation to God, and for a multidimensional understanding of salvation. From this framework, the real issue is fulfilment of the Promise as multidimensional. Thus, 'Christ does not "spiritualize" the eschatological promises; he gives them meaning and fulfillment today (cf Luke 4:21); but at the same time he opens new perspectives by catapulting history forward, forward towards total reconciliation' (1974:167).

The Promise is also fulfilled in the New Covenant, which replaces the Old Covenant, and is an important vehicle for the Promise (1974:161). As Gutierrez (1983:15) says: 'Jesus Christ is himself the New Covenant. In him God becomes the Father of all nations, and all men and women see that they are his children and one another's sisters and brothers'. In that we would see Gutierrez still maintaining his call for a conscious entering into the liberative process, the New Covenant can only provisionally apply to non-Christians or the oppressed who are ignorant of the Promise and who still have to 'see' that they are Yahweh's children. This of course would have a special application to those who are oppressors. Anyway, for Gutierrez (Ibid): 'The universality of the new covenant passes by way of Christ's death and is sealed by his resurrection'.

### 3.3 Change, Faith, and Hope

The whole point of liberation from suffering is that it will change the negative dimension of history. Gutierrez (1974:193) talks of the universalization of Yahweh's historical presence, which also moves out of the Temple into history:

Christ is the point of convergence of both processes. In him, in his personal uniqueness, the particular is transcended and the universal becomes concrete. In him, in his Incarnation, what is personal and internal becomes visible. Henceforth, this will be true, in one way or another, of every man.

Christ, then, as the Abrahamic heir, is here universalizing Yahweh's liberating presence. As the New Covenant, Christ takes Yahweh from Israel to the whole world.

We have referred before to Gutierrez's idea of multidimensional salvation. This salvation brings historical change or mobility, a possibility of going from death to life. In defining the effect of salvation, Gutierrez (1974:151-152) quotes from CELAM:

Thus the center of God's salvific design is Jesus Christ, who by his death and resurrection transforms the universe and makes it possible for man to reach fulfillment as a human being. This fulfillment embraces every aspect of humanity: body and spirit, individual and society, person and cosmos, time and eternity. Christ, the image of the Father and the perfect God-Man, takes on all the dimensions of human existence.

Put somewhat differently, 'Jesus is the irruption into history of the one by whom everything was made and everything was saved' (1983:61).

We come back to the question of mechanism. The question still remains as to just how the cross and resurrection effect liberation, especially in relation to the problem of ongoing human suffering. As we said earlier, Gutierrez chooses to focus

on hope in divine faithfulness and participation in liberation. To be sure, Gutierrez is cognizant of the question 'where are the signs of liberation amidst persistent suffering'?. Gutierrez presents his case by positing what can be expected, that is, liberation, life, and freedom; he also expresses how the oppressed should work out this expectation - faith and hope.

For Gutierrez (1976:66) faith is accepting 'the gratuitous gift of divine sonship' which implies joining the fight against injustice, so much so that faith 'thus appears to us ever more as a liberating praxis'. Thus faith is not passive; rather it is catalytic. Faith is entering a journey in order to love others because God first loved us, especially the oppressed (1983:20). In fact faith is to believe in a loving (just) God. To believe 'is to proclaim the kingdom as Christ does - from the midst of the struggle for justice that led him to his death' (Ibid). For Gutierrez, then, conversion, which is going from death to life (radical liberation), is worked out in the exercise of the gift of divine sonship (filiation). This exercise is a show of faith, of believing that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are in relation to the active human quest for freedom.

Faith, however, is buoyed by hope. In seeking for 'authentic communion' (that is brotherly love), we must show the gift of sonship as we 'opt for the cross of Christ and have hope in his resurrection' (1979:16). This hope will encourage one as he seeks freedom from suffering in our conflict-filled history. Gutierrez sympathizes with Moltmann's belief in future justice, but he feels that Moltmann is calling for a misplaced hope. For

Gutierrez (1974:218), Moltmann errs by replacing a 'Christianity of the Beyond with a Christianity of the Future' in a way that neglects the fight against injustice in the present. Rather, we must participate now in a liberating praxis (course of action). 'The death and resurrection of Jesus are our future, because they are our perilous and hopeful present' (Ibid). In this context one must lay oneself open to the gift of the future as one opposes injustice. 'Thus hope fulfills a mobilizing and liberating function in history. Its function is not very obvious, but it is real and deep' (Ibid).

For Gutierrez (1984:118), hope (of the resurrection) is no nebulous above-history thing; rather it stimulates historical activity against injustice. Implicit in the belief in the resurrection is the fight for life. Faith and hope can move an oppressed people to embark on a course of a spirituality of liberation in confidence (1984:120). It is in this context that Gutierrez (Ibid) quotes from a Chilean bishops' document:

Despite all the negative signs, we urge you to hope. Hope is an essentially Christian virtue. It is grounded in our certainty that in the death of Jesus Christ God has assumed all our sufferings and failures and that in the resurrection of Jesus God has overcome evil. In God's hands life is mightier than death.

Again, for Gutierrez (1990b:80-81), the eucharist celebrates the liberating actions and results of Easter, one element of which is hope.

Eschatologically speaking, then, the historical changes begun and set in motion by the death and resurrection of Jesus are appropriated in faith and hope. In the presence of persistent social suffering Gutierrez obviously has to consider the pattern of failures and victories. He points to the

inevitability of disappointments but also to the hope of future success. Concerning the ordinary person, Gutierrez (1983:191) states: 'Yes, the popular movement knows its retreats and vacillations - what historical process does not? But it knows its constancy, as well, its hope, and its political realism'. Gutierrez (1983:81) discusses the differences between the optimists and pessimists. For Gutierrez (Ibid) the pessimists, who say that reality dictates against liberative success, fail to understand that liberative action, no matter what immediate negative consequences may arise, engenders optimism. Gutierrez (Ibid) states: 'We affirm a utopia on the way to becoming a historical reality - through difficulties and hard struggles, to be sure, and with an open eyed awareness of the present situation'.

This utopia is to be brought about by human work but in the context of the divine-human dialectic. 'The human plan and the gift [promise of liberation] of God imply each other' (1974:238). For Gutierrez (1974:238-239), to 'hope in Christ is at the same time to believe in the adventure of history, which opens infinite vistas to the love and action of the Christian'. Part of the church's task is to identify and witness to God's liberating action in history. The church is to witness to the kingdom of God. For Gutierrez (1990b:158) the kingdom is to be understood as something that favours the poor, this preference being exhibited in the Christ-event. The resurrection is important here, as 'life' conquers 'death'. Gutierrez (1990b:159) relates the resurrection to the kingdom-task of the church in the following way:

Testimony to the Lord's resurrection is situated between acceptance of the grace of the kingdom and the historical demands that this grace makes. The task of the church is located precisely between these two terms. The church is called to be a sign of the life of the kingdom within history and to make that life a reality, thus placing itself under the judgement of the word of God.

The resurrection (and therefore also the cross) then, is behind both the being and kingdom-responsibility of the church. This church exists because of God's liberating grace while it is tasked to witness to the grace of liberation.

God's liberating action is, for Gutierrez, further linked to the poor as agents of evangelization. Evangelization is, of course, the announcing of, and participation in, liberation. With reference to Latin America, Gutierrez (1990b:151-152) speaks highly of the 'basic ecclesial communities'. These are communities comprised of the poor who relate to the liberative evangelization of the church and develop in liberative communion and fellowship. Concerning these communities, Gutierrez (1990b:152) says:

They are a manifestation of the people of God as existing in the world of poverty but at the same time they are profoundly marked by Christian faith. They reveal the presence in the church of the "nobodies" of history or, to use another expression of the council, of a "messianic people" (*Lumen Gentium*, No 9). They are, in other words, a people journeying through history and continually bringing about the messianic reversal - "the last shall be first" - that is a key element in every truly liberating process.

These communities, then, are sacramentalistic, as they reflect the meaning and purpose of the cross and resurrection.

Gutierrez, to be sure, believes that Christ is to culminate human liberative effort. This future has been determined by the cross and resurrection. For Gutierrez (1990b:141) the 'truth that sets human beings free is Jesus himself'. Referring to

*Gaudium et Spes* Gutierrez posits that Christ will himself present to the Father a kingdom of freedom and justice. This kingdom will reflect past human liberative efforts which will be 'cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured' (1990b:141). Gutierrez (1974:196-203) uses the parable of the sheep and the goats to speak indirectly of divine judgement on oppressors. If one's love of neighbour and Christ do not equate with each other, or do not exist, then one would remain unreconciled with Yahweh.

#### 4. SUMMARY

To this point we have been presenting Gutierrez's approach to the cross and resurrection in relation to human suffering. On the basis of the previous discussion, let us now briefly summarize Gutierrez's approach.

Human history is characterized by conflict, and, as experienced in Latin America, this conflict focuses on political, economic, and social oppression. Yahweh opposes this and makes an option for the poor (oppressed). This option began with creation, at which point Yahweh's salvific plan for unitary history was set in motion. The exodus demonstrated Yahweh's option and the possibility of his liberating intervention in history. Yahweh spoke also through the prophets, enunciating his call for justice. In this, and the covenants, the divine Promise of freedom, and preference for the poor, was made clear.

This freedom (from domination by oppression) is really for all history, beginning, of course, with the oppressed. Creation, exodus, and the cross are historically linked and are historical

landmarks of Yahweh's liberative actions. The oppressed, and ultimately all people, are players in the historical flow of liberation. The cross and resurrection culminate the historical flow as they fulfil the Promise and eschatologically open up the future.

In his death, Jesus died as a victim, in solidarity with the oppressed. This death was a justice event. The resurrection sees Jesus conquering death, vanquishing evil, and providing radical multidimensional (all life areas) liberation (freedom from domination). This makes possible the passing from death to life of the oppressed, in short - creating the possibility of freedom. For Gutierrez, freedom pertains to both the personal and systemic levels, bringing certain historical change.

The oppressed are to appropriate God's gift of freedom, by the Spirit, in faith (which implies liberative commitment) and hope. One can do this by entering into personal communion with the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. This can be done by any who are committed to liberation, even if they are doing it unknowingly. The divine option, as it is exercised in Christ, results in a universal, identifying, and liberating Christo-presence, especially amongst the oppressed. Oppressors will benefit from the cross and resurrection if they confess and therefore enter into solidarity with those who suffer.

Conversion is needed, which in reality is the act of confession, enjoying communion with Christ by the Spirit, and existentially identifying with the cause of freedom (i.e. having faith). Both oppressor and oppressed can enter into this. God calls for the oppressed to appropriate the power and promise of

the cross and resurrection as a basis for active participation in their own liberation. That is to say, God is on their side, in a divine-human dialectic. There will be failure and victory, with victory being ultimately certain, as God has planned the open liberation of history. Christ suffers and rejoices with the oppressed now. There will be, however, an eschatological handing over of a fully liberated (i.e. eschatologically consummated) history to the Father by the Son. The kingdom will have come in its fullness.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Gutierrez (1973:56) here refers to Jacques Maritain's 'New Christendom' approach.
2. That is, Gutierrez would not go for a total depravity a la Jean Calvin.

## CHAPTER TWO

### JAMES CONE: BLACKNESS AND FREEDOM

Now we move to that kind of oppression which is at once socio-economic and ethnocentric - white racism. In line with Cone, we have chosen to speak in terms of 'blackness'. Speaking from a victim's point of view, Cone bathes the issues of suffering, divine response, and human hope with the drama and emotions of the black experience. As in the previous chapter, we shall focus on the cross and resurrection and related factors. Like Gutierrez, Cone appears to treat the cross and resurrection as a unified event.

#### 1. THE BLACKNESS OF SUFFERING

Here we wish merely to establish that for Cone, black suffering is a reality. It is not our purpose to enumerate example after example of this suffering: black theology exists because racial oppression already exists. In *The Spirituals and the Blues* (1972) and *God of the Oppressed* (1975) Cone speaks of the evils of black slavery and the differing world views of slave and master. In connection with this, Cone relates the slave experience to musical styles such as the seculars, blues, spirituals and gospels. Cone's own experience is reflected in detail in *My Soul Looks Back* (1982).

In establishing the content of black theology, Cone (1986a:15) strikingly says: 'Realizing that white racism is an insanity comparable to Nazism, black theology seeks to articulate a theological ethos consistent with the Black revolutionary struggle'. Further, in determining the sources and norm of black theology, Cone (1986a:24) states that the 'black experience is existence in a system of white racism. The black person knows that the ghetto is the white way of saying that blacks are sub-human and fit only to live with rats'.

The American white church presents a major stumbling block for Cone. This is because he understands them 'almost without exception' (1985:182) to be preoccupied with pietistic concerns at the expense of social concerns. Thus the churches become, by their silence, and also active participation, agents of injustice. Cone (Ibid) concludes that 'all institutional white churches in America have sided with capitalist, rich, white, male elites, and against socialists, the poor, blacks and women'. In fact for Cone (1979d:120) the white church is a manifestation of the Anti-Christ.

How does sin fit into all of this? Cone (1986a:103-104) understands sin as estrangement from meaningful being, as well as existence in opposition to positive community. Sin is a community concept, rather than an abstractly theological one. As Cone (1986b:41) states:

For the basic human sin is the attempt to be God, to take his place by ordering the societal structures according to one's political interests. Sin is not primarily a religious impurity but rather social, political, and economic oppression of the poor. It is the denial of the humanity of the neighbor through unjust political and economic arrangements.

The 'problem of sin', for Cone (1975:237), 'is an alienation from God that it is always connected with injustice and oppression'.

It is important for Cone that whites give up analysing the black ethos, especially in theological terms. While it is agreed that all people are sinners, one must allow that only blacks can speak about black sin. The different cultural and Christian identities demands this (1986a:51). We observe that Cone allows blacks to analyze white sin, however. White sin is the oppressor mentality, or, whiteness itself - a thing whites are incapable of perceiving (1986a:106-108). Cone (1986a:106) advocates his views in the light of the fact that '[black] theology believes that the true nature of sin is perceived only in the moment of oppression and liberation'.

So what is sin in the black context then? Certainly, the black church is to deal with her own sins (including oppression of one another), but it is also to remember the black responsibility as liberative agents (1979a:354). The black community, as oppressed, sins if it denies or forgets (like Israel of old) that authentic existence involves the affirmation of God as their liberator (1986a:105-106). Concerning the question of what is wrong with the world, then, Cone (1986a:107) states: '[only] the oppressed know what is wrong, because they are both the victims of evil and the recipients of God's liberating activity'. Cone (1986a:51) symbolically, yet dramatically, states that for the oppressed, sin is attempting to 'love' oppressors on their own terms rather than killing them. For Cone, then, the inter-linkage between sin, racial suffering,

and the unnecessary acceptance thereof by blacks, is part and parcel of what we can call the 'blackness of suffering'.

## **2. THE BLACKNESS OF GOD**

### **2.1 Revelation and the Divine Option**

The brief observation of Cone's reflection on sin and racial suffering now allows us to consider his understanding of the divine response to suffering. This response culminates in the cross and resurrection, but to understand this we must first consider revelation in relation to suffering. Cone (1986a:106) avers:

Because sin is inseparable from revelation, and because revelation is an event that takes place in the moment of liberation from oppression, there can be no knowledge of the sinful condition except in the movement of an oppressed community claiming its freedom.

We understand our situation of suffering-as-sin in the light of the divine revelation. This revelation is contextual. Whites, then, can never hope to comprehend the black condition - but God can and does.

God does this because of who he is. According to Cone (1975:62), God is not an 'eternal idea' or an 'absolute ethical principle'. Rather, he is a God of historical involvement. As Cone (Ibid) puts it:

He is the political God, the Protector of the poor and the Establisher of the right for those who are oppressed. To know him is to experience his acts in the concrete affairs and relationships of people, liberating the weak and the helpless from pain and humiliation.

So revelation is God in action, it is God who presents himself in a situation of need.

For Cone, then, the divine revelation is the expression of the divine option to be on the 'side' of the oppressed. We shall see this as we proceed. Cone (1986a:45) plainly states: 'There is no revelation of God without a condition of oppression which develops into a situation of liberation. Revelation is only for the oppressed of the land'. God reveals himself through historical action, in human history, for human freedom (1973:53). Cone does not support the propositional (conceptive) notion of revelation as this would negate the idea that revelation is in the context of, and is also the promise of, historical liberation. For Cone (1975:62) there is no truth about Yahweh unless it is the 'truth of freedom'.

In discussing the sources of black theology, Cone (1986a:27) posits the following question:

What are the implications of black history for the revelation of God? Is God active in black history or has God withdrawn and left blacks to the mercy of white insanity? ... If God is not for us, if God is not against white racists, then God is a murderer, and we had better kill God. The task of black theology is to kill gods that do not belong to the black community.

Cone is here symbolically stating that true revelation, which issues in liberation, is determined by its relevance to the black situation. To the question, 'has there been true revelation?' Cone answers, 'Yes.' The yes is seen in God's history of self-disclosure in Israelite history (1986a:47) and, of course, in the Christ-event. Black theology investigates this.

Obviously, the exodus event is the opening key here. Yahweh responded to the Hebrew cry for help, and, through Moses, effected the exodus-liberation. This liberation also placed Israel into a covenant relationship with Yahweh the liberator,

in which Israel herself must act justly (1975:64). For Cone (1975:65), then, in the 'Exodus-Sinai tradition, Yahweh is disclosed as the God of history, whose revelation is identical with his power to liberate the oppressed'. The prophets also declare Yahweh's opposition to injustice as well as his call for justice. Further, even in the so-called David-Zion tradition, (which has to do with the Davidic covenant), the theme of promised liberation is present (1975:68-69). Further revelation was seen in Yahweh's delivering Israel from the exile in what was her second exodus (1975:72).

As history is also the medium of the divine liberative revelation, the life of Jesus continues the meaning of Old Testament revelation. Cone (Ibid) sees the New Testament presenting Jesus as the continuation of the Law and Prophets, as well as the inaugurator of a new age. For Cone (1975:73) the early church saw the historical Jesus as reflecting the meaning of both the Exodus-Sinai and David-Zion traditions. This meaning is that Yahweh liberatively responds to the poor.<sup>1</sup>

For Cone, the fact that Jesus was incarnated into the Jewish culture reflects Yahweh's disposition for the oppressed. 'He was not a "universal" man but a particular Jew who came to fulfil God's will to liberate the oppressed' (1975:119).

Jesus, as this Jew, came to bring about the Abrahamic blessing of the promised reconciliation of the world (Ibid). Of course, this reconciliation is worked out in liberation. God identifies with the helpless in Israel by becoming a poor Jew (1986a:5). Cone (1986a:114) sees the birth narratives as mythological, but stresses that they point to the natural social

poverty of Jesus. Thus the meaning of Jesus' existence was 'one with the poor and outcast'. The Messiah Jesus was humiliated and abused in his birth, and his continuing identity was with the tax collectors and sinners (1986a:115). God, in Jesus, was fully identifying with the poor 'precisely because they are poor' (1986a:117). Jesus opted against Satan, earthly powers, and the rich (1986a:2). For Cone (1973:54, 1986a:117) Jesus' identification with the poor is seen in his message that the kingdom is for the poor alone.

For Cone the general nature of Jesus' birth was that of entering into slavery in order to show the inhumanity of servitude (1975:111,120). Further, however, it was to signal the overthrow of the perpetrators of oppression. This is highlighted in the Magnificat and the synagogue address (1975:73,75). The Magnificat (Lk 1:49-53) stresses the providence of God in dealing with the rich and powerful. In the synagogue, we have Jesus declaring his mission of freedom for the poor, blind, victims and prisoners (Lk 4:18-19). The effectuating of all this, of course, implied a great personal cost for Jesus Christ.

## **2.2 Suffering and Victory**

We need to begin here by seeing how Cone links the divine option for the poor or oppressed with redemptive suffering. It is at this point that we take note of Cone's view of the baptism and temptation of Jesus Christ. Cone relates these to the theme of suffering, more specifically the Suffering Servant. Concerning the baptism, Cone (1975:74) sees the descent of the Spirit and the Father's announced pleasure in the Son as indicative of Jesus' liberative mission. Jesus' own self-

understanding and the Spirit descent signal the inauguration of the new age of liberation. Cone links Psalm 2:7 with Isaiah 42:1 here. The baptism allows Jesus to assume the oppressed status of sinners (1986a:115).

The wilderness temptations depict Jesus as rejecting any revolutionary role that would separate him from the poor (1975:75). No glorifying or oppressive means of messiahship is acceptable for Jesus. Rather, his 'being in the world is as one of the humiliated, suffering poor' (1986a:115). For Cone (1975:75), then, the meaning of Jesus' mission as seen in both the baptism and temptation is: *'Lordship and Servanthood together, that is, the establishment of justice through suffering'*. Jesus Christ therefore came to identify with and bring about liberation (freedom) for the oppressed. Jesus, as the Suffering Servant, is an important theme for Cone. This is part and parcel of the notion of redemptive suffering.

Cone begins his discussion of redemptive suffering by referring to the Israelite experience. In so doing, he discusses the issues of punitive and unjust suffering and looks at various approaches describing the Israelite experience. The Deuteronomic formula, (that suffering is always in proportion to sins committed), is rejected by Cone (1975:165-168) as being too simplistic and naive. The prophets themselves (for example Jer 12:1; Hab 1:13) found no answer in that formula. Ecclesiastes is 'skeptical and sometimes cynical' (1975:168) and it falls upon Job to supply some more realistic answers. While Yahweh does judge for sin, the question of unexplainable suffering remains. Cone (1975:170) sees Job as suggesting that the testing of faith,

and especially the possibility of redemptive suffering, constitute reasonable answers to the theodicy question.

Israel was not to think Yahweh had abandoned her; rather, the exilic suffering of Israel was redemptive. For Cone (1975:171), Deutero-Isaiah's message was just that. Israel was to see herself as Suffering Servant. In fact for Cone (1975:172), Israel was to bring in justice by bearing the sins of other nations. In this, she would be judged by Yahweh, for others. Cone (Ibid) states:

Her mission is to be Yahweh's people in the world by expressing the liberating presence of God among the nations. This act is the vicarious suffering of the innocent for the guilty. This is the meaning of Israel's double portion which she received from Yahweh's hand: expiation for her own sins, and transformation into a new being for the sake of others.

Cone (1975:172-173) adds that Israel was elected to this experience. Furthermore, this election implied the call to suffer for justice. This justice-suffering is redemptive in that she suffered with her Lord who identifies with the oppressed. Thus it is Yahweh himself who, by his identification with human suffering, makes it redemptive. In Israel, it could be said that Yahweh was 'bearing the pain of sin so that liberation will become a reality among all people' (1975:173). This history, along with the issues of sin and racial suffering, brings Cone to consider the Christ-event.

This he does in the context of Jesus as the Suffering Servant. 'The cross of Jesus is God invading the human situation as the Elected One who takes Israel's place as the Suffering Servant and thus reveals the divine willingness to suffer in order that humanity might be liberated' (1975:135). According

to Cone (1975:174-175), Jesus Christ was fulfilling the prophecy of the sad and stricken lamb of Isaiah 53:3-5. In this way, on the cross, 'God's identity with the suffering of the world was complete'. As the Suffering Servant, God through Jesus absorbs human pain and humiliation into his own history. The pain of the oppressed becomes God's pain (1975:175). This is the God who became a sacrificial victim (1975:80,175). Indeed, the pain of the cross is seen in God's suffering for and with us for the purpose of liberation (1975:139) as the Suffering Servant. Christ overcomes his and our suffering through his resurrection, freeing the oppressed to fight for freedom in joy (1975:175).

All this demonstrates the option of Yahweh for the oppressed. The cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ links the Exodus-Sinai and David-Zion histories with the Suffering Servant reality. This brings us now to consider the results of the life, dying and resurrection of Jesus. We shall look at the concepts of victory, freedom and the liberating presence of Christ. For Cone those themes are interlinked.

The cross and especially the resurrection, then, signal the divine victory over human pain. The poor no longer have to be determined by their poverty, as the resurrection means victory over oppression. As Cone (1986b:6) states: 'The Incarnation, then, is simply God taking upon the divine self human suffering and humiliation. The resurrection is the divine victory over suffering, the bestowal of freedom to all who are weak and helpless'. For Cone it is quite clear that the gospel means freedom. There are those who will maintain that the gospel should transcend race and politics. In response to this, Cone

(1979e:183) claims that 'Jesus did not die on the cross in order to transcend human suffering, but rather that it might be overcome'. A battle was needed; it was fought; it was won.

For Cone, the concept of victory is bound up with what he terms the 'objective side of reconciliation'. Liberation is God's method of effecting reconciliation. For Cone (1975:229) liberation is deliverance from 'unfreedom to freedom' whilst reconciliation is the 'bestowal of freedom and life with God'. The Old Testament depicts salvation in terms of political deliverance, which, Cone (1975:230) maintains, reflects the interrelationship between liberation and reconciliation. This theme is then acted out in Christ: 'Christ is the Reconciler because he is first the Liberator' (Ibid). As the Oppressed One, Jesus assumed the existence of the oppressed and died for them. This made clear that 'poverty and sickness contradict the divine intentions for humanity' (Ibid). Together, the cross and resurrection mean the ultimate defeat of slavery. Thus people are now able to be reconciled with God as the power of death and sin has been destroyed by him (Ibid).

In all of this, Cone (1975:232) draws political implications from the classical victory motif of the atonement as first propounded by Aulen. In this context, Cone speaks of the defeat of Satan. For Cone (Ibid), Satan is a figure who mythically represents metaphysical and earthly realities of evil. Satan and the principalities and powers are to be found in the American system, American bombs, the prison system, and such like. God, however, has defeated all this. As Cone (Ibid) says:

He [Satan] is alive in those who do his work. Satan is present in those powers, visible and invisible,

that destroy humanity and enslave the weak and helpless. And it is against Satan and his powers that Christ has given his life. Because Christ has been raised from the dead, we know that the decisive victory has been won. We have been redeemed, that is, set free from the powers of slavery and death. That is the objective side of the biblical view of reconciliation.

This victory of Christ is expressible also in terms of freedom. Some might ask whether God would choose the status of victim. For Cone (1986a:118), however, God's assumption of human pain and death reveals his divine freedom to do so. The resurrection, then, reveals that God defeated oppression and created the possibility of freedom. So the freedom of God paves the way for the freedom of man. Cone (1975:81) sees Christ's actions as reflecting 'a new vision of divine freedom, climaxed with the cross and resurrection' in which God demonstrates his option, and makes freedom available. In reality, liberation becomes a 'project of freedom' (1975:138,157) on the basis of the divine initiative.

In discussing the relation between suffering and freedom, Cone opposes the idea of retributive justice. For Cone (1975:176) the life, death and resurrection of Jesus make this idea inadequate. According to Cone (Ibid) there is a better understanding:

God is not an even-handed Judge who inflicts punishment according to the crime. Rather, he is the Loving Father of Jesus, the crucified and risen One, who suffers on our behalf. The legalistic structure of the orthodox formula, therefore, fails to deal with the complexity of divine involvement in suffering and the divine call of freedom to the oppressed in their situation of injustice.

In other words, freedom is the issue here. The Christ-event is to be understood in terms of deliverance rather than forensic (legalistic) punishment.

Cone speaks of discontinuity and continuity between the Old and New Testaments in regard to social freedom. The continuity is seen in that in both God desires to liberate the oppressed (1975:80). However, the discontinuity is seen in that the freedom offered by Jesus Christ is even more than the historical freedom as seen in the exodus. 'And it is this *more* which separates the Exodus from the Incarnation ... While both stress the historical freedom of the unfree, the latter transcends history and affirms a freedom not dependant on sociopolitical limitations' (Ibid).

This transcendent freedom gives birth to hope in the midst of historical suffering, hope that suffering shall eventually be overcome. Hope and freedom, however, have a demand. This demand is none other than the call to fight against injustice. The resurrection, signifying Christ's victory over suffering, frees the oppressed for a liberation struggle (1975:81). 'In Jesus' death and resurrection, God has freed us to fight against social and political structures while not being determined by them' (1975:158). We will return to the aspect of struggle later.

What are the boundaries of this demand? For Cone, (1986a:87), only the poor can truly know freedom. This is because freedom is the opposite of oppression. Thus the poor are the primary beneficiaries of the Christ-event. Ultimately, however, one can only be truly free when all people are free (1982:113). There must be a 'universal vision' in which the cross and resurrection liberate people 'into God's coming kingdom'. The resurrection, then, which offers the gift of freedom, is actually a political event (1975:125). Justification

is in reality the freeing of blacks from white power (1975:236); while salvation is definable in terms of freedom in present and future history (1979b:540). Jesus lived and died to give life (1975:118).

Along with victory and freedom, the poor themselves become the historical field for the divine presence of the liberating Christ (Christo-presence). Blacks understand that: '[Jesus Christ] is the divine one who transcends the limitations of history by making himself present in our contemporary existence. This is the meaning of Jesus' resurrection' (1975:125). One, then, does not receive merely the benefits of what Jesus Christ has done. One receives Christ himself. In fact, for Cone (1975:35), because God is the ground of our existence, he must be present in the human struggle.

Against Pannenburg, Cone (1975:121, 1986a:30) insists on the immediate presence of Christ. Cone (1975:121-122) says:

I reject Pannenburg's conclusions about the absence of Christ in our present not only because of the Scripture's testimony about the promise and presence of Christ's Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:1ff), but also because of the witness of the black Church tradition and the contemporary testimonies of black people, all of whom proclaim Christ's present power to "make a way out of no way" ... I must take my stand against Pannenburg and with my people who say that Jesus has not left us alone but is with us in the struggle of freedom.

Cone, then, does not like Pannenburg's idea of having to wait for a future, eschatological confirmation that Christ is, or has been, liberating.

For Cone, the presence of Christ amongst the poor, then and now, bears upon the relationship between theology and ideology. Cone (1975:98) says: 'This is the dialectic of Christian thought: God enters into the social context of human existence and

appropriates the ideas and actions of the oppressed as his own'. For the oppressed's benefit, the presence of the Spirit is the divine presence with them, giving them insight and the power to do the truth (1979c:391). Cone is careful to warn against the deifying of black theology (and turning it into an ideology), wanting merely to emphasize the importance of the Incarnation with regard to the liberating presence of Christ.

Cone (1986a:118) points out that the life of Jesus demonstrated more than mere sympathy for the poor: *'The finality of Jesus lies in the totality of his existence in complete freedom as the Oppressed One who reveals through his death and resurrection that God is present in all dimensions of human liberation'*. By this, Cone means that the liberating Christ is present in all areas of the lives of the oppressed, the physical, economic, social, worship, and such like. It is thus an all-encompassing identification. In fact for Cone (1986a:123), the value of the concept of the 'black Christ' lies in the fact that it *'expresses the concreteness of Jesus'* continued presence today'.

For Cone, the themes of sin, racial suffering, the Suffering Servant, the divine option (God's identity with human pain), victory, freedom, and presence, all point toward the role of Christ as Liberator. Let us see, then, how Cone relates his view of the 'liberator' status of Christ to the idea of the black Christ.

The resurrection, for Cone (1975:125), demonstrated the divine historical identity with the poor in that God assumed humanity *'for the purpose of liberating human beings from sin and*

death'. In his discussion of the being of the Trinitarian God in black theology, Cone (1986a:64) argues that, as Creator, God identified with oppressed Israel; as Redeemer, he became the Oppressed One to effect liberation; and as the Holy Spirit, God continues the movement of liberation. The Liberator role of Jesus is so important for Cone, that the concept of 'God in Christ as Liberator' becomes the hermeneutical principle for relevant theologizing (1975:81).

In fact for Cone, any other kind of theologizing is totally unacceptable. As Cone (1975:82) states:

Jesus Christ the Liberator, the helper and the healer of the wounded, is the point of departure for valid exegesis of the Scriptures from a Christian perspective. Any starting point that ignores God in Christ as the Liberator of the oppressed or that makes salvation as liberation secondary is *ipso facto* invalid and thus heretical.

Cone (Ibid) goes on to state that the black experience, and especially Jesus Christ himself are the test for this point of departure.

Our preceding discussion brings us to the idea of the blackness of Jesus Christ. If liberation is seen as freedom then the freeing, identifying, victorious and present Christ must be 'black'. 'If Christ is truly the Suffering Servant of God who takes upon himself the suffering of his people, thereby reestablishing the covenant of God, then he must be black' (1986a:122). Cone uses the word black symbolically, but for blacks themselves the term connotes a harsh reality. Cone (1986a:119-120) maintains that the seeking of liberation is at the same time the encountering of the 'existential significance of the Resurrected One'. Christ becomes the Liberator *par excellence*. Now the black community is an oppressed one because

of its very blackness. Concerning Christ, then, if 'he is not black as we are, then the resurrection has little significance for our times' (1986a:120). For Cone (1986a:12), the word of God includes the idea that God has chosen to make the black condition his condition.

Jesus Christ, as black, identifies with the goals of freedom for the black oppressed. As Cone (1973:56) puts it:

If Jesus Christ is in fact the Liberator whose resurrection is the guarantee that he is present with us today, then he too must be black, taking upon his person and work the blackness of our existence, and revealing to us what is necessary for our destruction of whiteness.

We see Cone, here, directly linking the historical revelation of God in Christ with the black existential need of freedom. The resurrection evinces the divine identity with all who seek liberation. Those who seek are black, thus Jesus Christ becomes black (1975:135). In discussing the being of God, Cone (1986a:76) refers to God's immanence. This is God in the 'depths of liberation', never being less than the experience of liberation, and thus taking on blackness.

God, truly understood, is the God only of the blacks, as valid perception of him emanates only from the black experience (1986a:63). Cone (1986a:75) can thus say: 'I am black because God is black'. We have mentioned earlier Cone's idea that Christ can transcend historical limitations in making himself contemporary with present existence. Blacks who have suffered have also participated in this experience of transcendence. Cone (1975:112) points out that blacks, in faith, and by divine grace, can existentially project themselves to the past and then return to the present armed with divine power to transform society.

Cone (1975:112) states: 'When the people are thrown back into their present social context, they bring with them this sense of having been a witness to Jesus' life, death and resurrection'. Jesus lived as an oppressed Jew (1975:119-120), thus for blacks: 'He is black because he was a Jew. The affirmation of the Black Christ can be understood when the significance of his past Jewishness is related dialectically to the significance of his present blackness' (1975:134). As Jewish, Jesus identified with the oppressed nation which had once known liberation in the exodus. His cross and resurrection also locate him in the contemporary black situation. The victory, freedom, presence, and all that goes with Jesus Christ as Liberator, or Freer, applies to blacks as blacks, and to all sufferers as sufferers.

All this emphasis on blackness does not mean that only blacks benefit from Christ. Cone (1985:67), in describing the history and nature of black theology, maintains that for blacks, Christ is black. Christ, however, can be the colour of any form of suffering world-wide.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, Cone (1982:115) refers to his personal growth from seeing racism as the main arena of suffering to seeing that 'racism, classism, sexism, and imperialism are interconnected' and need simultaneous attention.<sup>3</sup> The universal justice concern of God is applicable in various situations of suffering.

### **3. THE BLACKNESS OF FREEDOM**

If the concept of the divine option for the poor (black) is correct, then God's actions and demands are couched in the same context. This is the dialectic that Cone posits, that for

blacks, liberation at once implies responsibility. Black freedom means the ongoing struggle for black freedom. The event of Jesus Christ demands this. In this section we are going to look at Cone's view of the black task, especially in its relation to the cross and resurrection.

### 3.1 Freedom and the Gospel

A brief look at Cone's understanding of salvation and the gospel in relation to suffering is useful here, as this forms the framework for responsible action. The fundamental issue is one of justice. God's righteousness is his act of addressing human evil, while his love is his doing so in the interests of justice (1986a:72-73). Thus the themes of justice, liberation and hope are the outworking of divine love (1986b:84). For society's victims, then, this is the kind of God that is needed. The gospel is God's good news that the future of humanity is not determined by victimization (1979c:392). This same gospel, however, as reflected by the exodus, the prophets and the Incarnation, demands that the victims participate in actions that promote freedom. For Cone (1979b:538), the bible pictures God as the saviour *par excellence* who is responsible for the fact that salvation is a revolutionary historical liberation. This is why we have the Magnificat. According to Cone (1975:121), existential meaning is found in an encounter with the historical Jesus, as crucified and risen, who is present in the struggle for freedom.

This brings us back to reconciliation. We have already noted Cone's view of objective reconciliation under the heading of freedom. Here, we merely relate it to Cone's overall view of

the gospel. If reconciliation is objective (on the one hand), then black existence is to be radically transformed objectively, and God in Jesus has 'performed a reconciling act of liberation quite independently of our faithful response' (1975:238). In the midst of human suffering, man can be reconciled to God because he (God) has removed the conditions of alienation that come from the evil powers (1975:236). This is possible because of the victorious and liberating resurrection. On the horizontal level, reconciliation becomes part and parcel of liberation. It involves new interpersonal relationships and certainly is not limited to mystical communion or pietism (1975:229). Cone does speak out on aspects of social reconciliation, but that is a subject for another study.

For Cone the notion of the kingdom is an important part of the gospel. Let us emphasize Cone's view that the kingdom is only for the 'poor'. Cone (1975:79) states: 'It is important to point out that Jesus does not promise to include the poor in the Kingdom *along with* others who may be rich and learned. His promise is that the Kingdom belongs to the poor *alone*'. Cone (1973:54) is careful to state, however, that poverty is not a precondition for salvation. It would be the poor, though, who would correctly apprehend the elements of oppression and liberation. Cone (1973:54-55) states that in Christ's view, 'salvation is not an eschatological longing for escape to a transcendent reality and neither is it an inward serenity which eases unbearable suffering'. It is rather God, in Christ, identifying with and freeing the victim. 'The repentant man knows that though God's ultimate kingdom is in the future, yet

Christ's resurrection means that even now God's salvation breaks through like a ray of "blackness" upon the "whiteness" of the condition of the oppressed ...' (1973:55). The repentance referred to here is not that of mere 'morality or religious piety in the white sense' (1986a:124). It is the affirming of, and commitment to, the 'kingdom-event'. It is perceiving the 'irruption of God's kingdom' and understanding it as a black event (Ibid). Ultimately, Christ is the kingdom (1986a:3).

The gospel, for Cone, is of course not only objective. Repentance is subjective, and the experience of freedom and suffering is intensely personal. The subjective side of reconciliation demands commitment to the struggle. For Cone (1975:141-142), the liberated person is one who encounters God in faith, wherein one's self-humanity is actualized (or freed). The vertical dimension of faith is the call for an existential response to the gospel, and thus the motifs of conversion and worship are real and transforming. Liberation is for oppressors too, and it takes place when their oppressor mentality is overcome. This prevents hate and revenge (1975:151). For the victim, however, it still remains true that salvation includes the overcoming of oppression (1986a:128).

### **3.2 Freedom and Theodicy**

The notions of freedom and gospel call for responsible action. We have seen earlier that freedom from hopeless suffering calls for this. A problem presents itself here, however. We have seen the cross and resurrection as victorious, freeing, liberating and also demanding. Yet evil still persists. Cone recognises this and partly responds to the problem by

referring to redemptive suffering. Earlier we saw Cone's view of this in relation to Israel and Jesus Christ as Suffering Servant. The cross showed the particularity of divine suffering in Israel's place (1975:135) whereas the resurrection universalizes the victory (freedom) of Christ (Ibid).<sup>4</sup> Christ, as Black, was/is the Incarnate One, the God who assumed human pain, showing that human fullness is 'consistent with the divine Being' (1986a:121).<sup>5</sup> Yet despite the identity of Christ as Liberator, and as 'black', oppression remains widespread.

In the context of the exodus, and of Christ as liberator, Cone (1975:163) asks: 'then why are black people still living in wretched conditions without the economic and political power to determine their historical destiny?' Is it that God can not or will not do something about the situation? Cone's discussion on the prophets, the wisdom literature (especially Job), and the Suffering Servant, which we have already noted, tries to respond to this question. Yet Cone admits that the problem of theodicy is a perpetual one. While opposing the scepticism of William Jones, Cone (1975:191) states: 'Nevertheless, William Jones is right! There is no historical evidence that can prove conclusively that the God of Jesus is actually liberating black people from oppression'. Cone (1975:192) can say, however: 'to William Jones' question, What is the decisive event of liberation? we respond: Jesus Christ! He is our Alpha and Omega, the one who died on the cross and was resurrected that we might be free to struggle for the affirmation of black humanity'.

According to Cone (1975:165) the problem as scripture sees it, is not the fact of suffering; rather it is the distribution

of it. That is, why do the wicked prosper? Cone (1975:170) sees Job (as over against Deuteronomy) reflecting the axiom that 'prosperity and adversity have no necessary connection with goodness and wickedness'. This does not mean that God accepts human evil. For Cone (1986a:80-81), the death and resurrection of Jesus do not merely promise future freedom, they argue, rather, for the rejection of present suffering. Although the meaning of persistent black pain is a mystery, the cross and resurrection events declare that oppression is wrong and has been defeated (1975:192).

In referring to the black slave issue, in which survival faith was vital, Cone (1986b:90) states:

Love and suffering belong together in black religious thought. On the one hand God loves those who suffer; but, on the other hand, if God loves black slaves, why do they suffer so much? This paradox stands at the heart of black faith. Moses and Job, liberation and slavery, cross and resurrection - these polarities are held in dialectical tension ...

Cone (Ibid) goes on to say that whatever doubt that might arise from experienced suffering, black people could still maintain faith in a loving God. This is because God has suffered for them, and suffers with them, now, in the person of Christ. The issue of theodicy, then, is partly answerable by identifying on a practical level with the suffering Jesus, which is linked to the theme of redemptive suffering.

The cross and resurrection do not obviate the theodicy problem, but they do form a liberating response to it. Cone (1975:178-179) feels that scripture shows little concern for philosophical answers to theodicy; rather: 'Its emphasis is on what God has done in Jesus' cross and resurrection to destroy the

powers of evil and give the oppressed the freedom to struggle against humiliation and suffering'. It is here that the objective side of reconciliation relates to the subjective side. Cone (1975:233) sees them as belonging together, that is, the oppressed must now subjectively (personally) fight with God against human evil. This challenge exists because of the objective act of God. On the basis of God's suffering (cross) and victory (resurrection) Cone (1985:188) states:

However, the Christian affirmation of God's overcoming of evil in Jesus' cross and resurrection is not a substitute for making a political commitment on behalf of the liberation of the poor. Rather Jesus' cross and resurrection demand that we make an option for the poor, because God is encountered in their struggles for liberation.

As we mentioned earlier, then, freedom for the black oppressed is freedom to struggle for freedom.

This makes the church an agency for Yahweh in the history of freedom. A question presents itself here. Who is the church? Cone answers the 'who' question by speaking of the responsibility of the church. Cone (1975:148) begins by responding to white claims of being authentic Christians and also oppressed just like black Christians. For Cone the reality is that it is only blacks who really know true oppression and, therefore, true Christianity. In fact being an authentic Christian means refusing to 'stay in one's place' (1986a:77). Only the poor or the oppressed community are capable of knowing the divine will (1975:207). This is because Christ as Liberator is to be found in this community, and the divine will must relate in one way or another to the process of liberation. As Cone puts it:

The encounter of God's liberating presence includes hearing the call to be obedient to the claim of divine freedom.

Christian behaviour is basically the behaviour that arises out of the oppressed community in response to God's call to be obedient to his will.

The church, which must reflect the oppressed community, is a servant, defined by the cross (1986b:124). That is, the church 'is that people who have been called into being by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus so that they can bear witness to Jesus' Lordship by participating with him in the struggle of freedom' (1986b:123). Cone (1986a:130-132) gives a threefold description of the church's task: a) to proclaim 'the reality of divine liberation'; b) to actually share in the struggle for freedom; and c) to be exemplary in demonstrating what a liberated (and liberating) community looks like.

Thus the church is not an end in itself. 'By definition, the church exists for others, because its being is determined by the One who died on the cross for others' (1986b:124). Servanthood, then, means political commitment. 'We must be careful not to spiritualize servanthood so as to camouflage its concrete, political embodiment' (Ibid). This servanthood also means suffering; the church must be crucified, 'living under the cross'. The church is a church that *finds* itself (or should) in a suffering world. Its identity is to be found in the crucified Jesus, as well as in the act of serving the victim (1982:89). The church exists in the world to oppose evil (1986a:124).

Suffering is inevitable as freedom does not preclude Christians from suffering (1986a:97). Both white and black are to understand the sacrifice of reconciliation and the need to overcome human evil. Symbolically and literally, reconciliation means death (1975:239). The suffering to be expected comes

because it is all about the battle between good and evil (1986a:101). For Cone (1975:193), one must remember the fact of Christ's empathetic suffering with the oppressed. This empathy is liberating; thus the oppressed's suffering in this context will lead to liberation. Here we have the familiar theme of redemptive suffering (or service). Just as Israel and Jesus suffered redemptively, so must the black (and any) oppressed. In this regard, Cone (1986a:56) states:

It is God's cause because God has chosen the blacks as God's own people. And God has chosen them not for redemptive suffering but for freedom. Blacks are not elected to be Yahweh's suffering people. Rather we are elected because we are oppressed against our will and God's, and God has decided to make our liberation God's own undertaking. We are elected to be free now to do the work for which we were called into being - namely, the breaking of chains.

Cone, then, is claiming that the oppressed are favoured by Yahweh, but this favouring entails a praxis of struggle. The election is for service (suffering servants) - but this service will necessarily imply redemptive suffering. We saw earlier that it is redemptive because Jesus suffered for the oppressed in history, thus overcoming death and saying no to suffering. Blacks contemporaneously participate in this.

When it is understood that the cross and resurrection bring freedom, then the fight for it becomes worthwhile, and death does not have the last word (1986a:141). There is an enduring hope here. The resurrection means that ultimate victory over suffering is to be expected. For Cone (1979b:540), this belief added a 'heavenly,' eschatological element to the practical christianity of the slaves. They knew that death was defeated in the resurrection. For Cone (1975:182), then, the cross and

resurrection decisively defeated human evil, and the poor know this, and thus are freed to fight. In this context, faith and hope belong together. Cone argues for the importance of faith in the resurrection's victory. Coming back to Jones' chide, that there is no objective or scientific evidence of liberation, Cone (1986b:13) says that the former is speaking from outside the position of black faith. For black faith, Jesus' liberation is self-evident. According to Cone (1986b:13-14), for 'those who stand outside of this faith, such a claim is a scandal - that is, foolishness to those whose wisdom is derived from European intellectual history'. For Cone, then, faith is to be placed in Christ himself, rather than in looking purely at whatever circumstances one finds oneself in.

Faith becomes an existential recognition of evil leading to the believer's participation in liberating activity (1986a:48). As the Old Testament believers had faith in Yahweh's historical deliverance of them from oppression, so today we must exercise this same faith (1986b:40-41). Faith is a total commitment to justice because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1986b:40). For Cone (1975:42), faith is determined by who and what Jesus Christ was:

Jesus was born like the poor, he lived like them, and on the cross he died for them. If Jesus is the divine revelation of God's intention for humanity, then faith is nothing but trust in the One who came in Christ for the liberation of the poor.

Cone (1986b:120) sees the life, cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ as God turning the values of the world upside down. It is only the oppressed, therefore, who could exercise genuine faith. Easter applies to them. In all of this, though, Cone

(1982:63) declares that faith does not explain evil. Rather, it empowers and prevents despair. In fact, the persistence of evil is inexplicable because of faith.

Again, hope exists because the poor know the support of the resurrected Christ. Yet this is not to ease the experience of suffering. Rather, hope rejects evil now, and focuses on the future (1986a:3). The absurdity of suffering must be defeated. Suffering in fact becomes unbearable when there is no hope of reconciliation (1986a:99). For Cone (1982:131) belief is synonymous with hoping in Christ on the basis of his death and victorious resurrection. Hope is reasonable because the cross speaks of God's identity with the poor and the resurrection speaks of the conquering of suffering (1985:173-174). The church, then, bears witness to resurrection hope, which is the hope of the future (1986b:126). However, this is not an opiate hope; the church is not taken out of history, because it is called upon to participate in the freedom struggle (1979b:540, 1986b:127). By definition, then, blacks who respond to the offer of freedom from Christ (the black Christ), commit themselves to an historical project in which they, together and alongside God, struggle to overcome suffering and to actualize human authentic existence.

### **3.3 Freedom and the Future**

This struggle has an eschatological perspective to it, a sort of dialectical tension of promise and fulfilment. Human suffering will eventually come to an end. The eschatological perspective forces the poor to fight because the present humiliation is inconsistent with the promised future (1986a:137).

For Cone, the persistence of suffering is an unwelcome reality. However, this does not rule out the hope of a redeemed future.

Cone (1986a:140) states:

Christian eschatology is bound up with the resurrection of Christ. He is the eschatological hope. He is the future of God who stands in judgement upon the world and forces us to give an account of the present. In view of his victory over evil and death, why must human beings suffer and die? ... As long as we look at the resurrection of Christ and the expected "end", we cannot reconcile ourselves to the things of the present that contradict his presence.

Cone, then, is saying that the future eschatological hope creates a responsibility to oppose oppression in the present.

We must not neglect the after-life, says Cone (1986a:141), but to believe in heaven is to reject hell on earth. Cone (1975:160) points out that if blacks can see liberation or freedom in present history and the eschatological future, then the 'sigh of the oppressed' presses for revolution. The resurrection of Christ creates this possibility. Following Moltmann, Cone (1975:140) speaks of the present being influenced by the future. That is, God's future, which is at once the promise of freedom, can irrupt into human suffering now, and overcome it. Victims can be sure that the fight for freedom is worthwhile because the 'One who is their future is also the ground of their struggle for liberation'. The problem with white eschatology is that it ignores 'death', that is, the present non-being of the poor (1986a:136). It does not realise that for blacks, freedom from, and transcendence over death is (as it was for the slave) eschatologically in the present and in the future (1975:161-162).

Yes, human suffering persists. Yet for Cone (1975:177): 'The New Testament is clear that though the decisive victory has been won on the cross and through the resurrection of Jesus, the war against evil and suffering is still going on. The final victory will take place with the second coming of Christ'. For Cone, it is not a hopeless situation. It seems to be a case of the victory working itself out. Jesus Christ, through his life, death and resurrection, is the fulfilment of the kingdom and of the Day of the Lord (1979d:114). The church is God's agent until the second coming, at which time the kingdom will be fully consummated.

We remember, of course, that the kingdom is for the poor. In the first instance the 'poor' refers to the black victim. Christ is black because he identified with and created an eschatological resolution to black pain. Blacks who 'know' freedom must struggle, alongside Christ, for the universal kingdom and freedom. The black Christ who struggles now, is already victorious because of his resurrection. Cone, as we said earlier, is theologizing from within his own context of suffering and is in solidarity with his fellow blacks who are experiencing suffering. As said before, though, Cone applies his themes of freedom and struggle to all who suffer. Even oppressors themselves must be liberated from their own mentality, from 'whiteness', before universal freedom is attainable. In all of this, the eschatological hope dominates and the power of the resurrection operates. Thus we can say that, for Cone, we have the 'blackness of freedom', that is to say, a freedom brought by

the black Christ who identifies with and liberates the oppressed, who in turn participate in their own liberation.

#### 4. SUMMARY

Racism is alive and well in America and elsewhere. It is the cause of much suffering and despair for blacks. Their history reflects a context of oppression. Sin is the cause of this. Both black and white are guilty of sinful acts, but what primarily concerns Yahweh is the sin of white racism. It is in this that whites play at being God.

Blacks know of a sympathetic God because Yahweh showed his anger towards oppression by liberating the Jews from the Egyptian bondage through the exodus event. This divine 'option for the poor' was further demonstrated in the prophetic tradition in which Yahweh is portrayed as a God who fought against oppression, including the Jewish oppression amongst themselves. However, during the exile, Yahweh taught the Jews that they were also being used in the context of redemptive suffering. That is, God's reaction to suffering Israel speaks to all who suffer and cry for freedom. Israel became the Suffering Servant.

In the event of the Incarnation, Jesus Christ replaced Israel and identified in his life, death, and resurrection, with the poor of the world, as an oppressed Jew. Jesus became the Oppressed One, and the Suffering Servant. He absorbed human pain into the divine self. When applied to the black situation, this makes Christ the black Christ.

The Christ-event achieved a number of things. Of course the cross demonstrated the divine empathy for the victim as well as

the divine wrath on victimization. In the resurrection, Jesus overcame death and suffering, and thus provided the historical platform for defeating day to day 'death'. Jesus also rose victorious over those earthly institutions which reflect 'Satanic' oppression. The resurrection also set up the universal and liberating presence of Christ amongst the poor. Christ, as the black Christ, joins and works through the oppressed (black) in the fight for freedom.

Thus the poor are freed to struggle for freedom. This entails ongoing opposition and suffering, but the blow is tempered when it is seen in the light of 'redemptive suffering'. Faith and hope are workable realities, and this is to be communicated to the oppressed. The church becomes God's agent in the outworking of God's kingdom and bringing in of freedom. Of course, the black believer is especially loved by God, but also s/he is especially mandated to participate in the historical project of human freedom.

The resurrection benefits do not remove the persistent existence of suffering; theodicy is not fully resolved. Black faith and hope, however, stimulate ongoing struggle and remind one of the certain eschatological victory.

#### ENDNOTES

1. We are going to observe Cone's understanding of Jesus Christ's earthly life as one of option for the poor under our present discussion on revelation. When we move to discussing the actual cross and resurrection, the themes of the divine

revelation and option for the poor will of course still be present.

2. As Cone (1985:67) puts it:

Of course the blackness of Jesus did not mean that he could not be described also as red, brown, yellow, or by some other characteristic that defined materially the condition of the poor in the USA and other parts of the globe. Black clergy radicals never denied the universal significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. We merely wanted to emphasize the theological significance of Jesus in the context of the black liberation struggle in the USA.

Cone (1985:67-74) goes on to explain that Black theology arose to counteract the racism and intellectual arrogance of white theologians. This applies also to European progressive theologies (Moltmann) which, for Cone, are too abstract and irrelevant for blacks. Cone (1985:70-72) praises the contribution and insights of Frantz Fanon who 'taught' black theology to be suspicious of European political theologies. For Fanon, the Europeans used liberative language, but in reality did nothing to counteract slavery and death. Latin Americans such as Gutierrez concern Cone because they focus on classism rather than racism. This does not mean that Cone denies the value of Gutierrez et al. According to Cone (1985:66), it was people like Bishop Henry M Turner and Countee Cullen who gave the main impetus to Black theology and the 'blackness' of Jesus.

3. Cone's reflections on black feminism are interesting. He sees white and black feminism as two different things. Apparently black feminism is struggling to find a place within black theology in general and so it has to be virtually a movement in its own right. Cone (1985:134-135) reflects on how he was rebuffed by black seminarians when he read a rather mild pro-feminist paper to them. They reacted just like white anti-feminists.

Concerning the issue of black feminism, Cone (1985:137) says:

It is not a joke. ... I realize that many women give the appearance of accepting the place set aside for them by men as is still true of many blacks in relation to whites. But just as whites were responsible for creating the societal structures that aided black self-hate, so black men are responsible for creating a similar situation among black women in the church. Saying that women like their place is no different from saying that blacks like theirs. ... If black men deny this connection between sexism and racism, it is unlikely that they will recognize the depth of the problem of sexism.

Cone would argue that the cross and resurrection apply to the feminist cause in a particular way just as they apply to black people in a general way.

## 4. For Cone (1975:135):

The resurrection is the universality of divine freedom for all who "labor and are heavy laden". It is the actualization in history of Jesus' eschatological vision that the last shall be first and the first last. The resurrection means that God's identity with the poor in Jesus is not limited to the particularity of his Jewishness but is applicable to all who fight on behalf of the liberation of humanity in this world.

This applicability lies in the fact that Christ absorbs today's pain, and especially black suffering.

5. Cone has been criticized for his reliance on Karl Barth. Deotis Roberts, Olin Moyd, and Cecil Cone are three black theologians who have expressed concern at James Cone's 'Barthianism'. To be sure, James Cone does focus his black theology on Jesus Christ. We have seen in this chapter how, for Cone, Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God as Liberator. Christ enters into the social existence of the poor and thus reveals the divine option for them. Their story is God's story. The truth of liberation is practical, rather than academic, and it is found in the historical, revealing Jesus.

Again, liberation itself is effectuated by Christ who personally identifies with the poor. This identity goes a step further of course. Christ not only sides with the poor, he in the first instance sides with the *black* poor. Christ becomes the revealing, liberating, '*black*' God-Man for the oppressed blacks. Blacks are called upon to transcend their circumstances to identify with Christ himself, even in his death and resurrection. Thus we have a dialectical situation, revolving around the centrality of Jesus Christ.

Let us briefly note what Cone (1982:82-83) has to say in regard to his 'Barthianism':

Barth was the main nonblack influence in my writing of Black Theology and Black Power. My dependence was considerable; ... I knew Barth's limitations as I wrote ... My use of Barth diminished in later books.

Cone testifies to using other European theologians as well as Barth. He says:

Barth was useful because of his central focus on the Bible and Jesus Christ, Tillich for his focus on culture and the human situation, Bultmann for his emphasis on preaching and the present existential situation, and Bonhoeffer for his concern for the concreteness of theology as defined by the ethical demands of politics. They were like a smorgasbord of theologies from which I took what I wanted ... At no point did a European theologian, not even Barth, control what I said about the gospel and the black struggle for freedom. (1982:83.)

What we have, then, is Cone admitting to the *influence* of Barth et al but not the *control*.

It is of interest to see just how Cone, by his own admission, relates Barth to black theology. Cone speaks especially of Barth's concept of the threefold Word of God. Firstly, as in Barth, Christ is at the centre of the black gospel. 'In sermon, song prayer and testimony, Jesus is the one to whom the people turn in times of trouble ... because he is the gospel story'.

Secondly, like Barth, the black church sees the Bible as 'the primary source for knowledge about Jesus and God' (1982:81). Preaching always incorporates the 'good Book'. The Bible is important because it is the guide for living, and the provider of ethical standards.

Thirdly, Cone (Ibid) stresses the black church Barthian-like emphasis on preaching. It is in preaching that God speaks to the soul. In the black church 'preaching is understood as not only a human word, but primarily, through the work of God's Spirit, the divine Word of grace and judgement to the people'. We have, then, a Barthian pattern of the Word of God as revealed (Christ himself), written (the Bible), and preached (the divine-human act of preaching).

### CHAPTER THREE

#### JURGEN MOLTMANN: PROMISE, IDENTITY AND HOPE

The theme of 'hope' has always been a magnetic one. Hope implies a prior dilemma in relation to which a liberating resolution is being offered. Moltmann's political theology, or his ever developing hope-theology, relates to the same problems of injustice as do the theologies of Gutierrez and Cone. A brief analysis of Moltmann will reward us with a broader platform upon which to discuss our thesis. Moltmann's theology is anything but static. He has produced many works, and this, on many issues. It would be impossible to comprehensively represent him in only one chapter; thus we will be focusing on his ideas pertaining to the cross and resurrection. To do this, we will have to look somewhat at Moltmann's view of God, man, and the church, as they are all bound up with his view of the Christ-event and liberation. A full thesis could deal merely with Moltmann's view of 'God' alone!

Moltmann began with his *Theology of Hope* (1967) and there expounded his hope thesis and eschatological approach to history. Here, Moltmann focused on the resurrection, and revealed his liking of Ernst Bloch and others. Later, Moltmann changed his emphasis to the cross, but retained the theme of hope and resurrection. This hope, however, was explicated in the language of 'theology of the cross'. In his *Crucified God*, Moltmann,

(1974a:1-5) points out that he has always been concerned with the theology of the cross. Moltmann wanted to balance the traditional views of *theologia crucis* with the context of the resurrection. Further, Moltmann (1974a:4) felt that his present approach to *theologia crucis* would well deal with the issues of the divine abandonment of the Son by the Father, man and liberation, and church and social criticism. Moltmann (1974a:5) explains that 'the theology of the cross is none other than the reverse side of the Christian theology of hope, if the starting point of the latter lies in the resurrection of the crucified Christ'.

In *History and the Triune God*, Moltmann (1991:165-182) outlines a short biography of his theological career, including his developing theological motivations and influences of fellow theologians who had impacted his theology, as well as current historical experiences. In this biography, Moltmann (1991:173-4) responds to the charge of one-sidedness, especially in *Theology of Hope* and *Crucified God*. He explains that the alleged one-sidedness was due to the fact that he treated the whole of theology under a particular theme. Moltmann maintains that he is merely making certain points, that he writes contextually, and that he sees himself as a contributor to the overall theological scene. Thus theological 'truth' is broader than what he says at a particular time. Moltmann (1991:174) says that all of this 'may have irritated some doctoral students concerned with my theology'! We will be alluding to Moltmann's view of future and hope throughout the chapter. At this point we shall just say that for Moltmann there is eschatological hope for humanity

because of Christ having become the eschatological 'new man' for us. For Moltmann, the categories of hope and future are foundational.

## **1. THE HUMAN CRY OF ALIENATION**

### **1.1 The Alienation of Suffering**

Like liberation theologians and, here, Gutierrez and Cone, Moltmann is concerned with the evils of the present human condition. For Moltmann (1979:97), 'the cry for freedom can be heard all over the world', and there is an 'ever-deeper sensibility towards suffering'. In fact, Moltmann (1974b:13) sees the question, 'what is man?' as being conditioned by the reality of suffering. Moltmann (1969:38-40, 1974a:330-332) talks about 'vicious circles of death', these circles being various planes or areas of suffering. In much of Moltmann's writing these areas are referred to in one way or another. Let us briefly note these circles, which are man made, since 'hardly anyone believes in a personal devil ...' (1974a:293).

The first is the vicious circle of poverty. For Moltmann (1974a:330) this 'consists of hunger, illness, and early mortality, and is provoked by exploitation and class domination'. This is seen in the unfair exploitative relations between industrial and developing nations which result in the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. In reference to Northern Europe and the USA, Moltmann (1974a:293) suggests that within the larger circle one finds smaller vicious circles, namely poverty, drugs, crime, prison and poverty again. The poor simply cannot counteract the status quo in their own means. We

can see how Moltmann's analysis of the economic situation parallels that of liberation theologians'.

The political dimension provides man with the vicious circle of force, which is bound up with the poverty circle. Moltmann (1974a:330) maintains that this force is 'produced in particular societies by the domination of dictatorships, upper classes, or those with privileges'. In terms similar to Dom Helder Camara, Moltmann (Ibid) speaks of a spiral of violence involving oppression, revolution and new oppression. The arms race concerns Moltmann.

Whereas previous military deterrent systems have secured peace, their escalation is now leading towards instability. The predictable course of the arms race is "an open spiral upwards into nothingness". Mistrusts and interests in hegemony make the armament spiral a deadly threat to the whole world. (1974a:330-331.)

The recent arms and nuclear weapons limitation treaties between the United States and the Commonwealth of Independent States have not lessened the validity of Moltmann's concern. Generally speaking, Moltmann (1974b:98) feels that people see violence as a quick, easy way to resolve human conflict. For Moltmann (1991:48-49), violence exists as a 'crime against life', and those 'who do violence become inhuman and unjust; their victims are dehumanized and lose their rights'.

Linked with the previous circles is the circle of racial and cultural alienation. Concerning racism, Moltmann maintains that white racism is the worst kind because it bears upon major social structures. 'In such countries racism is not simply an ethnic group phenomenon, but an instrument of domination which secures political, economic, and cultural privileges for the whites and makes second-class human beings of black and coloured people ...'

(1975:133). It is in these social situations, of racial and cultural alienation, that people will be 'adaptable and compliant' because of the degrading of their personal self-consciousness. There will be poverty and oppression because of this. In fact they 'become apathetic cogs in a technocratic mega-machine' (1974b:331).

The circles of poverty, force and alienation are themselves bound up in a greater vicious circle, that of the *industrial pollution of nature*. Moltmann is strongly opposed to human greed and ecological damage concomitant with industrial advancement and profit. For Moltmann (1979:112), 'exploited nature expresses her protest through her silent death'. Further, the 'God of the machine, who promised everything to everyone seems now like an evil spirit, who draws everything towards destruction' (1974b:26). Moltmann (1974a:331) calls for a balance between progress and social equality in order to avoid the disastrous results of a mismanaged ecological crisis. For Moltmann (1991:71), there is 'a fellowship of creation, but today it has become a fellowship of suffering in which victims and perpetrators share and from which there is no escape'. We will see later how Moltmann calls for a proper appropriation of man's relationship to creation.

Moltmann (1974a:331) next places the economic, political, cultural and industrial circles into a 'deeper, more embracing drive: the vicious circle of senselessness and godforsakenness'. Here, Moltmann is referring to a world characterized by perplexity, disheartenment and loss of existential purpose. People make no sense out of life's vicious circles and this leads

to apathy and often 'an unconscious death-wish' (1974a:332). These circles of economics, politics, social alienation, industrial pollution and senselessness are linked together and 'bring the human life involved in them to a state of dehumanization and death' (Ibid).

In his discussion of the passibility of God, Moltmann has cause to reflect on the apathy of man in relation to the 'God of action and success'. Men become inhuman because of the drives for power and success. Moltmann (1975:71) states:

In short, he who believes in the God of action and success becomes an apathetic man. He takes no more notice of the world, of other men, or of his own emotions. He remains oblivious to the suffering his actions cause. He does not want to know about that and represses crucifying experiences from his life.

People, then, especially the exploiters, are concerned purely for themselves. Of course this apathy which finds itself in both victim and perpetrator is a stumbling block to liberation from that very apathy.

Moltmann (1983:132-133) sees man's quest for power and possessions also in terms of 'life' and 'death'. People will seek these things because at death it all goes away. So the fear of death causes a selfish and therefore oppressive mode of life. In all of this, there will always be victim and perpetrator. This has dire consequences:

This hunger for pleasure, for possessions, for power - this thirst for recognition by way of success and admiration - this is the sin of modern men and women. This is their godlessness and godforsakenness. The person who loses God makes a god out of himself. (1983:132.)

Of course, for Moltmann the victim experiences death now as well as afterwards. Throughout his works, Moltmann seems to hold to

the view that all people begin as godless and godforsaken, God's partiality for the 'poor' notwithstanding.

The category 'poor' is used by Moltmann (1983:76) in a similar way to Gutierrez and Cone. Prisoners, the blind, the despised and rejected of society, and the oppressed constitute the poor. Moltmann (Ibid) states:

The poor are all the people who have to put up with violence and injustice without being able to defend themselves. The poor are all the people who have to exist on the very fringe of death, with nothing to live from and nothing to live for. But in Jesus' message the poor are surely all of us too, since we have nothing to offer the coming God except the burden of our guilt and the rags of our exile - like the Prodigal Son.

The victim and perpetrator, then, have equally to do with God. Of course the 'feast of freedom' which Moltmann champions (for example 1983:77) is more immediately relevant to the victim.

## **1.2 The Alienation of Failure**

Human suffering (of the kind to which we have been referring) and failing go hand in hand. Under this heading we will briefly observe Moltmann's understanding of man's failed attempts to improve the status quo and his relation to the Creator. We could have placed the circle of industrial pollution here, as an example of failure, but we choose to keep Moltmann's 'circles' together as a unit.

One area in which man has failed is in the dialectical battle between 'being' and 'having'. The survival ethic of having to 'have' overrides the more humane ethic of right being (1969:54-56). This is both a personal and social problem. Man fails to resolve the problem because it is complicated by the fear and reality of death, as mentioned earlier. The spectre of

death inhibits a proper self-identification with one's bodily life (1969:56-57).

Despite his early indebtedness to Ernst Bloch's concept of future hope, Moltmann (1974b:47-59) feels that Marxism, or dialectical materialism, falls short upon the ultimate issue - that true humanity requires the presence of the divine. Alienation is more than just an economic-social issue. The marxist state of utopia, while commendable in its concerns, bears the faults of atheism and potential domination. Moltmann (1974b:57) states: 'It is not a good exchange to have a divinization of totality in place of a divinization of authority, and to have authoritarianism replaced by totalitarianism. Each is as inhuman as the other'.

In his analysis of the human history of attempted social change (especially in Germany), Moltmann discusses the failures, as he sees it, of the social revolutions of the Left and the Right. The Left (Marx, unionization) has not delivered the longed for freedom of man, and the Right (community movements, nationalism) has produced only anxiety and ethnocentrism. The bourgeoisie has destroyed itself (1974b:59-67). Man has failed also in his attempts at social romanticism (return to the 'good old past'), inward emigration (existential retreat from harsh reality) and unrealistic abstract utopianism (1974b:37-42). Failure also lies in the futility of social role-playing and activism (will to power, war, decision) in that, like other human attempts, change is attempted without proper consideration of man's relationship to God in Christ (1974b:86-104).

For Moltmann (1974b:108-109), the doctrine of creation includes the fact of the image of God in man. In fact, through this image God wishes to meet himself on earth, as man represents him and exercises the creation mandate. The image means that man, just as he is infinitely distant from God, should, however, have 'infinite freedom over against all finite things' (1974b:109). We note with interest here how the later Moltmann presents a more pantheistic view of man, as for example in his *History and the Triune God* (1991). Be this as it may, Moltmann is clear that man has failed in his task as image of God. He states: 'Every kind of class domination, racial discrimination, repression of women, imperialism and dictatorship is a perversion of man's designation as God's image; and it is also a perversion of the common human mandate to rule over the earth' (1983:5).

So how does God look upon mankind? For Moltmann, as we have seen, man on the one hand is suffering and failing. Humanism has not turned out to be redemption. On the other hand, man is seen as sinful by God. Man has failed God by not living up to the responsibility of his being in the image of God. If a man lives in this world, creating and being controlled by its powers, without recompensing God, he is a sinner (1974b:94). According to Moltmann (1974a:194), all people are sinners, 'without distinction'. For Moltmann (1983:35) even liberators are sinners: 'Their zeal was not the zeal of the Lord. They did not disarm this divided world. They could not forgive the guilt because they themselves were not innocent'. This is because God in Christ is not allowed to be liberator (1983:36).

Moltmann (1974a:293) talks about the 'vicious circle of sin, the law and death'. Evil traps man in that (as Paul expressed it in Romans 7:7-11) the more he tries to obey the law, the more he actually sins, legalistically. This circle is the background behind the other vicious circles of sin mentioned earlier. There is no escape, humanly speaking, from these circles. For Moltmann (Ibid) this 'vicious circle of sin and the law results in man's death'. In fact, people are trapped by the power of man-made structural sin over them (1991:54). Moltmann (1991:45-46) cautions us to maintain a balance between the Pauline doctrine of the universality of sin as a general condition and the Synoptic approach to sin as an individual act. The universal (solidarity) concept however, reminds us that we are all capable of the same crimes. 'In that case one ceases to accuse "the others" and oneself takes responsibility for them' (1991:46). Whatever the case, it is 'important for Christians to see the real history of injustice and violence as sin ...' (1991:45), on the basis of Genesis 3 and 4.

Man's failure to please God has caused God to presently judge man. This is seen in God's having 'given man over'. Moltmann (1974a:241-242) follows Paul's usage of *paradidonai*. He understands Paul thus:

God's wrath over the godlessness of man is manifest in that he "delivers them up" to their godlessness and inhumanity. According to Israelite understanding, guilt and punishment lie in one and the same event. So too here: men who abandon God are abandoned by God. Godlessness and godforsakenness are two sides of the same event. (1974a:242.)

Moltmann maintains that all are trapped by sin and are godless and godforsaken (perpetrators of oppression all the more so),

apart from entering into a liberating relationship with Christ, who became godforsaken for man.

The preceding discussion has shown how Moltmann views the general human condition and the particular universal problem of evil (oppression) and the failure to effect freedom on a purely human level. Man, then, as a result of his condition, is alienated from God, himself, and nature. For Moltmann (1974b:11,17), man is man and has to be man, but suffering, or lack of human rights, prevents men from being men. We are now in a position to see how Moltmann treats God, the cross and the resurrection in relation to the question of the sinful but suffering human race.

## **2. THE DIVINE RESPONSE OF IDENTIFICATION**

### **2.1 God as Triune and Historical**

We must first note Moltmann's approach to the being of God. This will help us to understand how Moltmann describes the historical relationship between God and humanity. Moltmann clearly opposes the traditional theistic understanding of God. The trinitarian nature of God, however, is vitally important for Moltmann. We are to view God as a trinity, in unity, composed of the three real personages of Father, Son and Spirit. These three form a trinitarian fellowship, made possible by the action of the Holy Spirit (1991:58-59). Moltmann (1991:85) is unhappy with what he would see as the rather vague 'modes of being' understanding of the Trinity, held by Barth or Brunner. Also, Moltmann (1991:59) dislikes the over stressing of the idea of God as one divine subject.

Following the Johannine formulation of having the Father, Son and Spirit dwelling in each other, Moltmann (1991:86) states:

This intimate indwelling and complete interpenetration of the persons in one another is expressed by the doctrine of the trinitarian *perichoresis*. It denotes that trinitarian unity which goes out beyond the doctrine of persons and their relations: by virtue of their eternal love, the divine persons exist so intimately with one another, for one another and in one another that they constitute themselves in their unique, incomparable and complete unity.

For Moltmann (1991:85), then, the Father, Son and Spirit are all subjects in God in an ongoing and personal intra-trinitarian history.

The earlier Moltmann (1974a:240) supports Rahner's notion of the identity of the economic (active) trinity with the immanent (ontological) trinity. By 1991 we see Moltmann (1991:164) promoting a clear panentheism in support of Giordano Bruno's organic view of God in the world. God is the spirit of the universe because he is its creator. Moltmann (Ibid) states: "'Spirit", understood as the "dynamic of self-organization" at the different levels of the universe, does not become divine if we coin a dynamic concept of God for it and call the dynamic "God", but only if we have a concept of God with a trinitarian differentiation'.

The reason behind this brief look at Moltmann's view of God is to show that for Moltmann, God experiences his own perichoretic history in connection with an identity with human history. According to Moltmann one can find an image of God in man as a social creature. Man, as body, soul and spirit, and as husband, wife and child, actually reflects in his community the trinitarian fellowship of God (1991:62-63). God is historically

'with' humankind and this bears important relation to human suffering. In short, the trinitarian and even panentheistic God knows all about suffering, personally. This brings us to an issue fundamental to Moltmann: the passibility of the triune God.

For Moltmann (1974a:214) the traditional theistic view of God is too abstract, too a-historical. This is because it rejects the idea that God can indeed suffer. According to Moltmann (1974a:253), God is 'poor' if he is above suffering. The God of ancient Judaism and traditional Christian thought becomes, in fact, apathetic, and therefore unable or unwilling to historically identify with human pain (1975:74-75). Moltmann (1974a:219-223) goes so far as to argue that atheism, its obvious problems notwithstanding, rightly opposes the theistic portrayal of a God who is impotent in the light of the theodicy question. We are called upon by Moltmann (1991:20-21,24-25) to reject the theistic understanding of God as Lord and Patriarch. This is because it portrays Yahweh as hierarchical and authoritarian, rather than being compassionately alongside sufferers. A trinitarian God obviates the indifference of theism.

Moltmann (1975:75-78) finds the bi-polar theology of Abraham Heschel persuasive because it portrays God as sympathetic with, and responsive to, man's suffering. Man then, in turn, can respond back to God. The covenant (between God and humanity) would be constituted around this bi-polar situation. However, Moltmann believes that Heschel's idea must be transformed from a bi-polar one to a trinitarian one. Moltmann (1975:78) states:

It must, for the sake of the crucified one, intentionally become a trinitarian theology. Through the crucified one, that dialogical God-relationship is first opened up. Through Christ, God himself creates the conditions

necessary to enter upon a relationship of pathos and sympathy. Through the crucified one, he creates a new covenant for those who cannot meet these conditions because they are Godless and Godforsaken.

It follows from this that Moltmann has a problem with the Nicaean understanding of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the historical (and risen) Jesus Christ. Moltmann (1974a:228) asserts that this doctrine allows only the human nature of Jesus to suffer. This is because of the 'Platonic axiom of the essential *apatheia*' of God, a God not allowed to suffer. Moltmann (1974a:232) is unhappy with the formula of *communicatio idiomatum* in which the characteristics of the two Christ-natures are mutually transferable. This still trades on the notion of divine *apatheia*. The divine-historical Christ, as participant in the triune Godhead, must and does suffer.

This triune God has a promissory history which is fulfilled in the historical Jesus Christ (1969:210-212). We shall observe Moltmann's idea of promise later, but here we wish to note that for Moltmann the triune God actually participates in the historical promise of freedom from suffering. This affects the very being of God. The idea of the 'Future' also comes in here: we must note how the concept of 'future' applies, in Moltmann's opinion, to God himself.

Moltmann (1975:51) refers to Revelation 1:4 which speaks of God (Christ) as he who is, who was, and 'is to come'. Moltmann points out that 'is to come' is, in the Greek, the future of *erchesthai*, to come, rather than the future of *einai*, to be. Moltmann (1975:52) points out that God's 'future' refers to his 'coming' and writes:

The future is, therefore, not a dimension of his eternity, but is his own movement in which he comes to us. This gives the future of God a preeminence over his past and his present in history. His actions in history in the past and the present are aimed at his coming and attain their significance from his future.

Moltmann adds that in the present history we can only know about God in an 'historically provisional way'.

Moltmann (1975:52-53) relates God's future to our understanding of the future in general. Rather than thinking of the future as events which 'will be', we must think of it as 'that which is coming'. That is, we can anticipate the future even now, in the present. Thus, unlike process philosophy which speaks of the 'becoming God', we can speak, eschatologically, of the 'coming God'. As the coming God, God is the future of the past as well as the present (1969:210). Therefore his future is preceded by a 'history of promises and anticipations' (Ibid).

Moltmann's view of God points to the identification of divine history with human history. God is he who speaks through the specific history of the exodus, he is the Covenant God who freed the Hebrew slaves (1974b:76). According to Moltmann (1974a:216-217), good theology means that one must think of God not only in a theological context. One must also relate the study of God to social life, human personality, society in general, politics and cosmology. World history, for Moltmann (1974a:218), must be understood as participating in the divine history, 'whose nucleus is the event of the cross'. The world and eschatological history are possible only in the history of God who 'creates from nothing and raises the crucified Christ' (Ibid).

The trinitarian history between Father, Son and Spirit at Calvary makes God an 'event', in the context of which people can relate to 'God' (1974a:247). In fact, Moltmann (1974a:249) states:

If one conceives of the Trinity as an event of love in the suffering and the death of Jesus - and that is something which faith must do - then the Trinity is no self-contained group in heaven, but an eschatological process open for men on earth, which stems from the cross of Christ.

We see, then, that Moltmann perceives divine history as penetrating into, and occurring with, human history. Moltmann allows for no static, indifferent, and theistic God. The coming triune God personally empathizes with the human condition. We shall come back to this when we deal with the actual cross and resurrection.

## **2.2 God in Liberating Identity**

### **2.2.1 Identity in Hope and Promise**

Before we look at Moltmann's approach to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we shall briefly outline his understanding of 'hope' and 'promise'. He sees the Christ-event as an eschatological act of hope and promise. For Moltmann (1967:121), the covenant is constituted of law (injunctions) and promise. The injunctions demand obedience whereas the promises stimulate hope for Israel. The commandments are the ethical reverse of the promise. Rather than being rigid determinants, the injunctions 'go along with the promise, producing history and transforming themselves on the path through the ages towards the fulfilment' (1967:122). Moltmann (1967:122-124) stresses that while sin can delay the fulfilment of blessing (promise), nevertheless promise is not ultimately dependent on human

obedience. For Moltmann (1967:124) the issue of fulfilment revolves around the 'gospel'. This shows that the covenantal injunctions are bound up with the promise of Yahweh to Israel and history.

It is Abraham, even before the Law, who bears a major relation to promise and hope. Moltmann (1967:152) understands the significance of the Abrahamic promise in terms of the tension between the demands of the Torah and the freedom of the gospel. Further, Moltmann (Ibid) places the significance in the context of Jesus Christ's eschatological verification of the promise, rather than any historic development of it. Moltmann (Ibid) states: 'The promise finds in the gospel its eschatological future, while the law finds its end'. The gospel shows its 'newness' by opposing itself to sin, death and the 'oldness' of the old.

For Moltmann (Ibid) 'Paul rediscovers the promise to Abraham in the gospel of Christ and therefore (sic) recalls along with the gospel of Christ the promise to Abraham as well'. While law and gospel are concerned with the past, promise and gospel are concerned with the eschatological future. Moltmann (1967:153-154) asserts that 'something new' happens to the Abrahamic promise. That is to say, the newness of the future affects the promise. The Christ-event is behind this. We, then, do not 'interpret past history' or escape from it. Rather, we 'enter into the history that is determined by the promised and guaranteed *eschaton*, and we expect from it not only the future of the present but also the future of the past' (1967:154).

The knowledge of God 'as God' is also bound up with promise. 'If God confesses to his covenant and promises in adopting, confirming, renewing, continuing and fulfilling them, then God confesses to God, then he confesses to himself' (1967:116). To know God must be to know his future and faithfulness in relation to his promises. This stimulates hope (1967:118). In dialectical fashion, Moltmann (1967:118-119) asserts that the truth of the promise is not necessarily demonstrated in immediate historical reality. Rather, the present reality will be in tension with the future which calls for 'obedient and creative expectation'. This allows for hope, trust and transformation of reality. Our hope lies in the faithfulness of the promising God and in eschatological fulfilment of the promises (1967:119).

What is the nature of a promise? According to Moltmann (1975:49) any promise is a 'pledge that proclaims a reality which is not yet at hand'. A new future is pledged, and this pledge becomes the 'word-presence' of the future. Divine promises are to be understood in this way also. Here, the future derives not just from present reality, or present possibilities, but rather from 'God's creative possibilities' (Ibid). The divine promise itself creates something new, and trusting God means leaving the fulfilment of the promise up to God. Moltmann (1975:50) believes that the finite promises 'point beyond themselves to the eschatological final arrival of God himself'. Thus God himself becomes the means of the promises and the varying historical fulfilments point to the one 'final future' of the promising God.

The divine promise is also the promise of hope. It is the context of, and catalyst for, the hope of freedom, whatever open

possibilities that may entail. The hope we have is based on the faithfulness of the promising God. For Moltmann (1975:47) the biblical message means having a belief in God which is 'harnessed between memory and hope'. The memory refers to God's historical demonstrations of faithfulness. God language is an historical and liberating language. Moltmann (1975:47-48) sees Abraham as an embodiment of true faith, when he stepped out into an uncertain history with God 'borne along and led solely by God's hope'. Hope, then, means trusting God himself. For Abraham this led to his own personal exodus. Hope is based on the promissory history of God. God's promises 'have been incarnated in the promissory history of Israel and in the promissory history of Jesus of Nazareth' (1975:45). These promissory histories make hope present in history.

Only God can offer real hope. For Moltmann (1969:106), the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* leads to confidence in God and thus to *participatio in Deo*. If God can create out of nothing, then he deserves our hoping in him. Hope opposes nonbeing and nothingness. If we understand God as the God of hope, then, according to Moltmann (1975:50), we must see the future as 'the mode of God's existence with us'. God, like his kingdom, is present as the future coming One. Moltmann (1975:51) states: 'He is already present in the way in which his future in promise and hope empowers the present. He is, however, not yet present in the manner of his eternal presence'. God becomes the 'ground of liberation' because he is at once the coming One and the 'power of the future'.

Hope, then, is the placing of our faith and trust in the liberating God who is coming from his eschatological future to us in the present. As history (for us) is not yet finished, so God has not finished coming, that is, his eternal presence is still to be realised. While this does not obviate the problem of suffering it does create the basis of the hope of freedom from suffering. Moltmann (1975:51) says of God: as 'the power of the exodus, his promise causes men in hope to grow beyond themselves'. Power and hope are seen in the cross and resurrection. Actually, the theology of the cross is best understood as a theology of hope (1975:71-72). The cross and resurrection form the basis of hope (1969:212).

### **2.2.2 Identity and Freedom in the Christ Event**

Moltmann's understanding of man, suffering, God, hope, promise and future all influence his approach to the Christ-event. For Moltmann one best understands Jesus Christ in terms of the divine 'option' for the oppressed. Moltmann does not stress the exodus-paradigm of liberation, as he rather focuses on the ongoing identification between divine and human history.

By 'option', we of course mean that God is partial to the oppressed; he is on their side. We remind ourselves, however, that Moltmann sees all people as sinful, whether victim or perpetrator. But it is the plight of the poor or oppressed which causes the historical event of Jesus Christ. Moltmann (1974b:18) compares the historical Jewish Christ with the Greek ideal of the 'good and beautiful man'. Jesus lived, rather, the life of the outcast poor, while he preached to them the gospel of the kingdom of God. Jesus 'embodied the secret, "God with us", "God for us",

on earth in such a way that he became a brother to the wretched' (1974b:18).

The concept of the 'Son of Man' is important here. Jesus' fellowship and ministry to the oppressed and possessed (demonic) indicate his being the Son of Man (1974b:19). Moltmann (Ibid) states: 'The Son of Man is he who identifies with those who are below the mean of humanness, in order to call them human. Because he recognizes himself in the poor, the hungry and those in prison, he calls them the "least of my brethren" (Matt 25:40)'. This identity, as Son of Man, with the poor, continues into the event of the cross and resurrection.

Christ's 'Abba' relationship with the Father is also important. For Moltmann (1991:16) the Abba (my father) notion indicates the nearness of the kingdom to the 'poor, the abandoned and the bowed-down'. Moltmann (1991:35) claims that Jesus' Abba relationship to God reveals him to be the 'beloved messianic child' and 'Son of God'. Jesus grows into his pre-determined role and effectuates the messianic secret. Concerning the Messiah, Moltmann (Ibid) says:

If we draw conclusions from Jesus' behaviour towards the poor, the sick, and the outcast not only about the God whom he reveals in this way but also about his own origin in God, then the love which he experienced in the Spirit of Abba, his beloved Father, and which he reciprocated in his living and dying, will have had the form of life-giving mercy.

In other words, the Son, who is of the Father, is the channel through which the Father's mercy works for the lost and hurting.

The chosen poverty of Jesus reveals his magnificence (1983:24). In fact we must look 'downwards' rather than upwards' at him. For Moltmann (Ibid) Jesus' glory, greatness and power

are seen in his humility, poverty and self-surrender respectively. The message of the kingdom, liberation and the forgiveness of sins for the sick and humiliated, inevitably made Jesus an enemy of the priests and of Rome. Amongst other things, popular support for Jesus was growing (1983:115-116). The authorities became alarmed.

The life of Jesus can be described in terms of a dialectical tension between the kingdom and human poverty. 'The inner contradiction between Jesus' claim of anticipating God's kingdom and his own poverty, as well as his associations with the outcasts and the poor, characterizes his historical appearance in general' (1975:55). For Moltmann (Ibid) Jesus ended up being crucified because it was out of his poverty, rather than his glory, that he offered the kingdom. Further, it takes the resurrection to understand what God was doing. This Jesus was 'condemned as a blasphemer and crucified because he practised the justice of grace and, thereby, violated the religious as well as the political law and order' (Ibid). Jesus was doing everything wrong. He was addressing the kingdom-gospel to the poor and outcast, the oppressed. In this way his life and message indicated God's love for the victim.

Let us come now to the cross. We have already noted that for Moltmann the triune God is at once the suffering God. For Moltmann (1974a:246) the reality of God has to be expressed in trinitarian terms if one is to understand the cross as a divine event between Son and Father. The doctrine of the Trinity actually becomes a 'shorter version of the passion narrative of Christ'. Moltmann (Ibid) states:

It [trinitarianism] protects faith from both monotheism and atheism because it keeps believers at the cross. The content of the doctrine of the Trinity is the real cross of Christ himself. The form of the crucified Christ is the Trinity.

Thus what happened on the cross could only have been a trinitarian event.

Moltmann (1983:23) says Jesus came to serve and not to conquer or rule. In this, his victory was his surrender to the cross-death as a 'ransom for many'. Moltmann does not expand on his concept of 'ransom'. This service was seen in the whole of Jesus' life. 'Jesus consciously and willingly walked the way of the cross and was not overtaken by death as by an evil, unfortunate fate' (1974a:243). This 'walking of the way' is seen dramatically in the Gethsemane ordeal of Jesus. Here, of course, we have the Father rejecting the Son's request of the possible passing of the cup. Moltmann (1983:116) sees this as the beginning of Christ's passion. In fact Jesus' 'true passion was his suffering from God'. Moltmann (1983:116-117) acknowledges the obvious human fear of the impending pain and suffering. However the real problem for the Son was the impending rejection from the Father. For Moltmann (1983:117) Jesus was afraid not for his life, but for God, and for the 'Father's kingdom, whose joy he had proclaimed to the poor'. Jesus' real struggle with God, here, becomes his agony and our hope.

The act of Jesus in surrendering to the cross was itself in the context of a divine 'delivering up'. Following the Pauline usage of *paradidonai*, Moltmann (1974a:243) sees Jesus as having given himself up to godforsakenness for men (Gal 2:20). Using Romans 8:31ff, 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13, in which

Jesus is not spared, and made sinful for us and even cursed, Moltmann (1974a:242) says: 'Because God does not spare his Son, all the godless are spared. Though they are godless, they are not godforsaken, precisely because God has abandoned his own Son and has delivered him up for them'. This act becomes the ground for our justification, and the Father becomes the 'Father of those who are delivered up' (1974a:243). The Son then identifies with the status of sinful and oppressed men - that of being 'given over' to judgement.

Now this delivering up or being given over involves being 'abandoned' as well. As man is abandoned in his alienation from God, so the Son becomes abandoned. For Moltmann (1974a:242) Paul understands the situation in terms of total 'inextricable abandonment of Jesus by his God and Father ...' Moltmann (1975:79) speaks of the divine humiliation in both the incarnation into human finitude and man's 'God-abandonedness'.

Thus Moltmann (Ibid) states:

In Jesus, God does not die a natural death, but rather the violent death of a condemned person on the cross. At Golgotha he dies the death of complete God-abandonedness. The suffering in the suffering of Jesus is the abandonment, and indeed condemnation, by the God whom he called Father.

For Moltmann (1991:52), Luther was right to see Jesus' experience of cross-forsakenness as the experience of hell.

All of this presupposes that the 'event at the cross is an event within God' (1975:81). We have already observed Moltmann's view of the ability of the triune God to suffer. This ability is at its highest when the issue is death. The cross was a trinitarian event. At the cross there was death *in* God, as over against the death of God (1974a:207). Moltmann (1974a:192)

states: 'In the death of the Son, death 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'. This is God 'acting in himself'. Moltmann (1975:80) sees this as a 'rupture' tearing through God himself, and not just through Jesus. Understood in trinitarian terms, then, the cross is the event in which God rejects and abandons himself and also calls out to himself.

Linked with the death in God is the cry of abandonment from the Son. For Moltmann (1983:117) the cry of '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*' expresses 'the most profound abandonment by the God on whom he had pinned all his hopes and for whom he was hanging on the cross'. Moltmann (1983:118) sees this as a 'terrible' death cry, a cry which reflected what had to happen. 'The Son was forsaken by the Father, rejected and cursed. He bore the judgement in which everyone is alone and in which no one can stand' (Ibid).

Jesus' death on the cross was truly trinitarian. While the act of sacrifice speaks of the Spirit (1975:81), the Father and Son undergo their own sufferings. Moltmann (1974a:243) maintains that both the Father and the Son experience forsakenness and surrender, but in different ways. The Son 'suffers dying in forsakenness, but not death itself', as the dead cannot suffer anything. Rejecting 'patripassianism' (the suffering and actual death of the Father) as well as the 'theopaschite' idea of the death of God, Moltmann writes:

The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as

the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has constituted himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son.

We have, then, an event of intra-trinitarian suffering which revolves around death within God.

None of this, however, meant that there was a dissolution of the ontological trinity. The Golgotha event, for Moltmann (1974a:244), in fact showed community in separation and separation in community, and this because of the 'historical godforsakenness and eschatological surrender'. Moltmann (1975:81) states that in the cross 'Jesus and the Father are in the deepest sense separated in forsakenness, yet are at the same time most inwardly united through the Spirit of sacrifice'. In fact, the cross is an event which 'divides and conjoins the persons in their relationship to each other and portrays them in a specific way' (1974a:207).

The cross also demonstrated trinitarian love. Moltmann (1991:52-53) states that the trinitarian persons exist in love and harmony with each other, and that on the cross this love is offered to a hostile and hurting world. Moltmann (1974a:244) emphasizes the importance of this love: 'He is love, that is, he exists in love. He constitutes his existence in the event of his love. He exists as love in the event of the cross'. In their respective sufferings, then, the Father and Son demonstrate love (1974a:245). In fact it is the 'unconditional and therefore boundless love which proceeds from the grief of the Father and the dying of the Son and reaches forsaken men in order to create in them the possibility and the force of new life' (Ibid).

Again, for Moltmann, this all is possible only because of the trinitarian nature of God. Community, surrender, suffering and love are all trinitarian functions operating in harmony for our benefit.

Needless to say, the divine love is a suffering love which is in response to human pain and sin. This is because the history of human suffering becomes the history of God. The divine anger towards human sin is in response to the prior violation of the divine love (1991:50). 'God suffers injustice and violence as a violation of his love because and in so far as he maintains his love for the unjust and those who do violence' (Ibid). Thus the divine love needs to rise above the divine wrath 'by rising above the pain which is added to it' (Ibid). This love manifests itself in God taking upon himself the pain, guilt and death of human sin.

In so doing, 'God overcomes himself, God passes judgement on himself, God takes the judgement on the sin of man upon himself. He assigns to himself the fate that men should by rights endure' (1974a:193). This is to say that God took upon himself the 'rejection and anger that cannot be turned away ...' (1974a:192). The death Jesus endured was a representative one on behalf of 'all sinners who have fallen victim to death' (1991:51). Jesus suffered vicariously for us (1983:119). The notion, in fact, of God acting 'for us' is important for Moltmann. The Jesus who was resurrected 'ahead of us', was the Christ who was crucified 'for us' (1969:214). Thus Moltmann (Ibid) can say 'in the one crucified "for us" and for our

justification, hope in freedom is not only portrayed paradigmatically before our eyes but is actually mediated'.

Jesus fulfils various roles at Calvary. As the Son of Man, he, amongst other things, identifies with man redemptively. The 'poor' Jesus also delivers and offers forgiveness to humanity; but he is also rejected by his nation (1974b:19). Moreover, the Son of Man is abandoned by his disciples and then rejected (as God) and abandoned by God on the cross. For Moltmann (Ibid) this means faith can say *Ecce homo* along with *Ecce Deus*. This makes God the 'God of the rejected, and the father of those who despair, and the acquitter of those who accuse themselves, but also the judge of those who boast in themselves' (Ibid).

As the historical God (see earlier) who thus bears the human history of suffering and injustice, God becomes the 'victim among the victims' (1991:50). This role as representative victim, however, is offset by Jesus as the freeing Messiah. Moltmann (1969:17) sees in the 'crucified Christ the deepest abyss of God-forsakenness and hopelessness on earth'. Yet just as God created the world out of chaos and nothingness, so God can do the same for humankind. This is because out of the 'humiliated, poor, and abandoned, Jesus who was crucified in disgrace, God makes his Messiah of the future, of freedom, and of life' (Ibid). Godless and evil human beings are thereby befriended and justified.

This Messiah, is also the 'Suffering Servant of God' of Isaiah 53 (1991:47). As God is the victim of human evil by virtue of his option for the poor, so the servant must also suffer. He bears human suffering and the sins which cause it. This is to make atonement possible. It puts Jesus on the side

of the victims, rather than the perpetrators (1991:47), [although the perpetrators are also included in the atonement]. Moltmann (1991:48) has the suffering servant also become the Messianic martyr in that he 'is the divine martyr among the millions of unknown martyrs in the history of the suffering of Israel, humankind and nature'. This throws Jesus' suffering open to future sufferers, that is, those who will suffer and undergo persecution and apocalyptic suffering (Ibid).

As already noted, Moltmann holds that world history is taken up into divine history, and that this includes human pain and sin. For Moltmann (1974a:246) all 'human history, however much it may be determined by guilt and death, is taken up into this "history of God". i.e. into the Trinity, and integrated into the future of the "history of God"'. Thus all suffering and death have become God's in and through what happened to Jesus at Golgotha. For Moltmann this applies to past, present and future history, even a future with open possibilities. The coming God embraces all that has taken place before him.

This human-divine dialectic issues forth into liberating benefits for sinful human beings, especially those who suffer. While the resurrection remains important for Moltmann, he discusses soteriological issues more in the context of the cross. Thus we will follow suit and observe his discussion before we look at the resurrection and its benefits as such.

Let us observe Moltmann's approach to justification. According to Moltmann, justification is not to be thought of in traditional forensic terms. Moltmann (1991:46) feels that if there is liberation from universal sin, through the righteous

activity of the Spirit, then political, economic, cultural and personal liberations must be included. Following Thomas Muntzer, Moltmann (1991:46) presents justification in this way:

The true Reformation doctrine of justification is the theology of the liberation of those without rights and of the unjust. A one-sided restriction to the perpetrators and forgiveness of their active sins has made Protestantism blind to the suffering of the victims and their passive sins and to God's judging and saving "option for the poor".

Moltmann, it appears to us, has a broad view of justification. Both victim and perpetrator are accountable to God for their actions and active sins. Nevertheless, the divine option favours the suffering. We have both a divine righteousness that justifies and a divine justice that effectuates justice as such (Ibid). Moltmann (Ibid) favours the idea of remunerative justice (*Justitia Justificans*) rather than distributive (forensic) justice (*Justitia Distributiva*). This means that, although we all have to account for our actions, God is primarily concerned for liberation-justice. Naturally, trinitarian action is involved in all of this. The events between Father and Son at the cross, allow the Spirit to justify the godless, fill the forsaken with love, and even apply this to the dead as the 'death in God also includes them' (1974a:244).

We now turn to Moltmann's understanding of the atonement, which he discusses at length in *History and the Triune God* (1991:ch 5). It is interesting to see that Moltmann lays some emphasis on how the atonement affects the perpetrators of injustice.

Moltmann (1991:49) begins by pointing out that violence (oppression) is two-sided: victim and perpetrators. The victim suffers, and the perpetrator becomes more inhuman. Liberation,

then, must begin from both sides. The perpetrator must be made aware of, and freed from, his own sin. The injustice of the past, of course, cannot be undone. Atonement, however, will bring 'fair' justice to bear upon the situation. Moltmann (1991:49) maintains that atonement must be in three dimensions, 'those of the victims, of the perpetrators, and lastly of the community in which victims and perpetrators live together'. The guilty need forgiveness as guilt becomes a burden and destroys their self-respect. Therefore, according to Moltmann (Ibid), there must be atonement for both perpetrator and victim. This will lead to the restoration of justice, as a result of which, reconciliation will take place.

Taking his cue from the Old Testament idea of the 'scape goat' which bears away sin as the suffering servant, Moltmann (1991:50) makes the point that atonement is only a divine possibility, not human, and issues forth in the divine bearing of human sin. This is the expression of divine mercy, in and through which God represents guilty man to God (1991:51). Of course, for Moltmann (Ibid) we must remember that Jesus Christ, as a person, died for us as people.

Moltmann (Ibid) says the early church understood the Christ-event to be atoning, justifying, and liberating from the power of sin. This caused them to recant lives of injustice and work for service instead. The cross was atoning because the historical God was in Christ, the Christ who underwent rejection and abandonment. Again, Moltmann (Ibid) stresses that this is not the work of a 'God of vengeance or a divine punitive judge'. The Father of Christ, the Son, would never act in this way. The

Son hangs 'cursed and damned' for us so we can have peace (1991:52). God reconciles the world by suffering contradiction rather than 'contradicting the contradiction, i.e. through judgement' (Ibid). The divine pain (of having absorbed human sin and suffering) is also the divine love issuing in atonement. Moltmann (Ibid) dismisses what he calls the 'inadequate images of the sacrificial theories: ransom, atoning sacrifice, satisfaction and so on'. Rather than objective atonement for objective sins, it is subjective atonement (on God's part) for we ourselves who have to be justified. Moltmann (Ibid) states that in 'the long run, Abelard was right, not Anselm'.

For Moltmann it is always the Trinity which works on our behalf. Moltmann asks how atonement actually comes to perpetrators of injustice, and answers (1991:53):

It comes from the mercy of the Father through the godforsakenness which the Son endures as a representative in the unburdening power of the Holy Spirit. A single movement of love arises out of the pain of the Father, is manifest in the suffering of the Son and is experienced in the Spirit of life. So God becomes the God of the godless. His justice justifies the unjust.

Perpetrators, then, can benefit from the sacrificial liberation which is available because of the trinitarian commitment to justice.

As all people are sinners, so all can be made righteous. Moltmann (1974a:194) claims that the theology of the cross 'is the true Christian universalism'. Moltmann (Ibid) states that in the light of the cross no distinction must be made between Christian and non-Christian, or Jew and Gentile. All people must acknowledge their sinful corruption, just as all people will be made righteous by divine grace in Christ who is for all

(1974a:194-195). Moltmann (1974a:225) sees the 'pie in the sky' approach to salvation and destiny as being idolatry. The crucified Christ has brought 'home' and 'freedom' to replace alienation and oppression (1974b:116). In an unredeemed world, reconciliation is the beginning of redemption, and redemption is the 'future of reconciliation which may be hoped for' (Ibid). All of this is possible because of the liberating identity of Jesus Christ.

Let us now move on to Moltmann's view of the resurrection. According to Moltmann (1969:50) the resurrection is not historically verifiable in our fallen, death-tainted history. The resurrection, rather, is an eschatological *novum*. It qualifies 'the historical and crucified Jesus as the eschatological person, in whom the future God is dawning' (1969:51). Thus we have faith in the resurrection that is only eschatologically verifiable. We do not yet exist in that frame of reference. The resurrection, in fact, was a scandalous element in Christianity. This is so because it was 'not that some man or other was raised before anyone else, but that the one who was raised was this condemned, executed and forsaken man' (1974a:175). Moltmann (Ibid) states that this unexpected element created the 'new righteousness of faith'.

The question Jesus asked about why the Father forsook him is answered by the resurrection. Moltmann (1983:119) finds the resurrection to be the liberating answer for Jesus, an answer that is practical, rather than theoretical. The forsaking was to be brief. In the raising of Jesus, death was swallowed up in

victory (1 Cor 15:55). The resurrection gives hope to any tormenting human question (1983:119).

It is the resurrection that 'interprets' or gives eschatological meaning to the life and death of Jesus (1969:44). However, the cross remains the focal point of Christian theology. All theological themes relate to this (1974a:204). We are not to think in terms of the cross *and* resurrection as if they were two distinct historical moments. The cross was historical while the resurrection was an eschatological event on a different level. Yet it was all one event dealing with the one person - Jesus the incarnate Son. Moltmann (Ibid) puts it:

Thus the centre [of theology] is occupied not by "cross and resurrection", but by *the resurrection of the crucified Christ*, which qualifies his death as something that happened for us, and *the cross of the risen Christ*, which reveals and makes accessible to those who are dying his resurrection from the dead.

Moltmann (1974a:182) states that the resurrection does not 'evacuate the cross', but gives it 'eschatology and saving significance'. The resurrection of the crucified Christ caused him to overcome death so that we who are spiritually 'dead' can benefit from the cross. Thus the cross 'for us' gives relevance to the resurrection 'before us' (1974a:183). The Christ-event brought death and atonement into the Godhead, but God is not dead. The sacrifice of Jesus is glorified (that is, its transcendent and liberative worth is shown) in the eschatological resurrection (1975:83). This resurrection is part and parcel of the atonement, rather than being a mere authentication of it (1991:53).

According to Moltmann (1983:125) resurrection value comes from the 'superabundance' of God's future. Not only do we have

liberation from sin, law and death, we also have a lot more. The added value is constituted of joy, righteousness, glory and life. Easter becomes the feast of freedom and liberation in which we can enter into the 'laughter of the redeemed, the dance of the liberated, and the creative play of fantasy' (1983:125). Following Athanasius, Moltmann (Ibid) claims that the resurrection makes life a perpetual feast. We can hope in the midst of suffering. The *shalom* meal, in the context of the eucharist, can take place because of the liberating resurrection (Ibid). Immortal, full and joyous life becomes present by grace which is effectuated by the resurrection of the crucified Jesus (1983:129). The raising of the outcast Jesus (the *novum*) brings new justice, unconditional grace and liberation for the hurting (1975:57). The cross and resurrection open up hope, freedom and love; the cross is itself a sign of God's hope on earth, displaying God's future.

Newness, power and glory are demonstrated in the resurrection (1974a:192-193). A qualitatively new future has come involving the presence of God, ensuring the possibility of a transformed world (1969:33). This includes a new relationship with God, new creation and the new man. The new creation begins with the dead (Ezek 37) because the old order (symbolised in the dead) has now passed away. The new beginning is symbolized as the resurrection of the dead (1991:53).

Jesus' resurrection set in motion the general resurrection of the dead (1974a:171). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a conquest over the 'deadliness of death' (1967:211), over judgement and over the curse. A divine righteousness comes to

us via Christ's resurrection, which embraces 'reconciliation and redemption of the mortal body' and also 'forgiveness of guilt and annihilation of the destiny of death' (1967:206). Death, then, is no longer the threat of nothingness that can consume us. Moltmann (1973:51) states: 'Yet through his death and by virtue of his resurrection "death has become a mockery", as Luther was able to say - although, of course, death is still here'. Christ will raise the dead as this demonstrates the newness that has come in through the cross and resurrection, and the fact that it will be a *novum ex nihilo* (1969:11-12,17). This resurrection of bodies will occur because it will answer the theodicy question, especially as it relates to death, and it will vindicate the victory of Christ's resurrection (1969:46). That is, death itself will be conquered. Resurrection will show ultimate victory over suffering, rather than the simple rising of those who have avoided eternal legalistic judgement.

The resurrection also establishes Christian responsibility to live the life of the kingdom. We come back to man's problem of desiring to 'possess' rather than 'to be'. Death and evil hinder our attempt at being the way God wants us to 'be'. However, the resurrection helps us to begin to be properly human. This humanity is to be worked out even now, in this world, in our bodies, before the eschatological consummation (1969:55-57). The new creation is not merely an 'opium from beyond'. Resurrection hope causes us to love and act in the light of the coming kingdom, no matter what opposition or pain this may imply (1969:58). It applies to the body we are, rather than the body

we have. New hope is created for participation in the new creation (1969:37).

The resurrection was also a 'future' event. God began the future there (1975:55-56). In the Christ-event we find the anticipation 'of the future in history in the midst of history' (1969:212). In other words, the future is here proleptically. The Christ-event was an incarnation of God's future. Moltmann (1969:213) feels that one must look *from* the future of God *to* the present of Christ and that in this we find the real incarnation of the 'Son of God'. As said earlier, the cross was 'for us', the resurrection was 'ahead of us'. The two, however, must be linked in order to be of any existential significance for those who suffer (1969:214). While the resurrection provided the future, the cross provided the identity of Christ with the poor. Faith is required, along with the recognition that the future will bring verification or vindication of our present liberating activity. The fact that suffering still continues demands this kind of faith (1969:214, 1974a:172).

Final judgement and forgiveness of sin took place in the cross and resurrection. This is because, according to Moltmann (1974a:168-169), Jesus rose into the 'final judgement of God' and into the 'coming glory of God'. The title of 'firstfruits' that was given to Christ pictures the future of God and the kingdom:

That means that the crucified Christ was understood in the light of his resurrection and that his resurrection was understood in the light of his future in the coming God and his glory. 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. (1974a:163.)

Again, we are to remember that the *future* freedom of God will overcome the *present* suffering and alienation of man. This makes Christ the historical ground of hope (1969:214).

### 3. THE FUTURE HOPE OF TRANSFORMATION

#### 3.1 Newness

We have already been referring to Moltmann's concept of newness in the course of our discussion. Here we wish to briefly emphasize this as a point in its own right, especially in terms of covenant and creation. The Sinai Covenant was one of freedom, instituted by the liberating God (1983:40). The exodus had an 'external political side', that of liberation. It also had an 'inward, spiritual side', that of the means of a positive personal existence in covenant with Yahweh (Ibid). Whoever loved God then loved freedom. For Moltmann (Ibid) these 'sides' of the exodus can be found in today's revolutions. The Jews, however, failed to abide by the Covenant precisely because they failed to transform their own attitudes (1974a:40-41).

God had to abandon those who had abandoned him, and thus established the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-33). According to Moltmann (1974a:42) the New Covenant will be characterized by willing obedience. It will be better than the Old Covenant. This New Covenant will offer a 'double liberation' in which one can be freed and liberated from the imprisonment of sin and guilt. Jesus inaugurates and brings gentiles into the New Covenant (1974a:43). As over against the Old Covenant, the New Covenant incorporates the eschatological judgement and future brought in by the resurrection. Forgiveness of sin and guilt is

here now. The New Covenant is still coming in, as seen by the continuing existence of the church and its eschatological witness.

The New Covenant, or New Age, bears relation to creation itself. Creation is 'sorrowful' (Rom 8:22) because of the curse. Honour given to Christ, however, who is the 'divine mystery' of the world, is honour given to creation (1991:72-73). That is, Christ, who participated in the creation of the world is reflected and even mediated in that very creation. We see Moltmann's panentheism coming in here. The New Age becomes the eternal sabbath rest for God, in which the Spirit indwells and brings harmony to creation (1991:75). Thus the resurrection affects more than just mankind. Actually, the 'church' must extend to include the cosmos and its own pain. God, via the immanent Spirit, suffers with, and preserves creation while it awaits final eschatological redemption (1991:75-76). The Spirit, then, works to help bring about the new creation of all things, and, according to Moltmann (Ibid) the resurrection becomes the first day of the New Creation. Thus for Moltmann (1991:77) the resurrection occurs in both human history and creation itself. The resurrection, therefore, opens up the eschatological process of the New Creation.

### **3.2 The Problem of Suffering**

Despite all that the Trinity and the Christ-event have accomplished, mankind is still faced with the ongoing presence of suffering. This does not prevent the Trinity from inviting us to participate in its history. Our liberation means we can be one with God (1991:87). Christ is the brother of those who

suffer; he has solidarity with them (1991:40-41). The Father suffers with us, and through the Spirit invites us to freedom and friendship (1991:24-25). In fact, as he suffers, the Father woos us into his freedom (1983:10). The incarnation is the true revelation of God, it shows God willing to enter a state of humiliation, and endure pain within himself for us (1974a:205). Part of this pain was the Son's cry of forsakenness. Men who are forsaken, then, can identify with Jesus as the Godforsaken One (1983:18). In fact, it is those who suffer who really know Jesus as liberator (1975:155). God, as the Coming One, the 'power of the future', and as the 'ground of liberation', can lift man out of and liberate him from suffering society (1975:51). That is, in suffering, man has hope to rise above his circumstances. The victim finds his own humanity in the suffering Jesus (1974b:113). Moltmann (1974b:20) claims a universalism in the cross in that the crucified Jesus offers himself to all classes, races and nations.

To be sure, the problem of suffering still persists. The victory and righteousness of God, though, can still work for us through the hope engendered by the cross and resurrection. Moltmann (1969:46-47) sees Paul as breaking away from the old apocalypticism in applying the consummation of God's righteousness to the present as well as the future. Further, the general resurrection is primarily for the purpose of entering eternal freedom, rather than having to face an apocalyptic judgement. Paul, according to Moltmann (1969:47), deals with the theodicy question by emphasizing the 'creative righteousness of God' and calling for 'faith pointing toward hope in conscious

solidarity' with our groaning creation, which itself 'longs' for freedom (Rom 8:22). The future which incorporates the new creation of God, helps us in our attempts to transform the present (1969:60).

Auschwitz, where God himself suffered (1975:73), and Hiroshima, are for Moltmann (1991:29) events which silence any theodicy or anthropodicy. To ask about God is to ask about injustice; it is to ask about God in Auschwitz. Even there, though, 'the suffering God gave comfort where humanly there was nothing to hope for in that hell' (Ibid). Theoretical, or metaphysical answers to the problem of evil and suffering are inadequate. Sufferers can, however, accept the mystical answer that God suffers our pain in himself. The crucified Christ brings his comforting love into human pain (1991:30). For God, the poor have rights (1991:48). Moltmann (1969:204-207), in stressing the failure of traditional theodicy, feels that the question of human identity is important. Man questions himself properly when he addresses the issue of injustice. Theology must understand that the future of history and man are bound up in the future of God. As man searches for 'humanity', he will experience suffering, but the promise of becoming a 'new man', in Christ, gives hope.

Moltmann is quite clear on the unavoidability of redemptive suffering. For Moltmann (1974a:64-65) a Christian stands at the 'intersection' of the four following points of suffering: a) resistance to false religion, and demonism; b) martyrdom; c) the 'suffering of love' for the oppressed; and d) the general sufferings of this age and the enslaved creation. One cannot

bypass this intersection. Also, the hope of the radically new creation makes things more problematic than ever. This is seen in that the promise of freedom, life, love and hope heighten the present pain of slavery, death, suffering and transiency (1969:61-62). Moltmann (1969:62) maintains that we will find 'certainty only in complete uncertainty'. It is the victim, however, who best helps other victims (1983:119). God is with us in our search for freedom. 'In our existence we sense God's existence; in our suffering we feel his pain; in our happiness we meet the assent of his bliss' (1983:134). Moltmann (1983:115) opines that we need to overcome our fear of passion and suffering, in order to serve the cause of hope.

### **3.3 The Church, Reality, and the Future**

In the past, the church and society yearned for the 'good old past'. Moltmann (1969:20) sees this as heresy. America displayed progress by looking for the 'new world', and eventually the 'future' was being sought by nation, church and culture (1969:25-27). The 'future' is the goal of our present history 'now' and of the 'present' history experienced in the past. Our present history now creates a new place for the 'present' of the Future which is reaching back to us (1969:28). History is experienced in the difference between future and reality, hope and experience, exodus and arrival (Ibid). The open future of true, final freedom is still to be realized; but our suffering in our struggle against evil produces a realistic conception of the future (1969:29-30).

While anticipations of truth are found in the past history of man, history itself is proceeding dialectically (Bloch). If

the human dream is turned forward, instead of looking back, we have 'provolution', instead of revolution (1969:32). Hope in the coming God leads to a messianic understanding of reality, that is, a new reality out of open creative possibilities is being worked out (1969:216). Moltmann is arguing that we must abandon a romantic return to the past. We are to realize that it is the future which forms the basis of reality. This future reality is gradually impacting the various avenues we might choose to take now. Reality, then, is an historical process in which the all-embracing eschatological reality forms a dialectic (or influence) with partial historical realities (1969:216-217). The resurrected Christ has inaugurated the future eschatological reality. There are many plural pasts, but survival ultimately means one common single future (1969:201). This will be a future reality without suffering. The divine-human journey out of suffering will have finished.

The liberating work of the Trinity will lead to the eschatological consummation, where love may be all in all, life triumphs over death, and righteousness over previous earthly hells (1974a:255). Christ's humanity becomes the primal sacrament, or liberating channel, making way for the eschatological new creation (1991:119). In our history, God is history; he was in the exodus but he is also at the end (1969:211). God is present historically, but not in the form of his eternal presence. 'The dialectic between his being and his being-not-yet is the pain and power of history' (1969:209). Again we see Moltmann bringing together human and divine history.

For the believer, faith is important. Faith allows creativity for freedom and love. It remembers the non-authoritarian Lord, who brings release and the future to the alienated (1974b:57). Faith knows of the future of God as the 'distant home of identity' and as present grace. For Christians, the Infinite is both a promise and a demand. They live in tension between faith and hope (1974b:58). Faith recognises God's grace and justification of the poor, the ugly and the mourning. Therefore the 'hope of faith points to full participation in the glory of God' (1973:61). Hope, with faith, persuades man to 'stay' and fight evil, the consequences notwithstanding (1974b:116). Hope is nurtured by the memory of the resurrection of the crucified Son of Man, while it creates 'hope in our hopelessness' (1974b:117). This hope is of the 'feast of the coming Lord of Glory', and it involves not the glory of victory over enemies, but rather victory over enmity (1983:22). The new man, or, our true humanity, is found in the future-mediating, reconciling and liberating Jesus Christ. Consequently, believers will not flee (from human pain) into themselves, or to the 'good old days', or into the humanistic dream that man can create a free society without any help from God (1974b:115).

For Moltmann the needed historical revolution must transform the foundations of systemic structures, and history becomes the history of revolutionary conflict between the future and the past (1969:131-132). Eschatological hope creates the 'new' faith in the revolutionary present. In other words, it is fine, even expected, for Christians to participate in God's revolution.

Christians would do it in the spirit of joy, festivity, dancing and non-vengeance. They would be aware of the revolution within the revolution (1969:145-147), that is, doing God's 'thing' in God's way. Reconciliation and hope would be spread by concrete, personal and social love. This love does not allow selfishness or injustice even for the sake of peace. Rather, peace and righteousness will 'only kiss and be one when the new person is born, and God the Lord, who has created all things, arrives at his just rights in his creation' (1983:36).

Who are the agents in all of this? Obviously the Trinity is the prime mover here. The process and gift of liberation has come from God. Historically, God works in and through the agency of man, especially the victims. Let us consider the poor briefly. Moltmann (1969:18) maintains that the 'poor, the abandoned, and the dying' are closer to God than any militant revolutionary hero. The rich and powerful must work for the poor, but they must also remember it is the very same poor who represent them. God will work through the poor. Moltmann (1991:121) sees the *universal* kingdom of God as being *particular* for the poor. Now, the earlier Moltmann (1969:104) maintained that it is the *latent* kingdom, rather than *anonymous* Christianity, which stimulates social transformation. Later (1991:121-122), Moltmann says that the kingdom, in its *particularity* for the poor, actually creates *anonymous* Christians. Moltmann (1991:122) claims that the poor, hungry, thirsty, sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25) are Christ's brothers and sisters 'whether they are Christians or not'. The kingdom includes them 'whether they believe or not'.

The church is of course a vital historical agent. As the messianic community, the church is the representative of, and vanguard for, the new mankind (1969:215). Further, the church is an exodus church, one which is at once confessing, liberating, and prophetic (1983:163-166). The church must participate in and exemplify the kingdom. We give here a lengthy quote from *Theology and Joy* (1973) which best summarizes Moltmann's view of the church:

The church therefore must not regard itself as just a means to an end, but it must demonstrate already in its present existence this free and redeemed being-with-others which it seeks to serve. In this sense - and only in this sense - the church is already an end in itself, not as a *church* complete with hierarchy and bureaucracy but as the *congregation of the liberated*. In that sense the church's function reaches beyond rendering assistance to a troubled world; it does already possess its own *demonstrative value of being*. In the remembered and hoped-for liberty of Christ the church serves the liberation of men by demonstrating human freedom in its own life and by manifesting its *rejoicing in that freedom*. (1973:86-87.)

Moltmann (1983:12-18) discusses the incident of Moses' calling to serve Yahweh in the exodus-liberation. Moses tried to 'get out of it' because of fear and the daunting task. Yahweh eventually made his point and Moses was used. Moltmann (1983:18) says we can identify with Moses, but, like Moses, we must eventually focus on the Lord and the task. God's power will fuel the 'weak' ones. We have the 'staying-power of hope'.

The kingdom of God is not the political world (1991:55). It comes to those who labour. In this context, social revolution is the 'immanent reverse side of the transcendent resurrection-hope'. This kingdom coming is based on Christ's resurrection out of humiliation, and also on this basis, 'God himself comes to mankind'. Thus Jesus 'forgives sin as only God can forgive'

(1969:103-105). This kingdom, of course, is not the same as any humanistic utopia. Moltmann (1974b:42-44) is not against realistic concrete (or historically practical) utopias, but man must remember all that is involved in being *human*. Of course true humanity is only found in the crucified Christ. For Moltmann (1969:40-41) God works in and through the New Creation and this leads to a practical utopia by the liberation of the poor from economic, political and racial oppression. Hope prevails over disappointments and religion becomes 'proligion', that is, 'the joining of faith in God with hope in the liberation of man on a new earth and under a new heaven'. Actually, the victim becomes God's Utopia in this world (1974b:117). That is, it is the liberating of the victim from suffering which concerns God the most. Freedom for the victim is God's main goal for human history.

Moltmann (1973:45) believes that just as creation is aimed at history, so also history is aimed at the *new creation*. Therefore freedom needs to be both realized and celebrated. It is in the 'new things' of the Old and New Testaments where one finds an eschatological messianism. Moltmann (1969:137-138) maintains that the New Future enters history in 'waves of anticipation'. That is, Jesus Christ created the gospel in which the sinner is forgiven, the Godless are justified and the humiliated are given hope. Further, the new community of Christ is mandated with a liberating mission which leads to a new obedience of believers. This in turn leads to the New heaven and earth. Future oriented faith joins up the new future, God's presence and the freedom of creation. Moltmann (1969:139) goes

on to say that in expecting divine transformation, we transform ourselves and our conditions into the likeness of the new creation. This is realized in repentance, conversion, new birth to hope, and life. Thus a messianic stream of renewal runs through history from the cross and the resurrection. Christ, after all, was raised into the 'coming new world'.

Ultimately, Christ is to hand all things over to the Father. Christ's work is provisional and a messianic realization of the ultimate Lordship of the Father (1969:213). Moltmann (1975:84) states: 'When he [Christ] brings his history to completion (1 Cor 15:28), his suffering will be transformed into joy, and thereby our suffering as well'. God's righteousness is creative justice which leads to shared peace, that is, *Shalom* (1991:55). The Final Age is already here, proleptically. The eschatological New Creation is here in the church and the Spirit, and the pilgrim church will change its form as the New Creation is fully realized (1991:96). In the end, the victim and the executioner will not triumph over each other - the one who triumphs will be the One who died and rose for them both (1974a:178).

We shall close off by noting Moltmann's idea of the Christian expectation, as he outlined it in *Theology of Hope* (1967). While the Son is to hand over to the Father, what nevertheless remains is 'the fulfilment of the promised righteousness of God in all things, the fulfilment of the resurrection of the dead that is promised in his resurrection, [and] the fulfilment of the lordship of the crucified one over all things that is promised in his exaltation' (1967:229). The New Age or Creation, then, will be this eschatological utopia.

To use Moltmann's terms, it will be the fulfilment of the negation of all negations. The Coming God will be eternally present in his eschatological kingdom.

#### 4. SUMMARY

We need now to bring together the different aspects of this chapter. A summary of Moltmann is, of course, a very ambitious idea, as he writes about so much, with many variations of a theme. Nevertheless, let us attempt a summary of the main themes of our discussion.

Mankind stands alienated and godforsaken before God and is also estranged from nature and himself. Sin has done this, and mankind, especially the victim, experiences various types of oppression, resulting in the historical problem of suffering. This is all the more serious in that man is in the image of God. Man has failed in all his humanistic attempts to improve his lot. Creation is cursed, and itself groans for cosmic liberation. Man and creation need redemption together.

God responds to this. By nature, he is trinitarian, with his own active intra-trinitarian history. However, God is also historical; he is with human history, including the history of human pain. Divine history incorporates human history. This is not process theology, or pure pantheism, but neither is it traditional monotheism. God is panentheistic. The trinitarian God can suffer, and actually suffers with the victim. This means God is partial towards the victim, although his redemption is for all. Exodus, scripture, and Christ all indicate the divine

option for the poor. God is the Coming God, meeting us from his future.

In this context, God promises redemption-liberation for man. Jesus was the incarnation of the Future God. The divine being is manifested by the divine working in history. Jesus was with man historically. As such, he identified with human pain and this pain was absorbed into God. Jesus became the representative victim. In physical and divine agony, Jesus went to Golgotha. Here, he was rejected, abandoned, and judged. This was in the context of atonement for both victim and perpetrators. Jesus also died, in his *totality*. This was also a justifying death - but not in the forensic sense. It was, rather, liberative. Further, it was 'for us'. The Father also suffered, suffering the death of the Son who died as the Son of Man, the liberating Messiah.

The cross and resurrection qualify each other. From the point of view of the future, Jesus was Crucified as the Resurrected One and Resurrected as the Crucified One. The resurrection benefits are mediated to man by the crucifixion. In the resurrection, Jesus: a) overcame death (the worst human want); b) set up a messianic eschatological stream of liberation, or freedom; c) brought in the New Creation; and d) glorified his historical self-sacrifice.

The Final Age has come, proleptically, and will be consummated at the Eschaton. In all of this, the Spirit effectuates justification and fellowship, and he energizes the church. The poor themselves are used by God in the process of liberation, and the church is to be nomadic, liberating, and

exemplary of a free human community in harmony with God, nature and the neighbour.

Christ will ultimately hand over his finished task to the Father. Promise and Hope are indicated and substantiated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The victim can grasp this hope, and in faith participate in the divine-human dialectic of liberation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CRITIQUE OF GUTIERREZ, CONE AND MOLTSMANN

In this chapter we will be subjecting the views of Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann (as presented in the first three chapters) to critical evaluation. We will be concentrating on the cross and resurrection in relation to human suffering, and on issues relating directly to this. Our approach will be to observe where the three authors agree or differ on various points and then to respond accordingly.<sup>1</sup> Our response will indicate some areas where we agree with our authors, but it will also point out issues or problems that we see. In chapter five we will indicate further where we would agree with the authors and, of course, express our own understanding on the various pertinent issues that will have come up.

We will spend some time on what our authors say about sin, the Abrahamic Promise, the exodus, and the life of Christ, before we look at the actual cross and resurrection. This approach will help us to see how our authors perceive the reason for the Christ-event.

Freedom of the oppressed from oppression and injustice is the primary goal of our authors. Therefore we have chosen freedom as the central theme in order to focus our discussion. Accordingly we will look at the need for freedom, the basis of freedom, and the character or application of freedom.

## 1. THE NEED FOR FREEDOM

### 1.1 Sin and Oppression

The previous chapters have pointed out how Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann agree about the existence of, and are concerned with, man's inhumanity. This inhumanity (or human injustice) is seen in various modes of oppression or what can be called historical contradictions. Gutierrez (1974:174) speaks primarily of the rich - vs - poor situation, Cone (1986a:24) speaks of racial oppression of blacks by whites, and Moltmann (1974a:300-331) speaks of the powerful - vs - weak, and of universal disharmony. All three authors are concerned about all types of oppression and are not in doubt as to the cause of oppression and suffering, namely, sin. Sin is understood to be alienation between God and man and man and man (Gutierrez 1974:35, 1990b:137; Cone 1975:237, 1986b:41; Moltmann 1991:45-46).

Obviously our authors hail from different points of departure and will emphasize different issues or express them in their own ways. Gutierrez writes on behalf of the oppressed of Peru as well as Latin America generally. He exposes class struggle as it is expressed in the social, economic, and political types of oppression pertaining there. From this point of departure he extrapolates his thinking to all the suffering of history. He speaks of oppressive sin as a 'breach of friendship with God and others' (1974:35). For Cone, however, the primary issue is one of racial oppression of blacks. He is looking at black man (and later black woman too!). Cone has strongly argued (1975:237) that racial oppression (in fact any oppression) is sinful. Social sin is virtually synonymous with

white power-structures (Cone 1986a:106-108). Interestingly, Cone (as over against Gutierrez or Moltmann) speaks of a special guilt common to many oppressed blacks. For Cone (1979a:354, 1985b:105-106), blacks sin when they deny or forget that authentic existence requires the affirmation of God as liberator, and when they ignore their role as agents for freedom.

We saw in chapter three Moltmann's (1974a:330-332) understanding of human sinfulness which he describes in terms of 'vicious circles' of oppression. This description includes Moltmann's concern with man's irresponsibility in relation to creation and the environment. Moltmann (1969:54-57, 1974b:37-42, 59-67, 86-104, 1975:71) talks more of man as a whole, in his sinfulness, apathy and possessiveness. Along with this is man's failure to improve his lot or transform himself through humanistic endeavours and philosophies. Rather than starting from a specific type of oppression, as Gutierrez and Cone do, Moltmann seems to focus on oppression and despair as a general human problem. His actual reflection, then, is not as praxis oriented as Gutierrez or Cone. Gutierrez and Cone would certainly not deny the solidarity of human sin, in which victims as well as perpetrators stand 'vertically' and 'horizontally' guilty before God. Moltmann (1991:45-46), however, seems to emphasize it more, and likes to speak of the 'godforsakenness' of both victim and perpetrator. Anyone who abandons God is abandoned by God and becomes godless and godforsaken (Moltmann 1974a:242).

We certainly have no problem with our authors' understanding of oppression as sinful. Also, we understand that they do

distinguish between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of sin. That is to say, a distinction is made between sin as a state of being and sin as it is manifested in social consequences, such as oppression. As this thesis is primarily concerned with the Christ-event and social *suffering*, we will not address our authors' views on sin at length. We will simply make one or two observations here.

Firstly, our authors are primarily concerned with the theme of suffering and the goal of freedom from it. Thus their discussion focuses on the oppressive horizontal effects of sin and the resultant hope of liberation. Our discussion of Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann in chapters one to three has already shown this. While we realize that our authors are theologizing in order to articulate their views on liberation, we would have liked to have seen more discussion on the vertical dimension of sin. It seems to us that Moltmann, because he is writing on a more general level, gives more time to the notion of humanity, as humanity, being alienated from God. Concerning all three authors, however, we would have liked to see discussion on the *relationship* between a) the ultimate (eschatological) destinies of individual victims and perpetrators and b) the historical problem of sin-caused suffering.

Secondly, ongoing discussion is needed on oppression between victim and victim and perpetrator and perpetrator, in order to more clearly work through the tension between 'salvation' and 'liberation'. To be sure, Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann refer to oppression or sin-acts perpetrated by the oppressed amongst themselves. We believe, however, that our authors need to

reflect more on the relationship between the solidarity of human sin in general, and the 'divine option for the poor', as a social grouping.

Now we might be accused of being unfair in raising these questions of our authors. As we have already stated, they acknowledge the existence of the multidimensionality of sin. We suggest, however, that if liberation is to be multidimensional (Gutierrez 1983:144-145; Moltmann 1991:49) then equal emphasis must be given to all aspects of man-as-sinful. Be this as it may, we wholeheartedly concur with Moltmann that man has failed to save or liberate himself from sin, suffering and apathy. Liberation, or freedom from sin and its consequences, is a self-evident need - one does not choose to be a victim.

We wish to mention the role of the biblical Satan here. Cone (1975:232), and Moltmann (1974a:293) deprecate the belief in a real Satan. For us, however, Satan is a participant in the historical drama of human sin, alienation, and suffering.<sup>2</sup> His ongoing encounter with Jesus, recorded in the temptation accounts and elsewhere, was, we believe, an attempt to thwart the latter's messianic mission.

## 1.2 Ideas of Freedom

We have seen what our authors think of sin and oppression. This leads us, now, to see what each of our authors understand freedom to be.

For Gutierrez (1974:176), freedom is understood to be passing from 'death' to 'life'. Death is the result of political, economic and social oppression. Life, then, is freedom from these oppressions. Put somewhat differently, life

or freedom is redemption from sin and its consequences (Gutierrez 1983:63). Freedom means one can realistically hope for the emergence of a free society which would be characterized by the absence of oppression on personal, interpersonal and systemic levels (Gutierrez 1974:151-152). Interestingly, Gutierrez (1990b:122) emphasizes that social freedom, or liberation, is valueless unless there is also personal freedom from sin, and communion with God. Of course, it is the cross and resurrection of the life-giving Christ that have made freedom possible and inevitable. While Gutierrez (1974:166-168) looks for a comprehensive liberation in all dimensions of existence he, like Cone, concentrates on the oppressed themselves. We will recall that Gutierrez and Cone call for perpetrators to repent and enter into solidarity with the oppressed (victims). However, their theologies focus on those who suffer.

Cone, obviously, is looking for the eradication of racial prejudice. Freedom implies that whites would have shed their superiority complex and oppressive tendencies. Blacks would be proud of their 'blackness' and know that Christ is for them (Cone 1973:56). Again, the cross and resurrection of the 'black' Christ have created or made possible the existence of racial harmony (Cone 1986a:119-120). Ostensibly, the absence or decline of racial prejudice will lead to economic and sociopolitical freedom. As we have mentioned earlier, Cone (1975:141-142, 223, 239) stresses the intrinsic connection between objective and subjective reconciliation. Objective reconciliation is none other than Christ's freedom for the poor (blacks, in the first instance) made possible by the cross and resurrection.

Subjective reconciliation would imply personal commitment to the struggle for freedom.

Moltmann, of course, has a more general approach to human suffering and failure. Obviously, he is looking for freedom or liberation from the 'vicious circles of oppression' which we discussed in chapter three. Further, he addresses himself (1991:49) equally to victim and perpetrator. Ultimately, he is looking (1974a:216-218, 1991:164) for a universal harmony between man, history, God and creation, in which there would be no jarring oppression, alienation, and environmental mismanagement. Freedom, then, includes this overall harmony. He relates his idea of harmony to the very *nature of God himself*. Gutierrez and Cone also look for the restoration of creation, with Gutierrez (1974:151-152) speaking of the transformation of the universe.

As we suggested in chapter three, Moltmann's view of God is crucial to his theology of hope and harmony. We remember that Moltmann (1991:86,164) favours a perichoretic view of the Trinity as well as a panentheistic approach to the presence of God in 'history'. While the Trinity has its own internal history, it also takes in the history of human guilt and pain. It thus behooves man to be in harmony with himself and his trinitarian God. God the liberator wants a dynamic relationship with a liberated human history. Concerning creation, Moltmann would call it 'free' or liberated when cosmic (environmental) unity is restored between Creator, creation, and creature (man).

To add to the above, Moltmann (1975:51-53) speaks of God as the Coming One, wherein which the combined future of both God and man impinges on the present. In chapter three we referred to

Moltmann's stress on the new creation which was inaugurated with the resurrection, and which will be fully realized when God is 'universally present', that is, in a fully restored relationship with a liberated creation and mankind. Put somewhat differently, the freedom of the future is coming to us now because God and his future are coming to us now (Moltmann 1975:52).

Confining ourselves to the area of suffering and freedom, we are in agreement with our authors' intentions or desires for freedom. We are especially in agreement with Moltmann's concept of the dynamic interaction between trinitarian and human history (via Jesus Christ). Our main problem with Moltmann is with his panentheistic view of God. This does not mean we are down-playing the immanence of God in 'history', or the working of the Holy Spirit in the affairs of non-Christians (Jn 16:8-11) and Christians. No doubt Moltmann's (1974a:214,228, 1975:78) concern with traditional theism, in that it down-plays the passibility of God, leads him (Moltmann) to emphasize God's experience of our (suffering) history. To be sure, God's identity with human suffering is behind the possibility of human freedom.

## **2. THE BASIS OF FREEDOM**

### **2.1 The Divine Option**

Our authors find the concept of the 'divine option' to be fundamental to their theologies. Here, of course, we are referring to the idea that God has opted or chosen to be on the side of the oppressed. For Gutierrez (1990b:119) it is God on the side of the socially weak; for Cone (1982:115, 1985:67, 1986a:75) it is God first of all on the side of oppressed Blacks

(and then any oppressed group); and for Moltmann (1974b:18) it is God on the side of the weak or poor. Under the idea of God's option, then, we will consider briefly the issues of the Abrahamic Promise, the exodus, and the 'poor' Christ.

### **2.1.1 The Abrahamic Promise**

For our authors, the divine option for the 'poor' was first revealed in the Abrahamic Covenant. Thus for Gutierrez (1984:95), Cone (1975:119) and Moltmann (1967:119-154, 1975:47-48) the promise was one of liberation, or freedom, especially for those who are victims of oppression. Gutierrez (1974:160-161) and Moltmann (1967:121) speak of the covenantal aspect of the promise (Gen 12:1-3). For Gutierrez (1974:158) especially, the history of Israel (including the exodus) is paradigmatic demonstrating the outworking of the promise. Of course, for our authors the promise expands to apply to all people, especially victims. For Moltmann the promise involves the influence of the future upon the present as well.

We have one basic question here. Is not the promise related to the Christ-event *before* it is related to the exodus? The idea, surely, is that Jesus, as Messiah, or Abrahamic Seed, will be a 'blessing' to the world. We do *not* rule the need for liberation out of the promise-content, but we maintain that the 'blessing' cannot be restricted to liberation. The concept of divine option was indeed demonstrated as the Hebrews benefited from God's hearing their cry in Egypt. However, as Paul says, the Promise was four hundred and thirty years before the exodus (Gal 3:17). If Gutierrez and Moltmann are correct in viewing the

promise as eschatologically affecting *all* history, then it (the promise) must apply to all human problems including and alongside the option which is demonstrated in the exodus-event.

In reaction to Gutierrez, we question the idea that the Promise, which is fulfilled in Jesus, and as it is seen in the New Covenant, is fundamentally one of historically progressive liberation. The notion of an eschatological progression towards an end is not being questioned. However, we think that Abraham is to be seen as the example of faith simply in his acceptance of being the founder of the line of Messiah and of a 'great' nation, and in his obedience to Yahweh. The promise to Abraham was that Yahweh would definitely bring his plans to fruition (Gen 15:1-21). However, there is no direct implication that this refers to ongoing liberation. In fact, Abraham was warned about a future oppression of the Israelites (Gen 15:12-14). Now if Abraham is the father of believers (Gal 3:6-29), then who are these 'believers'?

It could be answered that believers are those committed to the liberation gospel, both oppressor (as he repents) and oppressed. We recall Gutierrez's position of multidimensional salvation, in which he calls for personal commitment to the liberation process (The First Act). This includes commitment to Yahweh himself. Now if one can be saved (or at least linked with salvation) by participating in the 'saving process' unknowingly - even as a non-Christian (Gutierrez 1974:151) - then how in this instance can one be termed a believer, exercising personal faith in Abraham's liberating God? This difficulty aside, however, we wonder if being of the 'issue of Abraham' was ever meant to free

one from social suffering this side of the eschaton. Christian and non-Christian victims alike experience the same historical conditions (whether we talk about the rich and the poor, or black and white, or powerful and weak). This state of affairs continues to persist despite the victory and hope brought about by the cross and resurrection.

### 2.1.2 The Exodus-Event

Gutierrez (1983:7-11), Cone (1986a:117), and Moltmann (1974b:18-19) concur with the notion that oppression and the need for freedom became the occasion for divine action in history. In other words, we are talking of the revelation of and by a God who is intrinsically *against* suffering and *for* those who suffer, and who therefore liberates. The exodus, especially for Gutierrez (1990b:119) and Cone (1975:65) is an historical demonstration, or paradigm of this. Verbal confirmation of this is seen in the prophetic movement, in which the people of Israel are called upon to remember the Liberator God of the exodus-event and to cease the oppression within their nation (Jer 7:12-26; Ezek 20:1-12; Amos 2:6-16, 4:10, 9:7-8. It is pertinent to note that idolatry and oppression are of equal concern to the prophets).<sup>3</sup>

In chapter one (p 11-12) we pointed out how Gutierrez (1974:158) follows Neher in his understanding of the exodus, wherein God, in his desire to liberate, and the oppressed in their desire for freedom, cooperate with each other. Also, this implies a 'double belonging' (Gutierrez 1983:9), in which Yahweh was their liberating God while they were to be his liberated and liberating people. We ask Gutierrez, however, what the

Israelites actually did for their 'exodus'? Is reciprocal action necessarily implied in double belonging? While the oppressed Hebrews obviously desired freedom, they could do precious little to bring it about, and even Moses was initially reluctant. Was not the exodus rather a 'mighty act of Yahweh'? These questions, of course, do not work against the idea of the divine option for the poor. If anything, they support it all the more because it was God working for the poor.

We have an interesting question here: Why has God not liberatively intervened in history in a way similar to the exodus again? Gutierrez and Cone could reply by saying that God does not need to - Jesus Christ did it at Calvary. But then would not the exodus lose its paradigmatic value? We recall that Gutierrez (1991:119) said the exodus event itself was non-repeatable, but that its message - that God, where necessary, historically intervenes to liberate - is *permanently valid*. Our question, perhaps, should be modified to why Christ has not historically intervened since Calvary.

One could state, of course, that cases of social freedom since Calvary (eg: South Africa, East Germany) are examples of God having liberatively intervened in history. This assertion could be based on the idea that 'Christ as Liberator' is the hermeneutical key for understanding scripture and historical reality. (See Cone 1975:81, 1986a:118.) We wonder, however, if this way of interpreting historical events is empirically or historically verifiable. If it is not verifiable now, that is, if prior to the eschaton one cannot prove that God has intervened in an 'exodus' way, then perhaps claims of divine intervention

can be no more than faith-claims. One might argue that this is true also of the historical Mosaic exodus; but the exodus is already a recognized and recorded event of the past.

Can non-verifiable faith-claims of future physical liberation really be used to assuage the fears of today's victims? Are we not in danger of engendering a false hope? The case for 'permanently valid' intervention by God has to answer to such historical tragedies as the holocaust, or Bosnia-Herzegovina or the Sharpville massacre in South Africa. Here, one can just as easily ask, 'If God is *ipso facto* on the side of the poor and oppressed and thus seeks to liberate them, why does he allow such historical injustice in the first place?' The theodicy issue, we feel, makes it rather premature to assert that Gutierrez is *demonstrably* correct. Of course, this is not to take anything away from the rejoicing of South African blacks now that Mandela is in power.

We realise our discussion neither proves nor disproves that God has in fact intervened in some way or other since Calvary. It at least indicates, however, that one cannot verifiably maintain the case for ongoing and God-caused historical partial liberations. One might argue that we are creating a 'straw man' here, as faith is not amenable to historical-empirical verification in the first place, at least until the object of hope of that faith actually materializes. Our authors, of course, do not claim to have empirical proof for their case, as they would ultimately conclude and tell us that the victim must place *faith* in, and exercise *hope* through, 'Jesus Christ as

Liberator'. This faith and hope is to be lived out in the midst of present historical suffering.

Are we really building a straw man, however, if we insist that victims would need to demonstrably see that *God* actually is liberating people from oppression? Liberation (at least on the physical level) is not a nebulous thing - if it happens, it is at once a recognizable historical phenomenon. This is not to down-play faith and hope, but merely to assert that liberation needs to be seen to be happening if the message of liberation and black theology is to be taken seriously by the victim. We will return to the issues of faith and hope later.

We recall that for Gutierrez (1974:238-239), Cone (1975:207, 1986a:130-132) and Moltmann (1969:215, 1973:86-87, 1983:163-166), the church is to identify and co-operate with God's liberating interventions. This is because of the purported paradigmatic value of the exodus. *That the exodus demonstrated God's preference for the poor is not being questioned here; what is at issue here is whether or not the exodus is in fact paradigmatic for divine action in 'history'.* Did Yahweh simply act because he 'heard the cry of the Israelites'? It could be argued that he acted primarily because the oppressed people just happened to be his covenant (Abrahamic) people, and that there were already existing laws for taking care of the poor anyway. We are aware that differing scholarly opinions as to when and how the Law was given exist. However, whatever view is held on the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic legislation, we still concur with Cone and Gutierrez (who are aware of the covenant aspect) that the exodus, in and of itself, demonstrated Yahweh's concern for the

oppressed. The existence of laws for the poor would preclude Yahweh from turning a blind eye to oppression.

We remain unsure, however, that the exodus is paradigmatic. In Gutierrez (the perception of Christ as Liberator notwithstanding), a potential confusion exists. To be sure, Gutierrez talks about the liberating presence of Christ amongst the poor on the basis of the cross and resurrection. However, what about the actual process of liberation? Is it the 'way of the exodus' (permanent validity) or the 'way of the cross'? To be sure, Gutierrez (1974:155,158, 1990b:126) links creation, the exodus and the cross together in an ongoing historical 'flow of liberation'. Furthermore, he would insist that the resurrection brought eschatological freedom, and that a response is called for. This very argument, however, could be used to assert that the exodus and the exodus 'way' of doing things is over with. The *cross and resurrection* are now the key to freedom and God is not necessarily bound to intervene as he did with the exodus-Jews.

Cone (1975:80), we feel, is clearer when he speaks of a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments on social freedom. He maintains that the Christ-event produced a freedom that transcends the freedom obtained in the exodus because it rises above sociopolitical limitations. Cone's idea would not necessarily be rejected by Gutierrez, but the latter still stresses the paradigmatic nature of the exodus more. Moltmann, as we have seen in chapter three, would focus his programme for freedom on the relation between the cross and resurrection and

the intra-trinitarian history. The future of God is more important for Moltmann than the exodus.

### 2.1.3 The Poor Christ

The divine option, of course, can be seen in the very life of Jesus Christ. Gutierrez (1983:13), Cone (1986a:115,117) and Moltmann (1975:55) refer to Jesus' 'poverty' in that he refused wealth, social status ('whiteness') and power. God the Son, as Jesus Christ, in reality, was identifying with the poor. Jesus, as the poor victim, was creating the necessary conditions to bring about the only possible resolution to the problem of the poor - liberation.

The notion of revelation applies to the concept of the divine option. We have earlier stated that our authors saw the historical problem of oppression as the stimulus for divine intervention in history. This intervention was behind the exodus-event, and was at the same time an historical revelation of God's preference for the poor. In a similar vein, the historical life of Jesus Christ was also a mode of divine revelation - revelation that God was for the oppressed and thus against oppression.

We observed in chapter two that Cone (1975:98, 1979c:391) places great importance on the social context. Cone (1979c:391) demonstrates a Barthian tendency in centring revelation and liberation in Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> The point of departure for Cone is the black experience or story, and he sees the black situation as a type of 'covenant' between God and the black victim (1986a:56). However, this does not mean that he restricts revelation to the black story, and he certainly does not see

black history as the ultimate source for black theologizing. It remains, however, that for Cone, Jesus Christ demonstrates or works out the divine option for the black oppressed.

Moltmann, as we saw in chapter three, strongly emphasizes an identity between Trinitarian history and the history of human suffering. Here, it seems to us, Moltmann could be described as 'Barthian' (perhaps even more so than Cone) in his Christocentric approach to human suffering. Just as in Cone, liberation and revelation focus in Christ, so also for Moltmann. For Moltmann (1969:17, 1991:50) Jesus Christ was the focal point, the event in which the very nature of the compassionate God is revealed. Moltmann (1974b:19, 1991:16,35) also believes that the Trinity's passionate and messianic identification with suffering man was revealed in Jesus Christ as the Son of Man and in his 'Abba' relationship with the Father. Again, for Moltmann, the divine option is lived out in Jesus Christ

We basically agree with the notion that the historical Jesus Christ was revealing the divine option in that he was 'for the poor'. However, we wish to point out that Jesus also seemed to minister to the upper classes, or powerful, or the hated, in that he gave them as much chance as the poor (Matt 17:24-27, 19:16-26; Mk 5:35-43; Lk 7:1-10, 11:37-38, 13:1-5,10-17, 18:9-14, 19:1-10; Jn 3:1-21, 4:43-54). It is clear, though, that Jesus lived a life of material poverty and homelessness, although he does not seem to have laid down ethical ground-rules for a programme of systemic transformation. There has been much written on this very issue, and we do not need to explore it here. We wish to advocate, though, a modification of the notion 'Jesus was for the

poor and therefore against the unjust' to 'Jesus was for justice, or pro-justice', to use Sider's terminology. It just so happens, of course, that the bulk of injustice is perpetrated on the poor, weak, blacks and women. The divine 'option', then, is for justice, as justice. We realize that Gutierrez or Cone might respond by saying we are becoming too abstract, like Moltmann. Nevertheless, we raise this as a point of consideration, and are not down-playing the mandate for social justice on behalf of the oppressed.

Under the notion of option, then, we have considered the Abrahamic Promise, the exodus, and the poor Christ. It seems to us that these three are linked as far as the revelation of divine concern for man is concerned. At this point, however, we wish to question Gutierrez and especially Cone's (1986a:45) notion that revelation occurs primarily in the context of oppression and freedom. We feel that the human 'question' cannot be reduced to the death-dealing problem of human suffering. To be sure, God has revealed his option for justice because of oppression, reflecting the fact that he himself is just. Yet is it not true that the complex problem of the relationship between God and man gives rise to many questions and issues? There is a lot more pertaining to this relationship than the albeit devastating issue of human evil, and for which we need God's revelation. To be sure, we see God's concern for justice in the birth, life, and death of Jesus. We do not think, however, that this narrows the meaning of the cross to liberation (as if it replaces any idea of forensic judgement), or, more specifically, a definite

historical programme of liberation, no matter how multidimensional it may be.

## **2.2 The Cross and Freedom**

### **2.2.1 The Cross as the Focus of History**

In our three authors we find the linking together of creation, history (including the exodus), and Jesus Christ. This linkage is proposed in order to talk about liberation or freedom. Gutierrez (1974:154-160), Cone (1986a:64) and Moltmann (1969:17) see creation itself as being a part of redemption. Gutierrez (1974:154-160) sees man as the crown of creation, but also as the creature called upon to carry on God's creative activity. He asserts that the exodus, as liberation, illustrates the divine creative act (Gutierrez 1974:155). Man, then, should be demonstrating a propensity towards freedom, rather than evil and suffering.

Cone (1975:139,175) links the exodus with liberation in terms of Jesus Christ being the Suffering Servant. Gutierrez and Cone lay stronger emphasis than Moltmann on the exodus theme here. The exodus demonstrated the divine option and liberative nature of Yahweh; the cross is the culmination of this. As said earlier, Moltmann does not ignore the value of the exodus; it is just that for him the categories of Future and Promise (hope) are more important. The Trinity has its promissory (Abrahamic) history which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Moltmann 1969:210-212). For our three theologians, however, the linking of creation, the exodus, and the cross is possible because of a liberating, historical and messianic outworking of the Abrahamic promise (Gutierrez 1974:153, 1990b:97,126; Cone 1986a:64;

Moltmann 1967:154, 1969:139). In fact the fulfilling of the promise is part and parcel of a liberative historical 'flow'.

We agree with the idea of linking creation, the Abrahamic promise, and freedom with the Christ-event. Also, the exodus most certainly demonstrated that Yahweh desires that people should be free. Our main concern, however, is with the usage of the concept of history as a liberative 'flow'. We will reserve our comments on this until we discuss the resurrection and the idea of the 'future', especially as it is understood by Moltmann.

### **2.2.2 The Cross and Identity**

The whole point of the incarnation, for our theologians, is that God, through Jesus Christ, was doing something about the human condition. Jesus Christ, having been sent by the Father, was identifying with human pain and at the same time bringing about liberation from it. In this section we will observe the theme of identity as it is expressed in the victimization, rejection and suffering of Jesus.

As we saw in the earlier chapters, Gutierrez (1983:96), Cone (1975:80,175) and Moltmann (1991:50) agree that Jesus Christ went to the cross as a victim, a substitutionary victim. For Gutierrez (1974:231, 1983:61, 1984:50) Jesus became the victim of social, religious and political oppression. Cone (1975:119-120,134) emphasized that Jesus was a Jew, and, as such, was automatically a victim of Roman oppression. But this was not all. Jesus, in his alliance with the poor and 'sinners', qualified himself to be a 'black'. He drew Jewish political and religious opposition to him. Thus, in one sense, Jesus was a double victim. Cone is stating that Jesus was treated as a Black

would be treated today. Thus blacks will feel a liberating identity with Jesus (Cone 1986a:75). Moltmann (1974b:18) stresses Jesus' concern for the victims of his day, and his opposition to Roman and religious power. (However, we wonder what Moltmann would do with 'Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's' [Mk 12:17].) All three authors would see Jesus Christ as victimized and crucified for being a subversive.

We would submit that the victimization of Jesus was because of the prior divine option for the poor, thus in one sense it can be called voluntary. We are using the word 'voluntary' in the sense that God the Son knew very well why he became human through the incarnation. Human victims, of course, do not volunteer for suffering. It is, after all, a situation of suffering. The voluntariness of Jesus, then, was unique - it demonstrated his identity with those who suffer, that is, the divine option. One might ask if Jesus was actually a victim in spite of allowing himself to be victimized. Being a victim implies powerlessness. Would the Son of God ever allow himself to be caught up in this state of affairs? We would reply, in agreement with our authors, that Jesus was identifying with the human problem of suffering. Full identity, here, means taking on human powerlessness. Nevertheless, God's power was in reality still in control; power through and over weakness. This especially applies if we see the cross and resurrection as a unified event.

We ask, however, whether Jesus' role as victim-for-other victims describes the primary purpose of his death? This question would especially apply to Cone as for him divine revelation and atonement relate not just to the human question,

but in the first instance to the *black* human question. Cone (1982:115), as we noted in chapter two, does not deny other types of victimization, but for blacks themselves, Jesus was the 'victim for them'. However, how does the victimized Jesus relate to black victims who victimize other blacks, or black victims who reject even a 'black' Christ?

These questions are applicable to any situation of oppression. Our concern here is that the concept of 'victim' can become abused or meaningless. Even in Moltmann's (1969:17) scheme of Christ as the Abandoned and Forsaken One, 'for us', the questions pertain. If the Trinity has absorbed human suffering into its own history, what does this do for unwilling victims? That Jesus Christ was a victim, and amongst other things died for victims, is not being questioned. In fact our understanding of the Christ-event's relationship to human suffering revolves around that very theme. We feel, however, that if one centralizes the idea of atonement in this, it may not do justice to other aspects that relate to the atonement, such as the solidarity of human sin.

Our theologians might argue that Jesus died to bring liberation from sin, as alienation from God, and from the consequences of sin, seen especially in oppression. In our view, however, this approach treats the notion of guilt too lightly. To say that Jesus came to liberate both perpetrator and victim is all very well. But what about the guilt of mankind, what about the fact that God's holiness and righteousness have been violated? These are divine standards that have been broken, rebelliously, thus God is obliged to judge. Let us recall that

Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann hold to the universality of sin. Now if unrepentant perpetrators and even victims must account for their sinfulness, then we submit that a legal or penal element in the atonement is implied. Jesus' death, then, involves more than 'a victim dying for victims'. As important as liberation is, judgement of individuals, for individual sins, cannot be down-played.

As far as human suffering is concerned, justice may be defined in terms of liberation from oppression, and both the victim and perpetrator can benefit. However, as Cone rightly says, it will be the victims who will have the deeper and more appreciative understanding of freedom. Where does the perpetrator of injustice or sin-caused suffering fit in? Gutierrez (1990b:138), to be sure, calls for perpetrators to repent and enter into solidarity with the oppressed. So does Cone, (1975:151) although he barely holds out any hope for whites. Moltmann (1974a:195-196) is forceful in calling for acknowledgement of sin by both perpetrator and victim. We would support our theologians, here, especially Moltmann.

The question may be asked: 'if Jesus was a voluntary victim, why would perpetrators be accountable, let alone the victims?' We would reply firstly by pointing out that if the atonement was liberative, rather than penal, then the question would pose a problem, as accountability presupposes a forensic structure somewhere along the line. Secondly, we would emphasize the notion of identity, where Jesus identifies with the victim. This very identity, through which God participates in human suffering, allows God to demand accountability of either perpetrator or

victim. It further vindicates his judgement especially on sin-caused oppression. So then, Jesus, even as a voluntary victim, and victims themselves, have a key role to play in bringing freedom and judgement.

Let us move briefly to the rejection and death of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's life of liberative suffering led him to the cross. Cone (1975:135,174-175) and Moltmann (1991:47-48) agree that Jesus suffered for the oppressed as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. This suffering culminated in the crucifixion. On the cross, then, God the Son as Jesus Christ experienced both physical pain and divine rejection. Moltmann (1983:117-118) stresses the rejection more forcefully than Cone. What was being rejected? It was the phenomenon of oppression, the concrete consequences of sin, as Gutierrez (1974:300) puts it. This was being personified in Jesus, the substitute for the victims of society. Jesus was identifying and entering into solidarity with their suffering (Gutierrez 1983:90; Cone 1986a:115; Moltmann 1974b:19). Not only did Jesus experience the 'death' of oppression in his life and crucifixion; he also endured the death of divine judgement - for the 'poor'.

We will recall from chapter three how Moltmann (1974a:214,228, 1975:78) stresses the passibility of the Trinitarian God, as historically seen in Jesus Christ, and rejects traditional theism because it dismisses the idea that God can suffer. While both Gutierrez (1974:300) and Cone (1973:135) would agree with the idea of divine suffering, it is Moltmann who more strongly centres his theology on the issue. The cross becomes the supreme example of God's suffering with and for the

oppressed of the world. Moltmann (1974a:243) stresses that Jesus was 'given over' (*paradidonai*) for man. Jesus became the Abandoned One. Also, Moltmann (1974a:192,207) struggles more than Gutierrez and Cone with the problem of death within the Godhead, arguing for the identifying and liberative significance of the mystery. Historical meaning must relate to the resurrection of the condemned and *Crucified One* (Moltmann 1974a:175-204).

Moltmann (1991:86) links this with the *perichoresis* view of the Trinity, in which the Father, Son, and Spirit are intimately associated with each other and share an ongoing intra-trinitarian history. This history of God takes into itself the history of the world, while the nucleus of this process 'is the event of the cross' (Moltmann 1974a:218). The Trinity thus becomes an 'event' in which God absorbs human pain and is open for people (Moltmann 1974a:249). Again, while Gutierrez and Cone support the notion of divine intervention within history and of God identifying with human pain, it is Moltmann (1969:211) who gives it special emphasis when he says that: 'In our history, God is history'. The cross is the mechanism in which human history is absorbed into God's own history so that God actually suffers human suffering then and now. For Moltmann (1974a:183, 1974b:18) it is the *cross*, the place of suffering, where God's liberating identity with man along with the benefits of the resurrection actually become related to human suffering. Jesus was 'for us' at Calvary. Moltmann thus emphasizes the intra-trinitarian suffering at the cross. Jesus' abandonment and forsakenness,

during the event of the cross, which was for man, affected both him and the Father (Moltmann 1974a:243).

We concur with our authors in their understanding of the identifying suffering and dying of Jesus who in this way was working for the freedom of the oppressed. To our mind, to have a God who cannot identify and suffer with human pain, is not to have a God at all. We appreciate Moltmann's emphasis on the dynamic encounter of trinitarian history (through Jesus Christ) with human suffering. Our only caution is that we do not reduce the *primary purpose* of the cross-event to God's way of dealing with the problem of suffering. We will discuss the atonement, in relation to suffering, after we have looked at the resurrection.

## **2.3 The Resurrection and Freedom**

### **2.3.1 The Victory of Christ**

Gutierrez (1984:68), Cone (1986b:6) and Moltmann (1983:119) agree in that the resurrection evidences a personal victory for Jesus Christ, a victory over the consequences of sin-caused oppression which had beleaguered him. Most dramatically, it was a victory for Jesus over death. Jesus the victim became '*Christus Victor*', victorious over the circumstances that had led to his death. For Gutierrez (1983:96) there was a transformation within Jesus Christ in that he moved from death to life, that is, from being oppressed to being free.

Of course, for Moltmann (1983:119), the resurrected Christ is now no longer the Abandoned One. Moltmann (1967:152) especially, and Gutierrez (1990b:97) see the historic resurrected Christ as the divine consummation of the Abrahamic promise,

although historically the promise is still being realized even today. Moltmann (1974a:43) and Gutierrez (1983:15) also view the resurrected Christ as the fulfilment of the New Covenant in that the Abrahamic promise of liberation becomes relevant to all people. Christ, then, is victorious in having conquered sin and death, and in having effectuated the Abrahamic and New Covenants. Let us now see how the victorious resurrected Christ relates to the future.

### **2.3.2 The Future and Newness**

Moltmann stresses the idea of the Crucified One. The resurrection, then, is not simply the resurrection. It is the rising of God who had suffered and died for us (Moltmann 1974a:204). The resurrection gives liberative and eschatological meaning to the cross (Moltmann 1974a:182). It is the raising of the outcast Jesus (the *novum*) which brings newness and justice (Moltmann 1975:57). For Moltmann (1983:125), however, there is an eschatological dimension, in that the resurrection is the means through which the Future of the Coming God affects history. Christ draws the Future itself into the present (Moltmann 1975:55-56). Moltmann (1969:33, 1974a:192-193) stresses the idea of *Newness* including New Creation, New Man, and transformation, all due to the resurrection. This is the eschatological New Age. Prior anticipations of it and especially the resurrection are responsible for this. Moltmann (1975:49) links the future of God to the openness of God's creative possibilities.

Gutierrez (1974:218) and Cone (1975:140, 1986a:140), while being sensitive to the liberative importance of the eschatological future, view this differently because of their

praxis-orientated points of departure. For them, the resurrection must be seen to be relevant to present historical transformation (which for Cone [1975:192] motivates black power, and for Gutierrez [1984:120] motivates poor-power). The future is not a factor which can be substantially applied to the present as if freedom is coming only from the future. Rather, the resurrected Christ transacts freedom from the present as well as the future.

The above views of the authors and, in fact their very theologies of liberation and hope, are predicated on the idea of a liberative flow of history. At this point, then, we shall consider this notion of 'historical flow', especially as it is presented by Moltmann. Obviously the idea of the Future will be part of the discussion.

We and our three theologians have constantly used the term *history*. Freedom is spoken of in terms of history. We are familiar with concepts such as *historie* (recordable sequential events), *geschichte* (existential history), and *heilsgeschichte* (sacred history within history). Whatever concept we work with, however, is it not true that we treat history substantially, as if it is its own entity? We talk easily about God in history, or absorbing human history (Moltmann) or adopting a particular (black) history (Cone), or simply influencing history. We say that the cross and resurrection affected or transformed history. Yet to talk in this way presupposes that there is something tangible to be transformed or adapted in the first instance.

The incarnation of the Son of God is fundamental to our theological understanding. It cannot be said, though, that the

Son incarnated into a tangible 'something' alongside the human story. Talking instead about personal or group story, is, we think, less problematic. The concept of human solidarity seems viable to us, just as is the call to enter into solidarity with the oppressed. We would advocate, then, that the Son entered *humanity* or *humanness* (rather than 'history' as such) in order to experience and identify with human suffering first hand. In the incarnation, then, the human story became God's story, and 'history', especially the story of suffering could then be described as His-story. This culminated in the cross and resurrection.

None of this is to deny that we have our *historie* or *geschichte*. It is just to question how we conceive of them. This especially affects how we look at Moltmann's view of Future. For Moltmann (1975:50-51), as we saw, God is coming to us from his future, and the eschatological future of humanity, and is reaching into and influencing the present historical possibilities of transformation. Furthermore, this is possible because of the historical cross and resurrection which set up this eschatological scenario (Moltmann 1969:33,212).

We have two questions here. The first has to do with the concept of the future. If we look at it temporally, then we are thinking in terms of 'when'. However, if we look at it descriptively, we are thinking in terms of 'state-of-affairs'. In reality, we usually look at the future in both modes simultaneously. We believe this to be true even of Moltmann. Moltmann (1967:154), however, asks us to accept that the 'future', as we presently anticipate it, influences our present

and the past. That is, the reality of the future dialectically influences the many past and present realities, including the struggle against evil. Also, 'history' becomes the relationship between both the process and the goal of the future (1969:28-30).

Now for this to work conceptually and practically, the future as state-of-affairs must already exist. Yet if we accept that history does not exist as an entity in its own right, how can we say the future, and even the future of God, 'reaches' into the present (Moltmann 1967:118-119, 1975:50-51; Gutierrez 1974:218; Cone 1975:140) as if they are coming back down the messianic historical 'flow'? Also, thinking linearly, we find it difficult to conceive of how the future as state-of-affairs can already exist. Our discussion does not mean that we are ignoring the dialectical tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet'. In our view, however, this tension should apply to the already established promise-fulfilment scheme (culminating in the New Age) that God has ordained for the human story.

Would Moltmann not be guilty of a sort of eschatological determinism, despite his talk of 'open possibilities' and present 'anticipations' of the future? To be sure, Moltmann (1975:49) talks of the future reality being 'word-present' in the promise of it, that is, the future is not meant to replace the present. Nevertheless, Moltmann still argues for the future exerting an historically transforming influence on the present and the past.

Again, since our 'history' is taken up into God's, the coming future is therefore the coming God (1975:50). Now we wonder how any set of events, in and of themselves, can influence another set of events - especially from the future (not yet) to

the present? Is it not true that it is our personal appropriation of, or reaction to, an event or person that actually influences us? Our present hope of, and commitment to, a specific future can, of course, affect us now. This comes closer to the meaning of *geschichte*. Moltmann, of course, speaks of the future of God himself with the qualification that we do not think of this temporally, or, as if God is 'becoming', as in process theology. According to Moltmann, God has his future because, trinitarianly (that is through divine participation in human affairs and through the cross), he combines our story, especially the story of pain, with his.

Our second question (for Moltmann) then, is how is it conceptually possible for God to be experiencing history with us while at the same time be coming to us from his own future? To be sure, God's reality is not co-extensive with ours, and his being certainly precedes ours. Nevertheless, our question still holds, we feel, if it is maintained that the human story of pain is eschatologically included in the divine story. We are simply not in our own future yet. Of course, Moltmann could reply by saying that God is coming to us from both his and our futures. This still does not overcome what we feel is a conceptual contradiction - how can God experience open possibilities with us now while at the same time be coming to us from the future?

Similarly, how can Moltmann call for repentance and transformation now, and for it to be especially exhibited in the church (Moltmann 1973:86-87), if the eschatological future is coming to us anyway? Moltmann, it seems to us, speaks as if the 'not yet' is already a reality. The question is exacerbated by

Moltmann's description of the future as something new, present 'historical' anticipations of it notwithstanding. We think this weakens the idea of an eschatological 'flow' of history, because any such flow should surely have an implicit beginning and end. In the light of the above discussion we think it is less problematic to talk of God as Person, coming to us, rather than to talk of an abstract historical future influencing the present. God, as an ontological Being, can obviously influence any set of events and, at the same time, not be subject to temporal limitations.

Cone also speaks of the future reaching into the present, but his point of departure is not Moltmann's. To be sure, Cone believes in a future eschatological 'whiteless' (non-racial) society, but this does not stop the call to activity now. For him, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hope of a certain future victory still means that present transformation is predicated on the present need (Cone 1986a:140, 1986b:127). Gutierrez (1974:161, 1990b:126), of course, wants all history to be liberated or free, which freedom will arise out of the Christ-impacted liberation movement in history. Gutierrez follows Moltmann in attributing the working out of the Abrahamic promise to the so-called historical flow. However, if history is not its own entity, does not the actualization of any particular liberation come back to how *God* is in relation to any human event at any time? This is not to deny a 'history' of human ideas or actions in and of themselves, nor is it to deny *God* a programme or eschatological design for humanity. As we said earlier, we affirm the idea of the promise-fulfilment scheme of God's plans.

Now no part of our discussion necessarily denies any linkage between creation, the Abrahamic Promise, the exodus, and the cross. We are proposing that whatever linkages do exist are God-mediated rather than being the result of a mysterious 'flow of history'. The cross and resurrection affects the intra-trinitarian history, to be sure. On the basis of this the Trinity relates to humanity in its suffering. Thus while we would query Moltmann's concepts of 'future', we would affirm, in a general way, his idea of the Trinity deeply absorbing human pain, guilt and judgement.

This is not to say that we support the virtual panentheism of the later Moltmann, a position he admits to. We agree with his rejection of the process-theology view of God (that is, God is 'becoming') although we have questioned his exposition of the coming future of God, especially as it relates to 'history'. In chapter three, and in the present discussion, we have had to inquire (albeit briefly) into Moltmann's understanding of God, as Moltmann especially relates the nature of God as Future and as trinitarian to the resolution of the problem of human evil. Gutierrez and Cone also do this, but from varying points of departure, and they do not take it as far as Moltmann.

#### **2.4 The Atonement and Freedom**

We are now going to look at what our theologians have said about the atonement, primarily in its relation to freedom. Certain aspects of the atonement, such as the Abrahamic promise-fulfilment idea, the New Covenant and the opening up of the future have already been brought up. Now, however, we will

observe in more detail the implications of the atonement in its relationship to the cross and resurrection.

We can begin by noting the love of God that was displayed in the atonement. The cross shows justice-love (Cone 1986a:72-73) and even the violation of this love (Moltmann 1991:50). We will recall that Moltmann sees God as vulnerable, able to suffer, because of his love for us and especially those who are victims. The suffering love of God makes possible our redemption.

This redemption is total in that it embraces all dimensions of human existence: that is, both personal and systemic, oppressor and oppressed (Gutierrez 1974:151-152, 166-168; Moltmann 1991:49). For Gutierrez (1974:300), Cone (1975:232) and Moltmann (1974b:116) the cross and resurrection brought the kind of redemption that can be described as freedom from sin, guilt, and oppression. Freedom is seen to be the primary purpose of the atonement. Gutierrez (1974:300), Cone (1975:175) and especially Moltmann (1974a:218) understand Jesus' suffering on the cross to mean that God was taking into himself (absorbing) the pain of humankind. When the Son experienced the abandonment and judgement of the Father, and then resurrected, he brought justice, or freedom (Gutierrez 1983:14; Cone 1975:236; Moltmann 1975:57). Christ's personal victory thus ushers in victory, freedom and life for those who suffer. This is made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit, even among non-Christians (Gutierrez 1974:151, 158, 193-194, 1984:66-68; Moltmann 1991:24-25, 53, 75).

It follows, then, that this results in reconciliation, or the possibility thereof, with God and neighbour (Gutierrez

1990b:138; Moltmann 1974b:116). It is important to observe the approach to justification and reconciliation in Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann. The terms 'justice' and 'reconciliation' are used slightly differently at times. Moltmann (1991:49,52) has more to say on justification of perpetrators and clearly opposes any idea of objective atonement or reconciliation (as over against Cone who clearly supports both objective and subjective reconciliation [Cone 1975:141-142,232-233,238]). Moltmann (1991:51-52) advocates that legal punishment is not God's intention in the atonement; rather one should be looking for subjective justification. For Moltmann (1991:53) God's 'justice justifies the unjust', that is, God is effecting *freedom* from sinfulness and failure rather than cold punishment. God's justice, of course, can be applied to both perpetrators and victims. Ultimately, Moltmann (1991:49,51), Gutierrez (1983:14) and Cone (1975:236) concur in that justification, far from being forensic or penal (salvation from hell-punishment) is liberation or freedom from oppression. This freedom includes the possibility of communion with God.

Now our basic question in this area is: What degree of freedom does one need to be convinced that one is justified? Is a less-oppressed victim more justified than a victim who is being tortured in an oppressor's prison cell? Would it not in fact be *unjust* for a repentant perpetrator to be declared justified as over against a victim (even a Christian victim) who continues to experience oppression? We realize that we may be accused of raising irrelevant, or at best, artificial questions here, as it appears that we are trying to quantify justification and freedom.

That is not our intention. Our concern is with the appropriation of freedom from suffering. If the cross and resurrection set up a 'flow' of freedom, then surely the acquiring of it publicly verifies the existence of it.

The victim becomes the key here. To be sure, our authors are not advocating that justification is measured by an amount of freedom. However, the tortured prisoner's first existential question will be, 'what has the atonement done for my suffering now'? Ongoing oppression of non-Christian victims, who know nothing of any atonement for justification or freedom, makes our concern (the appropriation of freedom) all the more pertinent. It must be understood that we are talking with reference to persistent sin-caused evil or oppression, rather than the somewhat different situation of 'redemptive' suffering.

Christians, whether victims or not are called upon to exercise faith. If 'faith' means commitment to the *struggle* for freedom (as Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann argue), then the actual experience of justice-freedom for the victim can only be psychological or proleptic. As we saw, Cone (1975:80) argues anyway for a freedom that transcends one's immediate circumstances, until actual historical freedom is attained. Why, however, should this be the case? If justification is freedom and if one is justified now, should he not also be free now from actual oppression, at least to a reasonably high degree? We are speaking primarily for the victim at this point, even though we understand that a commitment to social justice implies redemptive suffering. The victim in the prison cell, however, is the one who counts in this issue.

In the light of this discussion, we find it somewhat incongruous that Gutierrez and Cone can be frustrated with Moltmann who, *inter alia*, advocates the *coming* future kingdom of freedom in connection with the coming God! It is unclear as to when actual reconciliation begins; is it during the process of bringing in justice, or is it only after total justice is achieved? Of course, if one uses the terms justice and reconciliation synonymously, the question falls away.

What about the other areas of sin that exist in history? If the cross and resurrection have relation primarily to liberation, what about the other alienations inherent within the human condition? Our question indicates that we do not regard all sin (spiritual or social) as oppression. We can think, for example, of idolatry or immorality. Would not the atonement bear relation to these in a different way? Our questions, of course, are *not* meant to imply that Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann ignore other sins. Rather, we are merely investigating what our authors deem to be the main import of the atonement - freedom from oppression. If one understands the atonement in a purely forensic sense (Anselm, traditional evangelicalism) then sin, as sin, becomes the main problem. However, if one looks at atonement in a primarily deliverance sense (as do Gutierrez [1974:300, 1983:63], Cone [1975:135,138,157] and Moltmann [1991:51-52]) then oppression as a concrete consequence of sin is the issue. The first looks more at legal judgement with ultimate freedom only really in the 'next life'; the second looks more at freedom from suffering now and in the future, as a matter

of historical course. We would suggest that both approaches form the boundaries of what is possible.

Just what was Jesus Christ being crucified (and rejected by the Father) for? Was it for the concrete sin of oppression (or any other concrete sin, for that matter), or was it for humanity *qua* humanity? If it was the former, is this not reducing the meaning of the death of Jesus too much? We wonder if the truth is not that it is both, that is, man-as-guilty (therefore alienated) as well as particular consequences of sin. We fear that even describing the primary purpose of the atonement as multidimensional or integral liberation from oppression, (Moltmann 1991:49; Gutierrez 1983:144-145), will run the risk of not doing justice (pun not intended!) to the comprehensive nature of sin. If sin is described in terms of 'state-of-being' as well as 'act', which our authors maintain, then the atonement must pertain equally to both dimensions. Both levels of being and act would be integral and universal. It is important to note that we are not saying that our authors ignore the vertical (personal) dimension regarding the atonement. Our concern is on where the emphasis is laid.

Suffering is the focus of this thesis, however. The forensic approach, we feel, does not properly deal with social injustice, whereas the deliverance approach does not treat properly the full extent of human sin and guilt. The eschatological judgement of man is important here. We remember that for Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann the cross was the scene for ultimate eschatological judgement. For Gutierrez (1974:196-203) the parable of the sheep and goats speaks to his cause. Ultimate

personal judgement is based on one's 'justice' performance. Here, though, we raise what for us is a perplexing question. Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann are looking for an eschatological utopia, and Moltmann is expecting the realization of the Future coming kingdom. Now Gutierrez, for example, still looks for future judgement. However, if God is working, albeit dialectically, with the poor, will he not succeed in his own goals?

This question would apply especially if, as for Moltmann, the coming God is bringing the coming kingdom with him. In our view there is a possible incongruity in the idea that God helps to bring in a utopia - but then finds himself having to judge eschatologically. Moltmann (1975:84, 1991:55) does not really deal with future judgement in his concept of the End, or, *Shalom*. Yet the ultimate fate of unrepentant perpetrators, for example, must be accounted for. At any rate, if all history is to be liberated, through an historical movement towards that very end, then why do Jesus Christ and the Apocalyptist emphasize a radical and universal future judgement (Matt 24-25; Rev 20-22)? If Moltmann and Gutierrez are correct in their liberative approach to history, should there not be an eventual harmonization of God, man and history (a la Hegel) without the need for 'final' judgement?

If judgement at the cross is understood in terms of our ultimate liberation, rather than legal punishment, how does the judgement implied in the sheep and goats parable (Matt 25:31-46) and in the Apocalypse (Rev 20:11-15) fit in? Could it not be that judgement is at once legal and liberating? Is it not

possible in the light of the questions we are asking, that the cross and resurrection point to something other than a progressive liberation? This is not to down-play the call to do justice - in fact it is the opposite. We would submit (with more emphasis than our authors) that as the Son took on humanness, so he died and rose for *humanity*, with all its ramifications, rather than *exclusively* for concrete freedom-on-the-way. Of course freedom from suffering still remains a crucial issue.

### 3. THE APPLICATION OF FREEDOM

#### 3.1 The Liberating Presence of Christ

For our authors, the accessibility of freedom through Christ is important. They present this issue by talking about the 'liberating presence of Christ' (Christo-presence), as well as the personal element involved in appropriating the freedom-benefit of the atonement. In this short section we will observe the former.

According to our authors, the resurrection put the Son of God in the position to be historically present with the oppressed. For Gutierrez (1974:176), Cone (1986a:119-120) and Moltmann (1974b:115, 1983:22), the resurrected Christ is now the Freer, Liberator, or New Man, able to offer victory, hope and freedom to all people, but with a priority for the oppressed. This is the goal of the divine identification with them. We mentioned above the idea of the Spirit ushering in Christ's victory amongst people. Along with this action of the Spirit, then, is the liberating presence of Christ with the poor or suffering (Gutierrez 1974:151-153; Cone 1986a:118,123; Moltmann

1974a:246). This Christo-presence indicates the ongoingness of the resurrected Christ's option for, and identification with, the oppressed.

It needs to be pointed out that, for Gutierrez (1984:67) and Cone (1986a:64), all three members of the Trinity are involved in the process of liberation. Again, for Moltmann (1974a:249, 1975:78), the reality of man's pain and the gift of freedom from it, are linked with the trinitarian identification with human history. Gutierrez (1974:193) tells us that the resurrected Christ, as the Abrahamic heir and as the New Covenant, universalized Yahweh's liberating presence from Israel to all people. Peculiar to Gutierrez (1974:262-264, 1983:107) is the idea that the eucharist celebrates the liberating work of Jesus Christ and transmits the victorious life of the resurrected Christ to the participants in the ceremony, especially the oppressed. In our view, though, Christian sufferers who take communion (a la Gutierrez), with its link to the presence of Christ, would have an advantage over 'anonymous' Christian sufferers who know nothing of the rite.

We concur with the notion that there is a presence of the resurrected Christ with the poor and oppressed. Indeed, this Christ is against oppression and indifference to human suffering. The sheep and goats parable clearly alludes to this, and Gutierrez (1974:196-203) so agrees. The parable makes the important point of the resurrected Christ's empathy (identity) with human suffering, especially that of the oppressed. We agree with Gutierrez (Ibid) that the 'little brethren' refer to any that are hurting.

Our question for our three theologians, however, is simply this: 'Is the presence of the resurrected Christ *actually* liberating'? We ask this in the light of the fact that we have already alluded to the problem of ongoing, actual suffering in our discussion on the exodus and the atonement. Christ, furthermore, is not just present with the oppressed (not that our authors are saying that), he is also present with all people, providentially and creatively. The resurrected Christ, through the convicting work of the Spirit, is present with and addressing the 'perpetrators of the world'. But is this address necessarily resulting in the liberation of the oppressed? We remain unconvinced that it is. Again, this is not to down-play the call to 'do justice'. We are brought now to the vertical (personal) dimension of liberation.

### 3.2 The Personal Element

Can freedom be forced on a victim whether s/he wants it or not? We are sure that our authors would agree that conscientization is often needed to alert victims to the fact that their suffering is unnecessary. Cone's (1974a:354, 1986a:105-106) idea that blacks sin when they neglect the message and responsibility of their own liberation, comes to mind. So does Moltmann's (1969:54-57, 1974b:37-42, 59-67, 86-104) discussion of human apathy and failure in relation to self-liberation.

Now if Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann look for an *integral* liberation, then this implies the personal element. Gutierrez (1990b:56), as we saw, calls for personal conversion, although not in the evangelical-pietist sense. It is conversion into solidarity with the oppressed (Gutierrez 1983:20). The oppressed

themselves are to (or at least should) seek a kind of mystical union with Christ in his cross and resurrection (Gutierrez 1983:148). Gutierrez (1990b:138) emphasizes that liberation implies a responsible personal communion on the part of the victim (and repentant perpetrator) with God as liberator and with others. Again, Moltmann (1969:33, 1974a:194-194) calls for personal relationship to Christ in a similar way to Gutierrez. Of course in Moltmann (1974a:246) human history has been integrated into divine history. Therefore an intimate link (even if it is not perceived by the individual) is established between God and man. Cone (1975:112), we recall, speaks of the transcendent ability of suffering blacks to enter into unity with the black Christ.

The above points mean that the atonement, in relation to suffering, demands personal accountability. Now Moltmann (1991:122) and Gutierrez (1974:151,158,193-194) boldly state that the oppressed are God's own, whether they know it or not. Therefore, we pose the following question, similar to that in our earlier discussion of the concept of the 'victim': How can justice, or liberation, or freedom, work for the poor who either knowingly reject, or are ignorant of, the Christian option? Can the medicine work if the patient does not take it? We understand well the difference between faith and ethics, or justification before God and justification before men. However, even if the issue of personal salvation is put entirely aside (which Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann would disallow anyway), how can liberation or freedom be effective in transforming social evil if personal acquiescence to God (be it from perpetrator or

victim) is necessarily part and parcel of it working in the first place?

We do not deny that God can use non-believers in his purposes; for example God used Cyrus in freeing the Jews from Babylonian captivity. However, we wonder how Moltmann (1991:122) can talk of the poor being anonymous *Christians* if freedom entails acknowledgement of Christ? If God has indeed inaugurated an historical programme of liberation ('project of freedom' as Cone [1975:138,157] calls it) how is it going to happen? If it is replied that the people of the liberated future will comprise only those who have personally acquiesced anyway, the question still remains. The 'anonymous Christian' element would still present a problem to that reply.

Apart from this, the reply would also imply a selective process of liberation, that is, only those who personally want freedom will actually get it. Yet Gutierrez (1979:151-152, 1983:61) talks of a unitary historical liberation and of all things being 'saved' by virtue of their being created. It seems as if our authors wish us to agree that the Christ-event can affect people corporately as well as individually. However, the problems mentioned above, along with the ongoing presence of evil and oppression, cause us to find Gutierrez's, Cone's and Moltmann's approaches to be problematic at this point. We would agree with them, of course, when they maintain that the personal element entails personal responsibility.

### 3.3 The Call to 'Fight'

According to our authors, the Christ-event not only offers freedom, it also demands participation in that very freedom. In

this section we shall look at various aspects of this 'participation' or 'fight' for freedom.

The cross and resurrection, as well as inaugurating eschatological freedom, also issue a challenge to the oppressed. For the oppressed, freedom is at the same time a call to suffer, or participate in the process of freedom. Thus the actual experience of suffering would not necessarily stop. They have been freed to fight for freedom (Gutierrez 1974:158, 1979:81,151; Moltmann 1969:131-132,145-147). A dialectic is established. God promises and works for liberation, but this is to be brought about through the agency of the oppressed, who become the interlocutors of their own liberation (Gutierrez 1984:30; Cone 1979b:540, 1986a:137; Moltmann 1983:18). Of course, those who participate in this historic liberation could be believers or non-believers. Faith, then, becomes the act of identifying with the liberative task, believing in the hope of victory or freedom from present suffering (Gutierrez 1976:66, 1979:16; Cone 1986a:48, 1986b:90,126; Moltmann 1973:61, 1974b:58,116-117). Faith brings about belief that the historical contradictions caused by injustice will be eradicated. We wonder what the object (as over against the goal) of faith for anonymous Christians could be.

Gutierrez, as we saw in chapter one, calls for the poor and their friends to participate in a liberating evangelism. This involves a process of conscientization, denunciation (challenging the status quo) and annunciation (the proclamation of Christ as Liberator). It is an active, praxis-call to transform society, in dialectical cooperation with Christ. For Gutierrez (1976:66,

1983:20), faith becomes a liberating praxis, a call to participate in the struggle for justice. The cross and resurrection have demanded this call. Gutierrez wants action now. We recall from chapter one how Gutierrez accuses Moltmann of replacing a Christianity of the Beyond with a Christianity of the Future (Gutierrez 1974:218). Like Cone, Gutierrez feels that Moltmann, theologizing as a European political theologian, is not successfully addressing the needs of those who suffer. Responsibility, for Gutierrez, is informed by the actual praxis of suffering, as well as ordinary reflection.

Moltmann, however, calls for a social revolution in which the circles of oppression are systematically worked against. This involves the abandoning of the futile promises of humanism, and godless inhuman utopias (Moltmann 1969:40-41, 1974b:115,42-44). One must work for a harmony between man, creation, and the Saviour who frees. The later Moltmann seems to call for a kind of cosmic unity. Present possibilities (of what the future might be) are open, so we must act in the power of the resurrection and in the hope of the future, a future which includes an eschatologically restored creation. Thus for Moltmann this is not simply a programme of liberation of the oppressed in its own right - it is the appropriation of future eschatological freedom into the present in order to overcome evil.

Though Moltmann may formulate his programme for change in different terms from those of Gutierrez and Cone, we think they unjustifiably charge Moltmann with irrelevance.<sup>5</sup> Moltmann still calls for active responsibility in liberation, just as much as do Gutierrez or Cone. In fact, Moltmann (1969:131-132,145-147)

argues for the need of Christians to be joyously involved in social revolution in the way in which God would want them to be. Religion becomes 'proligion', that is, the working together of faith, hope and liberation (Moltmann 1969:40-41).

Cone (1986a:140), for that matter, follows Moltmann in the idea of the future breaking into the present. Of course Cone does not emphasize it like Moltmann. Blacks themselves, therefore, are called to transcend their circumstances and unite with the Liberator, the Black Christ, in his cross and resurrection, and in his goal to see white oppression ended (Cone 1986a:56, 1986b:127).

It is not only individual victims who must participate in their own freedom, or individual oppressors who must repent (Gutierrez 1990b:138; Cone 1973:55, 1986a:124; Moltmann 1974a:194-195) and enter into solidarity with the oppressed. According to our theologians, the church also, after first liberating itself from its own internal oppression, is obliged to fulfil its liberating mission in society. This involves proclaiming the news of Christ's provision of freedom as well as actually participating in and publicly living out the process of eschatological liberation (Cone 1973:238-239, 262-264; Moltmann 1969:215, 1973:86-87, 1983:163-166).

As we have earlier mentioned, the call to fight for freedom is based on hope. For Moltmann (1983:125) and Gutierrez (1984:30) those who appropriate the gift of freedom from God pass from 'death' to 'life'. There is an eschatological perspective, based on the resurrection of Christ and the hope of a victorious future, and this makes the struggle worthwhile (Gutierrez

1984:22; Cone 1984b:140; Moltmann 1967:154, 1975:50), despite the problem of theodicy which still persists. Disappointments are to be expected (Gutierrez 1983:81), and man will understand more about his nature and need of God in the process of liberation (Moltmann 1969:204-207, 1991:29-30).

Moltmann (1969:166, 1975:50-51) calls for hope in the future of the Coming God, who has already shown his competence by creating *ex-nihilo*. People, and especially the oppressed, can rightfully hope and expect the fulfilment of the promise of eschatological righteousness (freedom), the resurrection of the dead, and the Lordship of the Crucified One (Moltmann 1967:229). In fact the final 'arrival' of God himself is expectantly awaited (Moltmann 1975:50). Of course, for our theologians, it is the oppressed who are the primary beneficiaries of the liberative hope. Cone (1986a:87) and Moltmann (1991:121), for example, maintain that the kingdom is in the first instance for the poor (oppressed) who are the agents (participants, catalysts) for it in the first place.

The victim is reminded that suffering is part and parcel of the process of liberation, in spite of the encouragement of hope. What else, when good opposes evil? There is, then, the reality of redemptive suffering. In agreement with Gutierrez and Moltmann, Cone (1975:239, 1986a:97,101) affirms that liberation will be conflictive, and calls for a commitment to redemptive suffering, even death. Furthermore, Cone (1975:170-171, 1986a:56) sees the theodicy question being reasonably addressed in the redemptive suffering of the oppressed, especially the black oppressed whose very suffering qualifies them to be God's

agents. Gutierrez (1983:20) claims that 'believing' is to proclaim the kingdom from the midst of struggle. Moltmann (1974a:64-65) outlines certain areas of unavoidable redemptive suffering (see p 116 of chapter 3). Ultimate freedom is certain, however.

We have already mentioned that our authors look for a freedom for all humanity. The call to fight for this freedom and, if necessary, endure redemptive suffering, is part and parcel of one's conversion. For Moltmann (1974a:194), Cone (1982:113) and Gutierrez (1974:153), God desires a universal freedom. Individuals will only be truly free when all history and creation is free. For Gutierrez (1974:238, 1983:81) and Moltmann (1969:40-41, 1974b:42-44), the divine-human dialectic, wherein God and man work together to bring in liberation, will lead to a future oppression-free utopia. For our authors this is a reasonable hope. Interestingly, both Gutierrez (1990b:41) and Moltmann (1969:213, 1975:84) refer to Christ the Liberator eventually handing over the free kingdom to the Father. This will be the ultimate act. The liberating presence of Christ would no longer be needed. Our response to this section on the 'call to fight' will be incorporated in the next section which will be a general response to Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann.

#### **4. GENERAL RESPONSE**

We wish to make some general comments, now, on the common ideas as put forward by our three theologians. Let us start by summarizing their basic message. The central event behind freedom and its related issues is the cross and resurrection.

We are told that the cross is the place where God in Christ consummately identifies with human victimization and where eschatological judgement is exacted on sin in its primary concretization as oppression or injustice. It is the cross where Jesus Christ becomes the substitutionary victim. Of course, on the cross, Jesus Christ is abandoned and rejected by the Father and experiences a justice-death for us. The cross was also the meeting place of creation, exodus and God, the place where God, in Jesus Christ, took in the pain of the world to create a liberation or freedom for it.

The resurrection was the positive resolution to all human suffering. This took place because the substitute sufferer, the Suffering Servant, rose from his double death - the death of his substitute suffering as an oppressed victim, and the death of the divine eschatological judgement on oppression. It was the resurrection which qualified the cross, while the cross made relevant the point of the resurrection - freedom from oppressive suffering. In the resurrection, there was victory over death, the inauguration of the New Age, or New Creation, and the witness of the eschatological future. The resurrection brought the eschatological transformation, at least proleptically, into 'history'. As a result, Christ as Liberator is now present with the poor or hurting. A call for responsible solidarity with the poor has been issued, and the poor themselves are to appropriate the victory or freedom that is now theirs. This does not obviate the harsh reality of redemptive suffering - liberative responsibility means conflict with evil. The resurrection, however, gives a freeing and motivating faith, buoyed by

eschatological hope. Ultimately, a free and open society will exist. The New Creation will be fully realized.

Our basic question to the above understanding of the cross and resurrection is simply this: 'What has the Christ-event actually done to relieve physical human suffering'? The basic format in Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann is first, to state the problem (oppression); then to offer the solution (liberating work of the Trinity); and then to call for a response. That is, the victim and repentant perpetrator are to appropriate the 'victory' personally and then suffer redemptively while participating in the struggle for freedom. Now, Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann do not really explain the basic mechanism of how the Trinity and the cross and resurrection, in and of themselves, do all the things they are purported to do. For example, how do the cross and resurrection of the past create freedom, especially physical freedom, for the victim today? The closest explanation we are given is that it is the Spirit of God who brings about the resurrection freedom (for example, Moltmann 1991:53). We are to accept this in faith and act accordingly. This is not to doubt the possibility of inner freedom or liberation. Our concern, however, is that the victim remains with the existential burden of reconciling the message of freedom with ongoing suffering, despite the hope of the eventual vindication of good over evil.

We ask our question in the light of a further consideration wherein the 'how' question ends up as the 'where' question. Put simply, it has been close on two thousand years since the Christ-event. Human scientific and intellectual progress has been incredible. However, the evolution (or devolution) of spiritual,

psychological and physical evil and oppression has been especially notable. There certainly have been dramatic historical changes, such as have taken place in the former Soviet Union and satellite states, East Germany, and South Africa. However, these freedoms have brought increased suffering also. The two world wars, the brutality of 'ethnic-cleansing' in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the racism and ethnocentrism in the new Germany, the Angolan civil war, the recent genocide in Rwanda, and such like illustrate only too well the point we are making - that sin and human evil (which necessitated the Christ-event) are as prevalent as ever.

This state of affairs, of course, has given rise to movements such as the social gospel of Rauschenbusch, the Death of God theology of Altizer and Hamilton, the liberation theologies of Gutierrez and Cone, the hope theology of Moltmann and Pannenburg, the Black theology movement in South Africa (Maimela, Mofokeng, Mosala et al) and general Third World theologies of freedom. Why all these theologies? Is it not because of the ongoing universal presence of human evil and suffering? Where is it verifiably clear that Christ, in dialectical cooperation with responsive victims (even with the Holy Spirit), is effectuating a *progressive* liberation? We are thinking of liberation that is supposedly the result of a liberative historical flow which includes the cross and resurrection. Is not Cone, in his emphasis on struggle with not much visible victory, (a belief for which he has been criticized), actually quite realistic?

Two things must be stressed at this point. Firstly, we state yet again that our comments are not meant to down-play the call for freedom and justice. *On the contrary, the cross and resurrection demand this call.* Secondly, Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann readily admit to the ongoing presence of human suffering. Gutierrez (1983:81,191) says we are to expect interim failures and he deplores the pessimists (like us!). He remains confident of ultimate freedom, given enough time. The dialectic of God and man in liberative adventure together, will end with eschatological utopia. Cone (1975:165,191-192, 1986b:90) admits to ongoing struggle and the persistence of the theodicy issue, even though he claims that Christ himself is the Final Answer to black suffering. Moltmann (1969:46-47,60, 1974a:64-65, 1975:73) precludes any theoretical answers to the problem of God and evil. He advocates, rather, that human suffering results in increased self-understanding (as mentioned earlier), and can lead to an encounter with the Trinity who also suffers pain through the Saviour. The hope and promise of the victorious future, and the future of God, enable victims to endure the mystery of suffering. Unfortunately, while we affirm the notion of redemptive suffering, we remain unconvinced that actual suffering (redemptive or oppressive) is decreasing.

Moreover, let us return to the example of the prisoner being tortured because, perhaps, he spoke out for political freedom. What is the point of telling him about an 'historical flow of liberation' and that Jesus Christ is freeing him just as he is about to be electrocuted? To be sure, the prisoner could understand that all is not lost, that suffering will eventually

cease, and that resurrection will conquer death. But telling him about redemptive suffering will not relieve the *actual* suffering. Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann could reply by insisting on faith and hope. True, a faith in Christ, in the way that Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann understand it, can enable one to endure suffering. It may also embolden one to actively fight for and even die for the cause of freedom. We still ask, however, why, after so long, suffering is so extant in the world today? Is God so slow?

We have indicated our concern with the authors' possible over-usage of the exodus event, as well as the stark fact of ongoing evil in the human experience. We have agreed that, *inter alia*, Jesus died and rose in response to the problem of oppression. However, have the cross and resurrection historically alleviated (even progressively) the pain and suffering which strongly characterize human existence? If the atonement had procured freedom, and if this is part and parcel of our 'historical liberative flow', why is freedom so slow in coming? Would the Trinity have made the freedom-benefit of the atonement so dependent on human participation?

Our questions, here, are referring to the issue of social suffering, not to the broader issue of human sinfulness in general. Is the eschaton meant to be a mopping up operation after the main liberating event of the atonement in conjunction with human participation (Cone), or is it to be a time of ultimate judgement? We mean, here, a judgement on perpetrators (be they oppressor or oppressed) who did not heed the call to do justice. We agree that Jesus Christ, in his capacity of

'substitute victim', underwent judgement and freedom. But, we ask again, has this really produced freedom (as understood by our authors) or even the strong possibility thereof for today's victims? Perhaps the persistence of evil and suffering since the Christ-event fits in with Jesus' predictions of great distress, persecution, betrayal, wars and rumours of wars (Matt 24:3-22). Some of the preceding may not be instances of direct oppression, but it certainly mitigates against the idea of freedom as a progressive movement, and it implies a 'kingdom' of evil. There can still be faith and hope, though, whether or not there is a divine programme of liberation in action.

We still affirm a call to urgent, responsible action towards freedom now. Along with this, however, is it not better to speak of a future *divine vindication of eschatological judgement on perpetrators* (based on the cross and resurrection), than to assure victims of an ongoing historical flow of liberation? We are most definitely not advocating the indifferent approach of a slave-master pietism here. What we are saying is that Jesus Christ identified with human suffering, underwent the Father's rejection on the cross, and died, for us. The resurrection indicated victory over evil and death. Thus Christ can now demand justice, and judge those who fail to perform, especially as he continues to suffer with us today. The preceding expresses the kernel of our thesis and we will be concerning ourselves with this in chapter five.

ENDNOTES

1. It would be just as well at this point to remind the reader that we are concerned primarily with social suffering in relation to the Christ-event. The larger issue of theological epistemology or hermeneutic, which is part and parcel of Latin American liberation methodology has not been discussed in detail in this thesis. Cone, and especially Gutierrez, would despair of Moltmann's approach in that he (Moltmann) does not emphasize praxis methodology. He would be seen as a European political-hope theologian who 'applies' his theology (and Scripture) to the issue at hand. We are concerning ourselves, however, with their situational and conceptual differences and similarities in relation to suffering.

2. We appreciate that in some quarters it is deemed naive, or non-intellectual to actually believe in the existence of Satan. To our mind, this very attitude falls into the hands of Satan. Obviously this is not the place for a defense for our belief in Satan. If praxis is the key to finding 'truth', then praxis tells us that the world of Satan and the occult is real. We have personally encountered the demonic and no amount of 'sophisticated' rationalizing can alter that. For us, the world of evil is guided by Satan who functions in the cosmic and human dimensions. Obviously, we are not advocating a medieval figure bearing horns and a pitchfork! Neither are we advocating an eternal dualism of good and evil beings or kingdoms, such as in Persian Zoroastrianism. What we do advocate is a literal fallen supernatural being who embodies evil.

3. Although not being fundamentalist, we are taking the view that scripture is authoritative here. Many would not see scripture as normative and would thus question our usage of it. We observe, however, that scripture is freely used by theologians when it comes to sourcing their belief in the exodus, promise, prophetic condemnation, and the Christ-event. While we affirm the progressive momentum of theology, we also affirm the stability of the biblical contribution. Naturally this is not the place for an apologetic for biblical trustworthiness.

4. Cone's 'Barthianism' bothers Deotis Roberts (another North American Black theologian), especially in the areas of revelation and ethical strategy for liberation. Roberts (1974:20) prefers a broad universal and historic view of divine revelation, which is measured by the incarnation as the supreme revelation. The Christo-centric approach of Cone is for Roberts (ibid) 'a most inadequate position'. This is because it makes any dialogue with the pan-African context unrealistic. (See also Roberts 1986:41.) We wonder why, however, if the incarnation is important for Roberts, he would lessen the revelatory value and uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Is there not a logical incongruity here?

5. Cone feels that Moltmann's theology actually does not answer human need. He (Cone) follows Bonino and other Latin American liberation theologians by insisting that Moltmann errs in individualizing or privatizing human suffering, rather than strategizing for systemic change. Cone (1982:109) feels that Moltmann's 'idea of God's sufferings and Jesus' cross become mere intellectual, theological concepts completely unrelated to the actual material conditions of the poor'. Cone makes his assertion over against the fact that Roberts accuses Cone himself of being irrelevant. For Roberts (1974:123) Cone's Barthian idea of the 'Kerygmatic Christ' is 'accessible only by a leap of faith', that is, it does not directly address the immediate need of blacks. Roberts (ibid) says 'the real problem in Cone is the lack of direction from his Christology to his ethics'. According to Roberts (1974:181-183) Cone has no real programme of social change and offers little chance of much liberative success in this age.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE VINDICATION OF JESUS CHRIST

This chapter is devoted to a presentation of our own understanding of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the evil of social suffering. Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann are quite right in highlighting the problem and sinfulness of oppression and suffering. Yet there still remains the existence and burden of suffering. To be sure, our authors do not advocate any kind of instantaneous or consistently paced eradication of evil and suffering, even though their theological positions embrace the idea of an ongoing flow or programme of historical liberation. If liberation is happening, though, why do we hear the call that we should be prepared for a drawn out struggle, or why does the theodicy issue remain so strident?

Various options concerning the ongoing existence of oppressive suffering present themselves.<sup>1</sup> The option we will be advocating in this chapter is that Jesus fully *identified* with human suffering, as a victim, and thus has the right to call us to do justice. If we fail, Christ is then vindicated in his eschatological judgement upon us. The cross and resurrection vindicate Jesus Christ in his words and deeds because of his existential identity with humanity. Our option does not include or necessitate the notion that God has set up an ongoing project of liberation. Rather, in accordance with our thesis, we will

be looking simply at how Jesus, through the cross and resurrection, identified with the existence of, judgement of, and victory over oppressive suffering. We will further observe how the cross and resurrection form the historical basis for the call to 'do justice', irrespective of any so-called 'flow of liberation'.

## **1. IDENTITY WITH THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING**

### **1.1 The Significance of Evil and Suffering**

We are not intending to enter into a lengthy discussion of theodicy at this point. Our immediate concern is with the perception of evil and suffering as it is experienced by victims of oppression.<sup>2</sup>

In our opinion 'evil' can be explained as that which is diametrically opposed to 'good'. It is not simply the absence of good; it is that which works against God and the well-being of mankind and creation. We do not want evil to 'happen' to us, although we as humans might willingly bring about evil upon others. We would agree with Peterson (1982:11) who says that one 'of the deepest human impulses is the resistance to evil'. Accordingly we are always trying to overcome that which hurts us. Victims of evil want freedom from the pain and existential limitations brought upon them. To be sure, victims of evil may end up in despair because of the power of evil against them, and become apathetic (Gutierrez, Moltmann). Then, of course, conscientization about suffering and freedom is in order. It still remains, however, that those who suffer would rather not.

We can classify evil (and thus the resultant suffering) into natural, moral and occultic (Satanic) dimensions. Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann would affirm the existence of moral evil as it is manifested in the various types of oppression. Here, of course, we are implying that moral evil can be properly represented by the word sin. We have even seen how Moltmann (1974a:331, 1974b:26, 1979:112) speaks against the sinfulness (vicious circle) of how we mismanage the world which God has given to humankind. This mismanagement could be described in terms of natural (physical) and moral evil. However we classify the various dimensions of evil, we ultimately commit moral evil against ourselves and God. It is God's created world, not ours; but it is we who have sinfully alienated ourselves from God (Rom 1-3).

We would submit, therefore, that suffering which is caused by evil cannot be called normal. If it was part and parcel of the ongoing evolution of the human race, God would not have indicated his opposition to sin or evil. There would be no cause to believe that the Christ-event has anything to do with evil and oppression. In fact there would have been no need for the cross and resurrection. We are going to explore, however, the idea that the cross and resurrection have very much to do with the overcoming of evil and suffering. Both oppressive and redemptive suffering indicate that the relationship between God and man is not as it should be. Alienation is the enemy of unity, and unity in both horizontal and vertical dimensions is surely what God wants for us. By 'unity' we mean a situation of righteousness (justice), harmony, and creative freedom. When these things are

not in existence, we have a situation of evil (especially moral evil), often resulting in oppressive suffering.

The victim who hears about the freedom of Christ will want to know that trusting in him is actually the answer to his suffering. Similarly, the perpetrator needs to know about incurred judgement because of his or her acts of oppression. When we talk about 'suffering' it should be remembered that we are referring in the first instance to oppressive or sin-caused suffering. We can, of course, suffer for the sake of freedom (redemptive suffering), or, bring suffering upon ourselves because of our own sin. It is unjust suffering, however, that attracts our present attention. We need to see now how the problem of evil and suffering relate to the Trinity and especially to Jesus.

## 1.2 The Incarnation

By the term 'incarnation', we refer to the event of the Son of God assuming the form of human being and experiences (Ph 2:5-11; Heb 2:14),<sup>3</sup> including human death. Indeed, it is his death which underlines the fact that the Son of God did not only assume humanness, but also became a man. Baillie (1961:87) reminds us that we should not make the mistake of seeing Jesus' humanity on a purely abstract level. For Jesus was fully God and fully man, who found expression in a particular man, Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>4</sup> The incarnation embraces the event of the birth of Jesus and culminates in his cross and resurrection. We wish to further unpack the implications of Jesus' incarnation by noting the following points.

Firstly, the incarnation speaks to us of the *divine option for mankind*. Let us call this the first option. We have already seen in preceding chapters how Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann speak of the divine option for the 'poor'. In our view, however, there is even a prior option - the fact that God is doing something for man in the first place. If mankind is alienated, sinful, unjust, ungodly, 'given over', why would God want to respond to the human cry for freedom and life? Many answers could be advanced, but we would rather agree with Gutierrez, Cone and especially Moltmann when they say that it is fundamentally the love of God that brings about his overtures to humanity. God so loved the world (Jn 3:16) that he gave his Son in response to the human predicament. It was a love which was vulnerable to rejection and abuse by mankind (Moltmann 1991:50).

Love, then, was the driving force behind God's prior option for man, and this love caused God to act graciously to us. The very fact that humanity continues to exist is because of God's grace. While fallen mankind can still freely do good (justice) or evil (injustice), the very existence of good and hope derive from the grace of God. We are reminded of Baillie's (1961:114-117) notion of the 'paradox of grace'. For Baillie (1961:116), the 'grace of God is prevenient', that is, the 'good was His before it was ours'. Jesus, as God incarnate, was showing that true humanity is reflected only when we are in proper union with God. Our contention, then, is that God's love and grace portray his prior option for humanity *qua* humanity.

A second crucial implication of the incarnation is the identity of God with human suffering. If God incarnates into

humanity, he therefore incarnates into the human predicament - except that he does not acquire a sinful nature. The consequences of sin (Gutierrez), however, surely affect him. It follows that the life and death of Jesus also demonstrate a more specific option than that discussed above. The *second* option, then, the one that Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann refer to is the divine option for the poor. We agree with Sider (1984:76) when he points out that God's option for the poor does not indicate divine bias as such. Rather, God 'is on the side of the poor just because he is not biased, for he is a God of impartial justice'. We prefer to call it an 'option for justice', because God is pro-justice. Whatever we call it, though, it still remains that the poor and weak need justice which can be translated into freedom. We wholeheartedly agree with Cone (1986a:66-74) that the revealed love of God was characterized by righteousness which motivated God to act against oppression.

In the incarnation, then, Jesus met with evil. Not that God had never encountered evil before. The historical Jesus, however, confronted evil and suffering as *experienced by man*. How far does this identity go? We will recall from the preceding chapters how Moltmann speaks of God's absorbing human history into his own. It is a trinitarian action in which Father, Son and Spirit participate, making it possible for God to actually experience human history, a history which includes the story of human pain and suffering. However, if oppressive suffering is sinful and an expression of moral evil, and if God takes upon himself suffering, does this mean that he also takes upon himself evil *qua* evil? Our question here relates more to God's identity

with man, rather than to God's bearing the consequences of sin on the cross. When Moltmann speaks of the relationship between God and man he speaks of 'identity' and 'absorbing'. So would we. The question, though, is this: 'is *identity* synonymous with *absorbing*'?

A husband may be able to understand the pain that his wife experiences when giving birth, but he could never identify with it existentially. He could never absorb his wife's pain into his own experience. With a 'like-pain' situation, say two people having a broken collar bone, the one may identify with the similar pain of the other. However, they could still never absorb each other's pain. On this mundane level, then, *identity* is not automatically synonymous with *absorbing*, because one individual remains separate from the other.

With the incarnation, however, we have a totally different scenario, because in the historic Jesus, God became both external and internal to humanity. One might argue that God was in *one* man, Jesus, not all men. However, this objection misses the point of representation in which Jesus, as victim and scape-goat, represented humanity, and not the least, those who suffer. When we say that God became internal to humanity, we do not therefore mean that all people have God 'in them', in a semi-pantheistic way, but wish to suggest that God now knows man experientially through Jesus Christ. Thus our story is taken into (absorbed) God's story, and yet without dissolving the ontological distinction between the Creator and the creature.

Our discussion on the incarnation shows us that God is certainly not indifferent to human suffering. If we, as humans,

inherently resist oppressive suffering, then God in Jesus was equally resisting, his voluntary victimization notwithstanding. We concur with Erickson (1991:608) who says that 'God does indeed choose to permit evil to occur and continue, but that he does so with full knowledge of its consequences, for he himself is victimized by the force of evil'.

It is all very well to postulate the existence of evil and suffering and that God, in Jesus, has and still does confront evil. The divine response goes further, however. The purpose of the divine encounter with evil was to bring freedom and hope. We now proceed to explore the role of Jesus in the cause of freedom from suffering.

### 1.3 The Mission of Jesus

The purpose or mission of the incarnate Jesus is summarised by Luke (Lk 4:18-19) who has Jesus saying:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

We have seen how Gutierrez (1974:166-168, 1983:14), for example, understands this messianic mission from a literal point of view, rather than from a spiritualizing approach. Of course, for Gutierrez 'literal' does not mean unspiritual; rather he advocates a holistic approach in which both vertical and horizontal dimensions are addressed. Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann are correct in adopting a multidimensional approach to the stated mission of Jesus, although we might differ on matters of detail. Hanks (1983:110-111) agrees with a holistic approach,

but also points out how the 'poor' are to be found in the four stated categories, that is the poor, the captives, the oppressed and the blind. We concur with Hanks (1983:112) when he states:

Some Christians wish to preach a gospel of socio-political liberation to the poor, whereas others want to offer forgiveness of sins to the rich. But Jesus does not offer us the luxury of two gospels, one for the rich, and one for the poor. He proclaims one liberating-forgiving gospel that is good news for the poor.

For those who support a holistic or even a fully literalist interpretation, there is a problem, a problem which does not affect spiritualistic interpreters. Jesus claimed that he was to bring freedom from social suffering, and he made his claim in terms of the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-54). In Old Testament terms, Yahweh was looking for a real freedom from the social bondages of the day. In New Testament terms the same applies. If we are correct in our holistic interpretation, then the goals of Luke 4:18-19 should have begun at calvary and be unfolding before our eyes. That is, it should be clear that Christ is now bringing in liberation. In chapter 4, however, we advocated that the sheer volume of suffering in the world makes it difficult for us to accept that this is actually happening. We have already seen how Gutierrez (1983:81,191) and Cone (1975:165,191-192, 1986ba:90) realize that historical evidence for liberation (especially in the sense of a liberative flow of history) is not abundant. Now those who are only looking for 'spiritual' freedom bypass the problem so to speak; they are not really expecting a progressive eradication of evil and suffering before the eschaton.

If we were to hold to an historical flow of liberation, the problem can be addressed by calling for patience and commitment

to the struggle for freedom, as do Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann. We have suggested in chapter four, however, that the cross and resurrection set up a platform for divine judgement on oppression rather than a programme of liberation as such. Of course, Jesus said a lot more about his mission than what we find in the Lukan passage. But our concern is with regard to what Christ has accomplished for the sake of social freedom. Perhaps Luke 4:18-19 will be better understood as we proceed with our discussion on the cross and resurrection. The theme of identity remains all important here.

## **2. IDENTITY WITH THE JUDGEMENT OF SUFFERING (THE CROSS)**

### **2.1 The Status of Jesus**

Jesus' existential identity with the *problem* of suffering became the basis for divine judgement on suffering. In fact, Jesus played out various roles (or states) in order to facilitate the judgement. Let us briefly observe these roles.

#### **2.1.1 Jesus as Suffering Servant**

The Suffering Servant is a theme which both Cone (1975:135,174-175) and Moltmann (1991:47-48) highlight. There is, of course, the ongoing debate regarding the identity of the Servant in the Servant Songs of Isaiah (including the Fourth Song) which is directly relevant to our thesis. We would follow the thinking of Hanks here. He (1983:86) disagrees with the progression concept (Delitsch and Noth) in which the Servant in Isaiah 42 is Israel, in Isaiah 49 is the faithful remnant, in Isaiah 50 is the prophet and finally in Isaiah 53 is a future person. Rather, Hanks (Ibid) follows Rowley who advocates a

'pendulum movement' in which the Servant of the Fourth Song swings from being a corporate personality (Israel) to an individual. The Servant, then, in its individual connotation, would refer to Jesus whose life and death are described in Isaiah 53.

How is the Servant treated? Isaiah 53 uses the language of suffering. The Servant identifies with the sicknesses and pains of the people (v 4). He suffers oppression both from the hands of the people (vv 5,7,8) and Yahweh (vv 4,10). Yahweh, here, allows his oppression and also judges him in our place. Jesus, in his life, was the victim of oppression, who was ultimately led away like a lamb to the slaughter and did not resist. Just as the Servant is despised and rejected (vv 2-3), so was Jesus. Jesus, then, endured the evil or suffering that came upon him due to sin and its consequences (Gutierrez) and the enmity of Satan.

### **2.1.2 Jesus as the Sacrificial Lamb**

The lamb of the cross is linked to the Servant image of Isaiah 53:7. Driver (1986:95-96) argues that the lamb of John 1:29 (the lamb who takes away the sin of the world) is probably best understood in terms of the Isaianic origin of the 'suffering lamb'. The Johannine Gospel refers to the fact that Jesus was crucified simultaneously with the killing of the Passover lamb (Jn 19:14,36). Driver (1986:97) reminds us that the Passover lamb was a commemorative sacrifice, commemorating the exodus liberation. For Driver (Ibid), 'Christ's Passion is described literally as an exodus (Lk 9:31) and the life of the messianic community was understood in terms of exodus liberation (1 Cor 10:1-4; Heb 3:6-19)'.

As the lamb, then, Jesus was also a sacrifice. Hebrews 9:11-28 underlines the sacrificial motif of the atonement, including the shedding of blood for 'many'. Paul and Peter also refer to the sacrificial dimensions of the death of Jesus. We agree with Driver (1986:139) who links together the themes of the Suffering Servant, the vicarious suffering of Jesus Christ and the sacrificial motif. While stressing the voluntariness of the death, Driver regrettably down-plays the 'victim' aspect of the event. We think, however, that if Jesus is indeed a substitute, vicarious sufferer, and atoning lamb, he must therefore be a victim. If human sufferers, especially, are victims, then the incarnate Jesus must also be a victim, however voluntarily he died for us. We agree with Cone (1975:80,135,174-175) who portrays Jesus' death as one of the Suffering Servant, stricken lamb, and victim who died in solidarity with and on behalf of human victims.

### **2.1.3 Jesus as Substitute**

We want to emphasize the vicarious or substitutionary nature of Jesus on the cross, which leads us back to the Fourth Song of Isaiah. Isaiah 53:5-6 speaks of the Servant who was wounded, crushed and punished for us and because of human sin. In verse 10, the Servant is described as a guilt offering. Hanks (1983:80-81) interprets this in terms of penal substitution and draws support from Westermann who talks of the Servant bearing our punishment. The substitutionary element is underscored by the notion that the Servant bore the sins of many (Is 53:11-12). Gutierrez and Moltmann, their antipathy to penal or forensic substitution notwithstanding, strongly affirm the substitutionary

element, by portraying Jesus as a victim. Moltmann (1974a:192-193, 1991:51-52) further points out that Jesus took the punishment that sinful humans could not bear. Therefore, we find God was judging God for man through the event of Jesus' cross.

Following Hooker and Dunn, Driver (1986:108-109) adds an interesting variation to the theme of substitution by maintaining that Jesus was not merely a substitute, but was actually Representative Man. Thus believers are those who die their death in the death of Jesus, in order to have life (Rom 7:24-25; 2 Cor 4:10-12; Col 1:24). In so doing, they participate in the death and new life of Jesus. The basis for our participation is the fact that Jesus did not merely die on behalf of humans, he died as a human. As our substitute or representative, then, Jesus was judged for us. (We take note of Pannenberg's [1994:429-436] caution that the representativeness of Jesus does not suppress or eliminate our own individuality. We are still individually accountable to God.)

## **2.2 The Judgement on Suffering**

### **2.2.1 The Suffering of Christ's Judgement**

It goes without saying that the physicality of the trials and crucifixion brought great bodily pain to Jesus. To our mind, Jesus suffered even greater pain when he became the Abandoned One. Simone Weil (1951:79) speaks about the difference between affliction and suffering. For her, suffering is primarily the immediate physical pain one might experience. When that suffering affects the soul, and ongoing and usually unconquerable mental anguish develops, the suffering has evolved into affliction. Weil (Ibid) maintains that Jesus was under

affliction in Gethsemane and on the cross, believing he was forsaken by the Father. According to Weil (1951:82-86) there is an ontological 'distance' between Creator and creation, although love between God and person can occur over any 'distance'. Joy and affliction (by virtue of creaturehood) are channels through which one can confront and even love God. Now Jesus exhibited the infinite distance. As Weil (1951:82-83) puts it: 'This infinite distance between God and God, this supreme tearing apart, this agony beyond all others, this marvel of love, is the crucifixion. Nothing can be further from God than that which has been made accursed'.

Jesus suffers and is afflicted because he is the Judged One, the Holy One who became sin for us. We agree with Moltmann's (1975:80) terminology when he speaks of a 'rupture' in the Godhead or Trinity. Similarly, we see the distance of which Weil speaks when Moltmann discusses the abandonment of the Son. For Moltmann (1974a:243), as we mentioned previously, there was a brief period of time when the Father experienced Sonlessness, and the Son experienced Fatherlessness. Jesus' suffering culminated in his death, and we support Moltmann (1974a:192,207) who would advocate that the death, somehow, penetrated or affected the deity of the Son just for a brief period. God, in Jesus, came to identify, suffer with, and die for us. Obviously, we are not talking of ontological annihilation of the Deity - but the Son's identity was total. Jesus suffered in the way we have been describing because he was identifying with suffering man and bearing the divine judgement on sin-caused evil or oppression.

### **2.2.2 The Nature of Christ's Judgement**

Having looked at Jesus' suffering on the cross, let us briefly consider the judgement itself in relation to the suffering of oppression. We must remember that the incarnate Son of God lived his life in direct confrontation with evil powers.<sup>5</sup> It was moral evil (and Satan) that generated opposition to Jesus.<sup>6</sup> While the Christ-event was preordained by the Trinity (Ac 2:23-27), the evil that necessitated it was not. If the identifying Son of God absorbed human pain into his story, then the Father was motivated to judge the evil and sinfulness behind human suffering. We have noted in preceding chapters that Gutierrez (1983:14), Cone (1975:236) and Moltmann (1991:49,51) do not support the notion of penal judgement as far as the atonement is concerned. We disagreed with them on the basis of individual accountability and the solidarity of human sinfulness.

However, we agree with them as far as God's judgement on oppression is concerned. We agree with Moltmann that Jesus assumed our own godforsakenness and abandonment, even though he was sinless. That is, Jesus assumed our godforsakenness (Rom 1:24-28) and abandonment and thereby became godforsaken and abandoned by the Father. In other words, Jesus was not only the lamb of God who 'takes away the sin of the world', but was also the scapegoat, bearing rejection.

In our view, Satan and the powers were also judged. This judgement was not final though, because the Apocalypse speaks of the great white throne judgement at which believers, Satan, unbelievers and even death itself are judged (Rev 20:11-15), when the new order of things is ushered in. Coming back to the cross,

however, we suggest that if evil and sin were judged, then the perpetrators of them (Satan and unbelievers, including oppressors) had also to be judged. This follows because evil or sin or oppression are not conscious agents in themselves. Satan and the evil powers were addressed by God at the cross as the conscious perpetrators of evil,<sup>7</sup> human guilt notwithstanding.

The judgement at the cross involved death. The lamb, after all, had to shed its blood 'for the remission of sins'. A question presents itself, however. If the biblical testimony is accurate, Jesus said 'it is finished' (*tetelestai*) before he died (John 10:30). For obvious reasons, the divine transaction (be it expiation, propitiation or liberation) on the cross had to be completed before the bodily death of Jesus. So has the death any significance after all?

It seems to us that the notion of sacrifice is important here. Also, the vicarious or substitutionary element is important for us because it gives concrete expression to the notion of God's identity with humanity, when the Son underwent rejection from the Father on our behalf. As we said above, the shedding of blood is part and parcel of the Christ-event. The writer to the Hebrews makes it quite clear that Jesus' blood is redemptively efficacious, whereas the blood of bulls and goats was not (Heb 9:12, 10:4). It might be said that the rupture within the Trinity precipitated the actual dying of Jesus, especially if we include the deity of Jesus in the death. Hendrickson (1954:435) suggests that the impending death and burial was so certain in Jesus' mind that he could speak of it as if it had already happened. Jesus also said that he was

committing his spirit to the Father (Jn 10:30). In connection with this, Michaels (1984:329) reminds us of the voluntary nature of the death: 'In the end, every attempt of the religious authorities to kill him had failed. No one took his life, but of his own free will he gave it back to the Father who had sent him (10:18; cf also Luke 13:46)'. The above discussion, then, indicates that the physical death of Jesus Christ was of great significance. Besides, the significance of the resurrection of Jesus is predicated upon the real death of Jesus.

### **2.3 The Achievement of the Cross**

#### **2.3.1 The Defeat of Satan and the Powers**

As a result of the judgement on evil and suffering, Satan and the powers were defeated. Jesus always spoke of and demonstrated his opposition and victory over unclean spirits (Matt 12:38; Lk 11:20) and Satan (Mk 3:13-16; Lk 11:18). Jesus connected his impending crucifixion to the defeat of Satan (Jn 12:31-33). Paul speaks of Jesus' disarming of, and triumphing over, the powers (Col 2:14-15; cf Heb 2:14-15). We have to acknowledge that, though defeated, Satan and the demonic powers still exercise influence and evil over humanity and against believers (Rom 8:38-39; Eph 6:12; 1 Pet 5:8). Nevertheless we would concur with O'Brien (1984:140) who states: 'It is not as though the principalities and powers continue just as they were prior to Christ's victory at the cross. Their defeat though hidden is no less real for all that. They have no other expectation than final ruin'.

The defeat of the cosmic powers at the cross has ensured that systematic oppression (human powers) will not last forever.

Of course, the nagging question persists: 'if Jesus triumphed at the cross, let alone the resurrection, why do Satan, evil and suffering, and thus oppression, still exist'? We cannot overcome the theodicy posed in this question, but we can suggest two answers here. Sinful people still exist, and therefore sinful human structures will coexist with them. Also, God (after the cross and resurrection) does say through Paul (Rom 1:18) that he is 'pouring out his wrath' on humanity which has been 'given over' to itself. That is, God is allowing mankind to incur the consequences of sin. We submit that only a radical eschatological renewal, in the eschaton, can change this state of affairs. Meanwhile, evil and oppression must still be opposed.

### **2.3.2 A Comprehensive Salvation**

We suggest that the cross is the place of suffering whereas the resurrection is the place of expressed freedom and victory. If we adhere to the idea of divine identification with suffering humanity and the need for justice (freedom), then we would see the cross and resurrection as a unified event. What was 'achieved', then, depended on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In this context we wish to quote from Hanks (1983:91) who, with deep insight, writes:

Situating the fourth song in its context, the salvation proclaimed there is an integral, multi-faceted liberation that embraces justification from the guilt of sin; healing of sickness; liberation from oppression; prosperity instead of poverty; peace instead of class struggle; fellowship and *koinonia* instead of loneliness and scorn; demographic growth instead of barrenness and the extermination of the nation; eternal life in paradise and (possibly) resurrection of the body instead of death; the return to the land instead of exile and oppression; and a new, fertile land instead of an ecological wasteland.

Hanks argues that Jesus, as the Suffering Servant, displayed the power of God as attested to in Isaiah 53. In the weakness of the crucifixion, God, in Jesus, was at his most powerful. In realization of that power, we are called upon to work with Yahweh in bringing freedom in (Hanks 1983:93,95).

We agree with Hanks in his exegetical interpretation of the Fourth Song, especially if we link the song with Luke 4:18-19; cf Isaiah 58:6, 61:1-2. The stated mission of the lamb parallels the stated mission of the Suffering Servant with reference to liberation, freedom and healing. To be sure, the ongoing weight of evil and suffering in the human story would seem to dampen the 'achievements', as enumerated by Hanks above. But it still remains that the cross became both the basis and the mode of God's identity with human suffering, and that judgement on it did take place. A fully realized victory over evil and suffering is to be expected only at the eschaton. Jesus, as the Servant and the Lamb, fully and successfully completed his mission.

Moltmann, Cone and Gutierrez interpret the cross in eschatological terms. For example, both Moltmann (1974a:43) and Gutierrez (1983:15) see Jesus at the cross as the fulfilment of the New Covenant. Moltmann (1974a:83, 1974b:18) advocates that the future and the benefits of the resurrection are mediated to us (especially those who suffer) through the event of the cross. We do not deny the eschatological element of the cross and resurrection, but we see the second coming of Christ as the ultimate eschatological event of judgement and freedom.

### 3. IDENTITY WITH VICTORY OVER SUFFERING (THE RESURRECTION)

#### 3.1 The Resurrection and Victory

For Jesus the resurrection<sup>8</sup> brought about his victory over death. To begin, Jesus overcame physical death in and of itself. If death is the end of life, then it becomes the greatest enemy of life. Certainly Paul sees physical death as something to be overcome (1 Cor 15:16-26) and emphasizes the life of the new resurrected body, pointing out that Jesus himself overcame physical death and became our firstfruits. Finger (1985:353) adds an interesting point here: 'The Son really was abandoned to all the finality and horror of death. Consequently, theology cannot, properly speaking, include his resurrection under "the work of Jesus Christ"'. Finger reminds us that it was the Father who raised the Son through the agency of the life-giving Spirit.

Following the *Christus Victor* model, Finger (Ibid) notes that Jesus (as God incarnate) lived out a sinless human life, resisting even the demonic, and rose 'into full communion with God'. The identifying act of Jesus, then, demonstrated or 'fleshed out' perfect humanness, by overcoming the threat of non-being and death. In our view, physical death is, *inter alia*, part of the 'wages of sin' (Rom 3:23). Jesus' life, death and resurrection encompassed all the factors of fallen and redeemed human being.

As Guthrie (1981:390) reminds us, the resurrection was a display of God's divine power, indicating the life-giving significance of the resurrection. As Guthrie (Ibid) puts it: 'It is the act by which the ceaseless round of death and corruption

in human life has been checked. God has provided a way out of death into life, by raising his own Son from death to life'.

We submit that Jesus not only overcame human physical death but also conquered psychological death. This idea is in line with Gutierrez's view of oppression as 'death' and of freedom as 'life'. To be sure, the sheer existential weight of suffering that victims might experience could lead victims into a condition of total despair and apathy (Moltmann). The resurrection of Jesus, however, augurs for victory over these things in the life of the victim.

The victory of Jesus over death also means the overcoming of moral evil and suffering. As we indicated earlier, moral evil is expressed through personal agents such as Satan or humanity. Therefore Jesus not only experienced direct opposition from Satan and sinful humans but also overcame the agents of evil and their intentions.

We are reminded by Finger (1985:351) that Jesus was condemned as a false Messiah and subversive, and his crucifixion appears initially to be a defeat of Yahweh. As Finger (Ibid) puts it: 'Seen from the most profound theological perspective, death and the Devil had attacked God and won. Jesus' death confirmed and vindicated their status as the real Lords of the cosmos'. We agree with Finger (1985:352) when he states that the resurrection reversed the verdict passed on Jesus by the powers. The resurrection, in fact, 'was the victory and the revelation of God's righteousness' (Ibid). We concur with Finger that God's righteousness could only be fully realized when the resurrection

displayed his victory over evil and sin, because it is in this way that God vindicates his people.

For Finger (1985:358), the incarnation 'revealed the truth about human and demonic forces'. That is, the prevailing religious and social institutions, wittingly or not, were actually opposed to God and his kingdom of righteousness. The resurrection showed that God had been opposed, and proved to be victorious over his opponents, while at the same time showing them what true righteousness should be. In this sense, the resurrection vindicated the suffering of Jesus, as the Suffering Servant. Jesus thus became the paradigmatic martyr (Osborne 1993:76; cf Moltmann 1991:48) who represents the martyred saints. The resurrection reveals the divine victory over suffering and death for Jesus and, ultimately, for us.

### **3.2 The Resurrection and Newness**

The concept of 'newness' is found in Gutierrez and Cone, but especially in Moltmann. We concur with Gutierrez that Christ is the personal fulfilment of the New Covenant and with Moltmann's emphasis on the New Covenant as the means of newness. Further, we find ourselves in agreement with Moltmann's (1969:50-51, 1974a:175) notion that Jesus was not merely raised; he was raised as the One who had been abandoned and cast out, the Crucified One. The Suffering Servant and the Lamb have given way to the High Priest of the New Covenant.

In relation to the theme of freedom from suffering, we must raise the question: 'What is the content of the alleged newness that the resurrection has achieved'? Put simply: is there really anything new for those who still suffer? Of course, what is

'new' for humanity as a whole, is also what is new for the group who suffer evil. The notion of freedom, though, is not immediately meaningful to those who are oppressed.

We can state without equivocation, that the first thing that is new is the *resurrected saviour himself*. The resurrection itself is not verifiable on an historical-empirical level. However the resurrected Jesus Christ was very visible and active. Prior to the death on the cross, Jesus was the suffering and seemingly defeated victim. After his burial and resurrection, he appeared as the one who had reversed all the odds against him. Christ did not appear merely in relation to himself as the Risen One; he appeared in relation to humanity, the Risen One *for humanity*. For those who *suffered* then and who *suffer* now, the resurrected Christ is also present.

The Old Covenant (Mosaic) was characterized by repeatable sacrifices, blood-shedding, and representation by the high priest on behalf of both himself and the nations of Israel (Heb 9:7, 10:1-4). The New Covenant was set up on the basis of a once-for-all sacrifice to God by the Son himself (Heb 9:26, 10:10,12). Further, it was only the shedding of *Jesus'* blood which ultimately atoned for the sinfulness of humanity (Heb 9:11-15, 10:5-10). The sacrificed Son, the God-Man, rose from the dead never to be sacrificed again. In fact, his sacrificial death has eternal significance, because Christ is now the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

For those who suffer, then, Jesus is the *One who has suffered before* in order to help them confront the reality of their own suffering. The resurrection signals the fact that

Jesus Christ totally overcame the power of suffering in himself. Thus Christ can never be overcome by evil or suffering, nor can he be judged again on behalf of those who are victims or perpetrators. The saviour, then, has done what had to be done, as far as the atonement in relation to evil and suffering is concerned. When the Suffering Servant said 'it is finished', he was expressing an ontological reality. Therefore, the resurrection speaks of this 'new' reality which, in the first instance, was fleshed out in Jesus Christ himself. The truth of this, of course, brings no physical relief to those who still suffer oppression, but it can remove the element of 'affliction'. The new situation is that the Risen Christ is the one who had absorbed (and still does) human pain into his own story. Sufferers are not alone because Christ accompanies them in their suffering, giving them succour, and hope that they too will overcome.

If human history and its concomitant pain were taken into the Trinity, then the risen Christ is presently empathizing with the human predicament of evil and suffering, as the Victor, the One who has judged and conquered. It must be stressed, though, that Christ's presence is not necessarily a physically liberating one, despite the fact that one might argue that it has inspired individual Christians to work towards the abolishment of slavery, child labour and such like.

Secondly, the newness resulting from the establishment of the New Covenant also includes the element of *direct accessibility*. Under the Old Covenant one could approach the presence of Yahweh only via the priestly mediatorship, because

one could never enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Jesus' death and judgement, however, opened up the way for direct communion with the Godhead (Heb 10:19-20). We agree with Bruce (1964:247-249) that it was the *human* life of Jesus which was the 'veil that was rent' for the entry into the 'heavenlies'. The writer of Hebrews thus urges us to boldly approach the throne of grace on the basis of the One who had known human life, death, and victory over Satan and alienation (Heb 2:14-18, 10:19-20). Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann can, indeed, rightly argue for a possible mutual identification between victim and Victor.

Thirdly, substantial forgiveness, (i.e. forgiveness based on a completed atonement) is now available. As Robertson (1980:284) says: 'The new factor of forgiveness anticipated on the New Covenant is the once-for-all accomplishment of that forgiveness'. In our view, the resurrection indicates the new situation of direct access to direct forgiveness. Both victim and perpetrator can relate to this in the senses of either immediate forgiveness or future judgement.

Fourthly, a vital aspect of the newness brought in by the New Covenant is the coming in of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God has of course been the subject of vast debate and instead of reproducing arguments in that debate, we will make a few observations that bear relevance to our thesis. As Gutierrez (1974:168-178) carefully points out, the Kingdom is not human history as such, although liberation contributes to its building up, and the future kingdom will take into itself past and partial victories of human liberations.

We believe that the Kingdom is both present (that is, has come in with Jesus) and future. The kingdom parables (Matt 13) describe the Kingdom in its present growth and in its future dimension of coming eschatological judgement. There is a dialectical tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the Kingdom, a tension which is understood by Ladd (1974:93) to be the 'mystery' of the Kingdom, when he writes: 'The mystery of the kingdom is the coming of the Kingdom into history in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation. It is, in short, "Fulfilment without consummation"'. Leon Morris (1986:129) notes: 'In a very meaningful sense the kingdom has come because Jesus has come. But in an equally meaningful sense the kingdom will come when Jesus comes. It is present. It is future'. Jesus is the initiator and champion of the kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

Moltmann (1975:50-51) speaks of the coming Kingdom in connection with the 'coming God'. Against Moltmann, we hold that the future, including the future Kingdom and God himself, do not come to us via the so-called historical flow, even though we agree that the Kingdom has been inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We agree with Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann that it is God who brings the Kingdom, not man. As Ladd (1974:103) rightly points out: 'Man can sow the seed, but the Kingdom itself is God's deed'. Men can reject, receive, enter, serve and do much more in relation to the Kingdom, but the Kingdom itself is super-natural, and it is God who brings it and offers it.

Now what does the above discussion mean for the oppressed victim? Jesus stated that the Kingdom was in the midst of his hearers (Matt 12:28,13), and Paul spoke of the Kingdom as being

righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17), rather than the bickering over what to eat and drink. On the vertical level, the Kingdom is for the believers who comprise the community or faith, or body of Christ. On the horizontal level, one can say that the Kingdom includes or is seen in the overcoming of evil and suffering, and the ultimate eschatological judgement of them. In our view both the victim and the perpetrator must deal with both levels of the kingdom.

Indeed, the resurrection signalled the inauguration of the Kingdom, and this constitutes a situation of newness. But something that is not new continues to persist - evil and suffering. This is in contradiction to the new situation reflected in the risen and victorious Saviour who disarmed the powers of evil at the cross. God has judged sin and its consequences at the cross. Yet the victim, at least on the physical level, still has to say 'the Christ-event has been proven powerless to relieve me of my victimization'. The objective situation of victory and newness, brought in by the resurrection, conflicts with the age-old subjective experience of existential evil and suffering. Put simply, the victory seems to be asynchronous with reality.

Yet it remains that the Son of God fully identified with and still identifies with the pain of human suffering. This identifying Son of God is also the champion, initiator, mediator and revealer of the Kingdom of God. However, if the Kingdom of God is to be reflected in righteousness and justice, then these last two must be expressed in ways other than an historical flow of progressive liberation. The victory of the resurrection does

not preclude the incarnate suffering of the Son nor the present suffering of the community of faith and victims in general. This suffering occurs because of the ongoing conflict between good and evil and it is *within* this conflict that the kingdom (of righteousness and justice) is 'growing up'.

We find our assertions reflected in Eduard Schweizer's interpretation of Mark 11:12 (the Kingdom being ushered in with violence). Schweizer (1975:262) suggests that the 'presence of the Kingdom, which was expected to bring victory and triumph and the solution to every problem, stands itself under the sign of the cross; it means oppression, harassment, suffering'. This disquieting view seems to us to fit reality quite well. The 'violence' of the Kingdom was perpetrated on Jesus himself, and his followers will not escape it either.

For those who unjustly suffer, be they Christian or not, the presence of the risen Christ must mean something other than an immediate, guaranteed freedom. This is not to say that the Christ-event has not created a new situation of freedom, but we suggest that freedom might be better understood in terms of deliverance from 'affliction' (as Weil understands it) rather than immediate physical suffering. This would be in line with Konig, who, in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (nd:55-57) talks about a 'theology of comfort'. That is to say, victims can draw comfort in the fact that evil and oppression, while immediately affecting mankind, do not have the last laugh. Their defeat by Jesus will be fully realized, perhaps partially now, but fully in the eschaton. The present mediatorial work of the resurrected Christ will ensure that.

We are not suggesting that historical freedoms, such as South Africa's newly-gained liberation, are meaningless. We indeed rejoice with black South Africa. However, it remains true that blood and violence were part and parcel of removing the blood and violence of the previous regime; (this is reminiscent of Helda Camara's 'spiral of violence'). Would God directly sanction or work through the very things that the Kingdom stands against? It could be argued by non-Christians or non-religionists that the South African liberation is the result of mere human social forces. Whether Christ as 'liberator' is behind the South African freedom or not, the stark and stubborn reality of suffering in South Africa and elsewhere remains. However, the persistence of suffering does not nullify the power and significance of the resurrection and the kingdom.

The situation of newness, fifthly, is seen in the impact of the cross and resurrection on the interrelationship between creation, history, and the Abrahamic Promise. We have seen in earlier chapters how this interrelationship is important for Gutierrez and especially for Moltmann, as it directly affects the story of human suffering. We concur with Gutierrez and Moltmann in these concerns.

In our view, the cross and resurrection become the focal point at which God provides redemption for humanity and creation. Paul (Rom 8:19-23) makes a link between the eschatological restoration of creation and the final transformation of the believer.<sup>10</sup> We affirm with Kraus that the act of creation has never ceased, and it is especially with humankind that God is

continually creating his image in humanity. As Kraus (1987:158) puts it:

The incarnation culminating in the cross and resurrection reveals to us the way in which God is at work finishing his creation. In the face of human failure and evil it is the process of vicarious death and resurrection .... a process of re-creation, that is, of reforming the deviant and restoring that which has been prostituted by sin. It is not a process of discarding the imperfect and beginning each time *de novo*.

The relationship between Christ and creation is powerful. As Quoist (1971:36) says: 'Creation, therefore, is an integral part of the Mystery of Christ. Nothing escapes the impact of the Event'. We agree with Quoist when he points to the role of Christ as Creator (Jn 1:3; Acts 17:28; Col 1:15-17) and, especially, to the present creative role of the resurrected Christ. Humanity must cooperate with Christ in the ongoing act of creation. It is part of being in the image of God.<sup>11</sup>

In our opinion, the cross and resurrection constitute God's identity with the human predicament and his creative offer of new life. As Finger (1989:409) puts it: 'Thus while the Old Testament affirms creation *ex-nihilo*, the New proclaims that God has entered into and arisen from the annihilating nothingness of evil and death. It therefore gives greater depth to the assertion that "nothing lies beyond God's creative power"'.<sup>12</sup> The cross and resurrection, together, turned the human story of hopelessness and negation into hope and being.

The full realization of hope and being implies a future state, that is, we are not yet rid of conflict and injustice. Nevertheless, God's creative power (for the bringing in of freedom) works right into the future. The cross and

resurrection, by inaugurating the newness of the Kingdom, have also established the basis for the future eschatological acting and speaking of God. We do not hold that the cross and resurrection were catalysts or events through which the future, as the future, influences the present, as Moltmann insists. We are moving towards the future, but the future is not moving 'backwards' to us.

We are of course not denying the notion of our living in a dialectical tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the future. The future can be said to be here partially or proleptically, if we think of it in terms of the Kingdom of God which was inaugurated by Jesus Christ. But as we pointed out in chapter four, if the future is supposedly influencing the present, then, logically, it cannot be an open system based upon the 'universal possibilities' of the present. God, of course, can be already in the future as he is not subject to time and space - although in the incarnation he certainly took upon himself human time and space. The cross and resurrection reveal the future as they picture future judgement and victory.

The future we look to is linked to the Abrahamic Promise of the past. We understand the Abrahamic promise to foreshadow the 'proto-evangelium' of Gen 3:15 and to be fulfilled in the Christ-event. In Genesis 3:15 we see the promise of conflict between the godly line of the 'woman' and the line (or offspring) of the 'Serpent'. In the cross and resurrection we see the conflict between good and evil (Christ and Satan) come to a head. We agree with M<sup>c</sup>Comiskey (1985:191) that the hebrew of Gen 3:15 must

refer in the first instance to a corporate offspring but that it is still in order to place Jesus Christ here as well.

The promise (of Gen 3:15) in fact is far reaching. As M<sup>c</sup>Comiskey (1985:191) puts it: 'In that dark day in human history, God acted on the basis of promise. The promise did not have its inception with Abraham. It figured importantly in the beginning of human history. It can be said to span all of redemptive history'. For M<sup>c</sup>Comiskey (1985:185), the category of promise indicated a covenant of grace and redemption between God and Jesus Christ. If this is the case the link between Abraham and Christ is all important. With M<sup>c</sup>Comiskey, we see the strong link in Galatians 3:16-17. Both Abraham and Christ exercise the double function of mediator and recipient of the promise.

For us, the important aspect of the Abrahamic promise is that the seed of Abraham would be a 'blessing' to the 'world'. Hence we disagree with Gutierrez and Moltmann that the content of the promise was primarily a promise of liberation. Nevertheless we affirm Gutierrez's notion that Jesus Christ universalized the promise. The promise, as it is worked out in the New Covenant, is offered to the world. Now we submit that the promise does not relate to just one aspect of the human predicament (for example, individual alienation from God), but rather it relates to every aspect, including human suffering. Part of the 'blessing' must surely involve the divine response to human pain, as demonstrated in the life, death and resurrection of the Suffering Servant. If the Suffering Servant mediated the promise in and of itself, then he is the mediator between God and all humanity.

Brunner (1934:492-493) writes:

The whole existence of the Mediator consists in making Himself one with humanity in its sin and sorrow. The Incarnation is no mere gesture; it is reality, stark and painful. Jesus drinks the cup of human existence in all its alienation from God, to the very dregs.

We concur with Brunner's emphasis that Jesus particularly identified with the underside of society. Also Brunner (1934:495-496) reminds us that the Mediator, in his self-sacrifice and in his bearing of the divine judgement, experienced his greatest identification with humanity. This Mediator suffered evil in order to confront evil and suffering.

Now it is the resurrection which validates the mediatorial role of Christ. The resurrection speaks of victory, power and a future of freedom. Christ's present mediatorship reflects that he is the Risen One. Because the cross and resurrection form the historical focus of God's identifying with human pain, it follows that salvation, or freedom, is by way of the cross and resurrection. As we submitted in chapter four, the exodus did indeed reveal Yahweh's displeasure against oppression and he did liberate the Hebrews. The fact of their liberation, however, did nothing to stop them from continuing the phenomenon of oppression amongst themselves. It also did nothing to stop their future subjugations. There is no factual basis to deduce that God is always going to liberate in the same way as he did in the actual exodus event. As Yoder (1989:84), correctly points out: 'God does not merely "act in history". God acts in history in particular ways'. Therefore, God is always free to act in whatever way he chooses, but the prime act of freedom has taken

place in the cross and resurrection, and Jesus Christ was the prime Actor.

To be sure, the exodus demonstrated God's concern for justice as well as his faithfulness to his covenant relationship with the Israelites. However, the cross and resurrection likewise demonstrate God's concern for human suffering as well as his faithfulness to the people. We agree with Kee (1978:106-108) that suffering is not so easily removed. The promise of historical freedom can lead to despair if it does not materialise. But *personal* (psychological, emotional and spiritual) freedom is attainable no matter what the circumstances. This is because of the 'paradox of freedom'. For Kee (1978:107), Christian faith 'is not based on Exodus but on that more subtle combination of Calvary-and-Easter'. Needless to say, we are not down-playing the need of, and the call for, social liberation.

#### **4. IDENTITY WITH THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SUFFERING**

Jesus Christ did not *simply* act and speak merely to help humanity and especially the victims of evil. We follow Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann in their insistence that humankind must respond to the Christ-event. This response includes the doing of justice.

##### **4.1 The Mandate To Do Justice**

In our view, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the greatest injustice in human history, even though we pointed to the voluntary nature of Jesus' actions. Jesus was not a masochist and therefore his tormentors are still guilty of their

actions. As the cross and resurrection were for us, it now places a special responsibility on humanity, namely, we are to do justice. We are not simply saying that we must do justice out of sympathy or solidarity with the oppressed. That idea should surely be seen as a given if we are serious about our responsibility as bearers of the *'imago Dei'*. Rather, we are especially held responsible for working for justice because *injustice has happened to the incarnate Son of God*.

As we affirmed in chapter four, the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt 15:31-46) is significant as far as God's expectations of us are concerned. With Gutierrez (1974:167, 1983:14), we take the *'least of these my brethren'* to mean the oppressed or poor, be they believers or not. Sider (1989:97-98) asserts that one is no believer if one neglects the poor and oppressed. One can, of course, seek forgiveness, but Sider (1989:98) poignantly points out: *'there comes a point -- and, thank God, God alone knows where! -- when neglect of the poor is no longer forgiven. It is punished. Eternally'*.

Why such divine anger (Matt 25:41) at the neglect of the poor? The parable asserts plainly that this neglect means neglect of Christ himself. Even then, this could be interpreted to mean mere disobedience to a command to love our neighbour. But if the assertions of the parable about the treatment of the risen Christ are related to the meaning of the Christ-event itself it becomes a different matter. If the Son of God existentially *identified* with those who suffer when he was in the world, then the cross and resurrection lead to a continuing identification today. Because God became incarnate in order,

*inter alia*, to confront and resolve the injustice of human suffering, the mistreatment of the poor today leads to the mistreatment of Christ.

We are not advocating an ontological identity between the risen Christ and the oppressed in history. Yet in some way there must be a real identity because Jesus indicated that our entrance into the eternal life is dependent on how both he and the poor are treated in the same instance. Barclay (1958:360) interprets the Christ - poor relationship symbolically by using the analogy of a human father and son. If we wish to impress a father, then treat his own children well. However literally or symbolically we treat the parable, one thing remains, namely, how we treat Christ is manifested by the way we treat the poor.

The mandate to do justice is for all people, especially those who perpetrate injustice through deliberate or indifferent actions. In this sense we appreciate Moltmann's stress on the equal responsibility of both perpetrators and victims. As far as the parable is concerned, one's lack of compassion is taken seriously by God. As Tasker (1961:239) puts it: 'it is not so much positive wrong-doing that evokes the severest censure, as the utter failure to do good'. With Gutierrez and Moltmann we affirm that 'doing good' includes the doing of justice along with responsible and creative stewardship of the environment. This is continuing the work of Christ and, as such, is not a hopeless participation in godless humanistic or utopic efforts.

While we must do our part, this does not mean that we are to do *God's* work for him. As Childs (1992:408), in response to Moltmann, points out, there is danger in 'assuming an easy

continuity between divine and human liberation'. The sovereignty of God with regards to the coming in of the new creation or new age, cannot be contingent upon human responsibility. But human responsibility there is, a responsibility which constantly needs eschatological hope. Although already defeated, evil and suffering remain formidable foes. Our responsibility, as Paget-Wilkes (1981:138) notes 'involves recognizing the cosmic nature of evil and working for its total overthrow'. Haight (1985:96) strongly emphasizes that human history is God's. The problem of this history, that is, the history of human suffering, points to our irresponsibility as co-creators with God. We are called upon to be responsible, to properly exercise our role as the image of God in human existence.

Obviously God wants all people to live justly. This applies especially to Christians, that is, the spiritual descendants of Abraham. We pointed out in chapter four that Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann would argue strongly for the personal dimension of liberation. Blacks are called upon to enter into personal and liberating communion with the Black Christ. Victims of social, economic and political oppression are encouraged to personally unite with the liberating Christ. Where necessary, repentance is called for, from both perpetrator and victim. Our own view is that any attempt to seek freedom from suffering is ultimately meaningless if one does not also seek personal salvation. Thus, the concept of the poor as 'anonymous Christians' is unacceptable to us. But whatever one thinks about the relationship between personal salvation and personal freedom from suffering, the mandate to do justice still remains.

#### 4.2 Hope and Suffering

We have been emphasizing that what happened to Jesus Christ is the reason for the justice-mandate. It would follow, then, that we would place supreme responsibility on the redeemed community of faith to exercise justice. While God would want all people to oppose unjust suffering, he would surely want obedience from those who follow the Christ who suffered. We agree with Gutierrez (1976:66, 1983:20, 1984:95-106, 1990b:56) who includes in the idea of conversion the basic element of solidarity with the oppressed.

The challenge to do justice goes hand in hand with the exhortation to have hope. Why so much emphasis on hope? Why did Moltmann have to compose a 'theology of hope'? We would submit that it was because of the magnitude of evil and unjust suffering that still exist nearly two thousand years after the Christ-event. The cry for freedom is as loud as ever.<sup>13</sup> Are the cross and resurrection a cause for despair because in reality they have failed to bring significant universal liberation or freedom from actual suffering? Or are they a reason for hope because the resurrected Christ, who was himself a victim but is now present with today's victims, can justly deal with injustice? Rather than the 'death of God', we can have the 'hope of God'.

The church is to be seen as a community of faith with hope. It is to be seen as a redeemed community of freedom and rejoicing (Moltmann 1973:86-87). Furthermore it is to expect opposition from Satan and the kingdom of evil, especially in the confrontation with the powers that be. We concur with Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann that those who participate in the struggle

against evil and suffering will in fact experience redemptive suffering. Similarly, we support Buthelezi's (1976:179-180) sharp distinction between oppressive and redemptive suffering.

The suffering of both conscientized victim and supporter may be seen as redemptive in the light of the redemptive mediatorship of the Risen Crucified One. Only Christ is mediator. One may ask why anyone should suffer redemptively in the first place, especially if Jesus has already suffered at the cross. We wish to offer two answers. First, our suffering makes us to share and complete the suffering of Jesus Christ, who is the redeemer (1 Pet 4:12-19). In our view, the parable of the sheep and goats indicates a dialectical relationship between Christ and the victim. Both Christ and victim are engaged in the battle against evil.

Harvey Cox (1969:90) offers the view that the Bible is itself a 'theology of Resurrection'. Cox argues that Christians are to share in Jesus' death, as if the crucifixion, in relation to suffering, is ongoing. In fact, we might best show our 'baptism' by entering into 'solidarity with the suffering and exploited of the world' (ibid). While we think Cox was over-secularizing the Christian faith, we would affirm his emphasis of our sharing in the suffering of Jesus for the sake of the victim. At the very least, the resurrection of hope would result.

Fortunately for Christians, the very reality of the crucified and risen Mediator brings hope. With Pannenberg (1968:263), we advocate that hope exists because of the prior

vicarious suffering of Jesus. The Christ-event, along with the effect of the presence of the Risen Christ today, points to the victory of hope and ultimate victory over evil.

Widyatmadja (1978:147) insists that every struggle entails suffering, but, 'where there is struggle, there is hope. Hope is something we don't reach yet'. According to Widyatmadja, who writes for Asian liberation, there 'is no resurrection without the cross and death of Jesus Christ'.

Secondly, we suffer simply because the confrontation between good and evil, peace and suffering, constitutes confrontation. Only when the 'not yet' of the New Age is fully consummated (arrived) will this confrontation cease.

Hendrikus Berkhof (1966:175-177) argues that the cross stands at the centre of history whereas the resurrection bears relation more to the consummation of history. Nevertheless the 'cross and resurrection are both together the secret of history'. Furthermore, Berkhof (1966:174) argues for a positive attitude on the part of the church despite the evil surrounding it.<sup>14</sup> With Berkhof, we must insist that God is not distant and powerless in this present age. Rather, God is 'blessing' the world.

As Zimmerli (1971:50) maintains, the curse upon the world comprised death, that is, 'loss of future and hopelessness'. However, the Abrahamic blessing comprises 'life, future, and hope'. Gutierrez and Moltmann concur with Zimmerli here, even though their understanding of 'liberation' might differ. The blessing was of course brought in by the atonement. Perry Yoder (1987:69) insists that the atonement should drive us to struggle

for *shalom*. To be sure, the struggle entails confrontation with oppressive forces of evil. However, Yoder (1987:69) opines that 'rather than despair, the cross is the harbinger of hope that our struggle for God's *shalom* will one day bear fruit ...' We would emphasize that it is the victory of the resurrection that makes it possible to interpret the cross in this way. For the black situation, Moyd (1979:146-147) points us to the black Christian understanding of the resurrection of Christ as causing an ongoing resurrection in the life of the black person. This includes resurrection 'from the circumstances of human oppression'. It is an experience of victory.

#### **4.3 The Final Vindication**

If the cross and resurrection inaugurated the New Age (a la Moltmann and Gutierrez) then the consummation of the New Age will be realized by the historical return of Jesus Christ. At the cross, Jesus was the suffering, substitutionary Lamb. In his return, Jesus Christ will be the powerful and triumphant Lamb. According to Revelation 5:1-14, it is the *cross* which creates the Lamb's greatness, not his 'essential being', as Mounce (1977:148) points out. The Apocalyptic Lamb alone will have earned the right to culminate our eschatological redemption and execute judgement. The Suffering Servant will return as the victorious and vindicated Lord.

For those who suffer,<sup>15</sup> especially Christians, the experience of Christ would be meaningless if it could not somehow touch their own lives. Fortunately the reverse is true; the victim and supporter can in the meantime struggle against evil in hope confident that the eschaton will vindicate their hope,

and will bear out their present trust in the victorious Christ. The future of freedom, inaugurated and pictured in the cross and resurrection, will become the *present* of freedom.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Firstly, one might say that God cannot stop oppression anyway, even if he wanted to. The most obvious objection to this would be the fact of God's omnipotence and providence through which God can and does do anything he wants to in his own creation. One could argue that God has given mankind absolute freedom of will, in order to promote human creativity. Thus God is forced to allow the practise of evil and oppression; man has freely fallen so to speak. We would reply, however, that the Christ-event (cross and resurrection) would then bear little relationship to the historical problem of oppression. The identifying suffering and judgement of Jesus on the cross was, *inter alia* the culmination of God's confrontation with the evil or oppression. The victory that Jesus realized was at least to say 'No' to the sin of human oppression.

Secondly, one could maintain that God actually does not care about human suffering, and that we would be quite wrong to assume that the cross and resurrection have any bearing here. We would reply by pointing out that the whole incarnation event, from the birth of Jesus to his ascension, belies any possible divine indifference. If the Son of God goes to the trouble of adopting humanness, then he is at the very least concerned about humanity for its own sake. Why would Jesus willingly identify and suffer with and for us if God does not care? It is clear to us that a divine concern for justice was evident in the dying and rising of Jesus, whether there is a 'project of freedom' (Cone) or not.

One could advocate, thirdly, that God is indeed concerned about human suffering, but for some reason or other is moving very slowly, putting much of the liberative responsibility upon the victims themselves. We would argue, however, that generally speaking the story of evil and pain seems as unbearable as it ever was. If the cross and resurrection did indeed establish an historical process of freedom, as our authors claim, then surely the bulk of liberative responsibility would fall upon God, rather than the victim. If the Son of God would choose to undergo suffering and victory for the poor or weak, he would surely see it through to its logical 'historical' conclusion. Even with the victim being called to participate in his or her own freedom, the resurrected Christ would now be bringing about universal freedom. But would he be doing it so slowly? If one is called upon to exercise faith in a *coming* freedom (Moltmann and Cone), then this call is tantamount to admitting that freedom is not obviously at large. The concept of the *liberating* presence of Christ becomes something that is difficult to accept.

Fourthly, one could sidestep the problem of suffering and simply say that God has bigger concerns at heart, and that suffering and evil will be dealt with at the eschaton (second coming of Christ) anyway. Our concern here is twofold. In our view, the revelation of God in word (prophets, Jesus, apostles) and deed (exodus, life of Jesus) makes it quite clear that God is affected by human suffering and evil. Also, if we deny that God is disturbed by evil and oppression, we make the Christ - event meaningless here. We advocate that even if one rejects the notion of a programme of liberation, one can still maintain that God desires social justice, and that the crucified Jesus demonstrated an option for the poor. At the very least, the cross and resurrection give cause for hope that evil will be judged. There can still be mutual identification between Lord and victim.

2. Obviously we are not presuming to speak for victims. They should be their own interlocutors. Our discussion is based upon, and related to, what Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann have to say.

3. We are aware of the vast debate that exists concerning the nature of the incarnation, including the 'Godness' and 'Manness' of Jesus. For the purposes of this thesis, we are following the traditional Chalcedonian approach in reference to the full deity and humanity of the historical Jesus. However, we are cognizant of the limitations of Chalcedon and also strongly affirm the notion that the 'God' of the God-Man could suffer to the same degree as the 'Man' of the God-Man. We are dealing with a single personality in Jesus. For a good critical survey of the many views on the incarnation, see Millard Erickson's *The Word Became Flesh* (1991, Baker Book House).

4. We hold to the 'historicity' of God the Son as Jesus, the so-called quest for the historical Jesus notwithstanding. It is important for our thesis that Jesus was both God and Man, as over against the pictures of Jesus as seen in Nestorianism, Gnosticism, Eutychianism and such like.

5. See Erickson (1983:648-652) for a good summary discussion of 'powers' and Jesus' relationship to them. We would certainly submit that Satan is behind the 'powers' that oppress. To be sure, Berkhoff (*Christ and the Powers*, 1977) has argued for the powers (*exousiai*) as being an invisible background of 'instruments' created to operate for mankind's existence and service to God. These powers, as reflected in human institutions, can be used for good or evil. In our view, Satan and his 'powers', or fallen angelic beings, exert influence in human powers. Paul, in Eph 6:12, seems to be arguing that the believer is involved in spiritual warfare even before human warfare.

6. The biblical testimony (Matt 8:28-34; Lk 4:13; Jn 13:2,26-27) points to a continual confrontation between Satan, his demons, and Jesus, so much so, that Gustaf Aulen developed the classical motif of the atonement. For Aulen this became the *Christus*

Victor motif. (We will be looking at Jesus' victory over Satan later on). Satan attempted to destroy the messianic mission of Jesus through the classical wilderness temptations (Matt 4:1-10; Lk 4:1-13). We are not going to enter the classical 'pecare non potuit' or 'potuit non pecare' debate concerning Jesus here. What is of importance to us is that one of Satan's motives was to tempt Jesus away from the path of suffering. Jesus was asked to immediately and effortlessly satiate his hunger, leap off the Temple and be spectacularly rescued by angels, and accept all the wealth and power the world could offer.

If Satan had succeeded, Jesus would have lost his messianic-liberative credibility, so to speak. He would not have been in the position to identify with the poor and weak of the world, and would have had no authority over Satan. We believe Jesus could have sinned, although he was not bound to. Whatever the truth on the peccability issue, Jesus, we believe, was continually in battle with evil (sin) and Satan. We agree with Nels Ferre (1976:305) when he says: '*Enhypostasia*, nevertheless, stands for the solid fact that in spite of all victories and even transfiguration experiences the struggle remained through the wilderness temptations, Gethsemane and until his dying cry of desertion by God'.

7. Finger (1989:163) makes an interesting point concerning the personality of the powers. He asserts that the powers, which wish to make humans less personal, cannot be personal, as only God is fully personal. Finger says that the powers cannot be fully rational, because 'evil involves an intrinsic irrationality'. However, the powers are not merely impersonal forces, as evil shows a definite pattern of intentionality. In this way the powers can exercise a strong (if hidden) domination over human behaviour, ideologies and institutions. We would maintain, however, that even fully impersonal powers could be used by personal beings.

8. We are aware of the vast debate over the physical reality and nature of the resurrection of Jesus. Our position, which we do not have space to defend, is that Jesus did rise bodily and spiritually.

9. Beasley-Murray (1986:145-146) presents his idea (with which we concur) of the relationship between Jesus and the Kingdom as follows: (1) Jesus is the *Champion* or *Contender* who has conquered Satan and evil (parable of the Strong Man. Mk 3:27). (2) Jesus is the *Initiator* of the Kingdom, following on from the ministry of John the Baptist. (3) Jesus is the powerful *Instrument* of the Kingdom, this being seen for example in the exorcism saying of Matt 12:28. (4) Jesus is also the *Representative* of the Kingdom (Lk 17:20-21). (5) Jesus is the *Mediator* of the Kingdom, as seen in the parable of the Bridegroom and his friends (Mk 2:18-19). Jesus, that is, mediates the royal fellowship of the impending wedding feast, and also brings healing and transfiguring powers (Matt 11:5). (6) Finally, Jesus is the *Revealer* of the Kingdom (Matt 11:25-26, 13:16-17; Mark 4:11-12; Lk 10:21-22). Beasley-Murray (1986:146) agrees with

Fuchs in seeing Jesus assuming the ways of God in the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost coin and the Prodigal Son.

10. Now if both the natural creation and believers await their final 'adoption', then this means that the overall process of freedom is not yet completed, both on a corporate and individual level. In our view, the 'historical' process of freedom can be understood as a series of separate though interlinked events, rather than a liberating flow as such. These events would include *inter alia* creation, judgement and the fall, incarnation, the cross and resurrection and the eschaton. The community of faith are the beneficiaries of these events. This is not to ignore the growing up of the Kingdom of God which itself contains or is manifested in (Gutierrez) the historical events of freedom.

11. As creator, then, Christ has to do with both the physical creation and humanity. To be sure, Yahweh's 'curse' on creation at the fall of humanity implies a link between humanity and its environment. The presence of evil and suffering affects both humankind and nature. We fully affirm Moltmann's concern over the 'vicious circle' of humanity's violation of nature and the environment. The cross and resurrection affect both mankind and creation as far as evil and its defeat are concerned.

Finger (1985:408-411) reminds us of the interlinkage in the Old Testament between the concept of creation and divine intervention in human history. The power of Yahweh displayed in the exodus was seen as creative power. Finger (1989:409) points out how Israel developed its faith in Yahweh as Creator in the light of its exodus deliverance. This theme continues in the prophetic period in which Yahweh's creativity was seen in both the exodus and in deliverance from the exile. Israel could have faith in a God who was able to deliver her from suffering and evil. This was the God who created *ex-nihilo*. (cf Moltmann 1969:106.) The New Testament further develops the theme of creation, both in physical terms and redemptive terms. Redemptively, this is seen for example in the teaching that Christ is the Last Adam, who works with the Spirit from above (Jn 3:3-8; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 15:45-49) in bringing 'new life' to those who would accept it. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, of course, we read of Christians being described as a 'new creation'. We affirm, with Finger (1989:412) that our faith in redemptive creation is based on 'Jesus' struggle with the forces of evil, through which the "Author of life" was actually killed (Acts 3:15)'.

12. We affirm the teaching that mankind has been given the 'creative mandate' (Gen 1:26-28) in which we are to be faithful stewards of the earth. The fall of the race meant also the failure of the stewardship responsibility. We follow Cranfield (1985:196) who argues that Paul, in Romans 8:20-21, is teaching that 'the sub-human creation has been subjected to the frustration of not being able properly to fulfil the purpose of its existence, God having appointed that without man it should not be made perfect'. Liberation is then for the sub-human creation (that is from decay and death) as well as for human being.

13. Juan Hernandez Pico (1985:49) makes an interesting observation here. He observes that the Israelites cried out for freedom, quite understandably. However, the text does not say that they cried out to God:

Theirs was simply the cry of the struggle for life against the threat of death, not in a confrontation with nature, but in the confrontation that takes place in history between intolerable social conditions created or ratified by human beings and the determination of human freedom to change such conditions.

Pico adds that Yahweh heard their call anyway.

14. In discussing the theology of spirituality and justice, Donal Dorr (1984:230-235) speaks of the value of prayer in a situation of evil and suffering. One can pray in desperation because of evil and what has to be done (like Jesus in Gethsemane), and one can pray in freedom of spirit, with a positive trust in the competence of God. In actuality, liberating prayer would be paradoxical, containing both the elements of desperation and freedom.

15. We note with interest the Jewish contribution to the whole discussion of liberation. Marc Ellis, in *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* (1987), argues for a responsible holistic liberation. The call is for faith and hope to move beyond the devastating impact of the holocaust. Ellis feels that Jew and Christian share a common responsibility in bringing about freedom. In a similar vein, Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, in *On Earth as it is in Heaven : Jews, Christians and Liberation Theology* (1987) advocates a common bond between Jews and Christians on the peace and justice issue. Cohn-Sherbok places more value on the paradigmatic nature of the exodus than does Ellis. Like Ellis, Cohn-Sherbok feels both Jew and Christian share a common hope for liberation.

## CONCLUSION

We will begin by asking ourselves just how our thesis of 'Christ as Vindicated Judge', in relation to human suffering, applies to Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann. Of course we have already been doing this to some extent but now we need to summarize our position. The issue has been whether the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have actually set up an historical flow of liberation from physical oppression. We must be careful to state yet again that Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann are not advocating a magical disappearance of evil and oppression. After all, we are called to participate in a *struggle* for freedom. Yet Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann still talk about an historical movement or flow of liberation, as being the primary work of God, and which was focused in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Concerning the poor and socially oppressed, then, we have proposed the following points. Firstly, the Trinity is indeed inherently active against evil and its expression in the many types of oppression. Accordingly, we have no argument with Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann on the notion that God has opted for the 'poor' or oppressed. What we have done is to modify the notion to 'divine option for justice'.

Secondly, the Trinity does indeed desire the freedom or liberation of the victim from evil and the oppressive consequences of sin, be it spiritual or physical. The 'pie-in-

the-sky' gospel has no place in the multidimensional message of the Bible. However, what God wants for humanity and what we actually do can be two totally different stories. God never wanted evil and oppression to occur in the human story, but here they are. To put it differently, God has allowed sinful mankind to suffer from its own evil consequences, more often than not, to reap what it has sown (Rom 1-3). Human free agency has made humanity unfree.

Thirdly, the victim of oppression can identify with the historical experience of Jesus Christ and thus with Jesus Christ himself. Similarly, Christ can now identify with the victim of today (Matt 25:31-46). Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann sometimes refer to this as the Christo-presence. Thus we would agree with Gutierrez when he advocates a unity or communication between the socially oppressed and Christ. Similarly, we would agree with Cone when he calls for a mutual identity between oppressed blacks and the 'black' Christ. Also, we concur with Moltmann when he calls for identity between the weak, the powerless, and Christ.

These first three points have been expressed in God's revelatory activities in the human story (exodus, prophets) and fleshed out in the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Agreeing with Cone to some extent, we have been arguing in this thesis that the identifying experience of Jesus is the 'hermeneutical key' to understanding the relation between suffering and the cross and resurrection. With Weber (1979:195) we maintain that Jesus Christ *identified* with the human problem of suffering, *separated* himself from the powers of evil, and began the *transformation* of the human story. This transformation

is in process, although not in the sense of a 'liberating flow of history'. The human story awaits the *ultimate* event of transformation, that is, the second advent.

This brings us to a fourth point, namely, God can and has redemptively or liberatively intervened in the human story. We have proposed, with Moltmann, that the human story, including the story of suffering, has been taken into the divine trinitarian story. In this way God has creatively identified with us and our problems, and has overcome them through the cross and resurrection. Evil and suffering still persist, but they do not have the last word on human history; the time will come when they will no longer be there. The ultimate end of evil will occur because God has suffered it for us and will speak the last at the eschaton. We strongly affirm Moltmann's position that God is able to suffer as a Triune God. Paul's claim (Ac 17:28) that 'we live and move and have our being' in God takes on deeper meaning, because our suffering can be God's suffering.

Fifthly, however, liberation in our view would mean divine deliverance from existential evil and oppression as well as the progressive negation of them. However, the sheer weight of suffering that stubbornly pertains to the human situation does not speak to us of a specifically politically liberating God. But it speaks to us of a God who wants liberation. There is no contradiction here. The four-fold level of identification that Jesus Christ has with humanity, in relation to suffering, speaks of a God who is anything but indifferent. This same God calls for a justice-praxis on the part of the Church and individual believers. Both perpetrators and victims need to be

conscientized against evil and oppressive suffering. We can therefore speak of a God who is vindicated in his judgement on the unjust. It should be made clear that we are *not* denying the possibility of liberation in the mental, psychological or 'spiritual' dimensions of anyone who might continue to be a political or social victim.

Gutierrez (1990a:211) speaks of Christ as he who liberates us from sin, thereby liberating us from the 'very root of social injustice'. We have been suggesting, however, that sin and sin-caused injustice seem fated to confront humanity until the eschaton - partial historical liberations notwithstanding. God calls us to do justice and judges us if we disobey. The Christ-event (itself a divine act of justice) is the basis for this call and possible judgement.

In chapter five we emphasized the centrality of the Christ-event. While not denying the revelatory significance of the exodus liberation, we nevertheless advocated the 'way of the cross'. To be sure, the exodus reveals a God who is faithful to his promises, who desires freedom for men, and who owns and ensures a free future (Ela 1986:33-35). Exactly how God brings this about has been the subject of much theological discussion and debate. Our contention has been that the great event or mechanism of liberation is the cross and resurrection. These last two do not promise existential freedom *from* suffering this side of the eschaton, but they do offer hope of freedom even *in* suffering.

Jesus, in his identification, suffering, death, and resurrection, achieved victory for himself as well as for us.

In this we fully agree with Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann. Our difference has been in the extent to which the victory is worked out in real life. If the cross and resurrection were meant to eradicate evil, especially sin-caused suffering or oppression, then we have a failure on our hands. This failure is not lessened by the risky call for the victim's participation in his or her own destiny.

The on-going and extensive presence of evil and suffering may seem to call into question any victory achieved at calvary and the tomb as far as freedom from suffering is concerned. However, if victory is synonymous with freedom or liberation in at least the mental, psychological and spiritual dimensions of one's existence, then one can say that the cross and resurrection did achieve the goals of God. The call to do justice, on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ, is one of those goals. Indeed, the defeat of Satan and the powers motivates us to do justice.

As we have stressed, in chapter five, just as Jesus fulfilled the role of Suffering Servant and Sacrificial Lamb, in his four-fold identification with us, so we should be prepared to suffer and sacrifice in our obedience to God. We are, of course, talking about redemptive suffering, not the meek apathetic acceptance of oppressive suffering. Berryman (1984:391), writing in the Central American context, refers to Oscar Romero's idea of combining sacrifice with struggle on the basis of the death and resurrection of Jesus when he has Romero saying:

all those who have offered up their life, their heroism, their sacrifice - if they have really offered it with a

sincere desire to give true liberty and dignity to our people ... are incorporating themselves into the great sacrifice of Christ.

We would not be as expansive as Romero who applies this sentiment to any Salvadoran who participates in the struggle for freedom. He is similar to Gutierrez in this approach. But we would affirm the general idea of participating in the work of Christ. It becomes all the more meaningful if one is already a believer in Christ.

It is possible, then, to have *hope* in the midst of evil and suffering. We are indebted to Moltmann for his emphasis on this idea. The socially weak and marginalized can have *hope* for an equitable future. The racially oppressed can have *hope* that the identifying Christ will ultimately bring in universal solidarity. We all can have *hope* that, at least in the eschatological future, there will be no environmental mismanagement. The hope for the future, then, can influence the experience of the present. Furthermore, rather than encouraging a 'pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die' gospel, the idea of hope should motivate both victim and perpetrator to seek justice now. We have a basis for faith and hope in the midst of suffering. Because Christ has identified himself with us, our faith and hope relate directly back to the cross and resurrection. Our obedience in doing justice is couched in faith and hope, causing us to have confidence in the God of freedom. There is no need for despair as such.

Mary O'Driscoll (1984:105), following *Populorum Progressio*, advocates that efforts towards justice parallel the 'paschal mystery' of Jesus Christ, and comments: 'In the light of this, we can say that despair is the worst sin. To despair, means not

giving credit to God anymore'. Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann speak against despair and argue for hope. The victim can rise above the 'state of affliction'. We have emphasized that the second coming of Christ will usher in the victory achieved in the incarnation of God the Son. It will also once and for all eradicate evil and suffering.

We also agreed with Gutierrez and Moltmann that Jesus fulfilled the Abrahamic Promise, and that this promise benefits us today because of what happened to and through Jesus in the event of the cross and resurrection. Our insistence has been that the promise is broader than a promise of liberation; it relates also to the need for personal salvation.

Our overall contention has been that the theologies of Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann promise more than the gospel could deliver. It is one thing to maintain that God has demonstrated his preferential option for the poor through the exodus and the event of Jesus Christ. It is another thing to advocate that the cross and resurrection happened *primarily* to confront the problem of oppressive suffering, and that the cross and resurrection were part and parcel of an ongoing historical flow of liberation.

We wish to concede that there might be possible objections to our thesis. Firstly, some may argue that to disallow an actual programme of liberation on God's part would in fact lessen the incentive for victims to struggle for freedom. Would it not be better if victims were invited to participate in a real divinely orchestrated liberative programme? It would be like an athlete actually running in a race rather than merely watching it or contemplating the possibility of such a race. We see

validity in the criticism. However, it still remains true that God, in Jesus, encountered and overcame evil and suffering. Whether or not we are guaranteed the subjective overcoming of suffering along with the experience of physical freedom does not alter the objective reality of Christ's victory for us. The existential experience of suffering does not negate the objective achievement of the Christ-event. Therefore it is reasonable and logical for the risen Christ to call us to do justice, thereby appropriating subjectively what Christ has objectively accomplished for humanity.

A second criticism, from evangelicals, might be that we have not properly dealt with the relation between the ethics of freedom and the faith of salvation. We have in fact maintained our position of a legal (forensic) element in the atonement as well as the need for personal salvation. Nevertheless, we would state that our main concern in this thesis had been the problem of suffering and its connection with the theme of liberation. It has been stressed that the pain of suffering is surely the same for believers (in Christ) and non-believers. In fact it could be worse for believers, as their so-called liberating God may not be seen to be doing much liberating. We have emphasized, however, that God would oppose the oppression of any victim. God is by definition a God of justice. The cross and resurrection are the basis for this. Likewise, the call to do justice applies to everybody, be they victims or perpetrators, Christians or non-Christians, religious or non-religious. Our personal understanding of faith-salvation does not have to (and we do not

intend it to be) confused with any ethical demand God might make on mankind as a whole.

A third criticism, from liberation theologians, might be that we have confused the issue of freedom by insisting that even victims need personal salvation (vertically) for any horizontal freedom to be ultimately meaningful. Our reply would be virtually the same as our response to the evangelical criticism. We would give a reminder, however, that in this thesis we have affirmed the distinction between mankind's horizontal responsibilities before others and his vertical responsibility before God. However, our difference with Moltmann and especially Gutierrez and Cone has been our insistence that there is a forensic element in the holistic atonement, as over against a purely liberation or deliverance approach. This has caused us to advocate a call for freedom and justice, but only on the basis of the prior, and ultimate need of personal salvation for every human being.

A fourth criticism will be that we have been 'Barthian', and thus too Christo-centric. We still stand by our thesis and remain indebted to Cone and Moltmann for the idea that God takes our suffering in a deeply personal way. Whatever 'infinite qualitative distance' there might be between God as Creator and us as creatures, the possibility of intimate union between the divine and human person still remains. For us, the cross and resurrection indicate that Jesus was/is the hermeneutical key to interpretation of both reality and our experience, because of his entry into, and direct assumption of, our humanness.

In our view, the strength of our thesis lies firstly in the fact that it has realistically accepted that evil and the consequence of suffering are here to stay until the eschatological return of Christ. To be sure, Jesus overcame evil in his death and resurrection. His overcoming of evil, however, does not necessarily imply the absence of evil, especially if 'evil' is located in the acts and intentions of persons. The possibilities of evil and oppression exist as long as people and Satan exist on this side of the eschaton.

Gutierrez, Cone and Moltmann do not by any means down-play the power and impact of evil and its consequences, even if they do not hold to a real Satan. However, the advocacy of an historical flow of liberation implies, at the least, a decrease in the presence and influence of evil and oppression. In our view, however, one sees instead the persistence of evil and sin-caused suffering which remain concretely experienced by many people. The victim does not have to become disillusioned in the Liberator Christ or think that the cross and resurrection have in reality done precious little in relation to his actual suffering. Knowing that God is for justice, the victim can still hope and take courage because Christ identifies with his or her pain. This brings us to what we consider is a second contribution of our thesis. We have seen that Cone, Gutierrez and Moltmann claim that God judged oppression, as a concrete act of sin, through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Judgement is still part and parcel of their emphasis on liberation. More importantly, Gutierrez and Cone, but especially Moltmann, argue that both victims and perpetrators will be judged

on the basis of their 'justice-performance'. Now our contention has been that the cross and resurrection have given God the incontrovertible right to exact judgement. This would apply whether one is talking about overall judgement, or about judgement primarily in relation to one's justice performance.

In the context of our horizontal responsibility, then, God can judge us on at least two levels. He can judge us simply because we have failed to love the neighbour (the oppressed). However, he can also judge us because we might have mistreated others in the same way as Jesus was mistreated in his historical experience. The sheep and goats parable also points to this. In chapter five we described Jesus as the representative victim for victims. Thus he is vindicated in his judgement on oppressors and evil. Of course we must be careful not to promote a vindictive Christ who will by any means 'get his own back' on oppressors. Vindication is not vindictiveness. God, of course, can judge both Christian and non-Christian perpetrators on the same basis.

Rather than a theology of liberation as such (Gutierrez or Cone), we have instead been advocating a theology of justice and judgement. Rather than all of history being eventually liberated (Gutierrez), even with the help of a returning Liberator, we hold to the certainty of a radical 'Great White Throne Judgement'. Only after this will Moltmann's Coming Kingdom have fully come.

Our thesis, thirdly, gives a strong framework for understanding God's solidarity with human suffering. This is reflected in Christ's four-fold identification with suffering humanity. Christ identifies with the suffering of Christians and

non-Christians. It has been shown that the very nature of God lends itself to this identity. We have fully affirmed Moltmann's insistence on the passibility of the God in the God-Man, Jesus, as well as of the Trinity in general. While we opposed Moltmann's panentheism, we have nevertheless supported his assertion of God's closeness.

Gutierrez and Cone have been shown to advocate the identity between Christ and the victim. God wishes to see freedom from suffering not merely because he understands it, but because he has experienced it. He has called humankind to responsible stewardship, be it in the dimension of race, power, gender, economics or environmental management. Our failure in these areas results in human suffering. God has demonstrated his faithfulness to us, by showing his constancy (Abraham, exodus), and his identity (Christ-event) with us. The ultimate victory over Satan, evil and suffering allows us to claim that God and righteousness have the last laugh.

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